

THE  
SECOND BOOK of the KINGS,

OTHERWISE CALLED THE

FOURTH BOOK of the KINGS.

*THIS Book contains a history of more than three hundred years, from the death of Jehoshaphat, in the year of the world 3115, to the ruin of the kingdom of Judah in 3416; including an account of the acts of Elijah and Elisha, the pious reigns of Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah, the repentance of Manasseh, the wickedness of some other kings, the anger of God in consequence, and at length the destruction of the kingdom of Israel by the king of Assyria, and the captivity of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar.*

CHAP. I.

*Elijah sends fire from heaven upon the messengers of king Abaziah, and denounces his death. After Abaziah, his brother Jehoram reigns in Israel.*

[Before Christ 896.]

**T**HEN Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab.

2 ¶ And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick: and he sent messengers, and said unto them, Go, enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron whether I shall recover

of this disease.

3 But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, *Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron?*

4 Now therefore thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die. And Elijah departed.

5 ¶ And when the messengers turned back

CHAP. I.

*Ver. 2. Abaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber] Through the lattice into his upper chamber, Houbigant; who thinks that as he was walking on the top of the house the wooden lattice gave way, and he fell through. See Calmet's Dissertation upon the buildings of the ancient Hebrews.*

*Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron] Baal-zebub is generally interpreted the god of flies; but why he was so called, there is no substantial reason given. Mr. Roque, in his 10th Dissertation, has treated at large upon this subject, and to him we refer. Mr. Jurieu is of opinion, that the Baal-zebub of Scripture was the same with the Pluto of the ancients. As זב זב signifies to flow, Parkhurst says, that זב זב זב זב, signifies the flower, the Baal, lord or power (generally supposed to be the sun) which, always flowing forth himself, is the first mover and causer of all fluidity.*

See his Lexicon. It is plain enough from all antiquity, but from the hymns of Orpheus especially, that the ancient idolaters deified and worshipped nature in all her constituent and operating parts. Ekron was a city and government of the Philistines, which fell by lot to the tribe of Judah, Josh. xv. 45. but was afterwards given to the tribe of Dan, though it does not appear that the Jews ever had a quiet and peaceable possession of it.

*Ver. 4. Thou shalt not come down from that bed, &c.] At one end of each chamber in the eastern buildings there is a little gallery raised three, four, or five feet above the floor, having a ballustrade in the front, with a few steps likewise leading up to it. There they placed their beds; a situation frequently alluded to in the Scriptures. See Shaw's Travels, p. 211, &c.*

*Ver. 5. When the messengers turned back unto him, &c.] It may seem something strange, that Ahaziah's messengers should stop their journey to Ekron at Elijah's command.*

But

unto him, he said unto them, Why are ye now turned back?

6 And they said unto him, There came a man up to meet us, and said unto us, Go, turn again unto the king that sent you, and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, *Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that thou sendest to enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron? therefore thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.*

7 And he said unto them, What manner of man *was he* which came up to meet you, and told you these words?

8 And they answered him, *He was an hairy man, and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite.*

9 Then the king sent unto him a captain of fifty with his fifty. And he went up to him: and, behold, he sat on the top of an hill. And he spake unto him, Thou man of God, the king hath said, Come down.

10 And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, If I *be* a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And there came down fire from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.

But he was a man of such a venerable presence, and spake to them with such authority in the name of the Lord, that they were over-awed thereby to obey him rather than the king.

*Ver. 8. He was an hairy man*] Elijah being a *hairy man* may either denote his wearing long hair on his head and his beard, according to the manner of the ancient Greek philosophers, or it may denote his habit, which was made of skins, rough, and with the hair on; as the ancient heroes were clothed with the skins of tygers, lions, and bears; as the evangelist represents the Baptist, in a *raiment of camel's hair*; or as the apostle describes the prophets, *wandering about in sheep-skins and goat-skins.*

*Note;* 1. It is a vain curiosity to enquire when we shall die; but it is our best wisdom to be always ready. 2. If once we offer worship to any object below the glorious, self-existent Jehovah, a fly is as worthy a god as any other subordinate created being. The difference is inconsiderable between an Arian and an Ekronite. 3. They who will not sue to God for mercy, may expect to hear from him in judgment. 4. Neglect of God, or setting the affections on any thing upon earth more than on him, is practical atheism.

*Ver. 10—12. If I be a man of God, then let fire come down, &c.*] We have before observed, that many of these prophetic denunciations might be rendered with equal propriety in the future; by which means they would no longer retain the appearance of revengeful imprecations, but be seen in their true light of prophetic denunciations. Many have been the objections made to this part of the sacred history. To set it in its true light, we must consider that the wickedness of Ahaziah and his people was extremely great. He was not moved by the untimely death of his father; but followed his pernicious example, still seducing the people, and provoking the God of Israel by his abominable idolatries. The author of the book of Chronicles informs us, that his impiety was so provoking, that God had abandoned him, and would not prosper the naval expedition of Jehoshaphat, because he joined the fleet of this vicious prince. And the wickedness of Ahab, so great in itself, was highly aggravated by his making the people to sin. By his evil example and authority, he corrupted their worship, and justly drew upon himself the guilt of their

transgressions. Ahaziah and his people could not but know what judgments this prophet had denounced against his family on account of their idolatries. How great then must their guilt be, in persisting in them, notwithstanding these warnings? The king himself was certainly an incorrigible sinner; for, when he was dangerously ill from his fall through the lattice, he did not repent, but sent to inquire of Baal-zebub, the idol of the Ekronites. This fresh instance of his impiety so offended the true God, that he decreed he should not recover, and sent Elijah to foretel his death to the messengers. But even this message, instead of touching him with remorse, excited in him the wicked resolution of murdering the prophet. No one can doubt that he designed to take away his life, who reflects on the implacable hatred which his family bore this holy man for reproving their wickedness, the resolution his mother Jezebel had formed of cutting him off, and the obstinacy with which the king himself persisted in his sins. The manner of sending for him confirms this to have been his design. Why did he not send the same messengers as he did to Ekron? How came he to send a company of soldiers, if he had not the same design against him as the king of Syria had against Elisha? chap. vi. 13. The captains commanded him to come down, but in a haughty manner, because they thought he must surrender himself; and had he refused to go with them, would undoubtedly have compelled him by force: and Josephus positively asserts, that the captain threatened as much. If the king himself was so obdurately wicked, though his life was endangered by the fall, we may justly presume that they who were employed on this occasion were not much better; for they must have been either idolaters, or the worshippers of the true God. If they were idolaters, their sin must have received no small aggravation from their engaging in this attempt; and they could not but know that Elijah did not deserve death for predicting as a prophet the consequences of their master's indisposition. If they worshipped the true God, it was a great crime in them to go against the prophet of that God in whom they believed, and attempt his life, contrary to the dictates of their own conscience. Yet were they either, they could not be excusable; and, supposing them to have been idolaters, we may conclude that they executed this commission



11 Again also he sent unto him another captain of fifty with his fifty. And he answered and said unto him, O man of God, thus hath the king said, Come down quickly.

12 And Elijah answered and said unto them, If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty. And the fire of God came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.

13 ¶ And he sent again a captain of the

third fifty with his fifty. And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and besought him, and said unto him, O man of God, I pray thee, let my life, and the life of these fifty thy servants, be precious in thy sight.

14 Behold, there came fire down from heaven, and burnt up the two captains of the former fifties with their fifties: therefore let my life now be precious in thy sight.

with pleasure. And if they who went first upon this design were culpable, what daring sinners must they be who made the second attempt, though such signal vengeance had overtaken those who preceded them! That it was the will of God to destroy these men, may be inferred from the presence of the angel who guarded this prophet. This is still farther evident from the nature of the punishment inflicted upon them. Though Elijah had been ever so much enraged, he could not bring down the devouring flames against them. Nor, had he prayed for this interposition, would his prayers have been heard, if he had desired what was unbefitting the conduct of infinite wisdom. The prophet appealed to this event for the truth of his mission, ver. 10. 12. *If I be a man of God, &c.* which seems to imply that they had styled him a *man of God* by way of derision; but to convince them of the reality of this claim, he assured them that God himself would vindicate his character by sending down fire from heaven. What he foretold happened, to the cost of those who called down this punishment upon themselves by persisting in their infidelity. Should it be asked, Why these men were singled out to suffer divine punishment, when the whole nation was plunged in the same idolatrous practices and immoralities? it is easy to reply, that these men suffered in the case before us because there was not the same reason why others should suffer, nor could the death of any others so well answer the ends of infinite wisdom. If this catastrophe was intended for the punishment of evildoers, who so fit to be made examples as those who were actually engaged in the wicked enterprize? It was done for the security of a righteous man, whose life was in almost inextricable danger. It would have been impossible for him to escape when beset by a whole company of soldiers; and if he surrendered, he lay at Ahaziah's mercy, who was his inveterate and implacable enemy. In this distress, God mercifully rescued him by destroying these wicked agents, and thus reserved him for future usefulness. This end was accomplished; for the third captain came with another view, and spake in a different manner, as appears from ver. 13. which plainly implies their danger in going before, and that the king himself was so impressed and so softened by the destruction of the first and second company, that there was no ground for the prophet to fear. This punishment was intended to confirm Elijah's mission, and vindicate the honour of the *only God*. The fire coming from heaven upon Elijah's denouncing it, manifestly proved that Elijah was inspired by the Creator of all the earth; and as it recalled to their minds

the contest that he lately had with the priests of Baal, wherein the descent of fire had been used as a test of the supreme power of the God of gods, this occurrence could not but operate upon their minds with double weight, and convince them of the wickedness of their enterprize; and since they were convinced by the former manifestation of the divine power, the destruction of these men by a second and a third descent of fire from heaven, was sufficient to arouse them out of this lethargy. As these men were the king's servants, their punishment might more sensibly convince him of his wickedness in seducing the people, and the people of their sin in following his example. Had as great a number of idolaters been destroyed in another place, it could not have had so good an effect; but their being struck dead in their attempt upon the prophet's life, was proper to convince both the king and his subjects that he was really commissioned by God, and that the punishments he had denounced against their idolatries would certainly be inflicted. These few, therefore, were not only taken away to preserve the prophet, but also to reclaim the people, and to prevent the ruin of the whole nation. When the general depravity of the kingdom is duly weighed, the number of those who perished will appear very small. If it should be asked, why this severity was twice inflicted, the reply is easy; because the prince was so wicked, and his servants so daring, as to make a second attempt. Hardened as they were, when the same punishment was inflicted a second time, they began to relent, as appears from the address of the third captain, ver. 13. who speaks not in the imperious language of the two first, but in the style of a suppliant, who was convinced that Elijah was really a prophet of the true God. If we consider this judgment as an act of God, there is nothing in it unworthy of his perfections. That it was an instance of his *power* will not be contested, because it was what no man nor any superior being could inflict without his permission. His *holiness* and justice are conspicuously seen, because this catastrophe was intended as a punishment against enormous crimes, and the persons who suffered were engaged in a wicked attempt upon the life of his prophet. It could not be inconsistent with his *goodness* and *clemency*, because the death of these few was designed for the reformation of all the nation. His *wisdom* appears herein, inasmuch as by these means the prophet's life was preserved; and it was well adapted to the state of the kingdom, which called for some striking and alarming dispensation.

Ver.

15 And the angel of the LORD said unto Elijah, Go down with him; be not afraid of him. And he arose, and went down with him unto the king.

16 And he said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Forasmuch as thou hast sent messengers to enquire of Baal-zebub the god of Ekron, *is it not because there is no God in Israel to enquire of his word?* therefore thou shalt not come down off that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die.

17 ¶ So he died, according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken. And Jehoram reigned in his stead in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah; because he had no son.

18 Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah which he did, *are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?*

## CHAP. II.

*Elijah with his mantle divideth the waters of Jordan, and passeth over on dry ground with Elisha, who requesteth a double portion of his spirit. A chariot of fire takes up Elijah; Elisha divides the waters of Jordan with the mantle of Elijah, healeth the waters of Jericho, and curseth the children who mock him.*

[Before Christ 896.]

**A**ND it came to pass, when the LORD would take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal.

2 And Elijah said unto Elisha, Tarry here,

I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Beth-el. And Elisha said *unto him, As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.* So they went down to Beth-el.

3 And the sons of the prophets that *were* at Beth-el came forth to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he said, Yea, I know *it*; hold ye your peace.

4 And Elijah said unto him, Elisha, tarry here, I pray thee; for the LORD hath sent me to Jericho. And he said, *As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.* So they came to Jericho.

5 And the sons of the prophets that *were* at Jericho came to Elisha, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the LORD will take away thy master from thy head to-day? And he answered, Yea, I know *it*; hold ye your peace.

6 And Elijah said unto him, Tarry, I pray thee, here; for the LORD hath sent me to Jordan. And he said, *As the LORD liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee.* And they two went on.

7 And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went, and stood to view afar off: and they two stood by Jordan.

8 And Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped *it* together, and smote the waters, and they were divided hither and thither, so that they two went over on dry ground.

*Ver. 15. And he arose, and went down with him unto the king*] This is a great instance of Elijah's faith and obedience to God, in whom he trusted, that he would deliver him from the wrath of the king, and the malice of Jezebel. He had ordered, not long before, all the prophets of Baal to be slain; had sent a very unwelcome message to the king, and made a very terrible execution upon two of his captains and their companies: so that he had all the reason in the world to apprehend the utmost expressions of the king's displeasure; and yet, when God commands him, he makes no manner of hesitation, but goes boldly to Ahaziah, and confirms with his own mouth the unpleasant truth which he had declared to his messengers.

*Ver. 17. And Jehoram reigned in his stead, in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat*] His brother Jehoram reigned in his stead, because he had no son. To avoid confusion, the reader should take notice, that in the course of this history there is mention made of two Jehorams; one, the second son of Ahab, who succeeded Ahaziah, and was

king of Israel; the other, son and heir to Jehoshaphat, who reigned in Judah. By comparing chap. iii. 1. and chap. viii. 16. a great difference in the reading of the dates will appear. We should just remark, however, that it is commonly supposed, that Jehoshaphat declared his son Jehoram king while himself was alive, and reigned in conjunction with him for the space of seven years; a supposition which, if allowed, will in some degree clear up the difficulty. See Archbishop Usher's Annals, sub A. M. 3106.

## CHAP. II.

*Ver. 3. Knowest thou that the Lord will take away thy master from thy head to-day?*] Houbigant renders this, *the Lord will elevate thy master above thy head to-day*, alluding to Elijah's being carried up into heaven.

*Ver. 8. His mantle*] In the two books of kings there is mention made five times of this mantle, and in every place it is called אֲדֵרֶת *adret*, which denotes a royal, as well as a prophetic mantle. As the high priesthood and

9 ¶ And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me.

10 And he said, Thou hast asked a hard thing: *nevertheless*, if thou see me *when I am*

taken from thee, it shall be so unto thee; but if not, it shall not be so.

11 And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, *there appeared* a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.

and supreme civil authority centered in the same person, mantles made of skins, furs, &c. which were worn at first in a religious view, came to be afterwards the *insignia* of civil authority. See Gen. xxvii. 15. and compare Gen. iii. 21. Lev. vii. 8.

REFLECTIONS.—Elijah's bright sun is now about to set, or rather to rise brighter in another world of glory.

1. God gives him notice of his intended removal, not in the ordinary course of nature, but by a change sudden and glorious, which, without the pangs of death, would prepare him for his abode in that world where flesh and blood cannot enter. *Note*; Though we may not expect Elijah's translation, yet, if like him, whilst on earth, we maintain our conversation in heaven, our passage thither will be as safe and sure through the grave, as if we were caught up thither in the whirlwind.

2. Before he is removed, he goes to take his farewell of the school of the prophets at Beth-el, the hopes of the rising generation; and, to try Elisha's affection and adherence to him, proposes to him to stay at Gilgal; but he resolves never to forsake him. He knew the time was short that he could enjoy his company, and therefore desired to improve every moment which remained by his holy conversation, and receive at least his parting benediction. *Note*; (1.) The rising generation is the great concern of the departing prophets, and their last breath they would gladly employ in encouraging, by their experience and dying testimony, their younger brethren to follow those happy paths which lead to life and never-ending glory. (2.) We should make the most of the conversation of those men of God which now for a moment we enjoy; lest, when they are taken from us, we should have to lament not only their loss, but our own negligence in not profiting by them as we might have done.

3. From Beth-el Elijah passes to Jericho on the same errand. In both places his intended translation is known. The sons of the prophets acquaint Elisha with it; he is no stranger to it, and bids them be silent; for now either his thoughts were too much engaged to enter on any discourse, or this mournful theme was grievous to him. Elijah there renews his request that he would stay; but nothing can divert him from his attendance. *Note*; A persevering attachment to the Prince of the prophets will be crowned at last.

4. Onward they pass to Jordan, while fifty of the sons of the prophets stood afar off to wait the issue; and Elijah's mantle, like the rod of Moses, there opens them a passage through the waters. *Note*; (1.) It is very desirable to see the last of dying christians. (2.) Through the waters of death the redeemed will find a safe passage,

while the wicked will be hurried down the stream, into the gulph of eternal perdition.

*Ver. 9. Let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me*] Elisha speaks to Elijah as a son to his father, from whom he requests that he would esteem him as a first-born son, to whom a double portion of goods was assigned. Nor does he ask a *double quantity* of that spirit which Elijah had, but only so much of that spirit, as a father leaves of his inheritance to his first-born son. This is the meaning of the expression, פִּי שְׁנַיִם *pi shenayim*, which is usually applied in the dividing of an inheritance. So Houbigant. Some, however, think, that as Elijah had no other successor, upon whom he was to bestow any prophetic gift, but Elisha, there can be no objection to our understanding the expression in the simple sense of a *double portion* of the prophetic spirit; since it is evident that he did many more miracles than Elijah, and even after his death exerted a divine power, in raising the dead man, ch. xiii. 21. Had he desired this double portion, indeed, out of a principle of vain-glory, there might then be something said against his request; but since he did it with a pure intent to become thereby more serviceable in his generation, we cannot perceive why he was to blame in requesting what our blessed Saviour granted to his apostles; viz. the power of working greater miracles than he himself performed. See Calmet and Le Clerc, and ver. 15.

*Ver. 11. A chariot of fire, &c.*] We cannot presume to enter into any precise explanation of these words. We may suppose, that a bright and radiant cloud, which, as it ascended, might appear like a *chariot and horses*, raised Elijah from the earth, and, leaving this globe behind, wafted him into the seats of the blessed. See Gen. v. 24. The design of this assumption, as well as that of Enoch, seems to have been not only to give the world a sensible proof of another, and a better country, even a heavenly, but also to shew God's interposition for the sake of his servants, as well as to typify the future ascension of his son. See Calmet's Dissertation upon Enoch. Indeed, Elijah was, in various respects, a type both of Jesus Christ and of John the Baptist. I. The New Testament sufficiently points out the conformity between Elijah and John the Baptist: nay, *John* is even called by the name of this prophet: and Christ himself so calls him in the encomium which he passed upon John; Matth. xi. 14. *And if ye will receive it, this is the Elijah who was to come*; who was promised, by the prophet Malachi, to appear before, and as the precursor of the Messiah. *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and illustrious day of the Lord.* And accordingly, the angel told Zecharias, the father of the Baptist, that his son should go before the

12 And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.

13 He took up also the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of Jordan;

14 And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and smote the waters, and said, Where is the LORD God of Elijah? and when he also had smitten the waters, they parted hither and thither: and Elisha went over.

15 And when the sons of the prophets which were to view at Jericho saw him, they said, The spirit of Elijah doth rest on Elisha. And they came to meet him, and bowed themselves to the ground before him.

16 ¶ And they said unto him, Behold now, there be with thy servants fifty strong men; let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master: lest peradventure the Spirit of the LORD hath taken him up, and cast him upon some mountain, or into some valley. And he said, Ye shall not send.

17 And when they urged him till he was

the Messiah, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, &c. So that Elijah was a type of John the Baptist, as to the spirit and power of his ministry; and so remarkably, that he is even called by his name. He was, as it were, another *Elijah* in spirit and ministry, though not in person; and thus we may account for his answer, when the priests and Levites sent to him; *Art thou Elijah, &c. and he said, I am not.* "I am not the prophet personally, as you expect him to appear, though I am come in his spirit and in his power, mystically, but not identically the same." There was some analogy between these two great personages also in their outward garb and deportment, the hairy raiment and leathern girdle; and also in their lonely and mortified lives in the wilderness; and their being persecuted by wicked princes, Elijah by Ahab and Jezebel, John by Herod and his wife Herodias. But chiefly was Elijah a type of John in his sanctity, courage, and undaunted zeal for reformation; and in the spirit and purpose of his ministry, to awaken a sinful generation, to bring many, both of the rising and declining age, to that real piety towards God, which is the surest band of mutual duty to each other; to bring many, who were before totally ignorant and regardless of duty, to the knowledge of God, which is the only wisdom. This Elijah eminently performed, when he caused the people to cry, *The Lord he is God, the Lord he is God*: this John also eminently performed, when numbers flocked to his baptism on the banks of Jordan, and he pointed out to the awakened penitents, the *Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world.* II. But Elijah was more especially a type of JESUS CHRIST, not only with respect to his ascension into heaven, but also in reference to the miracles that he wrought; his invincible courage and zeal in the cause of God; and his commissioning successors to carry on the work of his ministry, after his departure from this world. Elijah fasted forty days and forty nights in mount Horeb, the place where God appeared to Moses, and gave the law to his people Israel, and where also Moses fasted the same length of time; who, with Elijah, was the only person of whom we read this extraordinary miracle, and who therein figured our Saviour *Christ*, the great prophet and lawgiver of his people, who fasted forty days and forty nights in the

wilderness: and hence we read, that in our Saviour's transfiguration on the mount, these two distinguished persons appeared with him in glory; Moses the great giver, and Elijah the zealous restorer of that law which led to Christ, its end and perfection, and in whose honour their respective ministrations terminated. Elijah was entertained by a widow, whose son notwithstanding died, and he raised him to life again; so *Christ* was entertained by Martha and Mary, whose brother Lazarus nevertheless died, and was also raised by him from the dead. The spirit of Elijah rested upon Elisha. He cast his mantle upon him, which had such an influence, that he left all and followed him. Through the like miraculous influence of the spirit, Christ called his apostles, who left all, and followed him; and upon these his appointed successors he caused his spirit to rest, when, like Elijah, he ascended up before them into heaven, and a cloud received him out of their sight. See a fine encomium upon the prophet, Ecclus. xlviii. 1, &c.

*Ver. 12. My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!*] He calls him his father, as being his master and instructor; and the expression, *the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof*, most probably alludes to the chariot and horses which he had just then beheld, and seems to imply that Elijah, by his example, counsel, prayers, and power with God, did more for the defence and preservation of Israel, than all their chariots, and horses, and other warlike preparations. All good men, but especially men of extraordinary wisdom and piety, are the guard and defence of their country; they are better than an army. See Hosea, xii. 3.

*Ver. 16. The Spirit of the Lord hath taken him up!*] From some expressions in Scripture it seems as if the Spirit of the Lord frequently used to carry the prophets through the air, and with great swiftness remove them to distant places. Obadiah speaks of it as a common thing, 1 Kings, xviii. 12. And in the New Testament we are told of Philip, that *when they were come out of the waters, the Spirit of the Lord caught him away, that the eunuch saw him no more:—And Philip was found at Azotus;* Acts, viii. 39, 40.

REFLECTIONS.—Elijah is gone, but Elisha remains. When God removes one light from his church, he can raise up another to supply his place.

I. Elisha

ashamed, he said, Send. They sent therefore fifty men; and they fought three days, but found him not.

18 And when they came again to him, (for he tarried at Jericho,) he said unto them, Did I not say unto you, Go not?

19 ¶ And the men of the city said unto Elisha, Behold, I pray thee, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord seeth: but the water is naught, and the ground barren.

20 And he said, Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein. And they brought it to him.

21 And he went forth unto the spring of

the waters, and cast the salt in there, and said, Thus saith the LORD, I have healed these waters; there shall not be from thence any more death or barren land.

22 So the waters were healed unto this day, according to the saying of Elisha which he spake.

23 ¶ And he went up from thence unto Beth-el: and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou baldhead; go up, thou baldhead.

24 And he turned back, and looked on

1. Elisha with delight gathers up the mantle which fell from his departed father: he loved it since the day it was first cast over him, and not only for his sake preserved it, but, as the earnest of his petition being granted, received it with deepest thankfulness, and wore it as successor in office to the great prophet who had left it behind him. *Note;* (1.) Those tokens given us by our departed friends, which stir us up to imitate their virtues, are truly valuable. (2.) They who wear the livery of a prophet should read in their very clothes the obligations lying on them to discharge with diligence their weighty office.

2. Clothed now with Elijah's spirit, as well as with his mantle, he returns to the waters of Jordan, and there, in faith invoking the Lord God of Elijah, smites the waters, and they divide. Where is he? he cries; אֶפְהֻרָה *Aph-hu* follows in the original. Here he is, *even he*, as immediately answering to the call. *Note;* (1.) Even while the prayer of faith is uttering, God will answer. (2.) They who walk in Elijah's spirit will find with them the presence and power of Elijah's God.

3. The sons of the prophets, who beheld the miracle, received with deep respect the returning prophet, as Elijah's appointed successor. *Note;* It is not material whence a man came, or what has been his education; if God endues him with eminent gifts, and eminent graces, even the sons of prophets need think it no dishonour to bow before him.

*Ver. 21. And he—cast the salt in there, and said, &c.]* The manner in which Elisha sweetened this fountain, and made the soil fruitful by casting salt into the water, was in order to make the miracle more conspicuous; for salt is a thing which of all others makes water less drinkable, and ground more barren. There is a fountain at this very day towards the west of Jericho, which rises about three quarters of a league above the town in the way to Jerusalem, and yielding a great deal of water very excellent in its kind, runs along and fructifies the plain. See Josephus Bell. Jud. book v. cap. 4. and Exod. xv. 23. 25.

*Ver. 23, 24. There came forth little children, &c.]* Young lads. In order to rescue the character of the prophet from the objections of infidels on account of the catastrophe of these children, we may observe, that it appears from other passages of Scripture, (as Gen. xliii. 8. 1 Kings, iii. 7, &c.)

that the persons termed *little children*, were grown to the age of maturity, and consequently were capable of being concerned in any riotous proceedings. Nay, their coming out of the city implied as much. They came out of Beth-el, the chief seat of idolatry; they had strongly imbibed the prejudices of their parents, and were old enough to distinguish between idolatry and the worship of the true God. They probably had heard that Elijah was taken up into heaven. The prophets of the true God, who resided in this place, were apprised of this event before it happened; and it could not but be supposed, that an event of so astonishing a kind would become the chief topic of their conversation. The manner in which Elisha had repassed the river was undoubtedly spread abroad during his abode at Jericho, and his mission as a prophet was confirmed beyond dispute. They knew him to be a prophet of Jehovah, and derided him on account of his office; nay, they made a jest of the ascension of Elijah, a strong reprover of their idolatries; and in making a jest of that remarkable event, they shut their eyes against a miracle which seems to have been wrought partly to reclaim them. The words, *Go up, thou baldhead; go up, thou baldhead*, plainly refer to the ascension of Elijah; and if our translators had made use of the word *ascend*, instead of the words *go up*, this allusion would have appeared plainer and stronger. What still aggravates their guilt is, that they did not meet with the prophet by accident, but went out with a design to insult him; this is evident from the very context. They likewise went in a body, which shewed that their motive was malice, and their going not casual. Hence it seems probable, that they went out not only to deride the prophet, but likewise to prevent his entering into the city. They feared that he would be as zealous against their idolatries as Elijah had been; and by this insult they intended to free themselves from his remonstrances. Though the prophet could not but be displeas'd with the insult, yet no part of the narrative will countenance us in supposing that the curse he denounced against them was owing to the perverseness of his temper, or the ebullition of his anger. Though his rage had been ever so turbulent, it would not have supplied him with power to command these savage creatures to leave the woods at an instant, and to come to a place which they did not frequent, as a public road must be supposed to be, in order

them, and cursed them in the name of the LORD. And there came forth two she-bears out of the wood, and tare forty and two children of them.

25 And he went from thence to mount Carmel, and from thence he returned to Samaria.

### C H A P. III.

*The kings of Israel, of Judah, and of Edom, fight against the king of Moab: Elisha obtaineth water for them, and a promise of victory: the Moabites are overcome.*

[Before Christ 896.]

**N**OW Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah,

and reigned twelve years.

2 And he wrought evil in the sight of the LORD; but not like his father, and like his mother: for he put away the image of Baal that his father had made.

3 Nevertheless he cleaved unto the fins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom.

4 ¶ And Mesha king of Moab was a sheep-master, and rendered unto the king of Israel an hundred thousand lambs, and an hundred thousand rams, with the wool.

5 But it came to pass, when Ahab was dead, that the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.

to destroy these insolent youths. As his curse would have no effect had it proceeded from a peevish temper, we have no just cause from his cursing them to suspect, that he was agitated by any furious or malicious passion. The word *curse* has in Scripture three different acceptations. It signifies to *inflict* a curse; and in this sense God is said to have *curst* the ground after the fall. It signifies to *wish* a curse; and in this sense Shimei is said to have *curst* David. Lastly, it signifies to *pronounce* or *foretel* a curse or punishment; and in this sense Elisha is said to have *curst* the children. The historian expressly asserts, that *he curst them in the name of the Lord*. To speak in the name of the Lord, is to deliver what he commands; to prophesy in the name of the Lord, is to foretel what he reveals; and to *curse* in the name of the Lord, is to declare a curse which he is determined to inflict, and has authorized the prophet to denounce: so that in cursing these supposed children, Elisha acted as a minister of the supreme ruler of the world; and, by his order, foretold the punishment that was about to be inflicted upon these idolaters. His pronouncing this curse was not the cause of their catastrophe; but the certainty of their catastrophe, and the command of God, were the causes of his pronouncing this curse. On the whole, it appears, that the persons who mocked Elisha were not infants, but arrived at years of maturity: it appears, that they did not insult him by chance, but by design; that they went out in great crowds on purpose; that they mocked him because he was the prophet of the true God, from whom they had apostatized; and that he did not wish their untimely end from a principle of revenge, but only predicted it as a prophet. The punishment itself will appear just, if we consider the time, place, persons, and likewise how well it was adapted to convince the people of the heinousness of idolatry, and to recover them to that purity of worship which their law was peculiarly intended to preserve. Dr. Gregory Sharpe, in his *Second Argument in Defence of Christianity*, has very satisfactorily vindicated the conduct of Elisha. He observes, that if we inquire into the character of Elisha, we shall always find him good, merciful, and compassionate. He who restored life to the son of the

good Shunammite, and so often saved the lives of others, would not have slain in anger with his curses *little children*. Indeed, if the curse pronounced by Elisha had not proceeded from the Lord, if it had been the effect of anger in the prophet only, and not the just denunciation of the prophet upon obstinate incorrigible idolaters, so signal an event in the destruction of the youth of Bethel, would not so soon have followed it. See more in the work above referred to, and Waterland's Script. Vind. part ii. p. 120.

REFLECTIONS.—Elisha, being returned in the spirit of Elijah, multiplied miracles to confirm his divine mission.

1. At the request of the men of Jericho, he heals their waters, casts in the salt at the fountain-head, and in the name of the Lord commands the cure, which is instant as his word. *Note*; (1.) Opportunity must not be lost; whilst we have a prophet among us, let us employ him. (2.) Few people think how ill they could spare the most common necessaries: we could much better want every other liquor, than be without wholesome water. (3.) Nothing but the salt of divine grace can sweeten the bitterness or heal the barrenness of the corrupted heart. (4.) It is every prophet's labour to cast in this salt, and that not merely into the streams, for present reformation, but into the spring, in order to abiding conversion. (5.) Though the prophet speaks, it is God alone that works. (6.) They who have tasted of God's healing grace, will make it manifest in the fruitfulness of their lives.

2. Another miracle of a different kind marked his return to Carmel. As he passed through Beth-el, where another school of prophets lay, a company of young persons mocked him. The idol calf had there the general sway, and they hated those who were zealous to rebuke their sins. They cried in derision, Go up, follow your master, and let us be rid of you both; and because his head was bald, they derided the defect. With a look of indignation, he turned upon them, not in anger for the personal affront, but in holy displeasure at their contempt and dishonour of God, and, by a divine impulse from him, denounced upon them the curse that they had provoked; the executioners

6 ¶ And king Jehoram went out of Samaria the same time, and numbered all Israel.

7 And he went and sent to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, The king of Moab hath rebelled against me: wilt thou go with me against Moab to battle? And he said, I will go up: I *am* as thou *art*, my people as thy people, and my horses as thy horses.

8 And he said, Which way shall we go up? And he answered, The way through the wilderness of Edom.

9 So the king of Israel went, and the king of Judah, and the king of Edom: and they fetched a compass of seven days' journey: and there was no water for the host, and for the cattle that followed them.

10 And the king of Israel said, Alas! that the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab!

11 But Jehoshaphat said, *Is there* not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may enquire of the LORD by him? And one of the king of Israel's servants answered and said, Here *is* Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water

on the hands of Elijah.

12 And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the LORD is with him. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.

13 And Elisha said unto the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay: for the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab.

14 And Elisha said, *As* the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee.

15 But now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him.

16 And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches.

17 For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may

of which are near; two bears, rushing from a neighbouring wood, tore to pieces forty-two of these insolent mockers, and changed their shouts into dying groans. *Note;* (1.) It is no new thing for prophets to be abused, even in the streets, and for children, taught by their ungodly parents, to point at and hoot them. (2.) It is a high reflection upon God, to reproach any man with his natural defects or infirmities. (3.) Wicked children should read and tremble at this judgment.

3. Having visited Carmel, Elijah's late residence, and where might be another school of prophets, he went to Samaria, the metropolis, to testify against their idolatry, where it was most confirmed under the royal sanction. *Note;* When iniquity most reigns, and the largest field is open to labour for God, there is the zealous prophet's call.

### CHAP. III.

*Ver. 2. He put away the image of Baal, &c.]* It is a little strange, that his mother Jezebel, who brought this worship with her from the Sidonians, should suffer him to remove the image of her favourite god. See 1 Kings, xvi. 31. But perhaps she might be a little daunted by the many disasters which had befallen her family, and was content with the privilege of having her idolatrous worship in private; nor is it unlikely, that Jehoshaphat might refuse to assist him in his wars against the king of Moab, unless he would consent to renounce his

idolatry. See what we have said on 1 Kings, xii. 28. respecting the fins of Jeroboam, ver. 3.

*Ver. 4. An hundred thousand lambs, &c.]* Though this is a very large number, we are to consider that these countries abounded with sheep, inasmuch that Solomon offered a hundred and twenty thousand at the dedication of the temple, 2 Chron. vii. 5. and the Reubenites drove from the Hagarites two hundred and fifty thousand, 1 Chron. v. 21. for, as Bochart observes, their sheep frequently brought forth two at a time, and sometimes twice a year; and he remarks further, that in ancient times, when the people's riches consisted in cattle, this was the only way of paying tribute. See Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. xviii. cap. 3. Hence Ludolph is of opinion, that this great number of cattle was not a tribute which the Moabites were obliged to pay to the Israelites every year, but upon some special occasion only; as for instance, upon the accession of a new king, or the like. See Lud. Ethiopic. Hist. lib. ii. cap. 3. and Scheuchzer on the place.

*Ver. 11. Which poured water on the hands of Elijah]* This is a fine eastern expression, signifying to *serve* or *minister* to. Houbigant renders it, *who gave water to the hands of Elijah.*

*Ver. 15. Bring me a minstrel]* See on 1 Sam. x. 5. and xvi. 14. and Joh. Mulleri, *Elifens ad Musicæ sonum Prophetæ.*

*Ver. 17. Ye shall not see wind, &c.]* See the note on 1 Kings, xviii. 45. It is very common in the eastern countries,



drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts.

18 And this is *but* a light thing in the sight of the LORD: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand.

19 And ye shall smite every fenced city, and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree, and stop all wells of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones.

20 ¶ And it came to pass in the morning,

countries, and particularly in the deserts of Arabia, to be in want of water, which is so scarce there, that travellers, and the beasts they carry with them, often perish with thirst. Their last resource for preserving their lives is, to cut open their camels, and get from their stomachs what water they contain. We cannot say whether these kings, from a want of precaution, had neglected to provide sufficiently for themselves and their army, or whether they remained upon the road longer than they had foreseen. From the text it is plain, that they wanted water, and that the army found itself so urged by thirst that both men and beasts were in danger of their lives. In this calamity the kings had recourse to Elisha; as in cases of emergency, we see men have recourse to the prayers of wise and pious persons, to whom they paid little regard at another time, but who, in the days of calamity, are resorted to by whole cities and nations. The prophet arrives; he reproves Jehoram for his impiety, and then foretels things superior to reason and the powers of nature, inasmuch that the impious acknowledged and adored the assisting hand of the Almighty. He commands what is to be done, in order that so miraculous a succour may be of use to those who were thus pressed by necessity, and that it might not slip them too speedily. *Thus saith the Lord, make this valley full of ditches, &c.* These circumstances deserve attention, and furnish certain proofs of the miracle: after a long drought it commonly happens, especially in hot climates, that the rains are accompanied or preceded by winds, which collect together clouds, and break against each other the little bubbles of water which float in the air. See 1 Kings, xviii. 41. Without rain, rivers never overflow. But here, without rain, without wind, *there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water.* It issued somewhere, by the order of God, from the bowels of the earth, and flowed into the camp of the allied princes. Who but God could, at a given period, have produced so marvellous an effect?

*Ver. 19. And mar every good piece of land with stones.* Commentators seem to have been at no pains to account for this part of the punishment of the king of Moab's rebellion; though it does not appear very easy to conceive how the thing was to be done to any purpose; and, indeed, without giving as much trouble, or more, to Israel to gather these stones, and carry them on the lands of the Moabites, as to the latter to gather them up again, and carry them off. I would therefore propose it to the learned to consider, whether we may not understand the passage of Israel's doing that *nationally*, and as victors, which was done by *private* persons very frequently in these countries in ancient times, by way of revenge, and which is mentioned in some of the old Roman laws. Egmont and Hayman, who speak of the contentions and vindictive temper of the Arabs, tell us, they were ignorant however, "whether that people still retained the method

of revenge formerly common among them, and which is called *σκοπελισμος*, mentioned in *lib. ff. Digest. de extract. Criminib.* which contains the following account: 'In the province of Arabia there is a crime called *σκοπελισμος*, or *fixing of stones*; it being a frequent practice among them, to place *stones in the grounds* of those with whom they were at a variance, as a warning, that any person who dared to till that field should infallibly be slain by the contrivance of those who placed the stones there.' This malicious practice," they add, "is thought to have had its origin in Arabia Petraea." See their Travels through part of Europe, &c. vol. ii. p. 156. If the Israelites as victors, who could prescribe what laws they thought proper to the conquered, placed such *stones* in the best grounds of the Moabites, as interdicting them from tillage, on pain of their owners being destroyed, they without much trouble effectually marred such fields, as long as their power over Moab lasted, which had before this continued some time, and by the suppression of this rebellion might be supposed to continue long. As it was an ancient practice in these countries, might it not be supposed to be as ancient as the times of Elisha, and that he referred to it? *Observations*, p. 443.

REFLECTIONS.—War being resolved, Jehoram musters his forces, and, to strengthen himself the more,

1. Solicits and obtains the assistance of Jehoshaphat. At a council held, Jehoshaphat advises to fall upon the Moabites, not by the nearest way over Jordan, but through the wilderness of Edom, in order to surprize them.

2. The advice was followed, but it had nearly proved fatal to their army; and no wonder, when they had not consulted God about their way. The want of water parched them with thirst; and Jehoram, with murmurs against Providence, is ready to despair through fear of being attacked, by the king of Moab in this dispirited and weakened situation. *Note;* (1.) If we keep company with sinners, we shall be in danger of smarting under their rod. (2.) They who will not consult God to direct their way, will yet quarrel at his providence, when involved in difficulties, into which their own imprudence has brought them.

3. Jehoshaphat now reflects on his error, and, to amend it before it be too late, inquires after a prophet. In a camp he was little to be expected; but so God ordered it, who foresaw these difficulties, that Elisha should attend the army; and though the kings knew not of him, a godly Israelite of their servants had been favoured with his company, and could give them information concerning him. Hereupon, the kings immediately wait on him in his tent, to state their deplorable case, and to beg his prayers and direction. *Note;* (1.) Afflictions drive those to God, who in their prosperity neglected him. (2.) God's

when the meat-offering was offered; that, behold, there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water.

21 And when all the Moabites heard that the kings were come up to fight against them, they gathered all that were able to put on armour, and upward, and stood in the border.

22 And they rose up early in the morning, and the sun shone upon the water, and the Moabites saw the water on the other side as red as blood:

23 And they said, This is blood: the kings are surely slain, and they have smitten one another: now therefore, Moab, to the spoil.

24 And when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and smote the Moabites, so that they fled before them: but they went forward smiting the Moabites, even

in *their* country.

25 And they beat down the cities, and on every good piece of land cast every man his stone, and filled it; and they stopped all the wells of water, and felled all the good trees: only in Kir-haraseh left they the stones thereof; howbeit the slingers went about it, and smote it.

26 ¶ And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew swords, to break through *even* unto the king of Edom: but they could not.

27 Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt-offering upon the wall. And there was great indignation against Israel: and they departed from him, and returned to *their own* land.

mercy towards us is not only beyond our desert, but often foreruns our desires.

4. Elisha, with just indignation at Jehoram's idolatry, sends him to his father's prophets for direction: but these Jehoram knew were unable to help; therefore he humbles himself, and begs him, for the sake at least of the kings his confederates, to intercede for them. Hereunto Elisha consents; yet, testifying his high displeasure against him, and declaring, that but for Jehoshaphat's sake he would not deign to look upon or answer him. A minstrel is called for to soothe his ruffled spirit, provoked with Jehoram's presence, and to prepare his mind for prophetic inspiration; and when with sounds of heavenly melody the sweet musician sung, straight his enraptured spirit felt the present Deity. He bids them dig trenches, and without wind or rain God should fill them with water, and their lives be not only thus preserved, but victory succeed, and Moab be made desolate by them. *Note;* (1.) The greatest are not too high for rebuke. (2.) The wicked fare the better for their connections with God's people. (3.) God will not leave his people in distress, when they cry to him, though their own follies have brought them into it. (4.) When God gives, he gives like himself, more than we dare ask or think.

*Ver. 27. Took his eldest son—and offered him for a burnt-offering upon the wall.*] Not only the holy Scriptures, but several heathen writers, assure us, that in cases of great extremity it was customary among various people to sacrifice to their gods whatever was most dear to them. Cæsar in his war with the Gauls tells us, that when they were afflicted with grievous diseases, or in time of war or great danger, they either offered men for sacrifices, or vowed that they would offer them; because they imagined that their gods could never be appeased unless one man's life was given for another's. In conformity with this horrid custom, and to appease no doubt, as he thought, the

anger of his idol *Chemosh*, the king of Moab made this costly sacrifice of his eldest son; a deed which, it is plain from the text, was held in the greatest abhorrence by the Israelites.

REFLECTIONS.—The event answers the prediction.

1. The water came in a torrent by the way of Edom, at the time of the morning sacrifice. Probably then Elisha prayed openly, with his face towards the temple, that they might be assured whence this relief was sent. *Note;* (1.) Every mercy that we receive is owing to the efficacy of the blood of the Lamb which was slain. (2.) Every prayer must proceed on that foundation.

2. The Moabites, beholding the water as the morning-sun arose, and persuaded that there could be no water there, presently conclude that the confederates had quarrelled, and this was the blood of the slain: therefore they march as to certain victory, every man who was able to bear arms having been summoned to oppose the invasion. But how terrible their disappointment, when, tumultuously rushing on the spoil, the confederate army fell upon them with dreadful slaughter, routed them, wasted their country, ruined their cities, and left only the metropolis standing, which was soon besieged, and the breaches ready to be stormed. *Note;* (1.) Whom God will destroy, he often previously infatuates. (2.) Rebellion must not hope to prosper.

3. In this extremity, the king of Moab attempts, with a select band, to break through the quarters of Edom where he expected least resistance, but is repulsed. When rendered desperate by his danger, he seeks by the inhuman and most precious sacrifice of his eldest son, as his last effort, to appease his idol god *Chemosh*; or, by such a shocking scene on the walls, he thought to move the compassion of the besiegers; or, perhaps, to intimate his determined resolution to die with all his family, rather than yield. The seeing their king reduced to such distress, roused the indignation

## CHAP. IV.

*Elisha multiplieth the widow's oil; he promiseth a son to the Shunammite, and raiseth him up when dead. He feeds an hundred men with a few loaves.*

[Before Christ 895.]

**N**OW there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets unto Elisha, saying, Thy servant my husband is dead; and thou knowest that thy servant did fear the LORD: and the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen.

2 And Elisha said unto her, What shall I do for thee? tell me, what hast thou in the house? And she said, Thine handmaid hath not any thing in the house, save a pot of oil.

3 Then he said, Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, *even* empty vessels; borrow not a few.

4 And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons,

and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full.

5 So she went from him, and shut the door upon her and upon her sons, who brought *the vessels* to her; and she poured out.

6 And it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said unto her son, Bring me yet a vessel. And he said unto her, *There is not a vessel more.* And the oil stayed.

7 Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, Go, sell the oil, and pay thy debt; and live thou and thy children of the rest.

8 ¶ And it fell on a day, that Elisha passed to Shunem, where *was* a great woman; and she constrained him to eat bread. And *so* it was, *that* as oft as he passed by, he turned in thither to eat bread.

9 And she said unto her husband, Behold now, I perceive that this *is* an holy man of God, which passeth by us continually.

indignation of the remainder of the Moabites; and when the Israelites saw them thus made resolute by despair, they raised the siege and retired. *Note;* (1.) Despair sometimes does more than the most determined courage. (2.) Let us bless God for deliverance from idolatry. Our God delights not in the blood of the slain, but the living sacrifices of the heart devoted to his will.<sup>b</sup>

## CHAP. IV.

*Ver. 1. The creditor is come to take unto him my two sons*] The Jewish law looked upon children as the proper goods of their parents, who had power to sell them for seven years, as their creditors had to compel them to do it, in order to pay their debts. From the Jews this custom was adopted by the Athenians, and from them by the Romans: the Romans, indeed, had the most absolute controul over their children. By the decree of Romulus they could imprison, beat, kill, or sell them for slaves: Numa Pompilius first moderated this severity; and the emperor Dioclesian made a law that no free person should be sold on account of debt. The ancient Athenians had the like jurisdiction over their children; but Solon reformed this cruel custom.

REFLECTIONS.—Elisha, wherever he goes, is found dispensing blessings around him.

1. A poor widow makes application to him in her distress: her husband, a prophet whom Elisha knew, a man who feared God, had died in debt, not contracted by his own extravagances, but by unforeseen losses; or he was ruined under the persecution of Jezebel. His cruel creditors now were urgent upon her, and her sons were ready to be seized for bondmen, through her inability to answer their demands. *Note;* (1.) Unforeseen providences may ruin an honest man, and leave him under

debts that he cannot pay; but he who contracts them without a probability of repaying, or by extravagance outlives his income, is as dishonest as he who robs or steals. (2.) When a good man is under providential afflictions, he may humbly expect as providential relief.

2. Elisha, though silver and gold he had not, yet puts her in a method to pay her debts, and maintain her family. He inquires what she has left; and when he finds that she has neither money nor goods of value, but one pot of oil only, that shall be a fountain of relief. He bids her borrow of her neighbours empty vessels, and, to avoid interruption from her creditors, or not to boast of the miracle, shut her door, and, with her son's assistance, fill every vessel; for the oil should not fail. Without hesitation she complies with the prophet's injunctions, and the inexhausted stream continued flowing till there were no more vessels remaining. *Note;* (1.) An honest heart will part with the last utensil, rather than not repay a just debt. (2.) When we are desiring, in faith on the word of promise, to be found in the way of duty, God will take care that we shall not want. (3.) Divine grace, like this fountain of oil, ceases not to flow, till the faithful soul is filled with all the fulness of God.

3. The widow having with joy acquainted the prophet with the success, he directs her to sell this precious store, first satisfy her creditors, and then live on the residue. *Note;* (1.) Before we pretend to enjoy what Providence bestows, let every just debt be paid; for, with what comfort can we eat the bread of injustice? (2.) Let the poor, the widow, and the fatherless, cast their care on God; for he has promised to care for them. (3.) A little, with God's blessing, will bring greater contentment, than the assuance of extravagance, and the wages of injustice?

*Ver.*

10 Let us make a little chamber, I pray thee, on the wall; and let us set for him there a bed, and a table, and a stool, and a candlestick: and it shall be, when he cometh to us, that he shall turn in thither.

11 And it fell on a day, that he came thither, and he turned into the chamber, and lay there.

12 And he said to Gehazi his servant, Call this Shunammite. And when he had called her, she stood before him.

13 And he said unto him, Say now unto her, Behold, thou hast been careful for us with all this care; what *is* to be done for thee? wouldest thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host? And she answered, I dwell among mine own people.

14 And he said, What then *is* to be done for her? And Gehazi answered, Verily she hath no child, and her husband is old.

15 And he said, Call her. And when he had called her, she stood in the door.

16 And he said, About this season, accord-

ing to the time of life, thou shalt embrace a son. And she said, Nay, my lord, *thou* man of God, do not lie unto thine handmaid.

17 And the woman conceived, and bare a son at that season that Elisha had said unto her, according to the time of life.

18 ¶ And when the child was grown, it fell on a day, that he went out to his father to the reapers.

19 And he said unto his father, My head, my head. And he said to a lad, Carry him to his mother.

20 And when he had taken him, and brought him to his mother, he sat on her knees till noon, and *then* died.

21 And she went up, and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut *the door* upon him, and went out.

22 And she called unto her husband, and said, Send me, I pray thee, one of the young men, and one of the asses, that I may run to the man of God, and come again.

23 And he said, Wherefore wilt thou go to

*Ver. 10. Let us make a little chamber—on the wall, &c.]* See the note on Judges, iii. 20. The *little chamber* here spoken of, to which Elisha retired at his leisure, without breaking in upon the private affairs of the family, or being in his turn interrupted by them in his devotions, seems to have been of the like nature and contrivance with the *deals*, or back-houses, mentioned in that note.

*Ver. 13. I dwell among mine own people]* The phrase shews us the moderation of this woman, who was removed from all intercourse with courts, and from all ambition to be concerned with them.

REFLECTIONS.—Elisha, in his travels from Carmel to Samaria, often passed through Shunem; and we are told,

1. How kindly he was entertained by a good woman there. As God had blessed her with affluence, her hospitable doors were open to God's prophets; and though Elisha modestly declined going thither, and took up with humbler accommodations, she sought him out; begged as a favour that he would ever take her house in his way; and, to engage him to be more than a passing guest, so profitable had she found his short visits, she solicits her husband to build him a little chamber on the wall, probably of their garden, near their house, the expence of which would be trivial, a prophet's chamber needing no elegance, and to appropriate this wholly for him; which being retired from noise, would engage him to spend more time with them; and to this her husband gladly consented. *Note;* (1.) Modest worth deserves creatus. (2.) That house is highly honoured which

entertains a man of God. (3.) A good wife will do nothing of importance without consulting her husband, and a good husband will never give her cause to regret her dutiful obedience, by his delight to gratify her in every reasonable desire.

2. Elisha, in gratitude for so hospitable an entertainment, is willing to make this good woman a grateful return. He sends Gehazi, with professions of his sense of her kindness, to call her to him, that he might inquire what service would be agreeable to her, as he had interest in the court and camp, and would obtain for her husband preferment in either. She readily obeys the prophet's call, but professes her contentment in their present situation, and wants nothing more of worldly advantage than they enjoyed. Elisha, at a loss what to do for her, inquires of his servant, who might be more conversant with the family, and know more of their affairs; who suggests, that a son would be the most acceptable blessing, she being childless, and her husband old. Elisha having called her back to his chamber-door, where she respectfully waited the prophet's pleasure, assures her of what she can scarcely believe, (and fears he only jests,) that she shall have a son; but the event verifies the prediction. *Note;* (1.) A grateful heart will not only acknowledge the kindness shewn, but seize the first occasion to return it. (2.) They who have sufficiency and content at home, may well prefer their lot; courts and palaces are seldom so blest. (3.) They who imitate this Shunammite's piety, if here they receive not their reward, may shortly expect a portion better than that of sons or of daughters.

*Ver.*

him to-day? *it is* neither new moon, nor sabbath. And she said, *It shall be* well.

24 Then she saddled an ass, and said to her servant, Drive, and go forward; slack not *thy* riding for me, except I bid thee.

25 So she went and came unto the man of God to mount Carmel. And it came to pass, when the man of God saw her afar off, that he said to Gehazi his servant, Behold, *yonder is* that Shunammite:

26 Run now, I pray thee, to meet her, and say unto her, *Is it* well with thee? *is it* well with thy husband? *is it* well with the child? And she answered, *It is* well.

27 And when she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught him by the feet: but Gehazi came near to thrust her away. And the man of God said, Let her alone; for her soul *is* vexed within her: and the LORD hath hid *it* from me, and hath not told me.

28 Then she said, Did I desire a son of my lord? did I not say, Do not deceive me?

29 Then he said to Gehazi, Gird up thy loins, and take my staff in thine hand, and go

thy way: if thou meet any man, salute him not; and if any salute thee, answer him not again: and lay my staff upon the face of the child.

30 And the mother of the child said, *As* the LORD liveth, and *as* thy soul liveth, I will not leave thee. And he arose, and followed her.

31 And Gehazi passed on before them, and laid the staff upon the face of the child; but *there was* neither voice, nor hearing. Wherefore he went again to meet him, and told him, saying, The child is not awaked.

32 And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, *and* laid upon his bed.

33 He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the LORD.

34 And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm.

*Ver. 23. It is neither new moon nor sabbath.]* No stated public day, upon which the prophets used to preach and instruct the people, and on which, consequently, they were always to be found by such as wanted their advice or assistance.

*Ver. 24. Drive, and go forward.]* The appearance of travellers in the Holy Land, differs a good deal from that of those who journey among us. To see a person *mounted*, and attended by a servant *on foot*, would seem odd to us; and it would be much more so to see that servant *driving* the beast before him, or *goading* it along;—yet these are eastern modes. So Dr. Poccocke, in his account of *Ægypt*, tells us, that the man (by which possibly he means the husband) always leads the lady's ass there; and if she has a servant he goes on one side; but the ass-driver follows the man, goads on the beast, and when he is to turn directs his head with a pole. The Shunammite, when she went to the prophet, did not desire so much attendance, but only requested her husband to send her an ass and its driver, to whom she gave the order here mentioned. From the eastern manner of the women's riding on asses, it appears that the word *נהג* *nehag* here is rightly translated, *drive*, rather than *lead*; and this account of Dr. Poccocke's will also explain why she did not desire *two asses*, one for herself, and the other for the servant who attended her. Solomon might refer to the same, when in Eccl. x. 7. he says, "I have seen servants upon horses, and princes *walking as servants upon the earth.*" The reader will judge for himself. See *Observations*, p. 215.

*Ver. 34. Lay upon the child, &c.]* See what we have said on 1 Kings, xvii. 21.

REFLECTIONS.—How precarious is every sublunary blessing! how little dependance to be placed upon the comforts of a perishing world! We see,

1. This darling boy, seized in the harvest-field with his father, complains, My head, my head; and is sent home to the fond mother's bosom, and there death closes his eyes. *Note*; We had need stand prepared for sudden strokes; death often seizes at short warning.

2. With silent submission she took the dear corpse, and, going to the prophet's chamber, laid it on his bed, that the death might not be known, and where it would lie unmolested, till her return: then she hastes to her husband, and begs leave to go to the man of God. He wonders at her journey, as it was not one of the stated seasons when she used to join in worship with him. She said, *Well*, let me go, or be easy till I return; and, having his consent, she hastes to Carmel. At a distance observing her, the prophet sends to inquire the reason of her coming at this unusual season, and whether all at home were well? She answers *well*; her faith speaks the language of resignation. Then drawing near, she falls at his feet, whilst bitter anguish stops for a while her utterance. Gehazi is assiduous to raise her up, but the prophet restrains him: he saw some heavy grief oppressed her, though the Lord had not revealed to him the cause. At last, her interrupted words began to flow, and in her questions he perceived the cause

35 Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes.

36 And he called Gehazi, and said, Call this Shunammite. So he called her. And when she was come in unto him, he said, Take up thy son.

37 Then she went in, and fell at his feet, and bowed herself to the ground, and took up her son, and went out.

38 ¶ And Elisha came again to Gilgal: and there was a dearth in the land; and the sons of the prophets were sitting before him: and he said unto his servant, Set on the great pot, and scethe pottage for the sons of the prophets.

39 And one went out into the field to

gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds his lap-full, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage: for they knew them not.

40 So they poured out for the men to eat. And it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out, and said, O thou man of God, there is death in the pot. And they could not eat thereof.

41 But he said, Then bring meal. And he cast it into the pot; and he said, Pour out for the people, that they may eat, And there was no harm in the pot.

42 ¶ And there came a man from Baalshalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the first-fruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof. And he said, Give unto the people, that they may eat.

cause of her distress. *Note;* (1.) In every affliction, the consideration from whose hand it comes, should silence all complaint. (2.) All is well, when, however distressing the providence, we are enabled to submit to, and improve under the visitation. (3.) If he who gives, takes away, we are to be thankful for the length of the loan, and not to murmur that God resumes his gift. (4.) The joys of earth ebb and flow; and when we think the cup of happiness at our lips, disappointment robs us of the draught; but we have a more abiding portion, which, once secured, will never deceive us.

3. Elisha was as ready to help as she to ask, and instantly dispatches Gehazi with his staff to lay on the child's face, while he should pray that God would restore him to life; but the Shunammite, earnest that himself would go, will not quit him; and he consents at her importunity, and follows his servant. Gehazi meets them on the road, having to no effect executed his commands; and Elisha himself enters the chamber, shuts the door, and with earnest cries to God, begs that the spirit of the child may return; then after waiting a while, with significant gestures, in faith of the returning vital breath and heat, the flesh began to wax warm, the channels of life to be again opened, and, after sneezing seven times, the child looked up, and with delight he restored him to the tender mother, overwhelmed with gratitude and joy. *Note;* (1.) The word of God in the mouth of his servants, like the prophet's staff, is ineffectual to quicken the dead in sins, unless accompanied with the life-giving spirit. (2.) In the restoration of the spiritually dead, though the vital principle is infused at once, yet the exercise of the vital functions is gradually recovered. (3.) They who are sent to awake the dead, have need to be men of prayer and patience. (4.) If a dead son restored to life be such a joy to a mother's heart, how much greater comfort ought it to minister, to see the bands of spiritual death loosed from our children?

*Ver. 39. Found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds, &c.]* See Hiller. Hieroph. part ii. p. 220. This is generally supposed to have been the *colequintida* plant, which is so very bitter that some have called it "the gall of the whole earth;" it purges excessively, and is a sort of poison, if not qualified and taken in a moderate quantity. See Scheuchzer, who has given a print of the plant. The writer of the *Observations* remarks, that the common pottage of the Arabs is made by cutting their meat into little pieces, and boiling them with rice, flour, and parsley, all of which is afterwards poured into a proper vessel; and this in their language is called *chorba*. See Judg. vi. 19. Parsley is used in this *chorba*, and a great many other herbs in their cookery. These are not always gathered out of gardens, even by those who live in a more settled way than the Arabs; for Dr. Russell, after giving a long account of the garden-stuff at Aleppo, tells us, that, besides those from culture, the fields afford bugloss, mallow, and asparagus, which they use as pot-herbs, besides some others which they use in fallads. This is the more extraordinary as they have such numbers of gardens about Aleppo, and will take off all wonder from the present relation of one's going into the field to gather herbs to put into the pottage of the sons of the prophets, at a time when indeed Ahab, and doubtless others, had gardens of herbs (see 1 Kings, xxi. 2.); but it is not to be supposed that every thing was so brought under culture, as in later times. The Mishnah, a book referring to a much later period, speaks of gathering herbs in the field to sell in the market: Titulo *Shebiith*. See *Observations*, p. 180.

*Ver. 42. And full ears of corn in the husk thereof] And also new corn in his scrip or bag.* Houbigant.

REFLECTIONS.—Elisha's happy employment was in the prophetic schools, to instruct and encourage by his advice and experience those who might succeed him in the rising generation. Thus we find him employed at Gilgal; and

43 And his fervitor said, What, should I set this before an hundred men? He said again, Give the people, that they may eat: for thus saith the LORD, They shall eat, and shall leave thereof.

44 So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the LORD.

## C H A P. V.

*Naaman is sent by the king of Syria to the king of Samaria, to be cured of his leprosy: Elisha commandeth Naaman to wash seven times in Jordan. He obeys, and is cleansed. Gehazi receiveth gifts from Naaman, and becometh leprous.*

[Before Christ 894.]

**N**OW Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper.

2 And the Syrians had gone out by com-

panies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife.

3 And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.

4 And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel.

5 And the king of Syria said, Go to, go and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment.

6 And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy.

7 And it came to pass, when the king of

by his miracles relieving their bodies while he fed their souls.

1. He commands his servant to provide a repast for his disciples, after his instructions. They had learned temperance in his school. The unskilful servant, employed to gather herbs in the fields, found a wild vine, and shred a quantity of the gourds into the pottage. The taste quickly discovered the noxious quality of the provision, and, suspecting poison, they cried out to Elisha. He calls for a handful of meal, and casts it into the pot; the miraculous effect of which healed this bitter broth, as the salt the waters of Jericho. *Note;* (1.) They who preach mortification to others, must shew themselves examples of the self-denial they recommend. (2.) The delicacies of the luxurious, and the bowl of the intemperate, are more dangerous than the prophet's mess; the one only threatened temporal death, the other brings eternal destruction.

2. Elisha, who had before prevented the poisonous food from hurting, now makes a few loaves suffice for a full repast. As Israel was cut off from the temple, the few faithful made the prophets God's receivers, and employed their tithes for the support of these schools of piety. A good man of Baal-shalisha sent his first-fruits, of some ears of barley, and twenty loaves, to Elisha; poor fare indeed, but acceptable to the sons of the prophets. These he commands to be set before the people. His servant objects to the possibility of feeding a hundred men with such scanty provision; but Elisha bids him obey, and God will make it, as the event proved, enough and to spare. *Note;* (1.) A good man will not eat his morsel alone, but break his bread to the hungry. (2.) When God gives his blessing, a little will go far.

VOL. II.

## C H A P. V.

*Ver. 5. He—took with him ten talents of silver, &c.] See on 1 Kings, xiv. 3. concerning the presents of eatables; besides which, in other cases the presents that anciently were, and of late have been, wont to be made to personages eminent for study and piety, consisted of large sums of money or vestments. Thus we find here, that the present which a Syrian nobleman would have made to an Israelitish prophet, with whom he did not expect to stay any time, or indeed to enter his house, (see ver. 11.) consisted of ten talents of silver, six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment. It is needless to mention the pecuniary gratifications which have been given to men of learning in the east in later times; but as to vestments, D'Herbelot tells us, that Bokhteri, an illustrious poet of Cufah in the ninth century, had so many presents made him in the course of his life, that at his death he was found possessed of a hundred complete suits of clothes, two hundred shirts, and five hundred turbans. An indisputable proof of the frequency with which presents of this kind are made in the Levant to men of study; and at the same time a fine illustration of Job's description of the treasures of the east in his days, as consisting of raiment as well as silver, Job, xxvii. 16, 17. *Observations*, p. 238.*

*Ver. 6. That thou mayest recover him of his leprosy] Or, "That by thy command the prophet who is with thee may cleanse him." See ver. 3. Kings are often said to do those things which they command to be done; in which view, there is no ambiguity in the letter of the king of Syria. But the king of Israel thought himself mocked by it. The king's expression in the next verse, Am I*

3 M

a God,



Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, *Am* I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against me.

8 ¶ And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent

his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.

9 So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha.

10 And Elisha sent a messenger unto him,

*a God, &c.*? refers to what we have had occasion to remark in the notes upon Leviticus, that the leprosy was always esteemed a disease immediately inflicted by God, and only to be cured by him.

REFLECTIONS.—Elisha's greatness continues still the subject of the history. It is a pleasing episode, and a relief from the uniform tenor of evil which was in Israel and her kings.

1. Naaman, by means of a captive girl, hears of the prophet's miracles. He was a great general, successful in war, a high favourite with his master, but a leper. The captive girl, though a child when taken, remembered the great prophet in Samaria, and, as a good servant, tells her mistress of him, and wishes her master could see him: he could do more for him than all the physicians of Damascus. *Note*: (1.) A little child, if taught the knowledge of Jesus, the great prophet, may be a successful preacher; and by the mouths of babes and sucklings God can perfect his praise. (2.) Every good servant must seek the welfare of the family he is in. (3.) Greatness is no protection from the forest calamities incident to human life. Disease and death find as easy access to the palace as the cottage. (4.) Say all you can of a man's worldly felicity, success, or honour, one *but* spoils the whole. If he have the uncured leprosy of sin upon him, all besides is but splendid misery.

2. Naaman is eager to improve the hint, though given by so mean a person, and instantly prepares to wait on this great prophet, having mentioned the matter to the king of Syria, and received a strong recommendation to Jehoram, presuming that his authority with the prophet would facilitate the application and cure. With a great retinue, and loaded with suitable presents for the occasion, he hastens on his journey, and, being arrived at Samaria, delivers the letter to the king of Israel. *Note*: How willing are men to try every expedient, and grudge no expence or trouble, to obtain a cure of their bodily diseases! Who shews such eagerness to bring their diseased souls to the great physician, though the cure there is infallible, and also *without money, and without price*?

3. Jehoram no sooner read the letter, than he rent his clothes, whether shocked at the blasphemy that he supposed it contained, enjoining him the cure of a leper, which was God's work alone, or terrified with the apprehension that this was done with a design to quarrel with him, in order to invade his country. He had so little concern with God's prophets himself, that he had no idea of a Syrian's coming so far to court their assistance. *Note*: They who

are conscious of their own ill deserts, are ready to terrify themselves at every shadow, and put the worst constructions on what has not the least ill design.

4. Elisha heard the king's distress, and the cause of it; and, though he had just reason to complain of being neglected, yet when the glory of Israel's God is concerned, unfought he proffers his service, and will do for this Syrian what Israel's king cannot, that he may know there is a prophet in Israel. *Note*: Though wicked men have forfeited every mercy, yet God for his own glory will sometimes help them beyond all that they have reason to expect.

*Ver. 9. And stood at the door of the house of Elisha*] Elisha's not appearing to receive the Syrian general, is ascribed by some to the retired course of life which the prophets led; but then, why did he see him and enter into conversation with him, when he returned from his cure? We should rather think that it was not unbecoming the prophet upon this occasion to take some state upon him, and to support the character and dignity of a prophet of the most high God; especially since this might be a means to raise the honour of his religion and ministry, and to give Naaman a more just idea of his miraculous cure, when he found that it was neither by the prayer nor presence of the prophet, but by the divine power and goodness, that it was effected. In conformity to the law, which requires that lepers, in order to their cleansing, should be sprinkled seven times, Lev. xiv. 7, &c. the prophet ordered Naaman to dip himself as often in Jordan, *ver. 10.* But Jordan, as the Syrian rightly argued, had no more virtue in it than other rivers; nor could cold water of any kind be a proper means of curing this distemper; nay, rather it was contrary to the disease. But the prophet's design in it was, doubtless, to render the miracle more conspicuous, and fully to convince Naaman of the divinity of the God of Israel.

REFLECTIONS.—We have here,

1. Naaman, in all his pomp and splendor, an humble suitor at the prophet's door: and he receives an answer plain and satisfactory, which required only his obedience, and ensured his cure. *Note*: They who are found waiting upon God, may expect from him an answer of peace.

2. Naaman's pride could not bear either the reception that he met with, or the prescription ordered him; and in a rage he departs. He had promised himself deep respect, some immediate application to his disease, and prayer over him for his cure; and was indignant when, instead of seeing the prophet himself, he only received a message by a servant; and such a message, so foolish in his eyes, so useless! were

not

saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again unto thee, and thou shalt be clean.

11 But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.

12 *Are* not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.

13 And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, *if* the prophet had bid thee *do some* great thing, wouldest thou not have done *it*? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean?

14 Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again

like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

15 ¶ And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that *there is* no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant.

16 But he said, *As* the LORD liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take *it*; but he refused.

17 And Naaman said, Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth? for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt-offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the LORD.

18 In this thing the LORD pardon thy servant, *that* when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the

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not the waters of Syria as good as Jordan; and need he have come so far to wash, when he might have the nobler rivers of Abana and Pharpar at home? *Note*; (1.) A proud spirit interprets the least suspected slight into a heinous affront. (2.) The self-righteous heart, like Naaman, wise in its own conceits, with pride refuses to apply the simple balm of a Saviour's blood, and fancies that something beside is necessary to its cure. (3.) They who turn away from God's methods of grace reject their own mercies.

3. His servants, when his first rage was subsided, presume, with submission, to reason with him on the case. If he would have submitted to the most expensive or most painful methods that might have been prescribed, how much more ought he to yield to one so cheap and so easy? *Note*; (1.) Men in a passion are deaf to the plainest arguments: when they cool, reason will be heard. (2.) A good servant will rather hazard the displeasure of his master, than see him wound himself by his folly; but if he would succeed, he must wait the proper time, and add the respect and deference which may engage attention. (3.) None ought to be above being told of their faults. (4.) The plainness and freedom of the way of salvation, will render those who reject it the more inexcusable.

4. Naaman heard the wise advice, and, convinced of the reasonableness of the trial, descends to the river, where the experiment exceeds his expectation. His leprosy departed, and his flesh became soft, fair, and plump as the flesh of a little child. Can the waters of Jordan thus cleanse the leprous Syrian, and shall not the fountain of a Saviour's blood much more certainly cleanse the leprous sinner, who in faith descends to wash his spotted soul in this all-purifying stream?

*Ver. 17. Two mules burden of earth*] He desired the

*earth* of the land, because he thought it more holy and acceptable to God, and proper for his service; or that because by this token he would declare his conjunction with the people of Israel in the true worship, and constantly put himself in mind of his great obligation to that God from whose land this earth was given. He might, indeed, have had enough of this *earth* without asking any one for it; but he desired the prophet to give it him, as believing, perhaps, that he who put such virtue into the waters of Israel, could put as much into the earth thereof, and make it as useful and beneficial to him in another way. These thoughts indeed were groundless and extravagant, but excusable in a heathen and a novice, not yet sufficiently instructed in the true religion.

*Ver. 18. In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, &c.]* Rimmon, the great idol of the Phœnicians, is by many thought to have been the *sun*. There seems to be no doubt that some of the planets at least were worshipped under this name. As Naaman in the preceding verses has declared that he will worship no other god than Jehovah, there seems to be much plausibility in that translation of this verse which has been given by some learned men, and approved by many: *In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master went into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaned on my hand, and I bowed myself in the house of Rimmon; when I bowed down myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing.* This is reasonable; but certainly the incongruity would be great, if Naaman, who had just before declared his renunciation of idolatry, should now confess his readiness to relapse into the same crime, and desire God's pardon for it before-hand; whereas, to ask pardon for what he had done amiss, and to desire the prophet's intercession with God in that behalf, argued a mind truly sensible of his former transgression, and very much resolved to avoid it for the future;

house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon thy servant in this thing.

19 And he said unto him, Go in peace. So he departed from him a little way.

20 ¶ But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but, as the LORD liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him.

21 So Gehazi followed after Naaman. And when Naaman saw him running after him, he lighted down from the chariot to meet him, and said, Is all well?

22 And he said, All is well. My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments.

23 And Naaman said, Be content, take two

talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and laid them upon two of his servants; and they bare them before him.

24 And when he came to the tower, he took them from their hand, and bestowed them in the house: and he let the men go, and they departed.

25 But he went in, and stood before his master. And Elisha said unto him, Whence comest thou, Gehazi? And he said, Thy servant went no whither.

26 And he said unto him, Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and olive-yards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and men-servants, and maid-servants?

27 The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.

and accordingly it is supposed, that upon his return home he refused to worship Rimmon any more, and was thereupon dismissed from being general of the king's forces. Houbigant, however, is strongly of opinion, that Naaman pleads for permission to attend his master the king of Syria, merely in a civil capacity, to the temple of Rimmon; which he thinks might well be allowed, while he publicly professed himself a worshipper of the God of Israel, and offered up sacrifices and burnt-offerings only to him. The reader will find much in Calmet and Roque upon the subject, as well as in Houbigant's note on the place. The first interpretation has also the countenance of the learned Dr. Lightfoot.

REFLECTIONS.—He who turned away in a rage, now convinced by experience, returns with humility and gratitude to acknowledge the mercy that he had received.

1. He solemnly confesses his faith in Israel's God, as the only Jehovah, and, renouncing all his idols, resolves henceforth to offer sacrifice to no other God. *Note;* We then only truly know God, when, not by mere reasoning, but by blessed experience, we find his saving power exercised in our hearts.

2. He presses the prophet to accept a present from him, as the token of his gratitude; but this, though indigent, and able well to employ it for his poor pupils, he solemnly refuses; not as unlawful, but as inexpedient; it would be more for the honour of his God to shew a contempt of this world's wealth. *Note;* (1.) Nothing so dishonourable in a prophet as the appearance of a mercenary spirit. (2.) Where the heart is fixed on a better portion, it can look on gold as dross.

3. He makes a two-fold request, with which the prophet

complies. (1.) He begs two mules' burden of earth, to build an altar to Israel's God, henceforth his own. He looked on the land of Syria as polluted with idols; and now is as attached to the very earth of Israel, as he seemed before to despise it. *Note;* When the heart is turned to God, how differently do we regard every thing which relates to him! that which was our contempt or aversion, has now our warmest affections. (2.) He begs Elisha's prayers for him, that his past idolatry might be pardoned: not that he might be permitted still, as our translation intimates, to bow in the house of Rimmon, in complaisance to his master. To such a gracious appearance the prophet cannot but give his approbation, and dismisses him in peace, as one accepted of God. *Note;* (1.) Past transgressions should be ever remembered and lamented. (2.) They are to be encouraged, who give gracious symptoms of real conversion to God.

*Ver. 26. Went not mine heart with thee, &c. ?] Was not I present with thee in mind, when the man, &c. ?—Thou hast indeed taken money, with which thou mayest buy gardens, and olive-yards, &c. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 27. The leprosy—of Naaman shall cleave unto thee] A sentence which Gehazi justly deserved, for his crime was aggravated by a greedy covetousness, which is idolatry, profanation of God's name, a downright theft, in taking that to himself which was given for others, deliberate and impudent lying, a desperate contempt of God's omnipotence, justice, and holiness, a horrible reproach cast upon the prophet and his religion, and a pernicious scandal given to Naaman and every other Syrian who should chance to hear of it; while we are hence taught that God knows our sins, though committed in secret, and will punish them; and*

CHAP. VI.

*Elisha causeth an axe, which had fallen into the Jordan, to swim. He discloseth the secret counsels of the king of Syria to the king of Israel. He leads the Syrians into Samaria; a severe famine rages there.*

[Before Christ 893.]

**A**ND the sons of the prophets said unto Elisha, Behold now, the place where we dwell with thee is too strait for us.

2 Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan, and take thence every man a beam, and let us make us a place there, where we may dwell. And he answered, Go ye.

3 And one said, Be content, I pray thee,

and go with thy servants. And he answered, I will go.

4 So he went with them. And when they came to Jordan, they cut down wood.

5 But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water: and he cried, and said, Alas, master! for it was borrowed.

6 And the man of God said, Where fell it? And he shewed him the place. And he cut down a stick, and cast it in thither; and the iron did swim.

7 Therefore said he, Take it up to thee. And he put out his hand, and took it.

8 ¶ Then the king of Syria warred against

and particularly that his wrath pursues all those, in general, who are given to covetousness and dishonest gain; and that goods acquired by wicked means carry a curse with them, which often descends from parents to their children. See Poole and Ostervald.

REFLECTIONS—Of all men in Israel, there was not one from whom we might expect more exemplary piety than from the favoured Gehazi, the companion almost, rather than servant, of the prophet, blessed with his daily conversation, and beholding continually his bright example; and yet we find him as vile and hardened as the most idolatrous Israelite. *Note;* The best of men and ministers cannot change even those under their own roof. Nay, to their grief, they behold them sometimes more insensible and stupid than any others.

1. Gehazi's sin was great. A lover of filthy lucre, he could not see the gifts without hankering for them, and blaming his master's refusal: a liar and robber, careless what dishonour he brought on the prophet, or what disgust Naaman might take against God from such a procedure: crafty and dissembling, and as if he could deceive the Spirit of God in his master, seeking to cover one lie by a worse. *Note;* (1.) The love of money is the root of all evil. They who resolve to be rich, resolve on their destruction and perdition, 1 Tim. vi. 9. (2.) Covetousness and lying are nearly allied. (3.) When the heart is hardened by one sin, it is more easily disposed to a greater. (4.) Hope of concealment and impunity is the great encouragement to do evil.

2. His punishment was exemplary. Elisha silences his lying tongue. His spirit followed him to the chariot, and to the place where the robbery was deposited, and clearly foresaw how he designed to lay out these wages of unrighteousness: but short enjoyment shall his wickedness afford him. The curse of God is denounced upon him, the silver of Naaman is turned into his leprosy to eat up his flesh, and the disease entailed upon his latest posterity. Elisha's doors are immediately shut against him, and he departs a leper, loathsome as incurable. *Note;* (1.) The joy of prosperous wickedness is short-lived, transitory, and terminates in sorrows bitter as endless. (2.) Thus shall God at last lay open men's

folly, sin, and shame; and, speechless before him, they shall be driven from his presence, to suffer the just reward of their deeds.

CHAP. VI.

*Ver. 6. He cut down a stick, and cast it in thither, &c.]* The casting in this stick could no more contribute to the performance of the present miracle, than the garment of Elijah to the division of the Jordan, or the clay put by our Lord upon the eyes of the blind man to the recovery of his sight. These inadequate means were employed upon these occasions only to set forth more fully the reality and greatness of the miracles. See Sturvius' Colleg. Exper. p. 23. and Scheuchzer.

REFLECTIONS.—Under Elisha's care, the school of the prophets at Gilgal flourished; and such a resort was there to attend him, that the place was too small to contain them. *Note;* It is a good symptom both of a true prophet and a gracious people, when diligence to preach, and attention to hear, enlarges the auditory.

1. They propose building another seminary near the banks of Jordan; and with Elisha's consent, and under his eye, they would without delay begin the work. As they were poor, they must be their own builders; and, though prophets sons, disdained not the mean employment to which their poverty reduced them. *Note;* (1.) The greatest of heaven's blessings are usually bestowed on those who eat bread with the sweat of their brow. (2.) A minister of God must be content, if need be, to minister to his necessities by the labour of his own hands.

2. An accident happened to one of them, as they felled the timber, which gave them the greater uneasiness because the axe was borrowed, and perhaps he was unable to repay the loss, though small. *Note;* (1.) What is kindly lent us; we should be doubly careful of. (2.) They who are affluent, conceive not how great an affliction a seemingly inconsiderable loss is to those who are indigent.

3. Elisha pitied and relieved him, at the expence of a miracle. On throwing in a piece of wood at the place where it fell, he caused the iron to swim, and restored it to the thankful owner. *Note;* (1.) When we can make the poor mourner rejoice by a small relief, shall we refuse him the happiness which costs us so little? (2.) The heart most

Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place *shall be* my camp.

9 And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down.

10 And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice.

11 ¶ Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us *is* for the king of Israel?

12 And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that *is* in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber.

13 And he said, Go and spy where he *is*, that I may send and fetch him. And it was told him, saying, Behold, *he is* in Dothan.

14 Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host: and they came by night, and compassed the city about.

15 ¶ And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?

16 And he answered, Fear not: for they that *be* with us *are* more than they that *be* with them.

17 And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see. And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man; and he saw: and, behold, the mountain *was* full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha.

18 ¶ And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed unto the LORD, and said, Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness. And he smote them with blindness according to the word of Elisha.

19 And Elisha said unto them, This *is* not

most irrecoverably sunk, to human view, in the floods of ungodliness, and of earthly cares or pleasures, is not beyond the power of divine grace.

*Ver. 8. Shall be my camp] I will lie in wait.* Houbigant. And so at the end of the ninth verse, instead of *thither the Syrians are come down*, he reads, *there the Syrians lie in wait.* *Not once nor twice*, at the end of the tenth verse, signifies frequently: and at the end of the eleventh, instead of *which of us is for the king of Israel?* Houbigant reads, *who betrays us to the king of Israel?*

*Ver. 12. Elisha the prophet—telleth, &c.]* It is not to be doubted but that Naaman, upon his return from Samaria, spread the fame of Elisha so much in the court of Syria, that some of the great men there might have the curiosity to make a further inquiry concerning him; and being informed by several of his miraculous works, they might thence conclude that he could tell the greatest secrets, as well as perform the wonders related of him, and that therefore in all probability he was the person who gave the king of Israel intelligence of all the schemes which had been contrived to ensnare him.

REFLECTIONS.—We have here,

1. A new invasion of Israel: on what occasion is not said. *Note;* The enemies of God's Israel will not suffer them long to rest in peace.

2. Elisha, by his prophetic spirit, acquainted the king of Israel with all the ambuscades and motions of the Syrians, by which they were constantly disappointed in their designs. *Note;* (1.) God knows how to frustrate the wisest counsels of the crafty against his church and people.

(2.) When God by his prophets gives us warning, it is our wisdom to hear and prepare for the day of evil; lest, if we continue secure in our sins, death surprize us, and we perish through our folly.

3. The king of Syria suspected a traitor in his council; but one of his servants wisely apprises him of the discoverer of his secrets; Elisha's spirit visited his most retired chamber. *Note;* There is no place hid from the searching eye of God; even the secrets of all hearts to him are naked and open.

*Ver. 17. The Lord opened the eyes of the young man, &c.]* It is probable that this young man had been but a little while with his master; no longer than since Gehazi's dismissal; and therefore, perhaps, had not seen any great experiments of his power to work miracles; or if he had, the great and imminent danger he thought his master in, might well be supposed to raise his fear, and shake his faith; and therefore some miracle was necessary for the removal of the one, and the confirmation of the other. Angels, whether they be purely spiritual, or clothed with some material vehicle, it is allowed, cannot be seen by mortal eyes; and therefore, as Elisha himself, without a peculiar vouchsafement of God, could not discern the heavenly host which at this time encamped about him; so he requests of God, that for the causes above mentioned his servant might be indulged with that privilege; and it seems likely that from such historical facts as these, which have descended by tradition, that notion among the Greeks, of a certain mist which intercepts the sight of their gods from the ken of human eyes, might at first borrow

the way, neither *is* this the city: follow me, and I will bring you to the man whom ye seek. But he led them to Samaria.

20 And it came to pass, when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, LORD, open the eyes of these *men*, that they may see. And the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw; and, behold, *they were* in the midst of Samaria.

21 And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I smite *them*? shall I smite *them*?

22 And he answered, Thou shalt not smite *them*: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master.

23 And he prepared great provision for them: and when they had eaten and drunk, he sent them away, and they went to their master. So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel.

24 ¶ And it came to pass after this, that

its origin. See Iliad; v. ver. 127. and Æneid, ii. ver. 604.

Ver. 19. *This is not the way, &c.*] Elisha says this without being asked; for if the Syrians had asked him whether this was the way to the city of Dothan, his answer certainly would have been a falsehood; from which his words are clear; *this is not the way, neither is this the city*; because the prophet does not say *the way to Dothan, nor the city of Dothan*; but uses a feint or stratagem which has always been allowed in war against enemies whom he afterwards treated humanely. We are not to imagine that the blindness wherewith the Lord smote these men was so total that they quite lost the use of their eyes; but only that it was such a dimness and confusion in their sight, as hindered them from distinguishing one object from another: the city of Dothan, for instance, from the city of Samaria. See a similar case, Gen. xix. 11. This is no more than what happens to several men in their liquor, that though their eyes be open, and can perceive the several objects which surround them, yet they cannot discern wherein they differ: and if we may suppose that the Syrian army was under the same *Ασπασία*, as the Greeks happily term it, we need no more wonder that they readily accepted a guide who offered his service, than that a drunkard, after having lost his way, and found himself bewildered, should be thankful to any hand which should undertake to conduct him safe home. See Houbigant and Schencher.

Ver. 22. *Wouldest thou smite these, &c.?*] *Wouldest thou smite them as if thou hadst taken them, &c.?* Houbigant. Elisha here urges, that it would not only be more merciful, but more prudent and politic, to spare and treat them kindly; for thus, upon their return, they would become so many preachers, as it were, of the power and greatness of the God of Israel; and, probably, not only desist themselves, but dissuade others likewise, from opposing a people who had so invincible a protector.

REFLECTIONS.—Till Elisha was secured, the king of Syria despaired of success; and therefore, to effect this,

1. He sends an armed force to surround Dothan by night, where he understood the prophet was: a foolish attempt! Could he who revealed his designs against the king be ignorant of this upon himself?

2. Elisha's servant in the morning runs to his master in

a great fright, to acquaint him with the danger, as if now they were all undone and lost. *Note*; Weak believers are intimidated by the approach of danger; and, because they feel their own impotence, are ready to despair of God's power and grace.

3. Elisha quickly subdues his fears. One comfortable word of encouragement points him to a safe protector; and, that his weak faith might be helped by sight, at Elisha's prayer the servant's eyes are opened, and he beheld the angelic host, appearing like chariots and horses of fire round the city. *Note*; (1.) Whoever are our foes, if God be for us, we have strength and numbers on our side. (2.) To encourage the fearful, to support the weak, and comfort the feeble-minded, is the office of every faithful minister. (3.) They who have the eye of faith opened, behold cherubic legions as their guard, and the King of Glory at their head. (4.) We have need to pray continually for ourselves and others, that the eyes of our minds may be daily more and more enlightened.

4. He who prayed for the opening of the eyes of his servants, succeeds as effectually for the closing the eyes of his enemies. Bewildered in their apprehensions, they no longer knew either the place or the prophet, but gave themselves up to him as their guide, he promising to conduct them to the man they sought: and when he had brought them into Samaria, as men awakened from a dream, they beheld their danger when there was no possibility of their escape. *Note*; (1.) It is just in God to give up those to the blindness of their own hearts, who choose not the knowledge of the truth, that they may be saved. (2.) How terrible will be the sinner's disappointment, when led captive by the devil at his will; buoyed up with foolish hopes of heaven, he marches confidently on, till death awakens him from his lethargy, and he is astonished to find himself in hell.

5. Elisha, merciful as mighty, dismisses them in peace, after the most hospitable entertainment. The king of Israel is eager to improve the advantage by destroying his enemies, but Elisha restrains him. Had they been prisoners of war, they were entitled to mercy; how much more when not his arm, but God's providence, had brought them into his power? rather let him conquer them by his clemency and generosity, and, as they were now laid at his feet for mercy, entertain them nobly, and dismiss them peaceably. The king readily complies, and they

return

Ben-hadad king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria.

25 And there was a great famine in Samaria: and, behold, they besieged it, until an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and the fourth part of a cab of dove's dung for five pieces of silver.

26 ¶ And as the king of Israel was passing by upon the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying, Help, my lord, O king.

27 And he said, If the LORD do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? out of the barn-floor, or out of the wine-press?

28 And the king said unto her, What aileth thee? And she answered, This woman said unto me, Give thy son, that we may eat him to-day, and we will eat my son to-morrow.

29 So we boiled my son, and did eat him: and I said unto her on the next day, Give thy

son, that we may eat him: and she hath hid her son.

30 ¶ And it came to pass, when the king heard the words of the woman, that he rent his clothes; and he passed by upon the wall, and the people looked, and, behold, he had sackcloth within upon his flesh.

31 Then he said, God do so and more also to me, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day.

32 But Elisha sat in his house, and the elders sat with him; and the king sent a man from before him: but ere the messenger came to him, he said to the elders, See ye how this son of a murderer hath sent to take away mine head? look, when the messenger cometh, shut the door, and hold him fast at the door: is not the sound of his master's feet behind him?

return as much astonished at their generous treatment, as convinced of the impossibility of crushing those whom God so protected. Returning, they made no more attempts to seize the prophet; or perhaps these bands, when a new attack was meditated, refuse to serve any more against the people of Israel. *Note*; (1.) Not only are we enjoined to forgive our enemies, but to do good to those who hate us. Hard the task, but almighty grace is sufficient for it! (2.) They who will not be overcome with kindness and love, are desperately hardened indeed.

*Ver. 24. It came to pass after this, that Ben-hadad, &c.]* It has been often observed, that injuries are more gloriously overcome by benefits, than requited by pertinacious and mutual hatred; but the sense of benefits does not last long in bad natures. No sooner do we read of the kind treatment which the Syrians received, than it immediately follows, that the king of Syria gathered all his host, and went up, and besieged Samaria: which seeming not to agree with what is said in the preceding verse, that the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel, some suppose, that the Syrians quite retreated for this time, and laid aside all thoughts of war; though afterwards they altered their minds, and broke out again into hostilities. Others, however, suppose the meaning to be, that the bands of the Syrians made no more incursions and inroads, but that they were resolved to fall upon the Israelites at once, with a regular and formed army; and so Josephus understands it, *Antiq. lib. ix. c. 2.*

*Ver. 25. An ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver, &c.]* If we reckon these pieces of silver at fifteen pence a-piece, they come to five pounds sterling; a great price for that which had on it so little meat, and that too unclean, according to the law, *Lev. xi. 26.* In times of famine, however, and extreme necessity, the Jews themselves were absolved from the observation of the law;

nor are there wanting instances in history, where other nations upon the same occasion, have been reduced to the like extremities; if what Plutarch tells us, in the *Life of Artaxerxes*, be true, viz. that in that prince's war with the *Caducei*, an ass's head could scarcely be purchased at the price of sixty drachms; i. e. two pounds five shillings of our money. A cab, according to the Jews, contained as much as the shells of twenty-four eggs would hold. The word *חֵרֵי יוֹנִים* *chire yonim*, rendered *dove's dung*, as Bochart has fully proved, signifies *vetches*. or *pulse*: and accordingly some late traveller tells us, that at Grand Cairo and Damascus there are magazines where they constantly fry this kind of grain, which those who go on pilgrimage buy, and take with them as part of the provision for their journey. The Arabs to this day call this kind of *pulse* or *vetches* by the name of *dove's dung*. See Bochart, *Hieroz. p. ii. lib. i. c. 7.*

*Ver. 29. So we boiled my son, &c.]* This shocking anecdote is a terrible effect of the divine vengeance, which Moses had long before told the Israelites would fall upon them, if they rebelled against God. The same evil happened to them at two other times besides this; at the siege of Jerusalem, under Nebuchadnezzar; see *Ezek. ch. v. 10.* and at that under Titus; see *Joseph. Bell. Jud. lib. vii. c. 8.*

*Ver. 32. But Elisha sat in his house]* Some suppose, that by the *house* of Elisha, is meant the *school*, where the sons of the prophets met to be instructed; and by the *elders*, his chief scholars, who, under his instruction, applied themselves to the study of divine things. But as we frequently read in Ezekiel, of the elders of Israel sitting before the prophet to hear him, *ch. viii. 1. xiv. 1.* we cannot see why the *elders* in this place likewise, may not denote some good and godly men, who bore office either in the court, camp, or city; as seems probable from the prophet's desiring their help and protection: for though Jehoram himself was a wicked man, and most of his officers



33 And while he yet talked with them, behold, the messenger came down unto him: and he said, Behold, this evil *is* of the LORD; what should I wait for the LORD any longer?

C H A P. VII.

*Elisha prophesieth incredible plenty in Samaria; four lepers go to the camp of the Assyrians, which they find deserted: they return to the city with the news. The people rush forth from the gates of the city, and all these things happen which Elisha had foretold.*

[Before Christ 892.]

**T**HEN Elisha said, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the LORD, Tomorrow about this time *shall* a measure of fine flour *be sold* for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.

2 Then a lord on whose hand the king leaned answered the man of God, and said, Behold, *if* the LORD would make windows in heaven, might this thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see *it* with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

3 ¶ And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate: and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die?

4 If we say, we will enter into the city, then the famine *is* in the city, and we shall die there: and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall unto the host of the Syrians: if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die.

5 And they rose up in the twilight, to go unto the camp of the Syrians: and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, *there was* no man there.

6 For the LORD had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, *even* the noise of a great host: and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us.

7 Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, *even* the camp as it *was*, and fled for their life.

8 And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid *it*; and came again, and entered into

officers might be forward enough to imitate him, yet we are not to doubt but that there were some of them, whom Elisha's holy life and glorious miracles, together with the sundry benefits which the public reaped from his ministry, had won over to God, and to the true religion; and those were here *sitting with him*, either to receive comfort and counsel from him in this distressing time, or to solicit him to use his power with God for their relief: which accordingly he did, and in compliance with their request, not out of any fear of the king's threats, from which, he was well assured, God would not fail to deliver him, he pronounced the joyful news which follows in the beginning of the next chapter.

*Ver. 33. And he said, Behold this evil is of the Lord, &c.] He said,* that is, according to some, the messenger; though Houbigant rather thinks that it was the king himself; for it appears both from the preceding verse, and from ver. 17. of the next chapter, that the king came to Elisha; and as Elisha had ordered the messenger not to enter, it is the less probable that these were his words. From the expression, *what should I wait for the Lord*, we may collect that Elisha had said, *wait for the Lord*, or something to that purpose.

*Note;* (1.) In the distresses of our souls, if God be not our friend, vain is the help of man. (2.) None know the sufferings which await them before they die; we need pray that God would prepare us for what he has prepared for us.

VOL. II.

C H A P. VII.

*Ver. 1. A measure]* The word **מִדָּה** *saab* which we render *a measure*, implies a quantity equal to six eabs, and contained, according to some, six quarts; according to others, a peck, or a peck and two quarts of our measure. The shekel was much about our three shillings, and though to have a peck of fine flour for three shillings at other times would not have been so cheap; yet, according to the present situation of things, it was wonderfully so. See Le Clerc.

*Ver. 3. There were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate]* The Jews are of opinion, that these four lepers were Gehazi and three of his sons. Leprous persons were not permitted to converse with other men, and by the law of Moses, while the Israelites lived in tents, were to be excluded the camp, Numb. ch. v. 2, 3. But when they came to inhabit cities, it may be questioned whether they treated them with such rigour, since in chap. viii. 4. we find Gehazi holding discourse with the king, though certainly he might do this by talking to him at a proper distance. Lepers, indeed, were carefully avoided, because their distemper in these hot countries was thought contagious; but in the case before us these *four* seem to have been excluded, not so much on account of their distemper, as because they were useless hands; they could neither fight nor work in communion with others. They were only *fruges consumere nati*, and were therefore no proper persons in a siege. See Calmet.

3 N

*Ver.*

another tent, and carried thence *also*, and went and hid *it*.

9 Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day *is* a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household:

10 So they came and called unto the porter of the city: and they told him, saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, *there was* no man there, neither voice of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they *were*.

*Ver. 9. We do not well, &c.]* It is an infallible sign of great calamity to a nation, when the people have not a true delight in the public concerns; when there is not such a sympathy of affections, as that subjects rejoice at the prosperity of their princes. When the sins are national which draw down God's judgments upon us, the sadness and repentance of a few will do but little good; it must be a general sorrow and recognition which will avail. The same order must be observed in the reception of public blessings; and no blessings are more public, or of more public consequence, than good success to kings in their just undertakings, and therefore the joy and delight must be universal; and if that acknowledgement be wanting, God is defrauded of his due. He does not more love an humble and a broken heart under affliction, than he does a grateful and thankful heart upon his blessings and deliverance. Seasonable joy is as proper a sacrifice to the Almighty as tears and sighs can be; and the suppressing of the one is as bad as the not pouring out of the other. *We do not well; this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning-light, some mischief will come upon us; now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household,* was the cheerful consultation and conclusion of these poor men, who first discover that the king and city are free from the army of the Syrians, when they might perhaps have spent their time more to their own particular advantage by a discreet reservation, and not yet communicating this argument of public joy: but they knew that they would not then have done well, and that it would have been little better than sacrilege to defraud those of the present notice to whom God bequeathed the benefit: and they who have the notice of such great deliverances, and do not enlarge their hearts with a proportionable joy and acknowledgement, defraud God of what he expects from them: he loves a cheerful as well as a broken heart.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Despair covered every face with blackness, and the king gives up all for lost; but when we are most reduced, God will make bare his holy arm.

1. Elisha foretells the suddenly approaching plenty, in consequence of the siege being raised: welcome news to famished Israelites!

11 And he called the porters; and they told *it* to the king's house within.

12 ¶ And the king arose in the night, and said unto his servants, I will now shew you what the Syrians have done to us. They know that we *be* hungry; therefore are they gone out of the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying, When they come out of the city, we shall catch them alive, and get into the city.

13 And one of his servants answered and said, Let *some* take, I pray thee, five of the horses that remain, which are left in the city, (behold, they *are* as all the multitude of Israel

2. He denounces the doom of the unbelieving lord, who refused to credit his prediction. He was a great courtier, on whose arm, for state, his master now leaned; and, because it was impossible with men, he foolishly deems it impossible with God. *Note;* Unbelief is among the greatest sins, and most fatal to the soul.

2dly, God will be found true, and all who distrust him be proved liars.

1. According to his word, the siege is raised, and by his own power a dreadful panic is sent among the hosts of Syria. A terrible sound of horses and chariots is heard, and, fear magnifying their danger, they conclude that the Egyptians and Hittites are hired to fall upon them, and that nothing but instant flight can secure their lives. They immediately quit the camp, and each man with the utmost precipitation runs for his life. *Note;* (1.) God's terrors can make the stoutest tremble. (2.) The wicked flee when no man pursueth.

2. The discovery of the flight is made by four lepers, who carry tidings of it into the city. Famishing in their secluded hut without the gate, neither daring to enter the city, nor hoping for any relief thence; since die they must, if they abode where they were, they resolve to go to the Syrian camp, hoping that compassion might engage them to relieve them: at the worst, they can but die. They immediately go; and how great their astonishment to find the camp deserted, and all the tents and every thing in them remaining. Hunger first called for relief; and when that was satisfied, they began to load themselves with the richest plunder, till by and by, recollecting how unkind this was to their brethren, to neglect acquainting them with the good news, and how dangerous it might be to themselves if they should be found to have concealed the glad tidings merely to enrich themselves, they haste back to the city, and acquaint the centinel with the state of the Syrian camp; and instantly the news is carried to the king. *Note;* (1.) Every sinner is in these lepers' case; if they continue where they are, they must perish. There is but one door of hope; the compassion of that God whom they have made their enemy; and happy is it, when self-despair drives us to him. (2.) The mercies that we ourselves have experienced, we must publish for the comfort and edification of our brethren.

*Ver.*

that are left in it: behold, *I say*, they are even as all the multitude of the Israelites that are consumed :) and let us send and see.

14 They took therefore two chariot horses; and the king sent after the host of the Syrians, saying, Go and see.

15 And they went after them unto Jordan: and, lo, all the way *was* full of garments and vessels, which the Syrians had cast away in their haste. And the messengers returned, and told the king.

16 And the people went out, and spoiled the tents of the Syrians. So a measure of fine flour was *sold* for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD.

17 ¶ And the king appointed the lord on whose hand he leaned to have the charge of

the gate: and the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died, as the man of God had said, who spake when the king came down to him.

18 And it came to pass as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, Two measures of barley for a shekel, and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, shall be to-morrow about this time in the gate of Samaria:

19 And that lord answered the man of God, and said, Now, behold, *if* the LORD should make windows in heaven, might such a thing be? And he said, Behold, thou shalt see it with thine eyes, but shalt not eat thereof.

20 And so it fell out unto him: for the people trode upon him in the gate, and he died.

*Ver. 13. Behold, they are as all the multitude of Israel, &c.] It will not happen otherwise to them than to all the multitude of Israel, which now remains, or to all the multitude of Israel, which now perishes: that is to say, "Whatever happens to them, they will be in the same condition with us; for " if they survive, we shall survive, but if they perish, we " shall perish also." Houbigant.*

*Ver. 15. And, lo, all the way was full of garments and vessels, &c.] Saladin's army, which was defeated by Baldwin IV. near Gaza, being in like manner vigorously pursued till night came on, and as far as a certain standing water surrounded with reeds twelve miles off, were continually cut off in great numbers. To fly therefore with greater expedition, they threw away their arms and clothes, and abandoned their baggage, and by this means some of those who were strongest, and had swift horses, escaped; the rest were killed or taken. Those who had escaped as far as the above-mentioned fenny place, if they had any thing of weight still remaining, such as coats of mail, or greaves of iron, threw them among the reeds, or still farther into the water itself, that they might move quicker, and that the armour, being concealed in the water, might neither be of any after-service to the Christians, nor be kept by them as trophies of their victory. But in vain; for those who closely pursued them, diligently searched the place that night and the following day, and with proper instruments quickly found what they had concealed in it; and we have been informed, says the author of the *Gesta Dei*, by people of credit who were eye-witnesses, that a hundred coats of mail were drawn out of that place in one day, besides iron boots, and things which, though of less weight, were both useful and valuable. The historian then mentions how miserably these naked fugitives were harassed with incessant rains and unusually cold weather, which began the next day and continued ten days together. The Syrians, struck with a panic, left in like manner, in the road to*

Jordan, many of their garments, and of their vessels or arms, as I suppose that word means, just as Saladin's army did; for the original word here *כלים* *kelim* is known to signify arms as well as vessels; and the rest, perhaps, were thrown into the river. The horses and asses which were left in the camp, according to the seventh verse, were doubtless the beasts of burden used by them for the carriage of their tents and provisions, which their terror made them leave behind; and as the troops of the Syrians seem to have been horsemen, (see chap. vi. 15.) it is no wonder that they made no use of these heavier moving animals in their flight, but left them. *Observations*, p. 353.

*Ver. 16. The people went out and spoiled the tents of the Syrians.] Thus did the Lord work a double miracle for his people; at once delivering them from the Syrians, and giving them an unexpected and sufficient supply for their necessities; fulfilling exactly the predictions of his prophet, and thus giving the highest authority to his mission.*

*Note: (1.) Not a tittle of God's word shall ever fail. O that we had but faith to trust him! (2.) Supported by past experience, let us never despair, but patiently wait the salvation of God!*

*Ver. 20. And so it fell out unto him.] The unbelieving lord suffers the doom denounced upon him. He was appointed to command at the gate which led to the camp, in order to prevent tumults; but the people were so eager to get to the spoil, and satisfy their hunger, that they paid no regard to authority; but, each man pressing forward, the crowd was so great, that whilst he interposed to keep order, he was trodden to death in the gate. *Note: (1.) The wicked favourites of bad kings have often fallen the victims of popular rage. (2.) God's threatenings shall be as assuredly fulfilled as his promises. He who hath said, He that believeth shall be saved, hath as unalterably determined, that Whoso believeth not, shall be damned. (3.) Human greatness or glory is no protection from the arm of the holy God. The greatest men are worms of dust before**

## CHAP. VIII.

*The Shunammite hath her land restored. Benhadad, being sick, sends Hazael to Elisha, from whom he has for answer that he shall die. Hazael succeeds to the kingdom of Syria. Jehoram's wicked reign. Abaziab succeedeth him.*

[Before Christ 885.]

**T**HEN spake Elisha unto the woman, whose son he had restored to life, saying, Arise, and go thou and thine household, and sojourn wherever thou canst sojourn: for the LORD hath called for a famine; and it shall also come upon the land seven years.

2 And the woman arose, and did after the saying of the man of God: and she went with her household, and sojourned in the land of the Philistines seven years.

3 And it came to pass at the seven years' end, that the woman returned out of the land of the Philistines: and she went forth to cry unto the king for her house and for her land.

4 And the king talked with Gehazi the servant of the man of God, saying, Tell me, I pray thee, all the great things that Elisha hath done.

5 And it came to pass, as he was telling the king how he had restored a dead body to life, that, behold, the woman, whose son he had restored to life, cried to the king for her house and for her land. And Gehazi said, My lord, O king, this *is* the woman, and this *is* her son, whom Elisha restored to life.

6 And when the king asked the woman,

she told him. So the king appointed unto her a certain officer, saying, Restore all that *was* hers, and all the fruits of the field since the day that she left the land, even until now.

7 ¶ And Elisha came to Damascus; and Ben-hadad the king of Syria was sick; and it was told him, saying, The man of God is come hither.

8 And the king said unto Hazael, Take a present in thine hand, and go, meet the man of God, and enquire of the LORD by him, saying, Shall I recover of this disease?

9 So Hazael went to meet him, and took a present with him, even of every good thing of Damascus, forty camels' burden, and came and stood before him, and said, Thy son Ben-hadad king of Syria hath sent me to thee, saying, Shall I recover of this disease?

10 And Elisha said unto him, Go, say unto him, Thou mayest certainly recover: howbeit the LORD hath shewed me that he shall surely die.

11 And he settled his countenance stedfastly, until he was ashamed: and the man of God wept.

12 And Hazael said, Why weepeth my lord? And he answered, Because I know the evil that thou wilt do unto the children of Israel: their strong holds wilt thou set on fire, and their young men wilt thou slay with the sword, and wilt dash their children, and rip up their women with child.

him: he treads on princes as mortar, and brings contempt on all the honourable of the earth.

## CHAP. VIII.

*Ver. 1. Then spake Elisha, &c.] Elisha had said, &c. So ver. 2. And the woman had arisen, and done, &c. Houbigant: who conjectures from the 4th verse, that this event happened before Gehazi was stricken with leprosy.*

*Ver. 10. Go say unto him, Thou mayest certainly recover, &c.] Go say, Thou shalt certainly not live, &c. See Kennicot's first Dissert. p. 163.; but Houbigant thinks that ours is the just translation, and that the words contain a silent reproof from Elisha, who well knew that a courtier like Hazael would certainly flatter his king; and therefore the meaning, according to this interpretation, is, "Go THOU, and, "courtier-like, say to him, you will certainly recover; howbeit, "the Lord hath shewn me very much the contrary; he will "surely die, and die by your traitorous hand." See ver. 15. and Waterland's Script. Vind. part ii. p. 122.*

*Ver. 11. And he settled his countenance] "He, [Hazael]*

*"keeping his countenance, continued with the same look for "some time, while the man of God wept." Hazael pretended surprise at the answer of Elisha, desirous to conceal from him the satisfaction which he had in the intelligence of his king's death. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 12. And will dash their children, &c.] That dashing young children against the stones was one piece of barbarous cruelty which the people of the east were apt to run into in the prosecution of their wars, is plainly intimated Pf. cxxxvii. 8, 9. Nor was this inhuman practice quite out of use among nations pretending to more politeness; for, according to the remains of ancient fame, the Grecians, when they became masters of Troy, were so cruel as to throw Astyanax, Hector's son, a child in his mother's arms, headlong from one of the towers of the city. The ripping up of women with child, is the highest degree of brutal cruelty; but there is reason to believe that Hazael, in his war with the Gileadites, ch. x. 32, 33. verified this part of the prophet's prediction concerning him; for what Amos, complaining of his cruelty to*

13 And Hazael said, But what, *is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?* And Elisha answered, The LORD hath shewed me that thou *shalt be king over Syria.*

14 So he departed from Elisha, and came to his master; who said to him, What said Elisha to thee? And he answered, He told me

*that thou shouldest surely recover.*

15 And it came to pass on the morrow, that he took a thick cloth, and dipped *it* in water, and spread *it* on his face, so that he died: and Hazael reigned in his stead.

16 ¶ And in the fifth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel, Jehoshaphat *being*

this people, calls *threshing Gilead with threshing-instruments of iron*, both the LXX and Arabic versions read, *He sawed the big-bellied women with iron saws.* Le Clerc and Calmet.

Ver. 13. Hazael said, But what, &c.] When the prophet with tears foretold to Hazael what calamities he should hereafter bring upon Israel, his ambition instantly took fire, and he cried out with transport, "What! thy servant! a dog! that he should do the great [word] deed!" This is the literal translation of the passage. That of our Bible has stood in the front of many a fine declamation utterly wide of the real sentiment of Hazael. His exclamation was not the result of horror; his expression has no tincture of it, but of the unexpected glimpse of a crown. The prophet's answer is plainly calculated to satisfy the astonishment that he had excited: a dog bears not in Scripture the character of a cruel, but of a despicable animal; nor does he who is shocked with barbarity call it a GREAT deed. We may also observe, that it is evident from this transaction, that Hazael was now entirely ignorant of his designation to the throne of Syria, and consequently could not have been anointed by Elijah, 1 Kings, xix. 15. We must therefore take the command, in a figurative sense, to denote no more than God's purpose or determination that Hazael should succeed to the throne of Syria, to execute the designs of his providence upon the people of Israel, as Cyrus for the same reason is called *the Lord's anointed*; Isai. xlv. 1. though he was never properly anointed by God: or, if we take it in a literal sense, we must suppose some reason why Elijah waved the execution of that command, which probably might be his foresight of the many calamities that Hazael, when advanced to the crown, would bring upon Israel.

Ver. 15. He took a thick cloth, and dipped it in water] He did this that no signs of violence might appear upon him; for had the murder been in the least suspected, Hazael could not so easily have acceded to the throne; because, according to the account of Josephus, Ben-hadad was a man of such reputation among the people of Syria and Damascus, that, as his memory was celebrated among them with divine honours, his death, no doubt, had it been known to have been violent, would have been fully revenged upon the murderers. History makes mention of other princes who have died in the same manner. The emperor Tiberius, according to Suetonius, was in his last sickness choked in his bed by a pillow crammed into his mouth, or, as Tacitus has it, was smothered under a vast load of bed-clothes; and king Demetrius, the son of Philip, as well as the emperor Frederick II. was hurried out of the world in the same way. See Calmet, and Joseph. Antiq. lib. ix. c. 2.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. The advice of Elisha to his kind hostess at Shunem. He warned her to remove betimes to some neighbouring country, because of the approaching famine; and, Philistia being near, she there fixed her abode. Note; (1.) Men's sins provoke God's judgments, and his own unfaithful Israel shall feel the scourge heavier than even their idolatrous neighbours. (2.) The prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself.

2. As soon as the famine was over, she hastened home, and, to her grief, either found her land seized by the officers for the crown, as forfeited for her leaving the kingdom; or the person entrusted with it refused to give up possession. For want of a friend with the king, which once she thought she should never need, see chap. iv. 13. She is constrained to apply to him herself for redress; and so providence graciously ordered it, that at this very instant he was discoursing with Gehazi, Elisha's servant, about his miracles, and this very woman and her son were the subject, who now opportunely appear to confirm his narrative. Gehazi's being still Elisha's servant shews that this event preceded the cure of Naaman, and the siege of Samaria. Note; (1.) A strange coincidence of events, exactly suited to accomplish our desires, proves often to a demonstration the finger of an overruling Governor. (2.) God can raise us up friends, in our difficulties, where we least expected them.

3. The king, having heard from the woman herself the confirmation of Gehazi's report, orders an officer to put her in possession of her estate, and see that every farthing of the profits of it, from the day when she left it, be faithfully accounted for. Note; (1.) If the ears of kings are open to the cries of the oppressed, how much more will the King of kings hear their prayers and help them. (2.) The glory of a government is the righteous and impartial administration of justice.

2dly, What brought Elisha to Damascus is uncertain; what he did there, we are informed.

1. He is consulted by Ben-hadad concerning the event of his sickness. The king of Syria was no sooner apprized of his being there, than the report of his former miracles weighed more with him than all his idol gods, and he places greater confidence in the prophet of the Lord, than in all the priests of Damascus. With great respect he addresses him; sends his prime minister to be his messenger, and orders a magnificent present, as a token of his regard. Note; (1.) Sickness and death pay no compliments to crowned heads. (2.) Many on their death-beds send to God's ministers, who, all their lives long, paid little or no regard to them. (3.) The sinner that lieth sick is usually more solicitous to know, *Shall I recover?* than to inquire, *What shall I do to be saved?*

Ver.

then king of Judah, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah began to reign.

17 Thirty and two years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem.

18 And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, as did the house of Ahab: for the daughter of Ahab was his wife: and he did evil in the sight of the LORD.

19 Yet the LORD would not destroy Judah for David his servant's sake, as he promised him to give him alway a light, and to his children.

20 ¶ In his days Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah, and made a king over themselves.

21 So Joram went over to Zair, and all the chariots with him: and he rose by night, and smote the Edomites which compassed him about, and the captains of the chariots: and the people fled into their tents.

22 Yet Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day. Then Libnah revolted at the same time.

23 ¶ And the rest of the acts of Joram, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

24 And Joram slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David: and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.

25 ¶ In the twelfth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel did Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah begin to reign.

26 Two and twenty years old was Ahaziah

when he began to reign; and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Athaliah, the daughter of Omri king of Israel.

27 And he walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did evil in the sight of the LORD, as did the house of Ahab: for he was the son-in-law of the house of Ahab.

28 ¶ And he went with Joram the son of Ahab to the war against Hazael king of Syria in Ramoth-gilead; and the Syrians wounded Joram.

29 And king Joram went back to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which the Syrians had given him at Ramah, when he fought against Hazael king of Syria. And Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to see Joram the son of Ahab in Jezreel, because he was sick.

## CHAP. IX.

*Jehu is anointed king of Israel, that he may destroy the house of Ahab: he kills Joram, and afterwards Ahaziah: he commands Jezebel to be thrown out of a window, whose flesh the dogs devour, according to the prediction of Elijah.*

[Before Christ 884.]

AND Elisha the prophet called one of the children of the prophets, and said unto him, Gird up thy loins, and take this box of oil in thine hand, and go to Ramoth-gilead:

2 And when thou comest thither, look out there Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi, and go in, and make him arise up from among his brethren, and carry him to an inner chamber;

*Ver. 19. To give him alway a light, and to his children] That he should always have a light in his children. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 26. Athaliah, the daughter of Omri] Houbigant reads it, The daughter of Ahab, the son of Omri.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. An account of the wicked reign of Jehoram king of Judah, who, during his father's life, was associated with him to govern. Utterly unlike the good Jehoshaphat, he cleaved to the sins of the house of Ahab; and having taken his daughter to wife, she poisoned his heart with her idolatries. *Note;* (1.) Good men, to their grief, have often very wicked children. (2.) A wicked wife is among the greatest of God's plagues. (3.) Nothing can be so dangerous to young men as bad connections. Much more easily will they imbibe the principles and practices of a wicked Ahab, than of a pious Jehoshaphat.

2dly, Ahaziah succeeded his father, and walked, like him, in the wicked ways of Ahab's family. What

else could be expected from the son of Jezebel's daughter, and the example of a father so abandoned? At the request of Joram his uncle, he went to battle with him to Ramoth-gilead, where Joram was wounded, and, having taken the place, was carried to Jezreel to be healed. Thither Ahaziah went to visit him, and met, as we shall find, the death he deserved. *Note;* (1.) When the sinner's body is wounded, how solicitous is he to be healed, whilst the more dangerous wounds of his soul, neglected, sink and are corrupt through his foolishness! (2.) Friendship with the wicked is the path of death.

## CHAP. IX.

*Ver. 1. Elisha—called one of the children of the prophets.]* Some of the Jewish doctors have been of opinion, that this messenger was the prophet Jonah, who, upon this supposition, must have been a very young man, because Jeroboam the second, in whose reign Jonah prophesied, did not ascend

3 Then take the box of oil, and pour *it* on his head, and say, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel. Then open the door, and flee, and tarry not.

4 ¶ So the young man, *even* the young man the prophet, went to Ramoth-gilead.

5 And when he came, behold, the captains of the host *were* sitting; and he said, I have an errand to thee, O captain. And Jehu said, Unto which of all us? And he said, To thee, O captain.

6 And he arose, and went into the house; and he poured the oil on his head, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I have anointed thee king over the people of the LORD, *even* over Israel.

7 And thou shalt smite the house of Ahab thy master, that I may avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel.

8 For the whole house of Ahab shall perish: and I will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel:

9 And I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and

like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah:

10 And the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the portion of Jezreel, and *there shall be* none to bury *her*. And he opened the door, and fled.

11 ¶ Then Jehu came forth to the servants of his lord: and *one* said unto him, *Is* all well? wherefore came this mad *fellow* to thee? And he said unto them, Ye know the man, and his communication.

12 And they said, *It is* false; tell us now. And he said, Thus and thus spake he to me, saying, Thus saith the LORD, I have anointed thee king over Israel.

13 Then they hasted, and took every man his garment, and put *it* under him on the top of the stairs, and blew with trumpets, saying, Jehu is king.

14 So Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi conspired against Joram. (Now Joram had kept Ramoth-gilead, he and all Israel, because of Hazael king of Syria.

15 But king Joram was returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which the Syrians had given him, when he fought with Hazael king of Syria.) And Jehu said, If it

ascend the throne till about fifty years after this appointment of Jehu to the kingdom of Israel. However this be, it is reasonable to think that Elisha did not go himself to perform this office, either because he was now grown old, and unfit for such a journey, or because he was a person too well known, and not so proper to be employed in an affair which required secrecy.

*Ver. 3. I have anointed thee king over Israel.]* According to the Jews, none of the kings of Israel were anointed but those of the house of David, and these only when there was a question about their succession; as Solomon, they say, needed not to have been anointed, had it not been for the faction of Adonijah. But in the case of Jehu, in whom the succession of the kingdom of Israel was to be translated out of the right line of the family of Ahab, into another family which had no right to the kingdom, but merely the appointment of God, there was a necessity for his unction, in order both to convey to him a title, and to invest him with the actual possession of the kingdom. For if that which some imagine from 1 Kings, xix. 16. be true, that the prophet Elijah did before this time anoint Jehu, that unction conferred upon him only a remote right to the kingdom, in the same manner as Samuel's unction did upon David; see 1 Sam. xvi. 13.

*Ver. 11. Wherefore came this mad fellow to thee?] See Numb. xi. 25.* The officers who were in company with Jehu might easily perceive, by the air, habit, and manner of speech of the person who accosted Jehu so

boldly, and when he had done his business vanished so suddenly, that he was a prophet; but then there might be several reasons which might induce men of their profession to have a contemptible opinion of men of that order. The rigid and obscure course of life which the prophets led, and their neglect of the things of this world, might pass with them for a kind of infatuation, and the holy exercises to which they devoted themselves, for no more than a religious phrenzy; besides this, the false prophets whom they had seen in the court of Ahab had given just offence, and by their affected gestures and studied contortions, whereby they thought to recommend their crude enthusiasms, made themselves justly ridiculous and contemptible; and therefore it is no wonder that these officers at first sight should censure a true prophet, as they thought they had reason to judge of the false prophets with whom they had been acquainted; especially when we find some leading men in the tribe of Judah treating the prophets of the Lord as fools and madmen. See Ezek. xxiii. 30, 31. Jerem. xxix. 26. and Cicero de Divinat. lib. ii.

*Note;* (1.) It is not the last time that God's zealous servants have been called madmen. Thus Paul was branded, and even the blessed Jesus; let none of his followers therefore marvel, if a carnal world still judge thus of them. (2.) If worldly men expect from God's prophets reproof and religious conversation, let them not be disappointed by an endeavour to secure their regard at the expence of silence, or any sinful compliance.

*Ver.*



be your minds, *then* let none go forth *nor* escape out of the city to go to tell *it* in Jezreel.

16 ¶ So Jehu rode in a chariot, and went to Jezreel; for Joram lay there. And Ahaziah king of Judah was come down to see Joram.

17 And there stood a watchman on the tower in Jezreel, and he spied the company of Jehu as he came, and said, I see a company. And Joram said, Take an horseman, and send to meet them, and let him say, *Is it peace?*

18 So there went one on horseback to meet him, and said, Thus saith the king, *Is it peace?* And Jehu said, What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me. And the watchman told, saying, The messenger came to them, but he cometh not again.

19 Then he sent out a second on horseback, which came to them, and said, Thus saith the king, *Is it peace?* And Jehu answered, What hast thou to do with peace? turn thee behind me.

20 And the watchman told, saying, He came even unto them, and cometh not again: and the driving *is* like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi; for he driveth furiously.

21 And Joram said, Make ready. And his chariot was made ready. And Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah went out,

each in his chariot, and they went out against Jehu, and met him in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite.

22 And it came to pass, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, *Is it peace, Jehu?* And he answered, What peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts *are so many?*

23 And Joram turned his hands, and fled, and said to Ahaziah, *There is treachery, O Ahaziah.*

24 And Jehu drew a bow with his full strength, and smote Jehoram between his arms, and the arrow went out at his heart, and he sunk down in his chariot.

25 Then said *Jehu* to Bidkar his captain, Take up, *and* cast him in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite: for remember how that, when I and thou rode together after Ahab his father, the LORD laid this burden upon him;

26 Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, saith the LORD; and I will requite thee in this plat, saith the LORD. Now therefore take *and* cast him into the plat of ground, according to the word of the LORD.

27 ¶ But when Ahaziah the king of Judah

*V. r. 17. There stood a watchman on the tower.]* In times of peace as well as war, it was usual to have watchmen set on high and eminent places wherever the king was, to prevent his being surprised. Thus David at Jerusalem was informed by the watchmen, that his sons were escaped from the slaughter of Absalom, when he thought them all lost, 2 Sam. xiii. 34.; and therefore Jehoram, who had an army lying before Ramoth-gilead, had good reason to keep a watchful eye upon every motion, especially from that quarter. See Calmet.

*Ver. 22. So long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many] i. e.* Whilst her idolatries, wherewith she bewitches the people, are still continued and multiplied. He upbraids Jehoram with his mother's sins, not with his own, because her's were more notorious and infamous, and what by his connivance he had made his own; because they were the principal reason why God inflicted, and he was come to execute these judgments; and because he could find no odious accusation against him except about the golden calves, which he purposely declined mentioning, because he himself intended to keep them up. See Poole and Calmet.

*Ver. 26. The blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons]* It is to be observed, that in the history of Naboth, recorded 1 Kings, xxi. we find no mention made of the death

of his sons; but it is no unusual thing for the Scripture to supply in one place that which has been omitted in another. It is not improbable therefore that, as Naboth was accused of high-treason, all his family was involved in his ruin, and all his estate confiscated to the king's exchequer; and what seems to confirm this opinion is, that we find Elijah never once putting the king in mind to restore the vineyard to Naboth's children, nor the king in the time of his repentance ever once thinking to do it, because, to all human appearance, there were no heirs left. Notwithstanding this, Grotius and other learned men have observed, that these words may signify no more than the extreme poverty to which Naboth's family was reduced, by the death of the father and the confiscation of his goods. For among the Hebrews, say they, all punishments and miseries are called *blood*. Lev. xvii. 4. And to take away their estate, upon which they would have lived, was in effect to take away the blood, which is the life of every creature. But this, I think, is a little forced. See Le Clerc and Calmet.

REFLECTIONS.—As success depended upon the swiftness of their march, we have Jehu, his chariots and horsemen, with eager haste pressing toward Jezreel.

1. The watchman on the tower descries at a distance the approaching company, and Joram, desirous to know the cause,

saw *this*, he fled by the way of the garden-house. And Jehu followed after him, and said, Smite him also in the chariot. *And they did so* at the going up to Gur, which *is* by Ibleam. And he fled to Megiddo, and died there.

28 And his servants carried him in a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried him in his sepulchre with his fathers in the city of David.

29 And in the eleventh year of Joram the

son of Ahab began Ahaziah to reign over Judah.

30 ¶ And when Jehu was come to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it; and she painted her face, and tired her head, and looked out at a window.

31 And as Jehu entered in at the gate, she said, *Had* Zimri peace, who slew his master?

32 And he lifted up his face to the window, and said, Who *is* on my side? who? And there looked out to him two or three eunuchs.

cause, sends out repeated messengers, whom Jehu detains. As he drew nearer, the watchman, by his furious driving, concludes that it was Jehu, and the host from Ramoth-gilead. *Note*; It is too late to inquire, Is it peace? when the sword is unsheathed, and Jesus with his host appears, coming in the clouds of heaven to judge.

2. Unable, through impatience, to wait, or rather through divine infatuation hurried to his ruin, Joram orders his chariot, and hastes to meet Jehu, and Ahaziah accompanies him; and where should they meet but in the very spot of Naboth's vineyard. Joram, unsuspecting of danger, seems only concerned to know, whether they came victors over the Syrians in triumph, or in flight as vanquished; till Jehu's answer undeceived him, and the charge of his mother's idolatry and whoredoms, which he encouraged and copied, bid him despair of peace, and expect the sword of an avenging God. *Note*; (1.) Providence, in many instances, by strange events makes God's justice appear glorious in the eyes of men. (2.) Peace is still the sinner's cry, when ruin is at his very heels. (3.) The whoredoms which now are the sinner's pleasure, will shortly produce his everlasting pain.

3. Too late the treachery is discovered, and Joram attempts to escape; but the arrow from Jehu's bow stops his flight; and, as the executioner of the divine vengeance, Jehu commands his captain to throw his dead corpse into the vineyard of Naboth, according to the prophecy, 1 Kings, xxi. 19. Nor must Ahaziah be spared: since he is found in such bad company, he must fall with them. *Note*; (1.) When judgment overtakes the sinner, it is then too late to fly. (2.) They who are found companions of fools, will be destroyed with them.

*Ver. 30. She painted her face*] Rendered in the margin *put her eyes in painting*: the word פִּיֶּק *puk*, rendered *painting*, signifies a mineral substance, *stibium* or *stimmi*, otherwise called *plumbago*, or black-lead, a kind of ochre of very fine and loose parts. The word occurs again, Jer. iv. 30. and both there as well as here, it is mentioned as somewhat with which women coloured their eyes. At this day the women in many parts of the east, tinge their eyes with black to heighten their beauty. The ingenious writer of the "Agreement of the customs between the East Indians and Jews," well illustrates this matter. "Ezekiel," says he, "describing the idolatry of Jerusalem, under the figure of a lewd woman, accuses her of rubbing her eye-lids with black-lead when her lovers came to wait upon her." Ezek. xxiii. 40. This is what we find also that Jezebel did. *She painted her eye-*

*lids or her eyes, with black-lead, and put ornaments upon her head.* If we may judge of this practice by our fashions, it was not very fit to render women more enticing, yet the custom is still in use among the Indian women that are white, who, to heighten the lustre of their complexion, and render their eyes more languishing, paint them round with black-lead, which serves almost the same purpose as the patches used by some European ladies. See Tavernier's Travels into Persia, Ruffel's Natural History of Aleppo, and Shaw's Travels. The last cited author observes, that the practice above-mentioned was used as well by the Greeks and Romans as by the eastern nations; and to this Juvenal plainly refers, Sat. ii.

Ille supercilium madida fuligine tinctum,  
Obliqua producit acu, pingitque trementes  
Attollens oculos.

With jet-black pencils on his eye-brows dyes,  
And, gently touching, paints his trembling eyes.

See Parkhurst on the word פִּיֶּק *puk*. Dr. Shaw further observes, that the general method of building, both in Barbary and the Levant, seems to have continued the same from the earliest ages down to this time, without the least alteration or improvement. Large doors, spacious chambers, marble pavements, cloistered courts, with fountains sometimes playing in the midst, are certainly conveniences very well adapted to the circumstances of these hotter climates. The jealousy likewise of these people is less apt to be alarmed, whilst, if we except a small latticed window or balcony which sometimes looks into the street, all the other windows open into their respective courts or quadrangles. It is during the celebration only of some public festival that these houses and their latticed windows or balconies are left open; for, this being a time of great liberty, revelling, and extravagance, each family is ambitious of adorning both the inside and outside of their houses with their richest furniture; while crowds of both sexes, dressed out in their best apparel, and laying aside all modesty and restraint, go in and out where they please. The account that we here have of Jezebel's dressing herself and looking out at a window for Jehu's public entrance into Jezreel, gives us a lively idea of an eastern lady at one of these public solemnities. See Trav. p. 227. 229.

*Ver. 32. There looked out—two or three eunuchs*] According to the custom of the eastern nations, the business of this sort of people was to attend upon queens in their chambers. By their great fidelity and obsequiousness they generally gained the esteem, and were admitted to the

33 And he said, Throw her down. So they threw her down: and *some* of her blood was sprinkled on the wall, and on the horses: and he trode her under foot.

34 And when he was come in, he did eat and drink, and said, Go, see now this cursed *woman*, and bury her: for she *is* a king's daughter.

35 And they went to bury her: but they found no more of her than the scull, and the feet, and the palms of *her* hands.

36 Wherefore they came again, and told him. And he said, This *is* the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the portion of Jezreel shall dogs eat the flesh of Jezebel:

37 And the carcase of Jezebel shall be as dung upon the face of the field in the portion of Jezreel; *so* that they shall not say, This *is* Jezebel.

#### CHAP. X.

*The heads of seventy of Ahab's sons are brought to Jehu: he puts all the priests of Baal to death, in the temple of Baal at Samaria; but continues himself to worship the golden calves. He is succeeded by his son Jehoahaz.*

[Before Christ 884.]

**A**ND Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. And Jehu wrote letters, and sent to

Samaria, unto the rulers of Jezreel, to the elders, and to them that brought up Ahab's *children*, saying,

2 Now as soon as this letter cometh to you, seeing your master's sons *are* with you, and *there are* with you chariots and horses, a fenced city also, and armour;

3 Look even out the best and meetest of your master's sons, and set *him* on his father's throne, and fight for your master's house.

4 But they were exceedingly afraid, and said, Behold, two kings stood not before him: how then shall we stand?

5 And he that *was* over the house, and he that *was* over the city, the elders also, and the bringers up *of the children*, sent to Jehu, saying, We *are* thy servants, and will do all that thou shalt bid us; we will not make any king: do thou *that which is* good in thine eyes.

6 Then he wrote a letter the second time to them, saying, If ye *be* mine, and *if* ye will hearken unto my voice, take ye the heads of the men your master's sons, and come to me to Jezreel by to-morrow this time. Now the king's sons, *being* seventy persons, *were* with the great men of the city, which brought them up.

7 And it came to pass, when the letter came to them, that they took the king's sons, and

confidence of those whom they served; and so, very often into places of great trust and profit. It is remarkable, however, of Jezebel's eunuchs, that they were far from being faithful to her. Some of the Jewish doctors look upon Jezebel's as a punishment according to the *Lex talionis*; for, as she had done, so she suffered. She had caused Naboth to be stoned, and she is now condemned to be stoned herself: for there were two ways of stoning, either by throwing stones at malefactors till they were knocked down and killed, or by throwing them down upon the stones from a high place, and so dashing them to pieces. See Patrick and Calmet. The words, *he trod her under foot*, at the close of the 33d verse, Houbigant renders *they*, that is, *the horses trod her under foot*.

REFLECTIONS.—Long had this hateful monster of a woman, big with mischief, dispensed her baleful influence around, defying God, and tempted by long impunity to think that she should ever reign as a queen, and see no sorrow. But vengeance, though slow, is sure.

1. Her pride and insolence endured to the last. Unhumbled under the scourge now fallen upon her house, and decked with paint and jewels, she would still act the queen, and from her window dares insult the conquering

Jehu. *Note*; (1.) When God in just judgment gives up the sinner to his hardened heart, then he rushes on ruin as the horse into the battle. (2.) A painted face is the devil's mask. Like Jezebel, whom such imitate, their pride will have a fall. (3.) They who would act with zeal for God, will be often insulted and threatened; but, like Jehu, they will not be intimidated.

2. Jehu, mocking her impotent rage, calls out hastily, *Who is on my side? who?* and some eunuchs appearing at the summons, he bids them *throw her down*, which out of fear of Jehu they instantly complied with, and her blood besmeared the walls of the palace, and was sprinkled on Jehu's horses, as he drove over her corpse. *Notes*; (1.) There is no standing neuter between Christ and Belial. If we are on the Lord's side, we must appear for him. (2.) Wickedness and wretchedness are inseparable. Though for a time the sinner lifts his head high, it will be laid shortly low in the dust, and still lower in hell.

3. Having taken possession of the palace, and refreshed himself after his march, in respect for her royal descent, Jehu designs Jezebel a grave, forgetting the denunciation pronounced upon her; but God had fulfilled his own word. The dogs had devoured her carcase, and only a few scattered fragments remained; of which when Jehu

was

slew seventy persons, and put their heads in baskets, and sent him *them* to Jezreel.

8 ¶ And there came a messenger, and told him, saying, They have brought the heads of the king's sons. And he said, Lay ye them in two heaps at the entering in of the gate until the morning.

9 And it came to pass in the morning, that he went out, and stood, and said to all the people, Ye *be* righteous: behold, I conspired against my master, and slew him: but who slew all these?

10 Know now that there shall fall unto the earth nothing of the word of the LORD, which the LORD spake concerning the house of Ahab: for the LORD hath done *that* which he spake by his servant Elijah.

11 So Jehu slew all that remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men, and his kinsfolks, and his priests, until he left him none remaining.

12 ¶ And he arose and departed, and came to Samaria. *And as he was* at the shearing-house in the way,

13 Jehu met with the brethren of Ahaziah king of Judah, and said, Who *are* ye? And they answered, We *are* the brethren of Aha-

ziah; and we go down to salute the children of the king and the children of the queen.

14 And he said, Take them alive. And they took them alive, and slew them at the pit of the shearing-house, *even* two and forty men; neither left he any of them.

15 ¶ And when he was departed thence, he lighted on Jehonadab the son of Rechab *coming* to meet him: and he saluted him, and said to him, Is thine heart right, as my heart *is* with thy heart? And Jehonadab answered, It is. If it be, give *me* thine hand. And he gave *him* his hand; and he took him up to him into the chariot.

16 And he said, Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD. So they made him ride in his chariot.

17 And when he came to Samaria, he slew all that remained unto Ahab in Samaria, till he had destroyed him, according to the saying of the LORD, which he spake to Elijah.

18 ¶ And Jehu gathered all the people together, and said unto them, Ahab served Baal a little; *but* Jehu shall serve him much.

19 Now therefore call unto me all the prophets of Baal, all his servants, and all his

was informed, he reflected on the word of Elijah, and admired its awful accomplishment. She who alive was so imperious, cruel, and arrogant, is devoured as carrion, and denied even a grave. *Note;* (1.) Whether we intend it or not, the word of the Lord will have its exact accomplishment. (2.) Not only the corpse, but the very memory of the wicked shall rot. (3.) Let Jezebel's fate be a warning against her sins.

#### CHAP. X.

*Ver. 1. Sent to Samaria, unto the rulers of Jezreel*] From the context some have thought, that the letters were sent to the rulers of Samaria; and this they think the more probable, as the LXX render it *Samaria*, and not *Jezreel*. Le Clerc conjectures, that the *rulers of Jezreel*, who had the care of Ahab's children, might have been fled with them to Samaria. In the Vulgate it is read, *to the nobles, or chief men of the city*; a reading which Houbigant follows, and thinks is confirmed by the 5th verse. See his note, and Pilkington's Remarks.

*Ver. 6. Take ye the heads, &c.*] Besides the accomplishment of the divine decree, Jehu had a further design in requesting this cruel service of the rulers, and elders, and great men of the nation; namely, hereby to involve them in the same crime and conspiracy with himself. For by prevailing with them to murder Ahab's kinsmen in this manner, he bound them so closely to his interest, that

if any of the inferior people had been inclined to oppose his designs, they were by this means deprived of any man of distinction to head them; and not only so, but by this expedient Jehu thought that he might, in a great measure, lessen, if not entirely remove, the odium of his own cruel and perfidious conduct; for this is the meaning of his appeal to the people, ver. 9. *Ye be righteous, &c.* as if he had said, "I own, indeed, that I was a great instrument " in taking off the late king; but am I more culpable than " are the friends, the counsellors, the officers of Ahab? " I pretend not to conceal my fault; but the approbation " which the principal men of the nation have given it, in " taking up arms against the house of Ahab, and the " wonderful success which has attended this enterprize of " mine, do they not afford a certain proof that God has " raised me up to execute his decree in this respect, and " ought you not to acknowledge, in this case, the interpo- " sition of his hand?" See Calmet.

*Ver. 15. Jehonadab, the son of Rechab*] See the notes on Jer. xxxv. and Bedford's Script. Chronol. l. vi. c. 2. To *give the hand*, signifies to *promise*. When, therefore, we are told, that Jehu asked Jehonadab to give him his hand, we are not to suppose it was that he might assist him in getting up into the chariot, but that Jehonadab would give him an assurance that he would assist him in the prosecution of his designs. See Pilkington's Remarks, and Ezra, x. 19.

priests; let none be wanting: for I have a great sacrifice *to do* to Baal; whosoever shall be wanting, he shall not live. But Jehu did *it* in subtilty, to the intent that he might destroy the worshippers of Baal.

20 And Jehu said, Proclaim a solemn assembly for Baal. And they proclaimed *it*.

21 And Jehu sent through all Israel: and all the worshippers of Baal came, so that there was not a man left that came not. And they came into the house of Baal; and the house of Baal was full from one end to another.

22 And he said unto him that *was* over the vestry, Bring forth vestments for all the worshippers of Baal. And he brought them forth vestments.

23 And Jehu went, and Jehonadab the son of Rechab, into the house of Baal, and said

unto the worshippers of Baal, Search, and look that there be here with you none of the servants of the LORD, but the worshippers of Baal only.

24 And when they went in to offer sacrifices and burnt-offerings, Jehu appointed fourscore men without, and said, *If* any of the men whom I have brought into your hands escape, *be that letteth him go*, his life shall be for the life of him.

25 And it came to pass, as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt-offering, that Jehu said to the guard and to the captains, Go in, *and* slay them; let none come forth. And they smote them with the edge of the sword; and the guard and the captains cast *them* out, and went to the city of the house of Baal.

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*Ver. 21. So that there was not a man left that came not*] It may be asked, how all the worshippers of Baal could be induced, after Jehu's conduct, to assemble together? To which it may be replied, that as Jehu was a person of known indifference in matters of religion, (see the note on ver. 31.) who in this respect had always conformed to the humours of the court, and in the reign of king Ahab had been a strenuous worshipper of Baal; the people could not tell, when they read his proclamation of a great feast to Baal, but that he had returned in good earnest to the religion which he once embraced, and only deserted for a while in complacency to others. But whether they deduced themselves into this persuasion or not, they knew by experience that Jehu was a man of a fierce and bloody temper, who would not fail to put his threats in execution; and therefore reading in the same proclamation, *Whosoever shall be wanting, he shall not live*, ver. 19. they found themselves reduced to this sad dilemma, either to go or die; and therefore they thought it the wisest method to run the hazard, and throw themselves upon his mercy; having this at least to plead for themselves, that they were not disobedient to his commands. See Calmet and Poole.

*Ver. 22. Bring forth vestments*] It was the custom of almost all idolaters, to be very curious about the external pomp of their ceremonies, wherein, indeed, the chief part of their worship consisted. All the priests of Baal were clothed in fine linen, and their chief priests, no doubt, had some particular ornaments to distinguish them. Baal and Astarte were Phœnician deities; and therefore, as Silius Italicus, lib. i. in his description of the feasts of Hercules, has given us an account in what manner the Phœnician priests, when in their offices, were habited, we have reason thence to suppose that the dress of the priests of Baal was much of the same kind. The *worshippers of Baal*, in the text, probably do not mean all the people in general, because they wore no distinct garments in their worship, either of GOD or Baal, but the priests and ministers only. These were the great support

of the present idolatry; and therefore Jehu might conclude, that if he did but once destroy them, all the common worshippers would fall away of course. However, taking the words *servants* and *worshippers* (verses 19. 21.) in their utmost latitude, the temple of Baal, which was built in the capital city, and near the royal palace, and, being the chief in its kind, was designed for the use of the king and queen, and particularly for such great and high solemnities, might be large and capacious enough to contain them all. For, beside the principal building, there might be several outward courts, as there were to the temple at Jerusalem, where the people stood while they worshipped, as they did in the temple-service; and these, together with the temple itself, might afford sufficient space for all the idolaters of that kind, both ministers and people, that were then in the whole kingdom: for, since the days of Ahab, by the ministry of Elijah, Elisha, and the rest of the prophets, as well as by the slaughter which Hazael in his wars against Israel had made among many of them, the number of Baal's worshippers had been greatly diminished. See Patrick and Poole.

*Ver. 25. And the captains cast them out*] *And the captains were dismissed.* Houbigant.

REFLECTIONS.—Jehu with indefatigable diligence pursues his blow; and as he drives to Samaria,

1. He meets Jehonadab the son of Rechab, a man of eminent piety, coming to congratulate him on his accession, and to encourage him to perfect what he had begun. Jehu with all respect salutes him, and inquires if Jehonadab as heartily espoused his cause, as he revered and respected him. On receiving the warmest assurances of his good wishes, Jehu invites him into his chariot, that he may be convinced of his zeal in the Lord's cause; and by the presence of so good a man, no doubt, concludes to gain the greater reputation to himself. *Note*; (1.) It is a question that we need often put to ourselves and each other, *Is thine heart right?* upright and sincere in God's service. All profession of zeal without that, is but hypocrisy.

26 And they brought forth the images out of the house of Baal, and burned them.

27 And they brake down the image of Baal, and brake down the house of Baal, and made it a draught-house unto this day.

28 Thus Jehu destroyed Baal out of Israel.

29 ¶ Howbeit *from* the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, Jehu departed not from after them, *to wit*, the golden calves that *were* in Beth-el, and that *were* in Dan.

30 And the LORD said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in executing *that which is* right in mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that *was* in mine heart, thy children of the fourth *generation* shall sit on the throne of Israel.

31 But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart: for he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam, which made Israel to sin.

32 ¶ In those days the LORD began to cut Israel short: and Hazael smote them in all the coasts of Israel;

33 From Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites, and the Reubenites, and the Manassites, from Aroer, which *is* by the river Arnon, even Gilead and Bashan.

34 ¶ Now the rests of the acts of Jehu, and all that he did, and all his might, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

35 And Jehu slept with his fathers: and they buried him in Samaria. And Jehoahaz his son reigned in his stead.

crisy and design. (2.) Whenever there appears an outward fair profession of zeal for God, a good man cannot but charitably wish success, and countenance the work. Hearts must be left to God's searching. (3.) They who boast much of their zeal give cause to suspect their sincerity. (4.) Many will appear to serve God, as long as their own interest is advanced thereby, whose zeal quickly cools when they can no longer serve themselves.

2. Having destroyed at Samaria all Ahab's friends and family, as he had done at Jezreel, he contrives how at a stroke to cut off the worshippers of Baal from the land. The design was good, but the lie which paved the way was evil. Professing an uncommon zeal for the worship of Baal, which during Joram's reign, who had removed the image of Baal, might have been less public and solemn, he convokes all the priests, and perhaps also all the zealous worshippers of Baal, to Samaria, to partake of a great sacrifice which he intends to their God, threatening death to the man who should be found wanting. This collected a vast concourse, the gates of Baal's temple are open, the house thronged, and all the worshippers dressed for the solemn service: and now pretending zeal for the purity of the sacrifice, lest any servants of Jehovah should have mingled with them, he orders strict search to be made. All things being ready, guards are placed at the avenues, that not a man may escape: every soul is massacred in the temple, the building laid in ruins, the images burnt, and the worship of Baal for the time utterly exterminated.

Note; (1.) The wisdom of the serpent may be lawfully used in the cause of God, provided none of the poison of the serpent mingles therewith. (2.) The executioners of God's vengeance, more terrible than Jehu's guards, will shortly without mercy execute their commission on every servant of iniquity. (3.) God's cause, though long oppressed, will rise victorious at the last; and when Jesus shall have cast the wicked into hell, then shall he reign over his saints gloriously.

Ver. 31. *But Jehu took no heed, &c.*] Jehu indeed made great ostentation of his zeal for the Lord; and it must be acknowledged, that for his performance of the divine commands in this respect, he received commendations from God: yet he was still a bad man, though he did well in executing that which was right in the sight of the Lord, as to the abolition of the worship of Baal; for, his obstinate persistence in the sin of Jeroboam may be justly alleged against him as an argument of his false-heartedness in all his other actions. The reasons why he continued in this kind of idolatry were much the same with him, as they were with the first institutor of it; namely, lest, by permitting his subjects to go to the place appointed for divine worship, he might open a door for their return to the obedience of the house of David; and not only so, but disoblige likewise a great part of the nobility of the nation, who by this time had been long accustomed, and were warmly affected, to the worship of the golden calves. Herein, however, he made a clear discovery of his folly and his sin, in not daring to trust God with the preservation of that kingdom which he had so freely bestowed upon him. The truth is, Jehu was a bold, wicked, furious, and implacable man; but a man of this complexion, considering the work he was to be set about, was a proper instrument to be employed; and so far is it from tending to the reproach, that it is infinitely to the glory of God, that he can make use of such boisterous and unruly passions of mankind for the accomplishment of his just designs; Pf. lxxvi. 10. This he plainly did in the case of Jehu: for, after the Lord had settled him in the possession of a kingdom, and found that he still persisted in his political idolatry, he brought down the king of Assyria upon him, who *smote the coasts of Israel*, and quite wasted all that part of his kingdom which lay beyond the river Jordan. See the next verses, and Poole.

36 And the time that Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria was twenty and eight years.

### CHAP. XI.

*Athaliah destroying the royal family, Jehoshbeba secretes Joash, the son of Ahaziah; whom, after six years, Jehoiada the priest appoints to the throne: Athaliah comes to the temple, and is slain by the command of Jehoiada.*

[Before Christ 878.]

**A**ND when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal.

2 But Jehoshbeba the daughter of king Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons which were slain; and they hid him, even him and his nurse, in the bed-chamber, from Athaliah, so that he was not slain.

3 And he was with her hid in the house of the LORD six years. And Athaliah did reign over the land.

4 ¶ And the seventh year Jehoiada sent and fetched the rulers over hundreds, with the captains and the guard, and brought them to him into the house of the LORD, and made a covenant with them, and took an oath of them in the house of the LORD, and shewed them the king's son.

5 And he commanded them, saying, This

is the thing that ye shall do; A third part of you that enter in on the sabbath shall even be keepers of the watch of the king's house;

6 And a third part shall be at the gate of Sur; and a third part at the gate behind the guard: so shall ye keep the watch of the house, that it be not broken down.

7 And two parts of all you that go forth on the sabbath, even they shall keep the watch of the house of the LORD about the king.

8 And ye shall compass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand: and he that cometh within the ranges, let him be slain: and be ye with the king as he goeth out and as he cometh in.

9 And the captains over the hundreds did according to all things that Jehoiada the priest commanded: and they took every man his men that were to come in on the sabbath, and came to Jehoiada the priest.

10 And to the captains over hundreds did the priest give king David's spears and shields, that were in the temple of the LORD.

11 And the guard stood, every man with his weapons in his hand, round about the king, from the right corner of the temple to the left corner of the temple, along by the altar and the temple.

12 And he brought forth the king's son, and

### CHAP. XI.

*Ver. 1. When Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, &c.]* The consideration of the fate which attended these royal families, is sufficient to make one thankful to God for having been born of meaner parentage. The whole offspring of Jeroboam, Baasha, and Ahab, kings of Israel, were cut off for their idolatry; and the kings of Judah having contracted an affinity with the house of Ahab, and being by them seduced into the same crime, were so destroyed by three successive massacres, that there was but one left: for, first Jehoram slew all his brethren, then Jehu slew all his brother's children, and now Athaliah destroys all the rest whom her executioners can meet with. Enraged to see Ahab's family cut off, she resolved to revenge it on the house of David. As she was one of Ahab's family, she had reason to apprehend that Jehu, who had a commission to extirpate all, would not be long before he called upon her; her only way therefore to secure herself against him was, to usurp the throne; but this she knew she could not do without destroying all the royal progeny, who were no well-wishers to the worship

of Baal, which she had abetted, and was resolved to maintain.

*Ver. 5. A third part of you that enter, &c.]* The captains, and other officers who were admitted to the knowledge of Jehoiada's design, came into the temple unarmed, that they might give no suspicion: but as David had erected a kind of sacred armoury in one of the apartments of the temple, wherein were deposited the weapons and other trophies which he and several other generals had gained from their enemies; Jehoiada took care upon the present occasion to have this magazine of military provisions opened, so that there was no want of any sort of arms. See ver. 10. and Joseph. Antiq. lib. ix. cap. 7.

*Ver. 6. Keep the watch of the house, that it be not broken down]* In the Hebrew *חבאיית המסב* *habbaitth massach*, which the Vulgate and LXX render *the house of Messab*, supposing the original to be a proper name. Houbigant renders it, *the court of casting away*; supposing it to mean that part of the temple where the filth and dirt were carried out and thrown away.

*Ver.*



put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony; and they made him king, and anointed him; and they clapped their hands, and said, God save the king.

13 ¶ And when Athaliah heard the noise of the guard and of the people, she came to the people into the temple of the LORD.

14 And when she looked, behold, the king stood by a pillar, as the manner was, and the princes and the trumpeters by the king, and all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew with trumpets: and Athaliah rent her clothes, and cried, Treason, treason.

15 But Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of the hundreds, the officers of the host, and said unto them, Have her forth without the ranges: and him that followeth her kill with the sword. For the priest had said, Let her not be slain in the house of the LORD.

16 And they laid hands on her; and she went by the way by the which the horses came into the king's house: and there was she slain.

17 ¶ And Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and the king and the people, that they should be the LORD's people; between the king also and the people.

18 And all the people of the land went into the house of Baal, and brake it down; his altars and his images brake they in pieces thoroughly, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. And the priest appointed officers over the house of the LORD.

19 And he took the rulers over hundreds,

and the captains, and the guard, and all the people of the land; and they brought down the king from the house of the LORD, and came by the way of the gate of the guard to the king's house. And he sat on the throne of the kings.

20 And all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was in quiet: and they slew Athaliah with the sword beside the king's house.

21 Seven years old was Jehoash when he began to reign.

CHAP. XII.

*Jehoash reigneth well all the days of Jehoiada: he collects money to repair the temple: he is slain by his servants, and succeeded by his son Amaziah.*

[Before Christ 878.]

**I**N the seventh year of Jehu Jehoash began to reign; and forty years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Zibiah of Beer-sheba.

2 And Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the LORD all his days, wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him.

3 But the high places were not taken away: the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places.

4 ¶ And Jehoash said to the priests, All the money of the dedicated things that is brought into the house of the LORD, even the money of every one that passeth the account, the money that every man is set at, and all the money that cometh into any man's heart to bring into the house of the LORD,

*Ver. 12. Gave him the testimony]* Both here and in the parallel place, 2 Chron. xxiii. 11. there is nothing for gave him; and therefore as the word put refers to testimony as well as crown, it is very doubtful what is the meaning of the word in this place; but as the word certainly denotes additional or adventitious embellishments or ornaments, we may very well understand it here some royal robe or ornament, wherewith it was usual to invest kings on their coronation. See Exod. xxxiii. 4. 2 Sam. i. 24. and Parkhurst's Lexicon on the word עָרַץ vi.

*Ver. 14. Behold, the king stood by a pillar, as the manner was]* It is generally supposed, that the royal throne was erected near one of those pillars, whereof we have an account 1 Kings, vii. 15. 21. unless we may suppose that עַמּוּד *ammud*, that what is here called a pillar, was that brazen scaffold five cubits long, &c. which Solomon made at first upon his dedicating the temple, and which was afterwards continued for the king to appear upon on solemn occasions,

and where, doubtless, there was a throne of state. See Calmet.

*Ver. 16. And they laid hands on her]* Then they gave her room, or, They left her a free passage to depart out of the temple; so Houbigant, after the Chaldee.

*Ver. 17. And Jehoiada made a covenant, &c.]* "This could be no other than of protection and justice on his part; and of obedience on theirs; however, it makes it evident that kings may covenant with their people, contrary to Mr. Hobbes's doctrine."

CHAP. XII.

*Ver. 2. Jehoash did that which was right, &c.]* We refer to the parallel place in Chronicles, for a fuller account of this king and his proceedings after the death of Jehoiada.

*Ver. 4. Even the money of every one that passeth the account]* "Whether of the money of those that pass by, or the money with which

5 Let the priests take *it* to them, every man of his acquaintance: and let them repair the breaches of the house, wheresoever any breach shall be found.

6 But it was *so*, that in the three and twentieth year of king Jehoash the priests had not repaired the breaches of the house.

7 Then king Jehoash called for Jehoiada the priest, and the *other* priests, and said unto them, Why repair ye not the breaches of the house? now therefore receive no *more* money of your acquaintance, but deliver it for the breaches of the house.

8 And the priests consented to receive no *more* money of the people, neither to repair the breaches of the house.

9 But Jehoiada the priest took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one cometh into the house of the LORD: and the priests that kept the door put therein all the money that was brought into the house of the LORD.

10 And it was *so*, when they saw that *there was* much money in the chest, that the king's scribe and the high priest came up, and they put up in bags, and told the money *that was* found in the house of the LORD.

11 And they gave the money, being told, into the hands of them that did the work, that had the oversight of the house of the LORD: and they laid it out to the carpenters and builders, that wrought upon the house of the LORD,

12 And to masons, and hewers of stone, and to buy timber and hewed stone to repair the breaches of the house of the LORD, and for all that was laid out for the house to repair *it*.

13 Howbeit there were not made for the house of the LORD bowls of silver, snuffers, basons, trumpets, any vessels of gold, or vessels

of silver, of the money that was brought into the house of the LORD:

14 But they gave that to the workmen, and repaired therewith the house of the LORD.

15 Moreover they reckoned not with the men, into whose hand they delivered the money to be bestowed on workmen: for they dealt faithfully.

16 The trespass-money and sin-money was not brought into the house of the LORD: it was the priests'.

17 ¶ Then Hazael king of Syria went up, and fought against Gath, and took it: and Hazael set his face to go up to Jerusalem.

18 And Jehoash king of Judah took all the hallowed things that Jehoshaphat, and Jehoram, and Ahaziah, his fathers, kings of Judah, had dedicated, and his own hallowed things, and all the gold *that was* found in the treasures of the house of the LORD, and in the king's house, and sent *it* to Hazael king of Syria: and he went away from Jerusalem.

19 ¶ And the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

20 And his servants arose, and made a conspiracy, and slew Joash in the house of Millo, which goeth down to Silla.

21 For Jozachar the son of Shimeath, and Jehozabad the son of Shomer, his servants, smote him, and he died; and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David: and Amaziah his son reigned in his stead.

### C H A P. XIII.

*Jehoahaz reigns in Israel, and after him Joash, to whom Elisha prophesies that he shall thrice smite the Syrians. Elisha dies; and a dead man, being cast into his sepulchre, revives.*

[Before Christ 838.]

**I**N the three and twentieth year of Joash the son of Ahaziah king of Judah, Jehoahaz

“ *which every man will redeem his soul; all the money, in fine, which it shall seem good to any one to bring into the house of the Lord.*” Houbigant.

*Ver. 13. Howbeit, there were not made for the house of the Lord, &c.] For not yet were made for the house of the Lord, bowls, &c. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 18. And sent it to Hazael king of Syria] It is highly probable, that besides the present of gold, which Jehoash sent to Hazael in order to bribe him to withdraw*

his army, he had made him a promise of an annual tribute, and that, upon his refusal to pay it, the Syrian army took the field the next year, and, as the expression is, 2 Chron. xxiv. 24. *executed judgment upon Joash;* for, according to the author of the Jewish traditions upon the second book of Chronicles, while they killed his children before his eyes, they upbraided him with the cruel and unjust death of Zechariah. See Calmet.

the son of Jehu began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned seventeen years.

2 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom.

3 ¶ And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and he delivered them into the hand of Hazael king of Syria, and into the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael, all *their* days.

4 And Jehoahaz besought the LORD, and the LORD hearkened unto him: for he saw the oppression of Israel, because the king of Syria oppressed them.

5 (And the LORD gave Israel a saviour, so that they went out from under the hand of the Syrians: and the children of Israel dwelt in their tents, as before-time.)

6 Nevertheless they departed not from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, who made Israel sin, *but* walked therein: and there remained the grove also in Samaria.)

7 Neither did he leave of the people to Jehoahaz but fifty horsemen, and ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen; for the king of Syria had destroyed them, and had made them like the dust by threshing.

8 ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz, and all that he did, and his might, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

9 And Jehoahaz slept with his fathers; and they buried him in Samaria: and Joash his son reigned in his stead.

10 ¶ In the thirty and seventh year of Joash king of Judah began Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned sixteen years.

11 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD; he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin: *but* he walked therein.

12 And the rest of the acts of Joash, and all that he did, and his might wherewith he fought against Amaziah king of Judah, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

13 And Joash slept with his fathers; and Jeroboam sat upon his throne: and Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel.

14 ¶ Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died. And Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face, and said, O my father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof.

15 And Elisha said unto him, Take bow and arrows. And he took unto him bow and arrows.

16 And he said to the king of Israel, Put thine hand upon the bow. And he put his hand *upon it*: and Elisha put his hands upon the king's hands.

17 And he said, Open the window eastward. And he opened *it*. Then Elisha said, Shoot. And he shot. And he said, The arrow of the LORD's deliverance, and the arrow of deliverance from Syria: for thou shalt smite the Syrians in Aphek, till thou have consumed *them*.

18 And he said, Take the arrows. And he took *them*: And he said unto the king of Israel, Smite upon the ground. And he smote thrice, and stayed.

19 And the man of God was wroth with him, and said, Thou shouldest have smitten five or six times; then hadst thou smitten Syria till thou hadst consumed *it*: whereas now thou shalt smite Syria *but* thrice.

### CHAP. XIII.

Ver. 5. *The Lord gave Israel a saviour*] The LXX and Arabic render this a *deliverance*; which, as no particular person is specified, seems a preferable version: see ver. 17.

Ver. 19. *And the man of God was wroth*] Whether Joash before this interview with Elisha was acquainted or not with the nature of those parabolic actions, whereby the prophets were accustomed to represent future events, he could not but perceive, by the comment which Elisha made upon the first arrow that he shot, which he calls

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*the arrow of deliverance from Syria*, ver. 17. that this was a symbolical action, and intended to prefigure his victories over that nation; and therefore, as the first action of shooting was a kind of prelude to the war, he could not but understand further, even though the prophet had said nothing to him, that this second action, of striking the ground with the arrow, was to portend the number of victories he was to obtain; but then, if we may suppose with the generality of interpreters, that the prophet had apprised him beforehand that such was the symbolical intent of what he now put him upon, that the ostenser he

3 P

smote

20 ¶ And Elisha died, and they buried him. And the bands of the Moabites invaded the land at the coming-in of the year.

21 And it came to pass, as they were burying a man, that, behold, they spied a band of men; and they cast the man into the sepulchre of Elisha: and when the man was let down, and touched the bones of Elisha, he revived, and stood up on his feet.

22 ¶ But Hazael king of Syria oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz.

23 And the LORD was gracious unto them, and had compassion on them, and had respect unto them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, neither cast he them from his presence as yet.

24 So Hazael king of Syria died; and Benhadad his son reigned in his stead.

25 And Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz took again out of the hand of Benhadad the son of Hazael the cities, which he had taken out of the hand of Jehoahaz his father by war. Three times did Joash beat him, and recovered the cities of Israel.

#### C H A P. XIV.

*Amaziah reigns twenty-nine years; he overcomes the Edomites, and is overcome by Jehoash king of Israel, who plunders the temple. Amaziah is slain by a conspiracy. After Jehoash, Jeroboam reigns in Israel forty-one years.*

[Before Christ 839.]

**I**N the second year of Joash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel reigned Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah.

smote upon the ground, the more would be the victories which his arms should obtain; that this was the decree of heaven; and that thus, in some measure, his success in war was put into his own power; the king's conduct was utterly inexcusable, if, diffident of the prophet's promise, and considering the great strength of the kings of Syria more than the power of God, he stopped his hand after he had smote thrice; supposing that the prediction would never have been fulfilled, had he gone on, and smote upon the earth oftener. Upon the whole therefore, the prophet had just reason to be offended at the king for not believing in GOD, who had done so many signal miracles in favour of the Israelites; for not believing in Him, who, according to his own acknowledgment, had been a constant defender of the state, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof, ver. 14. and now, in his dying hours, was full of good wishes and intentions for his country. See Le Clerc and Patrick.

2 He was twenty and five years old when he began to reign, and reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem.

3 And he did *that which* was right in the sight of the LORD, yet not like David his father: he did according to all things as Joash his father did.

4 Howbeit the high places were not taken away: as yet the people did sacrifice and burnt incense on the high places.

5 ¶ And it came to pass, as soon as the kingdom was confirmed in his hand, that he slew his servants which had slain the king his father.

6 But the children of the murderers he slew not: according unto that which is written in the book of the law of Moses, wherein the LORD commanded, saying, The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, nor the children be put to death for the fathers; but every man shall be put to death for his own sin.

7 ¶ He slew of Edom in the valley of Salt ten thousand, and took Selah by war, and called the name of it Joktheel unto this day.

8 ¶ Then Amaziah sent messengers to Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, Come, let us look one another in the face.

9 And Jehoash the king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, The thistle that was in Lebanon sent to the cedar that was in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my

*Ver. 21. And it came to pass, &c.]* The life of Elisha was one continued train of miracles. The writer of Ecclesiasticus speaks thus concerning him: *The spirit of Elijah rested upon Elisha; whilst he lived, he was not moved with the presence of any prince, neither could any bring him into subjection: nothing could overcome him, and after his death his body prophesied. He did wonders in his life, and at his death his works were marvellous.* There was no innate power in the bones of Elisha to produce so wonderful an effect: it was the immediate work and operation of God himself; who was thus willing to give his people a proof not only of the divine mission of his prophet, and of his own immediate presence among them, but also of that future resurrection from the dead, which is fully revealed to us in the gospel. Calmet remarks, that this is further a symbol and a prophecy of the resurrection of Jesus Christ; with this difference, and a mighty one it is, that Elisha raised a dead body.

son to wife: and there passed by a wild beast that *was* in Lebanon, and trode down the thistle.

10 Thou hast indeed smitten Edom, and thine heart hath lifted thee up: glory of *this*, and tarry at home: for why shouldst thou meddle to *thy* hurt, that thou shouldst fall, *even* thou, and Judah with thee?

11 But Amaziah would not hear. Therefore Jehoash king of Israel went up; and he and Amaziah king of Judah looked one another in the face at Beth-sheMesh, which *belongeth* to Judah.

12 And Judah was put to the worse before

Israel; and they fled every man to their tents.

13 And Jehoash king of Israel took Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Jehoash the son of Ahaziah, at Beth-sheMesh, and came to Jerusalem, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, from the gate of Ephraim unto the corner-gate, four hundred cubits.

14 And he took all the gold and silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house, and hostages, and returned to Samaria.

15 ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Jehoash which he did, and his might, and how he fought with Amaziah king of Judah, *are* they

body without raising himself, while Jesus Christ not only raised himself, but gives life to all those who believe in him.

#### CHAP. XIV.

*Ver. 5, 6. As soon as the kingdom was confirmed—he slew his servants, &c.*] It seems, that the two assassins continued to be men of weight and interest at court even after they had murdered the king; for Amaziah retained them in his service for some time, nor durst venture to execute justice upon them till he was well settled in his authority. He acted, however, in the punishment of them like a good man, and contrary to the wicked customs of many kingdoms; where, if any one be guilty of high treason, not only he, but his children likewise, who neither partake nor are conscious of any of his traitorous practices, are equally devoted to destruction, lest they should form any faction against the prince, or seek revenge for their father's death.

*Ver. 7. Took Selah—and called the name of it Jektheel*] As *יהל סלנג* in the Hebrew signifies a rock, and exactly answers to the Greek word *Petra*, the generality of commentators with good reason have agreed, that this *Selah* is the same with *Petra*, the metropolis of *Arabia Petraea*, whence the whole country, which also was very rocky, took its name. He gave it the name of *Jektheel*, which signifies *obedience to God*, probably as having obliged the inhabitants to observe the laws and statutes of Moses. See Grotius and Wells's Geography.

*Ver. 8. Come, let us look one another in the face*] Josephus, in his account of this transaction, tells us, that Amaziah wrote an imperious letter to the king of Israel, commanding him and his people to pay the same allegiance to him, which they formerly paid to his ancestors David and Solomon; or, in case of their refusal, to expect a decision of the matter by the sword. Others think that he intended no war by this message, but only a trial of military skill and prowess, or a civil kind of interview between his men and those of Israel; for, had he proposed to act in a hostile manner, he would have assaulted them on a sudden, and not given them this warning to stand upon their defence. The words of the message are much of the same

kind with what Abner said to Joab, *Let the young men now arise, and play before us*, 2 Sam. ii. 14. But how polite forever the expressions may be, in both cases they had in them the formality of a challenge, as both the king and general, who were not unacquainted with military language, certainly understood them. So that the truth of the matter seems to be this; Amaziah, being encouraged by his late victory, determined to be revenged for the slaughter of his ancestors by Jehu, chap. ix., and for the late spoil which the Israelites had made in his country; and thereupon, resolving to have satisfaction, he sent them this open declaration of war, only conceived in mild terms.

*Ver. 9. The thistle that was in Lebanon*] This address is a proverb derived from the fable; a kind of speech which corresponds in all respects to writing by hieroglyphics; each being a symbol of something else to be understood: and as it sometimes happened when a hieroglyphic became famous, that it lost its particular signification, and assumed a general one, as the *caduceus*, which at first was painted only to denote the pacific office of Hermes, became in time the common symbol of league and amity; so it was with the apologue; of which, when any one became celebrated for the art and beauty of its composition, or for some extraordinary efficacy in its application, it was soon converted and worn into a proverb. We have a fine instance of this in the present message of Jehoash to Amaziah, which alludes to the apologue of Jotham, in Judg. ix. 7., and shews us plainly, that this satirical apologue of the thistle and cedar was now become a proverb. See Div. Leg. vol. iii. Considering the circumstances of the person addressed, who was, comparatively to many, but a petty prince, flushed with a little good success, and thereupon impatient to enlarge his kingdom, no similitude could be better adapted than that of a thistle, a low contemptible shrub, but, upon its having drawn blood of some traveller, grown proud, and affecting an equality with the cedar, a tall stately tree, the pride and ornament of the wood; till, in the midst of all its arrogance and presumption, it is unhappily trodden down by the beasts of the forest; which Joash intimates would be Amaziah's fate, if he continued to provoke a prince of his superior power and strength. See Calmet and Scheuchzer.

not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

16 And Jehoash slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel; and Jeroboam his son reigned in his stead.

17 ¶ And Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah lived after the death of Jehoash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel fifteen years.

18 And the rest of the acts of Amaziah, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

19 Now they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem: and he fled to Lachish; but they sent after him to Lachish, and slew him there.

20 And they brought him on horses: and he was buried at Jerusalem with his fathers in the city of David.

21 ¶ And all the people of Judah took Azariah, which was sixteen years old, and made him king instead of his father Amaziah.

22 He built Elath, and restored it to Judah, after that the king slept with his fathers.

23 ¶ In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel began to reign in Samaria, and reigned forty and one years.

24 And he did *that which was evil* in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

25 He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the LORD God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gath-hepher.

26 For the LORD saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter: for there was not any shut up, nor any left, nor any helper for Israel.

27 And the LORD said not that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven: but he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash.

28 ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, and all that he did, and his might, how he warred, and how he recovered Damascus, and Hamath, which belonged to Judah, for Israel, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?

29 And Jeroboam slept with his fathers, even with the kings of Israel; and Zachariah his son reigned in his stead.

*Ver. 19.* Now they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem, &c.] What provoked the people of Jerusalem, more than those of any other part of the nation, against their king, was, their seeing their city spoiled of its best ornaments, exposed to reproach on account of the great breach that was made in their wall, and several of their children carried away as hostages for their good behaviour, ver. 13, 14. all which they imputed to their king's mal-administration; whereupon they entered into a conspiracy against him, which makes some commentators say, that he lived in a state of exile at Lachish the space of twelve years, not choosing to continue in Jerusalem after the defeat which Jehoash had given him. But our learned Usher has placed this conspiracy in the last year of Amaziah's reign; and Capellus supposes, that it was set on foot by the great men of Jerusalem upon the specious pretence of being guardians to the young prince, and taking better care of him than his father was likely to do.

*Ver. 25.* By the hand of his servant Jonah] The only mention we have of this prophet is in this passage, and in the account of his famous mission to Nineveh, where we shall say more on the subject. What the prophecies were by which he encouraged Jeroboam to proclaim war against the king of Syria, are nowhere recorded; but as we have not every thing which the prophets did write,

so several prophets did not commit their predictions to writing. From this place, however, we may observe that God was very merciful to the Israelites, though a very wicked people, in continuing a race of prophets among them even after Elisha was dead. See Patrick.

*Ver. 28.* How he recovered Damascus, and Hamath] Some are of opinion, that when Jeroboam re-conquered these two chief cities of Syria, he restored them to the kingdom of Judah, because they belonged to it of right, and reserved to himself only a small tribute to be paid him by way of acknowledgment. This is what the original Hebrew as well as the Chaldee and Septuagint versions seem to favour; but the Syriac and Arabic translators have omitted the word *Judah*, and may therefore be supposed to think, as several others do, that Jeroboam kept to himself all those places which he had recovered at his own hazard and expence.

REFLECTIONS.—Under Jeroboam and his contemporary kings of Judah, Hosea, Jonah, Amos, and Micah prophesied and wrote. When matters were hastening to ruin, then did God multiply the warnings of his word; and, though Israel and Judah despised their prophets, we have reason to bless God for their writings, which are preserved for our admonition.

CHAP. XV.

*Azariah reigns in Judah fifty-two years, and is succeeded by his son Jotham. Zechariah reigns over Israel six months, and is succeeded by Shallum; who is succeeded by Menahem. Tiglath-pileser carries captives into Assyria.*

[Before Christ 772.]

**I**N the twenty and seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel began Azariah son of Amaziah king of Judah to reign.

2 Sixteen years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned two and fifty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jeholiah of Jerusalem.

3 And he did *that which was* right in the fight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done;

4 Save that the high places were not removed; the people sacrificed and burnt incense still on the high places.

5 ¶ And the LORD smote the king, so that he was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house. And Jotham the king's son *was* over the house, judging the people of the land.

6 And the rest of the acts of Azariah, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

7 So Azariah slept with his fathers; and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David: and Jotham his son reigned in his stead.

8 ¶ In the thirty and eighth year of Azariah king of Judah did Zachariah the son of Jeroboam reign over Israel in Samaria six months.

9 And he did *that which was* evil in the fight of the LORD, as his fathers had done: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

10 And Shallum the son of Jabeš conspired against him, and smote him before the people, and slew him, and reigned in his stead.

11 And the rest of the acts of Zachariah, behold, they *are* written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

12 This *was* the word of the LORD which he spake unto Jehu, saying, Thy sons shall sit on the throne of Israel unto the fourth generation. And so it came to pass.

13 ¶ Shallum the son of Jabeš began to reign in the nine and thirtieth year of Uzziah king of Judah; and he reigned a full month in Samaria.

CHAP. XV.

*Ver. 1. In the twenty and seventh year]* In the fourteenth year, according to Houbigant. Dr. Lightfoot is of opinion, that the difficulties in the chronology of this place may be settled, by supposing that there was an interregnum, wherein the throne was vacant eleven or twelve years between the death of Amaziah and the inauguration of his son Azariah, who, being left an infant of four years old when his father died, was committed to the guardianship of the grandees of the nation, who, during his minority, took the administration of public affairs upon themselves, and when he was become sixteen devolved it upon him; so that when he became in full possession of the throne it was in the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam. *Azariah* in 2 Chron. xxvi. 1. is called *Uzziah*; and by St. Matthew, *Ozias*; words of pretty much the same signification.

*Ver. 5. And the Lord smote the king]* See on 2 Chron. xxvi. 19. *In a several house*, is rendered by Houbigant, *a separate or remote house*.

**REFLECTIONS.**—Azariah began young to reign, and sat very long upon the throne of Judah; and, like his immediate ancestors, his first days were his best. The common fault of the high places remained, and for daring to intrude into the priest's office, he was struck with

leprosy, secluded from society till his death, and Jotham his son administered in his room, as viceroy, the affairs of the kingdom. *Note;* (1.) Those who walk in pride, God is able to abate. (2.) One stroke of disease can make the mightiest monarch loathsome to others, and a burden to himself. (3.) God, when he has pardoned the guilt of our sins, may yet correct us long with temporal afflictions, and bring us under them even to the grave.

*Ver. 12. Thy sons shall sit on the throne of Israel unto the fourth generation]* God had promised Jehu, that for executing his will upon the house of Ahab, he would continue the crown of Israel in his family for four generations; and accordingly Jehoahaz, Joash, Jehoram, and Zechariah succeed him; but because he did it not so much in obedience to the divine commands, as to satisfy his private ambition, and in a method of cruelty quite abhorrent to the divine nature, God cut his family short as soon as he had fulfilled his promise to him, and thereby accomplished the prophecy of Hosea: *I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu, and will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel*, chap. i. 4. And perhaps it was in remembrance of this promise, as well as of the prophecy which confined the kingdom to Jehu's family for four generations only, that Shallum was encouraged to attempt the life of Zechariah.

*Ver.*



14 For Menahem the son of Gadi went up from Tirzah, and came to Samaria, and smote Shallum the son of Jabesh in Samaria, and slew him, and reigned in his stead.

15 And the rest of the acts of Shallum, and his conspiracy which he made, behold, they *are* written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

16 ¶ Then Menahem smote Tiphfah, and all that *were* therein, and the coasts thereof, from Tirzah: because they opened not *to him*, therefore he smote *it*; and all the women therein that were with child he ripped up.

17 ¶ In the nine and thirtieth year of Azariah king of Judah began Menahem the son of Gadi to reign over Israel, and reigned ten years in Samaria.

18 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD; he departed not all his days from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

19 ¶ And Pul the king of Assyria came against the land: and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him to confirm the kingdom in his hand.

20 And Menahem exacted the money of Israel, *even* of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not there in the land.

21 ¶ And the rest of the acts of Menahem, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

22 And Menahem slept with his fathers; and Pekahiah his son reigned in his stead.

23 ¶ In the fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekahiah the son of Menahem began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned two years.

24 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

25 But Pekah the son of Remaliah, a captain of his, conspired against him, and smote him in Samaria, in the palace of the king's house, with Argob and Arieah, and with him fifty men of the Gileadites: and he killed him, and reigned in his room.

26 And the rest of the acts of Pekahiah, and all that he did, behold, they *are* written

*Ver. 14. Menahem—went up from Tirzah*] Tirzah was a long time the regal city of the kingdom of Israel; Jeroboam, who was the first king of Israel, though he dwelt for some time at Shechem, in his latter days at least resided here; as did all the kings of Israel, till Omri, having reigned six years in Tirzah, built Samaria, and removed the royal seat thither, where it continued till a final period was put to that kingdom. See Cantic. vi. 4. and Wells's Geogr. vol. iii.

*Ver. 19. And Pul, the king of Assyria*] This is the first time we find any mention made of the kingdom of Assyria since the days of Nimrod, who erected a small principality there; see note on Gen. x. 11.; and Pul or Phul is the first monarch of that nation who invaded Israel, and began their transportation out of their country. Some are of opinion, that he was the same with Belshis the governor of Babylon; who, together with Arbaces the Mede, slew Sardanapalus the last of the Assyrian monarchs, and translated the empire to the Chaldeans. Bishop Patrick seems to be confident in this; but, according to Dr. Prideaux, Belshis was one generation later; and therefore it is supposed, that this Pul was the father of Sardanapalus, who was called Sardan, with the annexion of his father's name Pul, in the same manner as Merodach, king of Babylon, was called Merodach Baladan, because he was the son of Baladan. This Pul therefore was the same king of Assyria, who, when Jonah preached against Nineveh, gave

great tokens of his humiliation and repentance. See Prideaux's Connection, A. 747. and Bedford's Scripture Chronology, book vi.

*Ver. 22. And Pekahiah his son reigned in his stead*] This shews that Menahem was a man of great weight, since, notwithstanding all his violence and cruelty, he left the kingdom in his own family, which his two predecessors could not do. It is manifest however, that there was a small interregnum of about a year's continuance between his death and his son's accession; for his son did not begin to reign till the 50th year of Azariah; and yet the father must have been dead a year before, because it is said of him that he began to reign (ver. 17.) in the 39th year of Azariah, and reigned but ten years; there was therefore apparently an interregnum; but what the occasion of it was, is not so well known, though there is reason to suppose that it proceeded from the interest of his successor, who might raise a party to keep him out of the throne, as he did afterwards to dispossess him both of that and of life; for, according to Josephus, he was cut to pieces, with several of his friends about him, at a public feast, by the treasonable practice of Pekah, one of his principal officers, who, seizing upon the government, reigned about twenty years, and left it at last a difficult question to determine, whether he was more remarkable for his impiety towards God, or his injustice towards men. See ver. 25. and Joseph. Antiq. lib. v. cap. 11.

*Ver.*

in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

27 ¶ In the two and fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekah the son of Remaliah began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned twenty years.

28 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

29 ¶ In the days of Pekah king of Israel

came Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abel-beth-maachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria.

30 ¶ And Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and smote him, and slew him, and reigned in his stead, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah.

31 And the rest of the acts of Pekah, and

*Ver. 29. Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, &c.]* He is supposed by some to have been the son and successor of Sardanapalus, who restored the kingdom of Assyria and possessed it, after it had been dismembered by Belshazzar and Arbaces: but our learned Prideaux makes him to be the same with Arbaces; by Ælian called *Tiblgamus*, and by Castor, *Ninus Junior*; who, together with Belshazzar, headed the conspiracy against Sardanapalus, and fixed his royal seat at Nineveh, the ancient residence of the Assyrian kings, as Belshazzar, who in Scripture is likewise called Baladan, *Isai. xxxix. 1.* fixed his at Babylon, and there governed his new erected empire for nineteen years. The first captivity of the Israelites was made by *Pul*, who carried away the two tribes and a half situated beyond Jordan: the second was this made by Tiglath-pileser. There were three deportations of the Hebrews; the first was of Galilee, the second of Samaria, the third of Judea; whence probably, under the second temple, Samaria, Galilee, and Judca, were the general names of the three provinces.

*Ver. 30. And Hoshea, the son of Elah]* After Hoshea had murdered his predecessor Pekah, the elders of the land seem to have taken the government into their own hands; for he had not the possession of the kingdom till the latter end of the twelfth year of Ahaz; i. e. nine years after he had committed the fact. He came to the crown, it must be owned, in a very wicked manner; and yet his character in Scripture is not so vile as that of many of his predecessors, chap. xvii. 2. For whereas the kings of Israel had hitherto maintained guards upon the frontiers, to hinder their subjects from going to Jerusalem to worship, Hoshea took away these guards, and gave free liberty to all to go and pay their adoration where the law had directed; and therefore, when Hezekiah had invited all Israel to come to his passover, this prince permitted all that would to go; and when upon their return from that festival, they destroyed all the monuments of idolatry that were found in the kingdom of Samaria, instead of forbidding them, in all probability he gave his consent to it; because without some tacit encouragement, at least, they could not have ventured to do it.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Terrible was the state of Israel in these last days: Like the convulsions of the body before its dissolution, under judgments unhumbled, by mercies unaffected, uniformly persevering in a course of idolatry; their kings mounting successively to the throne by murder;

shook with intestine commotions, spoiled by invading enemies, till, at last, the besom of destruction swept the land.

1. Zachariah, the last of Jechu's family, began and ended his reign in six months.

2. Shallum, his murderer and successor, had still a shorter space. One month saw his ill-gotten greatness ruined. Menahem revenged his treason and murder upon him, and seized the crown, of which the usurper was dispossessed. *Note;* Few traitors and murderers die in their beds.

3. Menahem, having climbed into the throne by blood, seeks to secure his seat by the most inhuman barbarity on those who dared to oppose him. Tiphshah, for refusing to open its gates, is, as a terror to others, sacked and ravaged with the most savage fury, even to ripping up the women with child. Yet, cowardly as cruel, he dared not fight the king of Assyria, who invaded him; but at an immense sum, which he levied from his nobles, bought him off, and engaged him to support his wicked government. *Note;* The more we read of this miserably oppressed and distracted state, the more thankful should we be for the liberty, peace, and security we enjoy under our own mild government.

4. Pekahiah succeeded his father, who died in peace; though a tyrant and usurper. Two years his tottering government continued, when he fell by the conspiracy of his general Pekah, who seized the throne, and reigned in his stead.

5. Twenty years Pekah kept the crown that his treason had secured; but long impunity is no final security. The king of Assyria, though so lately bribed, returned, and seized all Gilead, with part of Naphtali, Zebulun, and Ephraim; and thus half of the ten tribes went into captivity. Whereupon a conspiracy was formed against Pekah, and Hoshea, having murdered him, as he did his predecessor, ventured to wear that crown which had been so fatal to others, and proved as destructive to himself. All these kings concurred in following Jeroboam's sins, and thereby justified God in these judgments which fell so heavily upon them.

2dly, Jotham, who succeeded his father Uzziah on the throne of Judah, copied his excellencies, and avoided his sins; only the high places remained. His repairing the gate of the Lord's house shews his respect to the place, and God kept him in peace, it seems, all his days, re-

all that he did, behold, they *are* written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

32 ¶ In the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel began Jotham the son of Uzziah king of Judah to reign.

33 Five and twenty years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Jerusha, the daughter of Zadok.

34 And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD: he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done.

35 Howbeit the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burned incense still in the high places. He built the higher gate of the house of the LORD.

36 ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

37 In those days the LORD began to send against Judah Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah.

38 And Jotham slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father: and Ahaz his son reigned in his stead.

#### C H A P. XVI.

*Ahaz reigns sixteen years over Judah: he sends the treasures of the temple to Tiglath-pileser, who takes Damascus, and puts to death Rezin, king of Syria. Hezekiah succeeds his father Ahaz.*

[Before Christ 739.]

**I**N the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah Ahaz the son of Jotham king of Judah began to reign.

moving him at the age of forty-one, from the storm which was gathering under the confederacy of the kings of Syria and Israel. *Note;* (1.) The righteous are taken away from the evil to come. (2.) When God removes a good king from a nation, or a good minister from his flock, they have reason to fear, lest for their sins and unprofitableness the Lord has a controversy against them.

#### C H A P. XVI.

*Ver. 6. Recovered Elath to Syria]* Elath, or Elam, was a famous port on the Red Sea, which David in his conquest of the kingdom took, and there established a great trade to divers parts of the world.

*Ver. 9. Went up against Damascus]* In the time of Abraham, Damascus was in being; for it is certain, that one whom he had made free and appointed steward of his

2 Twenty years old *was* Ahaz when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, and did not *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD his God, like David his father.

3 But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel.

4 And he sacrificed and burned incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.

5 ¶ Then Rezin king of Syria and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel came up to Jerusalem to war: and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome *him*.

6 At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and drave the Jews from Elath: and the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there unto this day.

7 ¶ So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, *I am* thy servant and thy son: come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me.

8 And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent *it* for a present to the king of Assyria.

9 And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him: for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried *the people* of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin.

house was of Damascus, Gen. xv. 2. at the time that he pursued Chedorlaomer, and the five confederate kings as far as Hoba, which lies northward of Damascus; Gen. xiv. 15. The Scripture says nothing more of this city till the time of David, when Hadad, who, according to Josephus, was the first that took upon him the title of king of Damascus, sending troops to the assistance of king Hadad-ezer, king of Zabab, was himself defeated by David, and his country subdued. Towards the end of Solomon's reign, Rezin recovered the kingdom of Damascus, and shook off the Jewish yoke; 1 Kings, xi. 23, &c. Some time after this, Asa king of Judah implored the help of Ben-hadad king of Damascus against Baasha king of Israel, 1 Kings, xv. 18.; and from his time the kings of Damascus were generally called Ben-hadad, till, in this last controversy with them, Ahaz called in the assistance of the king

10 ¶ And king Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and saw an altar that *was* at Damascus: and king Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the fashion of the altar, and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof.

11 And Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that king Ahaz had sent from Damascus: so Urijah the priest made *it* against king Ahaz came from Damascus.

12 And when the king was come from Damascus, the king saw the altar: and the king approached to the altar, and offered thereon.

13 And he burned his burnt-offering and

his meat-offering, and poured his drink-offering, and sprinkled the blood of his peace-offerings, upon the altar.

14 And he brought also the brazen altar, which *was* before the LORD, from the forefront of the house, from between the altar and the house of the LORD, and put it on the north side of the altar.

15 And king Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, Upon the great altar burn the morning burnt-offering, and the evening meat-offering, and the king's burnt-sacrifice, and his meat-offering, with the burnt-offering of all the people of the land, and their meat-offering, and their drink-offerings; and sprinkle

king of Assyria, who killed their king, and carried his subjects into captivity, according to the prediction of Isaiah, chap. vii. and Amos, chap. vii. See Calmet.

[*Captive to Kir*] i. e. *Media*, as appears in Josephus. Media therefore was yet subject to Assyria, which destroys the credit of the Ctesian kings of Media, who, as he reports, having revolted from and beaten Sardanapalus, had now reigned a long time, Arbaces being the first of them; whereas Herodotus makes Dejoces the first. See chap. xvii. 6.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Ahaz, the son of pious Jotham, degenerated greatly from the steps of his holy ancestors. The idolatry of Israel pleased him better than the pure worship of Judah; and Molech is preferred to the glorious Jehovah. He sacrifices on the high places, which his fathers, though they left them, had never used; and, as if unsatisfied with lesser abominations, made his own son pass between, or through, the fires of lustration, to the honour of his hateful idols. *Note*; (1.) They who provoke God to give them up, lose every natural affection, and turn monsters instead of men. (2.) The desperate wickedness of the heart of man, when left to itself, who can know?

2dly, The sin of Ahaz soon brought him into deep distress, Isa. vii. 2. His country was ravaged, Elath lost, and his capital besieged by the confederate forces of Syria and Israel. Yet, far from having recourse to God, or depending on his promises, Isa. vii. 4—16. he rather trusted in an arm of flesh; and, to engage the king of Assyria to make a diversion in his favour, robbed the house of God of the dedicated treasures, impoverished his own, and professed himself the vassal of an idolatrous Assyrian, rather than be the servant of the King of kings, who was so much better able to deliver him. The project succeeded: the king of Syria was slain, his capital taken, and his people led captive to Kir, as foretold Amos, i. 5. *Note*; (1.) God is the last resource that a sinner will fly to. (2.) They who cast off God's government make themselves quickly the worst of slaves. (3.) When men by their wickedness involve themselves in trouble, they will scarcely stop at any fraud or injustice to extricate themselves from it.

VOL. II.

*Ver. 11. Urijah the priest built an altar, &c.]* It must not be denied, that the high priest carried his complaisance much too far in obeying the king's injunction, which he ought to have opposed with all his interest and power. God prescribed to Moses in what form and with what materials he was to make the altar, Exod. xxvii. 1, &c. The altar which Solomon made, indeed, was four times as large, 2 Chron. iv. 1. But when God gave such solemn testimony of his approbation of it, there was no touching it without impiety. For the high priest could not but know that this innovation of the king's did not proceed from any principle of religion, but from a design to degrade the altar of the Lord, as well as the other sacred vessels of the temple. But what shall we say to this? There will, in all ages, be some men found ready to execute the most impious commands that can possibly come from the throne. See Patrick and Calmet.

REFLECTIONS.—He who had enslaved his body to Assyria's king, now enslaves his soul to Assyria's idols.

1. On a visit to the king of Assyria, to congratulate him on his success, and to pay him the homage that he had promised, he saw at Damascus, whilst probably he joined with him in his idol-sacrifices, an altar which much pleased him for its beauty; and instantly he resolves to copy it, sends the model to Urijah the priest, and bids him prepare just such another against his return.

2. Urijah, a true court priest, to gratify his master, consents to prostitute his office; and Ahaz, at his return, is vastly pleased with the altar, offers on it his burnt-offerings; and though the priest had some shame left, and set it behind the brazen altar, the king will have the old altar thrown by, and will consider what to do with it, whilst his own is advanced into its place; and Urijah basely complies. *Note*; (1.) Of all characters, a sycophant priest is the most detestable. (2.) Court air is dangerous to breathe in: they who set their hearts on rising, rather than offend their great patrons, will worship at their altars, and comply with their evil ways.

upon it all the blood of the burnt-offering, and all the blood of the sacrifice: and the brazen altar shall be for me to enquire by.

15 Thus did Urijah the priest, according to all that king Ahaz commanded.

17 ¶ And king Ahaz cut off the borders of the bases, and removed the laver from off them; and took down the sea from off the brazen oxen that were under it, and put it upon a pavement of stones.

18 And the covert for the sabbath that they had built in the house, and the king's entry without, turned he from the house of the LORD for the king of Assyria.

19 ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Ahaz which he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

20 And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David: and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

## CHAP. XVII.

*Hoshea reigns in Samaria nine years; Shalmaneser takes Samaria, carries Israel away captive, and sends other inhabitants, who are devoured by lions.*

[Before Christ 724.]

**I**N the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah began Hoshea the son of Elah to reign in Samaria over Israel nine years.

*Ver. 18. And the covert for the sabbath*] Something, perhaps, which was made for this purpose, that, on the sabbath days, there coming a great throng, the porch not being able to contain them, they might be kept under this covering from the injuries of the weather. Houbigant supposes that it was something of this kind. The prophet Ezekiel tells us expressly, that the gate of the inner court which looked towards the east was opened only on the sabbath, and on the day of the new moon; and that on these days the king was to enter the temple at this gate, and to continue at the entrance of the priests' court (where was the brazen scaffold which Solomon erected, 2 Chron. vi. 13. a place for the king to pay his devotions on) until his sacrifices were offered: and if so, the word מִסְכָּה *musak*, which we translate *covert*, might be a kind of *canopy*, or other covered place under which the king sat when he came to the service of the temple on the sabbath, or other great solemnities, and which was therefore called *the covert of the sabbath*: and the reason why the king ordered this to be taken away was, because he intended to trouble himself no more with coming to the temple, and by this action to express his hatred and contempt of the sabbath, as his removing the

2 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel that were before him.

3 ¶ Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents.

4 And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and brought no present to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year: therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison.

5 ¶ Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years.

6 In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

7 For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, which had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods,

8 And walked in the statutes of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made.

9 And the children of Israel did secretly

bases, the laver, and the brazen sea, ver. 17. was palpably with a design to deface the service of God in the temple, and thence to bring it into public disesteem. But, in the midst of his days, God, in mercy to his people, stopped his career of wickedness, and at thirty-six years of age he died, and left his crown to his most worthy successor and son Hezekiah.

## CHAP. XVII.

*Ver. 3. Shalmaneser king of Assyria*] Shalmaneser, who, in Hosea, x. 14. is called *Shalman*, and in Tobit, i. 2. *Enemessar*, was the son and successor of Arbaces, or Tiglathpileser, and according to Josephus, who has quoted a passage from Menander, mention was made of him, and of his conquest over the land of Israel, in the history of the Tyrians.

*Ver. 4. So, king of Egypt*] This *So* seems to be the same as *Sabachon*, the Ethiopian king of Egypt, of whom Herodotus relates, that being warned in a dream, he departed of his own accord from Egypt, after he had reigned there fifteen years. In the beginning of Hezekiah's reign he invaded Egypt, and having taken Boccharis the king thereof prisoner,

those things that were not right against the LORD their God, and they built them high places in all their cities, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

10 And they set them up images and groves in every high hill, and under every green tree :

11 And there they burned incense in all the high places, as did the heathen whom the LORD carried away before them; and wrought wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger :

12 For they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing.

13 Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets.

14 Notwithstanding they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God.

15 And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them.

16 And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal.

17 And they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire, and used divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

18 Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.

19 Also Judah kept not the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made.

prisoner, with great cruelty burned him alive, and then seized on his kingdom.

Ver. 6. Carried Israel away into Assyria, &c.] The policy of any prince in transplanting a conquered people in another country, is, to prevent their combining (which they cannot so well do in a strange land, and amongst a mixed multitude of different languages), in order to shake off their uneasy yoke, and recover their liberty. Among other rich things which Shalmaneser took and carried away in this expedition was the golden calf which Jeroboam had set up at Bethel, and which ever since his time had been worshipped by the ten tribes that had revolted with him from the house of David, as the other golden calf, which he set up at the same time at Dan, had been taken thence about ten years before by Tiglath-pileser, when he invaded Galilee, the province wherein that city stood. See Prideaux, A. 729. and Seder Olam Rabbi, ch. xxii.

Placed them in—the cities of the Medes] Media was then subject to the king of Assyria, which destroys the credit of Ctesias. The king of Assyria here mentioned, Shalmaneser, is not the same king who is mentioned ver. 24. of this chapter (see Ezra, iv. 2.); unless Shalmaneser and Esarhaddon was the same king. Marsham makes them to be two different kings. Stackhouse would render the latter part of this verse, be placed them in Halab, and by the river Habor, in Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

Ver. 18. And removed them out of his sight] A very strong expression to signify God's rejection and total removal of this apostate people from his care and Providence.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Hoshea, the last of Israel's kings, lost with shame the throne that he had ascended by perjury and murder. We have here,

1. Israel become tributary, as a prelude to their final destruction. Though their king was not so bad as his predecessors, the people continued as bad as ever; and therefore God sold them into the hand of Shalmaneser. Note; (1.) God tries lesser judgments before he strikes the final blow. (2.) They who sell themselves to the service of sin, will shortly find the wages of it to be eternal ruin.

2. Utterly destroyed and dispersed, Hoshea, by the help of So, king of Æthiopia, rebelled against the king of Assyria; but he suffered for his falsehood: his country is ravaged, his capital besieged, and, after three years resistance, taken; himself made prisoner; and, in order to prevent any future revolt, all the people of any note carried away captive, and dispersed in the north of Assyria, and in the cities of Media; whilst colonies of Assyrians are put in possession of their fruitful land, under whom the remainder of this miserable nation might be husbandmen and vine-dressers, and serve, in other menial employments, their proud conquerors. What guilty nation sinning against gospel-grace need not tremble, that reads the catastrophe of God's once favoured people!

Thus ended the kingdom of Israel, which, from its commencement under Jeroboam, had continued two hundred and fifty-five years.

2dly, To vindicate the ways of God to man, and show the causes why Israel was thus abandoned to ruin, the sacred

20 And the LORD rejected all the seed of Israel, and afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of spoilers, until he had cast them out of his sight.

21 For he rent Israel from the house of David; and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king: and Jeroboam drave Israel from following the LORD, and made them sin a great sin.

22 For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they departed not from them;

23 Until the LORD removed Israel out of his sight, as he had said by all his servants the prophets. So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.

24 ¶ And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from

Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed *them* in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof.

25 And *so* it was at the beginning of their dwelling there, *that* they feared not the LORD: therefore the LORD sent lions among them, which slew *some* of them.

26 Wherefore they spake to the king of Assyria, saying, The nations which thou hast removed, and placed in the cities of Samaria, know not the manner of the God of the land: therefore he hath sent lions among them, and, behold, they slay them, because they know not the manner of the God of the land.

27 Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, Carry thither one of the priests whom

sacred historian, after relating their dispersion, declares the just reasons of God's procedure.

1. Their sins great, numberless, aggravated, and incorrigible, had provoked his judgment.

(1.) *Base ingratitude.* God had rescued them from the iron bondage of Egypt; after many wonderful interpositions, had bestowed on them the land of the heathen; and, to crown all, had given them the plainest direction for their conduct, and the most glorious promises to encourage their obedience. But all would not engage their hearts to him; they forgot the God of their mercies, and turned from him to idols.

(2.) *Wilful disobedience.* They rejected God's covenant, left all his commandments, and sold themselves to work wickedness, as slaves by willing choice to their lusts: and if for a time restrained, through fear or shame, from open and avowed impiety, they still, in secret, indulged their abandoned hearts, and continued as bad as ever.

(3.) *Gross idolatry.* Of all their sins this was the most provoking: against it they had received especial warnings; and, because of it, had seen God's heavy judgments on the heathen. Yet, they not only learned their ways, but became worse than the idolaters whom they imitated. They readily kissed the calves that the wicked Jeroboam erected; adopted all their neighbours' gods, worshipped the hosts of heaven, the sun, moon, and planets; yea, so mad were they upon their idols, that there was scarcely a grove, or a spreading tree, without an image under it. Every city, yea, every village, even to the meanest watch-tower, had its hill-altar, till they were multiplied *as heaps in the furrows of the field*, Hof. xii. 11. There they offered incense to these strange gods; and so lost to natural affection, so begottered were they in their adulterous rage after these abominations, that their very children were led through the fires, or burnt in them, to honour these diabolical deities. Lord, what is man!

(4.) *Hardened incorrigibleness.* Prophet after prophet did

God raise up to warn them; and, to enforce the word of *their* mouth, he smote them with the sword of his corrections; but under both they proved alike impenitent. They regarded not the warning voice, nor repented under the stroke of judgment. Therefore, when every method of recovery was fruitless,

2. God removed them out of his sight, according to the word of his prophets. The rod of his anger was the Assyrian, but the destruction was from the Almighty.

*Ver. 25. Therefore the Lord sent lions among them]* Josephus, in this part of the history, varies from the sacred text. For, instead of the increase of *lions* which destroyed the people, he tells us that they were visited with a dreadful *plague*, so that the place was in a manner depopulated by it. But allowing it to be lions, why should these new inhabitants be afflicted with these creatures *for not fearing the Lord*, when the Israelites, who feared the Lord as little as they, were never infested with any such thing? The Israelites, indeed, were addicted to idolatry, but then they did not deny the divine power and Providence; only they imagined that their idols were the intermediate causes whereby the blessings of the supreme God might be conveyed to them: whereas these new comers believed the idols they worshipped to be true gods, and had no conceptions higher. They had no notion of one eternal, almighty, and independent being: they took the God of Israel to be such a one as their own; a local god, whose care and power extended no further than to one particular nation or people; and therefore, to rectify their sentiments in this particular, he took this method to let them know that *all the beasts of the forest were his*, and that whenever he is incensed with a people, he wants no instruments to execute his wrath; the air, the earth, the elements, and creatures of any kind, can avenge him and punish them. See Lev. xxvi. 22. Jer. xv. 3. and Calmet, and Scheuchzer on the place.

*Ver.*



ye brought from thence; and let them go and dwell there, and let him teach them the manner of the God of the land.

28 Then one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and dwelt in Beth-el, and taught them how they should fear the LORD.

29 Howbeit every nation made gods of their own, and put *them* in the houses of the

high places which the Samaritans had made, every nation in their cities wherein they dwelt.

30 And the men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, and the men of Cuth made Nergal, and the men of Hamath made Ashima,

31 And the Avites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burned their children in fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech, the gods of Sepharvaim.

*Ver. 30. The men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, &c.]* We have here an account of the idols, which were consecrated by the different nations transplanted by the king of Assyria to Samaria. It is difficult, however, (and has afforded a large field for conjecture,) to give any satisfactory account concerning them: the reader will find in Selden, Voslius, and Jurieu, much upon the subject. *טכרות בנות Succoth-benoth* may be literally translated, *the tabernacles of the daughters, or young women.* Herodotus, lib. i. cap. 199. gives us a particular account of their detestable service; but it is too bad to mention. See Baruch, vi. 43. This abomination, implied by *Succoth-benoth*, the men of Babylon brought with them into the country of Samaria; and both the name of the idol *Melitta*, and the execrable service performed to her honour, shew that by *Melitta* was originally intended the same as the *Venus* of the Greeks and Romans. See the beginning of Lucretius's first book, *De Rerum Nat.* Mr. Selden imagines that some traces of the *Succoth-benoth*, may be found in *Sicca-Veneria*, the name of a city in Numidia, not far from the borders of Africa Propria. See Univ. Hist. vol. xvii. p. 295., and Parkhurst's Lexicon on the word *ך*.

*The men of Cuth made Nergal]* *Cuth* was a province of Assyria, which, according to some, lies upon the Araxis; but others rather think it to be the same with *Cush*, which is said by Moses to be encompassed with the river Gihon, and must therefore be the same with the country which the Greeks call *Susiana*, and which to this day is called by the inhabitants *Cbusista*. Their idol *Nergal* seems to have been the *sun*, as the causer of the diurnal and annual revolutions of the planets; for it is naturally derived from *נר* *ner*, *light*, and *גל* *gal*, *to revolve*. The Rabbis say, that the idol was represented in the shape of a cock, and probably they tell us the truth; for this seems a very proper emblem. Among the latter heathens, we find the cock was sacred to Apollo, or the Sun, (see Pierii Hieroglyph. p. 223.) "Because," says Heliodorus, speaking of the time when cocks crow, "by a natural sensation of the sun's revolution to us, they are incited to salute the god." *Æthiop. lib. i.* And perhaps under this name *Nergal* they meant to worship the sun, not only for the diurnal return of its light upon the earth, but also for its annual return or revolution. We may observe that the emblem, a *cock*, is affected by the latter as well as by the former, and is frequently crowing both day and night when the days begin to lengthen. See Calmet, and Parkhurst's Lexicon.

*The men of Hamath made Ashima]* There are several cities and countries which go under the name of *Hamath*; but

what we take to be here meant is that province of Syria which lies upon the Orontes, wherein there was a city of the same name; which when Shalmaneser had taken, he removed the inhabitants from thence into Samaria. Their idol *אשמה Ashima* signifies the *atoner or expiator*, from *אשם asham*. The word is in a Chaldee form; and seems to be the same as *אשמת שמרון asmath shomron*, the *sin of Samaria*, mentioned Amos, viii. 14. where *asmath* is rendered by the LXX *propitiation*. It is known to every one who has the least acquaintance with the mythology of the heathens, how strongly and universally they retained the tradition of an *atonement or expiation for sin*, although they expected it from a false object and false means. We find it expressed in very clear terms among the Romans; even so late as the time of Horace, lib. i. ode 2.;

Cui dabit partes scelus expiandi  
Jupiter——?

And whom, to expiate the horrid guilt,  
Will Jove appoint?

The answer is, "Apollo," the god of light. Some think that as *Afuman*, or *Suman*, in the Persian language, signifies *heaven*, the Syrians might from hence derive the name of this God; who they suppose was represented by a large stone pillar, terminating in a conic or pyramidal figure, whereby they denoted *fire*. See Parkhurst on the word *אשם asham*, Calmet, and Tennison on Idolatry.

*Ver. 31. The Avites made Nibbaz and Tartak]* It is uncertain who these *Avites* were. The most probable opinion seems to be that which Grotius has suggested, by observing that there are a people in Bactriana mentioned by Ptolemy under the name of *Avadia*, who possibly might be those transported at this time into Palestine by Shalmaneser. *Nibbaz* according to the Rabbis had the shape of a dog, much like the Anubis of the Egyptians. In Pierius's Hieroglyphics, p. 53. is the figure of a *cynocephalus*, a kind of ape, with a head like a dog, standing upon his hinder feet; and *looking earnestly* at the moon. Pierius there teaches us, that the *cynocephalus* was an animal eminently sacred among the Egyptians, hieroglyphical of the moon. See Johnston. *Nat. Hist. de Quadruped.* p. 100. This being observed, the *נבהז nibbaz*, (which may well be derived from *נבח nabach*, *to bark*, and *חזח chazach*, *to see*.) gives us reason to conclude that this idol was in the shape of a cynocephalus, or a dog looking, barking, or howling at the moon. It is obvious to common observation, that dogs in general have this property; and an idol of the form just mentioned, seems to have been originally designed to represent the power or influence of the moon on all  
sublunary

32 So they feared the LORD, and made unto themselves of the lowest of them priests of the high places, which sacrificed for them in the houses of the high places.

33 They feared the LORD, and served their own gods, after the manner of the nations whom they carried away from thence.

34 Unto this day they do after the former manners: they fear not the LORD, neither do they after their statutes, or after their ordinances, or after the law and commandment which the LORD commanded the children of Jacob, whom he named Israel;

35 With whom the LORD had made a covenant, and charged them, saying, Ye shall not fear other gods, nor bow yourselves to them, nor serve them, nor sacrifice to them:

36 But the LORD, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt with great power

and a stretched-out arm, him shall ye fear, and him shall ye worship, and to him shall ye do sacrifice.

37 And the statutes, and the ordinances, and the law, and the commandment, which he wrote for you, ye shall observe to do for evermore; and ye shall not fear other gods.

38 And the covenant that I have made with you ye shall not forget; neither shall ye fear other gods.

39 But the LORD your God ye shall fear; and he shall deliver you out of the hand of all your enemies.

40 Howbeit they did not hearken, but they did after their former manner.

41 So these nations feared the LORD, and served their graven images, both their children, and their children's children: as did their fathers, so do they unto this day.

sublunary bodies, with which the cynocephalus and dogs are so eminently affected. So, as we have observed upon *Nergal*, the influence of the returning solar light was represented by a cock, and the generative power of the heavens by *Dagon*, a fishy idol. See Parkhurst on נכחז, who is of opinion that *Tartak* תרתק is compounded of תר *tor*, to turn, go round, and רתק *ratak*, to chain, tether, and plainly denotes the heavens, considered as confining the planets in their respective orbits, as if they were tethered. The Jews have a tradition, that the emblem of this idol was an ass; which, considering the propriety of that animal when tethered to represent this idol, is not improbable; and from this idolatrous worship of the Samaritans, joined perhaps with some confused account of the cherubim, seems to have sprung that stupid story of the heathens, that the Jews had an ass's head in their Holy of Holies, to which they paid religious worship. See Bochart, vol. ii. p. 221. Jurieu is of opinion, that as the word *Nibhaz*, both in the Hebrew and Chaldee, with a small variation, denotes quick, swift, rapid; and *tartak* in the same languages signifies a chariot, these two idols may both together denominate the sun mounted on his car, as the fictions of the poets and the notions of the mythologists were wont to represent that luminary.

*The Sepharvites burned their children—to Adrammelech, and Anammelech*] As the Sepharvites, probably, came from the cities of the Medes, whither the Israelites were carried captive, and as Herodotus tells us that between Colchis and Media are found a people called *Saspires*; in all likelihood they were the same with those here named *Sepharvites*. *Molech*, *Milcom*, and *Melech*, in the language of different nations, all signify a king, and imply the sun, which was called the king of heaven; and therefore the addition of אדר *adar*, which signifies powerful, illustrious, to the one, and of ענמ *anem*, which implies to return, to answer, to the other, means no more than the mighty, or the oracular

*Molech*. And as the children were offered to him, it appears that he was the same with the Moloch of the Ammonites. See Univ. Hist. and Calmet.

*Ver. 33. They feared the Lord and served their own gods, &c.*] The imaginary vengeance which the tutelary god was supposed to take on those, who, inhabiting his land, yet slighted his worship, was really taken on the Cutheans, when they came to cultivate the land of Israel; for the Almighty having, in condescension to the prejudices of the Israelites, assumed the title of a tutelary local god, and chosen Judea for his peculiar regency, it appeared but fit that he should discharge in good earnest the imaginary functions of those tutelary gods, in order to distinguish himself both to the Jews from lying vanities, and to the Gentiles by some illustrious display of power. Therefore when so great a portion of his chosen people had been led captive, and a rabble of pagans were put into their possessions, he sent plagues among them for their idolatrous profanation of the Holy Land; which calamity their own pagan principles enabled them easily to account for. The account is given, ver. 24, &c. But lest this miraculous interposition should be misunderstood as an encouragement of the notion of local gods, or of an intercommunity of worship, rather than a vindication of the sanctity of that country which was consecrated to the God of Israel, the sacred historian goes on to acquaint us with the perverse influence that this judgment had on the new inhabitants, so contrary to the divine intention. *They feared the Lord, and served their own gods*; i. e. they feared the vengeance impending on the exclusion of the worship of the God of Israel: *but they feared not the Lord, neither did they after their statutes*; i. e. they transgressed the commandment which they found so frequently repeated in the Pentateuch, of joining no other worship to that of the God of Israel. Div. Leg. vol. iv. p. 43.

*Vers.*

## C H A P. XVIII.

*Hezekiah reigns twenty-nine years. He destroys idolatry, and shakes off the yoke of the Assyrians. Salmanser besieges Samaria. Sennacherib sends Rab-shakeb to Jerusalem, who exhorts the people not to confide in Hezekiah or his God, but to deliver themselves up to the king of Assyria.*

[Before Christ 727.]

**N**OW it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign.

2 Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign; and he reigned twenty and nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name

also was Abi, the daughter of Zachariah.

3 And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did.

4 ¶ He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan.

5 He trusted in the LORD God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.

## C H A P. XVIII.

*Ver. 2. Twenty and five years old was he when he began to reign*] In chap. xvi. 2. it is recorded, that Ahaz was but twenty years old when he began to reign, and that he reigned sixteen years before he died, so that he lived in the whole six and thirty years. Now his son Hezekiah is said to be five and twenty years old when he began to reign, and consequently he must have been born when his father exceeded not twelve years of age. Houbigant observes, that in the parallel place, 2 Chron. xxviii. 1. the Syriac, Arabic, and LXX read, *Ahaz was twenty-five years old when he began to reign.*

*Ver. 4. He removed the high places, &c.*] It was a great demonstration of Hezekiah's sincere piety and zeal towards God, that he began so soon to reform the corruption of religion, and did not stay till he had established himself in his throne. He might, however, think that the surest way so to establish himself, was, to establish the true worship of God; though he could not but foresee that he ran a great hazard in attempting the abolition of idolatry, which had been confirmed by so many years prescription. See 2 Chron. xxix. &c. The reason why Hezekiah destroyed the brazen serpent, we are told, was because the children of Israel burned incense to it: not that we are to suppose, that all along, from the days of Moses, this brazen serpent was made an object of religious worship. This is what neither David, nor Solomon in the beginning of his reign, would have allowed of; nor can we think but that Aza or Jehoshaphat, when they rooted out idolatry, would have made an end of this, had they perceived that the people at that time either paid worship or burned incense to it. The commencement of this superstition, therefore, must be of later date; probably from the time that Ahab's family, by being allied to the crown of Judah by marriage, introduced all kinds of idolatry. One false inducement to the worship of this image, might be a mistake of the words of Moses, Numb. xxi. 8. *Whoever looketh upon it shall live*, whence they might think, by its mediation to obtain a blessing. However, we may imagine, that their burning incense, or any other perfumes before it, was designed only in honour of the true God, by whose direction Moses made it: but then, in process of their superstition,

they either worshipped the God of Israel under that image, or, what is worse, substituted a heathen god in his room, and worshipped the brazen serpent as his image; which they might the more easily be induced to do, because the practice of some neighbouring nations was, to worship their gods under the form of a serpent. Upon this account Hezekiah wisely chose, rather to lose this memorial of God's wonderful mercy, than to suffer it any longer to be abused to idolatry; and therefore he brake it in pieces, that is, as the Talmudists express it, "He ground it to powder, and then scattered it in the air, that there might not be the least remains of it." And yet, notwithstanding all the care which he took to destroy it, Sigonius, in his history of Italy, tells us, that in the church of St. Ambrose in Milan, they shew a brazen serpent intire, which they pretend to be the very same with that erected by Moses in the wilderness; though it must be owned, that among their learned men there are some who acknowledge the cheat, and disclaim it. See Le Clerc, and Prid. Connect. A. 726. Parkhurst observes, that the name *Nehushtan*, נחשתן, seems a compound of נחש *nichesh*, to divine, and תן *ten*, a serpent, and so denotes the divining spirit; and therefore, he thinks the passage should be rendered: *Hezekiah brake the serpent of brass which Moses made, because even to those days the children of Israel were burning incense to it, and called it Nehushtan.* So the Targum renders the latter part of the verse, and they were calling it *Nehushtan*. This implies, that the children of Israel had so far perverted the use of this eminent type of Christ, as to apply to it for magical purposes, as the heathens did to their sacred serpents, or serpentine images; and that therefore Hezekiah brake it. Houbigant translates in the same manner.

*Ver. 5. After him was none like him, &c.*] This same commendation is given to Josiah, chap. xxiii. 25. so that it must relate to some particular virtue wherein Hezekiah stood distinguished from the rest of the kings of Judah; and that this was his trusting in the Lord God of Israel, as it is in the beginning of the verse, and not in the help of any foreign forces, as all the other kings, even the most renowned for their piety, are known to have done in some measure. See Calmet.

6 For he clave to the LORD, *and* departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses.

7 And the LORD was with him; *and* he prospered whithersoever he went forth: and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not.

8 He smote the Philistines, *even* unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

9 ¶ And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Hezekiah, which *was* the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against Samaria, and besieged it.

10 And at the end of three years they took it: *even* in the sixth year of Hezekiah, that *is* the ninth year of Hoshea king of Israel, Samaria was taken.

11 And the king of Assyria did carry away Israel unto Assyria, and put them in Halah and in Habor *by* the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes:

12 Because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed his covenant, *and* all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded, and would not hear *them*, nor do *them*.

13 ¶ Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria

come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them.

14 And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest on me I will bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold.

15 And Hezekiah gave *him* all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house.

16 At that time did Hezekiah cut off *the gold from* the doors of the temple of the LORD, and *from* the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.

17 ¶ And the king of Assyria sent Tartan and Rabaris and Rab-shakeh from Lachish to king Hezekiah with a great host against Jerusalem. And they went up and came to Jerusalem. And when they were come up, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which *is* in the highway of the fuller's field.

18 And when they had called to the king, there came out to them Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, which *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder.

19 And Rab-shakeh said unto them, Speak

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REFLECTIONS.—Though Israel was gone into captivity, Judah yet remained, and in a state of great prosperity, under the pious Hezekiah.

1. He copied after the best of his progenitors, though the son of the worst; and was, like David in heart and temper, devoted to God's worship and service: nor did he, as some before him, begin well and end ill, but persevered to the last in constant dependance upon God, and unshaken fidelity to him under all his trials: so that in this, neither before nor after him was any like him of the kings of Judah. *Note;* (1.) God, in the darkest times, can raise up in his church the most burning and shining lights; let not his people therefore despair. (2.) The more obstacles are in the way, the more does the grace of God appear great and glorious in overcoming them. (3.) Perseverance in the truth, is the crown of fidelity.

2. His zeal for God's glory immediately appeared on his accession to the throne. He applied no palliatives to the deep and prevailing idolatry, but laid the axe to the root of the tree. Undismayed through fear of oppo-

sition, he not only destroyed the groves and images, but also removed the high places, which had so long been abused, and which the most pious of his predecessors connived at. *Note;* (1.) They need not fear, who boldly trust on God in the path of duty. (2.) No length of custom can consecrate an evil practice. (3.) If our parents have dishonoured God, it is our honour to be unlike them.

3. God blessed him in all his undertakings. Having delivered the nation from the yoke of idolatry, he bravely threw off the yoke of the king of Assyria's usurped dominion, and recovered from the hand of the Philistines the cities that his father had lost, 2 Chron. xviii. 18. *Note;* Fidelity in God's service, will be ever accompanied with his blessing.

*Ver. 13. Now in the fourteenth year, &c.]* As what remains of this chapter, together with the contents of the 19th and 20th, are found in the book of the prophet Isaiah, and with some additional circumstances, we shall defer our comment upon them till we come to that place.

ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest?

20 Thou sayest, (but *they are but* vain words,) *I have* counsel and strength for the war. Now on whom dost thou trust, that thou rebellest against me?

21 Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, *even* upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him.

22 But if ye say unto me, We trust in the LORD our God: *is* not that he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and hath said to Judah and Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem?

23 Now therefore, I pray thee, give pledges to my lord the king of Assyria, and I will deliver thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them.

24 How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?

25 Am I now come up without the LORD against this place to destroy it? The LORD said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.

26 Then said Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and Shebna, and Joah, unto Rab-shakeh, Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and talk not with us in the Jews' language in the ears of the people that *are* on the wall.

27 But Rab-shakeh said unto them, Hath my master sent me to thy master, and to thee, to speak these words? *hath* he not sent me to the men which sit on the wall, that they may eat their own dung, and drink their own piss with you?

28 ¶ Then Rab-shakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and spake, saying, Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria:

29 Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah

deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you out of his hand:

30 Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

31 Harken not unto Hezekiah: for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make *an agreement* with me by a present, and come out to me, and *then* eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig-tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his cistern:

32 Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil olive and of honey, that ye may live, and not die: and hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you, saying, The LORD will deliver us.

33 Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria?

34 Where *are* the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? where *are* the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand?

35 Who *are* they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?

36 But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not.

37 Then came Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, which *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder, to Hezekiah with *their* clothes rent, and told him the words of Rab-shakeh.

## CHAP. XIX.

*Hezekiah, mourning, sendeth to Isaiah to pray for him; he comforteth him: Sennacherib sendeth a blasphemous letter to Hezekiah; Hezekiah's prayer. An angel slayeth the Assyrians: Sennacherib is slain by his own sons\*.*

[Before Christ 710.]

**A**ND it came to pass, when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his clothes, and

\* See the Annotations and Reflections on Isaiah, ch. xxxvii. where this chapter is repeated nearly word for word.

covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD.

2 And he sent Eliakim, which *was* over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz.

3 And they said unto him, Thus saith Hezekiah, This day *is* a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and blasphemy: for the children are come to the birth, and *there is* not strength to bring forth.

4 It may be the LORD thy God will hear all the words of Rab-shakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God; and will reprove the words which the LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up *thy* prayer for the remnant that are left.

5 So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

6 ¶ And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.

7 Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

8 ¶ So Rab-shakeh returned, and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish.

9 And when he heard say of Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, Behold, he is come out to fight against thee: he sent messengers again unto Hezekiah, saying,

10 Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

11 Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly: and shalt thou be delivered?

12 Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed; as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden which *were* in Thelasar?

13 Where *is* the king of Hamath, and the

king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Hena, and Ivah?

14 ¶ And Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up into the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.

15 And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said, O LORD God of Israel, which dwellest *between* the cherubims, thou art the God, *even* thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth.

16 LORD, bow down thine ear, and hear: open, LORD, thine eyes, and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, which hath sent him to reproach the living God.

17 Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands,

18 And have cast their gods into the fire: for they *were* no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them.

19 Now therefore, O LORD our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou *art* the LORD God, *even* thou only.

20 ¶ Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, *That* which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard.

21 This *is* the word that the LORD hath spoken concerning him; The virgin the daughter of Zion hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn; the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.

22 Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted *thy* voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? *even* against the Holy *One* of Israel.

23 By thy messengers thou hast reproached the LORD, and hast said, With the multitude of my chariots I am come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon, and will cut down the tall cedar-trees thereof, and the choice fir-trees thereof: and I will enter into the lodgings of his borders, and into the forest of his Carmel.

24 I have digged and drunk strange waters, and

and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of besieged places.

25 Hast thou not heard long ago *how* I have done it, *and* of ancient times that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass, that thou shouldest be to lay waste fenced cities *into* ruinous heaps.

26 Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded; they were *as* the grass of the field, and *as* the green herb, *as* the grass on the house tops, and *as* corn blasted before it be grown up.

27 But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me.

28 Because thy rage against me and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.

29 And this *shall be* a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year such things as grow of themselves, and in the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye, and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruits thereof.

30 And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.

31 For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD *of hosts* shall do this.

32 Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it.

33 By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD.

34 For I will defend this city, to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

35 ¶ And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote

in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they *were* all dead corpses.

36 So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.

37 And it came to pass, as he was worshipping, in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword: and they escaped into the land of Armenia. And Efarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.

## CHAP. XX.

*Hezekiah, receiving a message of death, by prayer hath his life lengthened. The sun goeth ten degrees backward for a sign. Manasseh succeeds Hezekiah\*.*

[Before Christ 714.]

**I**N those days was Hezekiah sick unto death. And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thine house in order; for thou shalt die, and not live.

2 Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, saying,

3 I beseech thee, O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done *that which is good* in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.

4 And it came to pass, afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying,

5 Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the LORD, the God of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD.

6 And I will add unto thy days fifteen years; and I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

7 And Isaiah said, Take a lump of figs. And they took and laid *it* on the boil, and he recovered.

\* See the Annotations and Reflections on ch. xxxviii. of Isaiah.



8 ¶ And Hezekiah said unto Ifaiah, What shall be the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the LORD the third day?

9 And Ifaiah said, This sign shalt thou have of the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that he hath spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees?

10 And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees: nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees.

11 And Ifaiah the prophet cried unto the LORD: and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz.

12 ¶ At that time Berodach-baladan, the son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present unto Hezekiah: for he had heard that Hezekiah had been sick.

13 And Hezekiah hearkened unto them, and shewed them all the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not.

14 ¶ Then came Ifaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country, even from Babylon.

15 And he said, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All the things that are in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I

have not shewed them.

16 And Ifaiah said unto Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD.

17 Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD.

18 And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.

19 Then said Hezekiah unto Ifaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken. And he said, Is it not good, if peace and truth be in my days?

20 ¶ And the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and all his might, and how he made a pool, and a conduit, and brought water into the city, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

21 And Hezekiah slept with his fathers: and Manasseh his son reigned in his stead.

## CHAP. XXI.

*Manasseh reigns fifty-five years. He worships idols, and fills Jerusalem with innocent blood. He is succeeded by Amon, who is no better than his father, and is slain after a reign of two years. Josiah his son succeeds him.*

[Before Christ 698.]

**M**ANASSEH was twelve years old when he began to reign, and reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hephzi-bah.

2 And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.

## CHAP. XX.

*Ver. 21. And Hezekiah slept with his fathers*] See on 2 Chron. xxxii. 30. In the innermost and chief room of the royal sepulchre of the house of David was the body of Hezekiah, placed in a niche, which was at the upper end of the room, and, very likely, cut at that time on purpose to do him the greater honour. The prophets who are supposed to have been living in his son's and his reign, were Hosea, Joel, Nahum, Habakkuk, some say Obadiah, and Ifaiah, the greatest of them all.

## CHAP. XXI.

*Ver. 2. He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord*] Hezekiah's first care had been to rout all

idolatry out of his kingdom, and to restore the service of the temple to its pristine order and splendour. His graceless son, on the contrary, made it his study to banish religion and morality, to revive the old idolatry, and to introduce new and unheard-of idols and ceremonies; besides witchcraft, forceries, and every wicked custom which was used among the heathens far and near. Baal became now the favourite object of his worship. Moloch and the valley of Hinnom were now more frequented than ever; the impious king encouraging his impious subjects to sacrifice their children there, as Ahaz had done before. He did not, however, pass unpunished for these offences: but for the particulars of his punishment, which are not mentioned

3 For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.

4 And he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD said, In Jerusalem will I put my name.

5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.

6 And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used enchantments, and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

7 And he set a graven image of the grove that he had made in the house, of which the LORD said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever.

8 Neither will I make the feet of Israel move any more out of the land which I gave their fathers; only if they will observe to do

according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them.

9 But they hearkened not: and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel.

10 ¶ And the LORD spake by his servants the prophets, saying,

11 Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which were before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols:

12 Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Behold, I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle.

13 And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down.

14 And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of

mentioned in this book, we must refer to 2 Chron. xxxiii. 11, &c.

Ver. 3. *A grove*] Or, *Aschera* [*Astarte*].

Ver. 7. *Image of the grove, &c.*] *Image of Aschera, [Astarte] which he had made by the house, &c.* Houbigant.

REFLECTIONS.—Like the seven years famine of Ægypt, which made the former plenty forgotten, the wickedness of Manasseh blots out all the glorious work that his father had so piously accomplished.

1. Manasseh was young when he began his reign, and continued longest of any of the kings of Judah, reckoning the years of his captivity in Babylon. Whether he was immediately corrupted by those at court, who, amidst their pretended reformation, retained their love for the old abominations, and by flattery gained the ear of the unexperienced king; or whether only after he had children, ver. 6. he apostatized, is uncertain. *Note*: It is very dangerous to come too young to the possession of honour and greatness; so many are in wait to flatter such persons to their ruin.

2. His wickedness was beyond that of all his predecessors. Not warned by Israel's punishment, he adopted all their sins with circumstances of peculiar aggravation; despising, or rather as if designing to cast reproach on his father's proceedings, he began with rebuilding the high places that Hezekiah had destroyed. Baal and Ashtoreth once more reared up their hateful heads, and the hosts of heaven were the objects of his worship, instead of that God who made them. To profane God's holy temple, he dared

there erect his idol altars, filled the house and courts with these abominations, and there sacrificed to his gods. In the temple itself he placed the image of Ashtoreth, ver. 7. in opposition and defiance to God, provoking him to cast them off for ever, whom, on their fidelity, he had promised ever to protect and preserve. Madly attached to his idols, he made his son to pass through the fire, in honour to these false deities; and, superstitious as impious, he trusted in charms, and consulted wizards, as if the devil was a better oracle than the God who spoke from between the cherubims. Seduced by their king's example, the people in general followed him, and Judah was filled with idolatry, worse than the very heathen nations around them. *Note*: (1.) They who have had a religious education, when they give themselves up to evil, usually grow of all others the most profligate. (2.) Irreligion and superstition are nearly allied. They who cast off all fear of God, are often seen to be the greatest slaves to the illusions of the devil. (3.) A bad example is mortally infectious, and especially in kings: how much will they have to answer in the day of God, who are chargeable not only with their own blood, but with the murder of thousands of souls, whom they have seduced and destroyed?

Ver. 13. *I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, &c.*] See 2 Sam. viii. 2. The expression, *I will wipe Jerusalem, &c.* signifies, "I will take away all its inhabitants, as a dish is freed from its contents, by wiping, and turning it upside down."

Ver.

their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies;

15 Because they have done *that which was evil in my sight*, and have provoked me to anger, since the day their fathers came forth out of Egypt, even unto this day.

16 Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin, wherewith he made Judah to sin, in doing *that which was evil in the sight of the LORD*.

17 ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and all that he did, and his sin that he finned, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

18 And Manasseh slept with his fathers, and was buried in the garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzza: and Amon his son reigned in his stead.

19 ¶ Amon was twenty and two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Meshullemeth, the daughter of Haruz of Jotbah.

20 And he did *that which was evil in the sight of the LORD*, as his father Manasseh did.

21 And he walked in all the way that his father walked in, and served the idols that his father served, and worshipped them:

22 And he forsook the LORD God of his fathers, and walked not in the way of the LORD.

23 ¶ And the servants of Amon conspired against him, and slew the king in his own house.

24 And the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon; and

*Ver. 16. Manasseh shed innocent blood*] Among the rest of the prophets and other innocent persons put to death by Manasseh, Isaiah is generally numbered, who is said to have been *sawn asunder with a wooden saw*, to which the author of the epistle to the Hebrews is thought to allude, chap. xi. 37.

*Ver. 18. Manasseh was buried—in the garden of Uzza*] This garden, as some think, was made in that very spot of ground where Uzziah was struck dead for touching the ark of the Lord, 2 Sam. vi. 7. But others imagine, that this was the place where Uzziah, who died a leper, was buried, 2 Chron. xxvi. 23. and that Manasseh chose to be buried here, as unworthy; the sense of his former miscarriages not suffering him to think himself deserving of a place among his ancestors. It has been remarked by some of the Jewish writers, that two years is the usual term to which the sons of those kings arrived who provoked God to anger by their abominations; as they instance in the present case, in the son of Jeroboam, 1 Kings, xv. 25., the son of Baasha, chap. xvi. 8., and the son of Ahab, chap. xxii. 51.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. The charge brought against Manasseh. His vile idolatry, his infamous seduction of God's people; and, as the summit of his guilt, the blood of innocents which he shed, and even of God's prophets. This filled the measure of his iniquities to overflowing, and brought down the heavy wrath of a justly offended God. *Note*: (1.) The greatest kings must stand shortly as the meanest criminals at God's bar. (2.) The persecution of God's people is the crime which soonest fills the measure of a nation's sins.

2. The sentence pronounced upon him. A destruction so terrible, that the neighbour-nations should be astonished at the report. The same judgments should light on Jerusalem as Samaria, and the house of Manasseh be destroyed

as the house of Ahab. The country should be thoroughly plundered, ransacked, and made desolate, *spoiled* of all, as a dish wiped clean, and turned upside down, and all the inhabitants removed into a strange land. Since they had forsaken God, he would forsake them, and, taking now their former sins, from the day they left Egypt, into the account, reckon with them from first to last. *Note*: (1.) When by our perfidious apostacy we turn from God, old guilt, which had otherwise been cancelled, is recalled, to witness against and condemn us. (2.) They who forsake God must expect to be forsaken by him. (3.) When God visits for sin in the great day, then shall indeed the ears of sinners tingle at the dreadful sentence denounced upon them.

3. Manasseh's death is recorded; and his burial. Probably, on his penitence, see 2 Chron. xxxiii. he judged himself unworthy to lie in the royal sepulchres, and therefore was buried in his own garden, leaving his crown to his son, the heir of his idolatry, as well as his kingdom.

2dly, 1. Amon's reign and life were short, and his end tragical. He returned to those idolatries, which, in his latter days, his penitent father had suppressed, and thus by his wickedness hastened his death. A conspiracy was formed; and, after a reign of but two years, he was slain in his own house. *Note*: (1.) The evil that we have occasioned to others, we can never repair. When we would wish to undeceive those whom we have seduced, to our grief we find every effort vain. (2.) It is a mercy to a nation, that the career of a wicked king is short.

2. The men of Judah revenged his death on the conspirators, and set up Josiah his son in his stead; who, being an infant, they probably designed to rob of the crown: and they buried Amon with his father, in the garden of Uzza, as unworthy of a tomb among his illustrious predecessors.

the people of the land made Jofiah his fon king in his ftead.

25 ¶ Now the reft of the acts of Amon which he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

26 And he was buried in his fepulchre in the garden of Uzza: and Jofiah his fon reigned in his ftead.

## C H A P. XXII.

*Jofiah reigns thirty-one years: he repairs the ruins of the temple. Hilkiab finds the book of the law. Huldah the prophetefs foretels the deftruction of Jerufalem.*

[Before Chrift 623.]

**J**OSIAH *was* eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty and one years in Jerufalem. And his mother's name *was* Jedidah, the daughter of Adaiab of Bofcath.

2 And he did *that which was* right in the fight of the LORD, and walked in all the ways of David his father, and turned not afide to the right hand or to the left.

3 ¶ And it came to pafs in the eighteenth

## C H A P. XXII.

*Ver. 8. I have found the book of the law*] This is generally agreed to have been the archetype written by Mofes, and by him ordered to be deposited with the ark, in the moft holy place, but which fome pious high-priest had caufed to be thus hid in the reign of Ahaz or Manaffeh, to prevent its being destroyed with all the other copies of it; for it plainly appears by the tenour of the hiftory, that this was the only perfect one left. But it is much difputed, whether it was the whole Pentateuch, emphatically called *התורה hattorah*, the law, or only *Deuteronomy*, or even barely the 28th, 29th, 30th, and 31ft chapters of it. Jofephus, by calling it "the facred books of Mofes," feems to declare entirely for the former; others have declared for the latter, becaufe the book of Deuteronomy is a kind of repetition or epitome of the Mofaic law. Calmet, among fome others, holds the laft of thefe three opinions, and thinks that nothing more is meant here than that fhort fummary which is found in the above-mentioned chapters of that book; in which are contained all the bleffings and curfes that fo alarmed the pious monarch. But if either this fhort epitome, or even the whole Deuteronomy, was all that the high-priest found hid in the temple, when was the reft of the Pentateuch recovered? If it be faid, that there might be fome copies of this laft ftill extant, then this fummary muft have been in it; and it would be furprizing that fome one or more fhould not have been brought to fo good a king, after he had given fuch fignal proofs of his piety and zeal; and if any fuch had been prefented to him, he muft be fupposed to have neglected

year of king Jofiah, *that* the king fent Shaphan the fon of Azaliah, the fon of Meshullam, the fcribe, to the houfe of the LORD, faying,

4 Go up to Hilkiab the high priest, that he may fum the filver which is brought into the houfe of the LORD, which the keepers of the door have gathered of the people:

5 And let them deliver it into the hand of the doers of the work, that have the oversight of the houfe of the LORD: and let them give it to the doers of the work which *is* in the houfe of the LORD, to repair the breaches of the houfe.

6 Unto carpenters, and builders, and mafons, and to buy timber and hewn ftone to repair the houfe.

7 Howbeit there was no reckoning made with them of the money that was delivered into their hand, becaufe they dealt faithfully.

8 ¶ And Hilkiab the high priest faid unto Shaphan the fcribe, I have found the book of the law in the houfe of the LORD. And Hilkiab gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it.

the reading of it, or he could never have been under fuch furprize and fear at the reading of that which the high-priest fent to him. We therefore think, with the far greater number of Jews and Christians, that it was the whole Pentateuch; and that there might be ftill feveral imperfect and mutilated copies difperfed here and there, which might be now rectified by this prototype, after it was thus brought to light. If it be asked, how the king could run over thofe five books fo quickly as to come prefently to the bleffings and curfes; it may be answered, that as their manner was to write upon volumes of a confiderable length, which were rolled up round one or two fticks, it might fo happen, that thefe laft chapters were on the outside; and that the king, impatient to know the contents of it, might have curiofity to read in it, before he had unfolded a round or two. We are, however, very far from rejecting the notion of the Jews, who believe that Providence directed him to that very part. Something like this we find happened under the Gofpel, Luke, iv. 17. Acts, viii. 28, &c. What appears moft furprizing is, that all the copies of the Scripture, which the good king Hezekiah feems to have caufed to be written and difperfed about the kingdom, (fee Prov. xxv. 1.) fhould have fofoon vanifhed, that neither Jofiah, nor the high-priest had ever feen any of them till this one was brought to light. All that can be faid in this cafe is, that Manaffeh, during the former part of his reign, had made fuch havock of them, that if there were any left, they were only in a few private hands, who preferved them with the utmoft caution and fecrecy. See the Universal Hiftory.

REFLEC-

9 And Shaphan the scribe came to the king, and brought the king word again, and said, Thy servants have gathered the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of them that do the work, that have the oversight of the house of the LORD.

10 And Shaphan the scribe shewed the king, saying, Hilkiyah the priest hath delivered me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king.

11 And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the book of the law, that he rent his clothes.

12 And the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Michaiah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Afahiah a servant of the king's, saying,

13 Go ye, enquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not hearkened unto the words of this book, to

do according unto all that which is written concerning us.

14 So Hilkiyah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Afahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college;) and they communed with her.

15 ¶ And she said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me,

16 Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, *even* all the words of the book which the king of Judah hath read:

17 Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be kindled against this place, and shall not be quenched.

18 But to the king of Judah which sent you to enquire of the LORD, thus shall ye say

**REFLECTIONS.**—One merciful respite more is given to idolatrous Judah; another good king, to prove them, if yet they will bring forth fruit, before the axe is laid to the root of the tree.

1. Though Josiah was very young, but eight years of age, when he came to the crown, he gave very early symptoms of uncommon piety, and all his days the fruit answered the promising blossoms. *Note;* Early piety is peculiarly pleasing and promising.

2. As soon as he was fit to take the reins of government into his own hand, he began to reform the interrupted worship, and repair the decayed temple of God. Nearly the same method seems to be taken, as in the days of Joash, chap. xii. to collect the money, and the same integrity appears in the persons employed. *Note;* They who delight in the temple-service, may be trusted for their fidelity and honesty in the repairs of it.

3. In the repairs of the temple, the book of the law was happily found, generally supposed to be the very copy, Dent. xxxi. 26. that Moses laid up in the most holy place. *Note;* (1.) The preservation of the inspired writings through so many ages, and amidst so many enemies, is a standing witness to their divine authority. (2.) When God's word is thrust into a corner, unnoticed by, or cruelly withheld from the people, no marvel that iniquity abounds. (3.) They who have never read through *all* the book of God, know not how much it contains to make them tremble, or how much to comfort them: and yet how many christians, yea, protestants, are thus negligent, and never once in their lives read God's word entire!

4. Hilkiyah, having first read the book himself to Shaphan, desires him to convey it to the king, and read it in his ears, as it contained matters so deeply and nearly affecting him. *Note;* (1.) Reading their Bibles, is among the best employments in which kings can be engaged. (2.) They are inexcusable, who have this sacred book in their hands, and continue wilfully ignorant of its contents.

*Ver. 14. Huldah the prophetess]* This is the only mention that we have of this prophetess; and certainly it tends much to her honour that she was consulted upon this important occasion, when both Jeremiah and Zephaniah were at that time prophets in Judah. But Zephaniah, perhaps, at that time might not have commenced a prophet, because, though we are told that he prophesied in the days of Josiah, Zeph. i. 1. yet we are nowhere informed in what part of his reign he entered upon the prophetic office. Jeremiah too might at that time be absent from Jerusalem, at his house at Anathoth, or some more remote part of the kingdom; so that, considering Josiah's haste and impatience, there might be no other proper person to apply to than this prophetess; well assured of whose fidelity in delivering the mind and counsel of God, the king, and the ministers who went from him to inquire, concluded rightly, that it was much more important what message God sent, than by whose hand it was that he conveyed it. See Poole, and Smith's Select Discourses, p. 252.

*Ver. 16. Even all]* According to all. Nold. 868.

*Ver.*

to him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, *As touching the words which thou hast heard;*

19 Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and hast rent thy clothes, and wapt before me; I also have heard *thee*, saith the LORD.

20 Behold therefore, I will gather thee unto thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace; and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place. And they brought the king word again.

CHAP. XXIII.

*Josiah reads in the temple the book of the law. He purifies the temple and Judah from idolatry. He destroys the altar at Beth-el, and pollutes the place. He takes away the high places of Samaria, and kills the priests: he celebrates the passover, is wounded at Megiddo, and dies. He is succeeded by his son Jehoahaz, and afterwards by Jehoiakim.*

[Before Christ 623.]

**A**ND the king sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem.

2 And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests, and the prophets, and all the people, both small and great: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the LORD.

3 ¶ And the king stood by a pillar, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all *their* heart and all *their* soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people stood to the covenant.

4 ¶ And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal, and for the grove, and for all the host of heaven: and he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Beth-el.

5 And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem; them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven.

6 And he brought out the grove from the house of the LORD, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped *it* small to powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people.

7 And he brake down the houses of the sodomites, that *were* by the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the grove.

*Ver. 18, 19. As touching the words which thou hast heard, &c.] Because thy heart was terrified at the words which thou hast heard, and thou hast humbled, &c. Houbigant. See also 2 Chron. xxxiv. 26.*

*Ver. 20. Thou shalt be gathered into thy grave in peace] The death of Josiah was indeed sudden and immature; he fell in battle against the Egyptians, (see the next chap. ver. 29.); and yet he may be said to have gone to his grave in peace, because he was recalled from life while his kingdom was in a prosperous condition, before the calamities wherewith it was threatened were come upon it, and whilst he himself was in peace and reconciliation with God. Thus, when the righteous are taken away from the evil to come, though in the sight of the universe they seem to die, and their departure is taken for misery; yet, in what manner soever their exit be, they may well be said to die in peace, who, after their dissolution here, are numbered among the children of God, and have*

their lot among the saints. See Isaiah, lvii. 1. Wisd. iii. 2, &c.

CHAP. XXIII.

*Ver. 2. The priests and the prophets] The priests and the Levites. Houbigant. 2 Chron. xxxiv. 30.*

*Ver. 5. The idolatrous priests] In the Hebrew כמרים kemarim. It is plain from this place, that their particular business was to burn incense. Hence the faithful Jews seem to call them כמרים in contempt, as being continually scorched by their fumigating fires. Bishop Patrick thinks, that they were so called from being clothed in black; for the Egyptians, as well as many other pagan nations, made use of black garments when they sacrificed to the infernal deities: in opposition to which, the Jewish priests were clothed in white at their sacrifices.*

*Ver. 6. And he brought out the grove] And he brought out Acherah. Houbigant.*

8 And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beer-sheba, and brake down the high places of the gates that *were* in the entering-in of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which *were* on a man's left hand at the gate of the city.

9 Nevertheless the priests of the high places came not up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they did eat of the unleavened bread among their brethren.

10 And he defiled Topheth, which *is* in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech.

11 And he took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entering in of the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathan-melech the chamberlain, which *was* in the suburbs, and burned the chariots of the sun with fire.

12 And the altars that *were* on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, did the king beat down,

and brake *them* down from thence, and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron.

13 And the high places that *were* before Jerusalem, which *were* on the right hand of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had builded for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile.

14 And he brake in pieces the images, and cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men.

15 ¶ Moreover the altar that *was* at Beth-el, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and burned the high place, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove.

16 And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres that *were* there in the mount, and sent, and took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burned *them* upon the altar, and polluted it, according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words.

17 Then he said, What title *is* that that I see?

*Ver. 10. And he defiled Topheth*] *Topheth* [תפת] comes from תפ, a musical instrument, a drum or tabor; and the place was so called, according to the general opinion of the Jews, because drums or tabors in this horrid valley were used to be beaten, in order to drown the cries and shrieks of the hapless little innocents who were burned alive to the idol *Molech*. Hence Milton, speaking of *Moloch*, calls him,

—Horrid king, besmeared with blood  
Of human sacrifice, and parents' tears,  
Though for the noise of drums and timbrels loud  
Their children's cries unheard, that pass'd through fire  
To his grim idol. —

MILTON'S *Par. Lost*, book i. line 392.

*Ver. 11. He took away the horses—given to the sun—and burned the chariots, &c.*] Whether these horses and chariots were real, or only carved or molten, is not easy to determine. The ancient Persians used to consecrate white horses and chariots to the sun, with which they adorned their processions, wherein they were imitated afterwards by other nations. See Hyde's *Relig. Vet. Perfar*. We can see no reason, therefore, why so many learned commentators should scruple to suppose that the Jews had adopted this among other far worse heathenish idolatries; especially considering how soon the prophet Amos, and

from him St. Stephen, charged them with having carried about the tabernacle of *Moloch* or the sun, and the star of their god *Remphan*. What convinced us further that these were real chariots, drawn by horses, and bearing some image of the sun, is, that the text expressly says, that Josiah did not burn chariots and horses, as he would have done if they had been only carved and painted; but that he took away the horses, and burned the chariots. Bochart supposes that these horses and chariots were designed to carry the king and his great officers out of the east gate of the city, every morning, to salute and adore the sun at its coming above the horizon, according to the custom of the Persian idolaters. See *Univ. Hist. and Boeth. Hieroz.* pars i. lib. 11.

*Ver. 12. The altars that were on the top of the upper chamber*] Or, *The altars on the house-top*. The ancient idolaters and the magi were wont to sacrifice not only upon high places and mountains, but also upon the house-tops. See *Jerem.* xxxii. 29.

*Ver. 13. Mount of corruption*] *Mount of olives*; Houbigant; who supposes the word מושבת *masbchith*, which we render *corruption*, to be derived from מושב *masbach*, to *ancient*.

*Ver. 15. High place*] Houbigant thinks it may be collected from hence, that the high places were made of wood raised up in the manner of a theatre. See *ver.* 13.

*Ver.*



And the men of the city told him, *It is* the sepulchre of the man of God, which came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the altar of Beth-el.

18 And he said, Let him alone; let no man move his bones. So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet that came out of Samaria.

19 ¶ And all the houses also of the high places that *were* in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke *the LORD* to anger, Jofiah took away, and did to them according to all the acts that he

had done in Beth-el.

20 And he slew all the priests of the high places that *were* there upon the altars, and burned men's bones upon them, and returned to Jerusalem.

21 ¶ And the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the passover unto the LORD your God, as *it is* written in the book of this covenant.

22 Surely there was not holden such a passover from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah;

23 But in the eighteenth year of king Jofiah,

*Ver. 17. What title is that that I see?*] The Jews have some ridiculous fables concerning this matter. We may suppose, agreeably to the text, that the king espied a stone or a pillar more eminent than the rest, with an inscription upon it, not legible. This caused him to ask the question of *the men of the city*; i. e. some of the old inhabitants who had escaped the captivity, and not any of those new comers whom the king of Assyria had sent thither; for these could have given no account of the ancient history of the Israelites; neither can we suppose that the sepulchre itself, after so many years standing, could have been distinguishable, had not some pious person or other, with an intent to perpetuate the memory of the thing, taken care to preserve and repair it. Matt. xxiii. 29. See the note on 1 Kings, xiii. 1.

*Ver. 19. Cities of Samaria*] *City of Samaria*; Houbigant. Jofiah, perhaps, may be thought by some to have followed the dictates of his zeal rather too far, in destroying the images and altars, and other monuments of idolatry, in the kingdom of Israel, where he had neither any regal nor judicial authority; but it should be remembered, that his authority in this regard was founded upon an ancient prediction, wherein he is particularly named and appointed to this work of reformation by God himself, and that consequently he could not be guilty of an infringement upon another's right, even though he had no further permission. But the ten tribes, we are to recollect, being now gone into captivity, the ancient right which David and his posterity had to the whole kingdom of Israel, before it was dismembered by Jeroboam and his successors, devolved upon Jofiah. The people who escaped the captivity were united with his subjects, and put themselves under his protection; they came to the worship of God at Jerusalem, and, doubtless, gladly complied with the extirpation of idolatry; at which the Cushites, the new inhabitants of the country, who worshipped their gods in another manner, were not at all offended. The kings of Assyria, it is true, were the lords and conquerors of the country; but from the time of Manasseh's restoration they seem to have conferred upon the kings of Judah, who might thereupon become their homagers, a sovereignty in all the land of Canaan. So that Jofiah, upon various pretensions, had sufficient

power and authority to visit the kingdom of Israel, and to purge it from idolatry, as well as his own. See Le Clerc and Calmet.

*Ver. 22. Surely there was not holden such a passover, &c.*] These words, taken in a literal sense, must denote that this passover, which was celebrated by two tribes only, was more numerous and more magnificent, than all those that were observed in the days of David and Solomon, in the most happy and flourishing states of the Jewish monarchy, and when the whole twelve tribes were met together to solemnize that feast. It may not be amiss therefore to allow, that in these expressions there is a kind of *auxesis* or exaggeration not unusual in sacred as well as in profane authors: for, nothing is more common than to say, never was so much splendour and magnificence seen, when we mean no more than that the thing we speak of, was very splendid and magnificent: unless we suppose with some, that a preference is given to this passover above all the rest, on account of the exact observation of the rites and ceremonies belonging to it, which at other times were performed according to custom, and several things either altered or omitted; whereas at this, every thing was performed *according to the prescribed form of the law*, from which, since the finding of the *authentic copy* of it before mentioned, Jofiah enjoined them not to vary a tittle. See Calmet and Le Clerc.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, To avert, if possible, the threatened wrath, Jofiah, with earnest solicitude, seeks the reformation of the people.

1. In a general assembly of the elders, priests, prophets, and people, convened on purpose for the occasion, he himself, as it seems, read in their ears the words of the book found in the house of the Lord, that it might more deeply engage their attention.

2. The book of the covenant being rehearsed, the tenor of which was, that on their fidelity they were assured of God's blessing, the king, to encourage and engage the people, solemnly, as in the presence of God, declared his purpose of walking after the Lord, in all the ways of his instituted worship, and observing all his commandments moral, judicial, and ceremonial; and this with

wherein this passover was holden to the LORD in Jerusalem.

24 ¶ Moreover the workers with familiar spirits, and the wizards, and the images, and the idols, and all the abominations that were spied in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, did Josiah put away, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD.

25 And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.

26 ¶ Notwithstanding the LORD turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal.

27 And the LORD said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there.

28 ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

29 ¶ In his days Pharaoh-nechoh king of

all simplicity and sincerity, trusting in God to enable him to perform what was so plainly his duty, and so greatly his desire. The people join the king in his engagement, and, promising all fidelity, stand to the covenant. *Note;* (1.) A good and great example is very influential. (2.) Jesus our king, is our covenant-head; faith in him is now our security. (3.) God's people are bound to him, not so much by bonds of vows and promises, as by better bonds of divine love.

2dly, In consequence of his solemn engagements, Josiah without delay set himself to remove all the abominations contrary to the book of the law, which were found in the land.

1. He began with Judah and Jerusalem; where, shocking to tell! the most gross and strange monuments of idolatry remained. To purge the house of the Lord was his first concern: thence he fetched all the vessels which had been consecrated to and employed in the service of Baal and Ashtoreth, and the hosts of heaven; and having burnt them, he carried their ashes to Beth-el, that hated beginning of idolatry, which now he would make a dunghill, and lay there the filth and off-scouring of all these abominations. The idolatrous priests, (for such they will be, when court-favour follows Baal's worship,) he put down, destroying all the high places where they offered incense, which, though Hezekiah had ruined, his wicked successors had restored. These were degraded from their office; and though they had a portion with the priests for their maintenance, they were no more suffered to approach the altars of the Lord. The images of their false deities he stamped to powder, and, to render them more loathsome, cast the dust on the graves of their worshippers, as a reproach to their memory, and in contempt to their idols; whilst he dug up the bones of the priests, and scattered them upon the high places, where they had used to sacrifice. Topheth he defiled, making it a burying-place. The horses which had been dedicated to the sun, he took away, and burnt the chariots. His own house also he thoroughly purged: the altar of Ahaz, which was on the roof, and those which Manasseh had made, he beat to powder, and threw the dust into the

brook Kidron. Throughout Judah, he put away all wizards and workers with familiar spirits; and in short, every abomination that he found, after the strictest search made according to the word of the Lord, he utterly abolished. *Note;* True conversion to God makes thorough work, casting away every weight, and the sin which doth most easily beset us.

2. He proceeded to carry the reformation that he had begun in Judah, into the cities of Israel. The altar at Beth-el he defiled; and, after sacrificing the idolatrous priests, and burning the bones of dead men upon it, destroyed it, with the high place and the grove adjoining. And as he did at Beth-el, he did in the other cities of Samaria, utterly rooting out every monument of idolatry. *Note;* Though God's word be long ere it be fulfilled, whether it be promise or threatening, the accomplishment is sure.

3. The land being thus cleansed from idols, and the people, according to their engagements, returning in truth to the worship of God; a solemn passover is proclaimed and kept, with such exactness and conformity to the divine institution, with such delight and joy, that since the days of the judges, even under the best of their kings, no such passover had been observed. *Note;* They who are faithful in the covenant, will be happy to partake of the seals of it. Neglect of the table of the Lord, is a sure mark of the continuing apostacy of the heart from God.

*Ver. 25. Like unto him was there no king before him, &c.]* As it is mentioned to the particular praise of Hezekiah, chap. xviii. 5., that there was no king like him, who trusted in the Lord God of Israel; so the preference given to Josiah is here limited to his turning to the Lord with all his heart, &c. by which is partly meant that he made a more thorough and complete reformation than any of his predecessors. But however sincere he was in this reformation, omitting nothing to restore the purity of God's worship wherever his power extended, yet a great part at least of the people still had a hankering after the corruption of the former part of Manasseh's reign. They complied indeed with the present reformation, but this was

Egypt went up against the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates: and king Josiah went against him; and he slew him at Megiddo, when he had seen him.

30 And his servants carried him in a chariot dead from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem, and buried him in his own sepulchre. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and anointed him, and made him king in his father's stead.

31 ¶ Jehoahaz was twenty and three years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.

32 And he did *that which was* evil in the

fight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.

33 And Pharaoh-nechoh put him in bands at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem; and put the land to a tribute of an hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold.

34 And Pharaoh-nechoh made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the room of Josiah his father, and turned his name to Jehoiakim, and took Jehoahaz away: and he came to Egypt, and died there.

35 ¶ And Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give the money according to the commandment of Pharaoh: he exacted the silver and

only through fear of incurring the king's displeasure, or of feeling the severity of his justice. Their hearts were not right towards God, as appears fully from the writings of the prophets of those times; and therefore, seeing no sign of their repentance, God had no reason to reverse his decree, nor to *turn from the fierceness of his great wrath*; ver. 26.

Ver. 29. *In his days Pharaoh-nechoh, king of Egypt, went up, &c.*] We have heretofore observed, that *Pharaoh* in the Egyptian language signifies *king*: but *Nechoh*, according to Herodotus, was the proper name of this monarch; though some will have it to be an appellative signifying *lame*, because this Pharaoh, as they suppose, had a lameness, proceeding from some wound which he had received in war. The same historian tells us, that he was the son and successor of Psammetichus, king of Egypt, and a man of a bold enterprising spirit; that he made an attempt to join the Nile and the Red Sea by drawing a canal from one to the other; that, though he failed in this design, yet by sending a fleet from the Red Sea through the straits of Babelmandel, he discovered the coast of Africa; and in this his expedition to the Euphrates resolved, by destroying the united force of the Babylonians and Medes, to bid fair for the whole monarchy of Asia. Megiddo was a city in the half tribe of Manasseh, not far from the Mediterranean sea. Houbigant renders the last clause of this verse, *and king Josiah, &c.—who slew king Josiah coming against him, as soon as he had him for an adversary*; and instead of *dead* in the next verse, he reads *dying*, as it appears from 2 Chron. xxxv. 24. that he died at Jerusalem. See Prideaux and Calmet.

Ver. 31. *Jehoahaz was twenty and three years old*] Jehoahaz was not the eldest son of Josiah, as appears from this; he was but three and twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned but three months; after which his brother Jehoiakim, when he was made king, was *five and twenty years old*, ver. 36. For this reason, it is said, that the people *anointed* him; because, as he did not come to the crown by right of succession, his title might have otherwise been disputed. See the note on

chap. ix. 3. At this time, however, the Jews might have some reason to prefer the younger brother, because very probably he was of a more martial spirit, and better qualified to defend their liberties against the king of Egypt. His proper name, it is thought, was Shallum. The Scripture nowhere tells us upon what occasion it was that he fell into the king of Egypt's hands, or for what reason it was that he used him so severely; but it is probable, that, to revenge his father's death, he might raise an army, and engage him in a pitched battle, though he failed in the attempt: for why should he *put him in bands*, if he voluntarily went and surrendered himself at *Riblah*, ver. 33.? Or why be so highly offended at him for accepting a crown which the people conferred on him? The general opinion therefore is, that he was a man of a bold and daring spirit; and the words in the prophet Ezekiel, chap. xix. 2. &c. are applied to him. See also Jeremiah, xxii. 11. and Calmet.

Ver. 33. *Riblah*] *Riblah* was a city of Syria, upon the Orontes, afterwards called Antioch. As it was one of the pleasantest places in all Syria, Nebuchadnezzar lay there to attend the success of the siege of Jerusalem, to send his army proper supplies, and to intercept any relief that might come to the besieged.

Ver. 34. *Turned his name to Jehoiakim*] It was usual for conquerors to change the names of the persons whom they vanquished in war, in testimony of their absolute power over them. Thus we find the king of Babylon changing the name of *Mattaniah* into *Zedekiah*, when he constituted him king of Judah; ch. xxiv. 17. Archbishop Usher has further remarked, that the king of Egypt gave *Eliakim* the name of *Jehoiakim*, (that is, "the God of Israel hath, " or shall make it to prosper,") thereby to testify that he ascribed his victory over the Babylonians to *Jehovah*, the God of Israel, by whose excitation, as he pretended, 2 Chron. xxxv. 21, 22. he undertook the expedition.

Note; With Josiah perished all the glory of Judah. Like a man mortally wounded, the kingdom gasped a while under his sons, and then expired, as it were, under Nebuchadnezzar's invasion.

the gold of the people of the land, of every one according to his taxation, to give it unto Pharaoh-nechih.

36 ¶ Jehoiakim *was* twenty and five years old when he began to reign; and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Zebudah, the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah.

37 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.

#### CHAP. XXIV.

*Jehoiakim rebels against the king of Babylon, and dies. Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem, takes king Jehoiakim captive, plunders the temple, and makes Mattaniah king; who reigns eleven years, and then rebels against the king of Babylon.*

[Before Christ 593]

**I**N his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant three years: then he turned and rebelled against him.

2 And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servants the prophets.

#### CHAP. XXIV.

*Ver. 5. The rest of the acts of Jehoiakim*] Jeremiah prophesied in the time of this prince, as did also Urijah; see Jer. xxvi. 20, &c. About this time also lived the prophets Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Nahum, who, being called to the prophetic office in the reign of Josiah, continued, very probably, to this time, because we find them prophesying the same things which Jeremiah did; namely, the destruction and desolation of Judah and Jerusalem for the many heinous sins they were guilty of. As to Habakkuk, neither the time in which he lived, nor the parents from whom he descended, are anywhere named in Scripture; but his prophesying the coming of the Chaldeans in the same manner with Jeremiah, gives us reason to think that he lived in the same time. Of Zephaniah it is expressly said, (chap. i.) that he prophesied *in the time of Josiah*; and in his pedigree, which is also given us, his father's grandfather is called Hezekiah, whom some take for the king of Judah, and consequently reckon this prophet to have been of royal descent. As to Nahum, lastly, it is certain that he prophesied after the captivity of the ten tribes, and before that of the other two, which he foretold, chap. i.

3 Surely at the commandment of the LORD came *this* upon Judah, to remove *them* out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did;

4 And also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; which the LORD would not pardon.

5 ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?

6 So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead.

7 ¶ And the king of Egypt came not again any more out of his land: for the king of Babylon had taken from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates all that pertained to the king of Egypt.

8 ¶ Jehoiachin *was* eighteen years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. And his mother's name *was* Nehushta, the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem.

9 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father had done.

10 ¶ At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged.

Though, therefore, the Jews do generally place him in the reign of Manasseh, yet others choose to refer him to the latter part of Josiah's, as being nearer to the destruction of Nineveh and the Assyrian monarchy, to which several prophecies of his do principally relate.

*Ver. 6. Jehoiakim slept with his fathers*] It is plain that this expression can signify no more than that he *died* as his fathers did; for he neither died in his bed, nor was he buried with his fathers, but lay above ground, unburied, according to the prediction of Jeremiah, ch. xxxvi. 30.

*Ver. 7. Came not again any more*] Or, *Came no more as yet.*

*Ver. 8. Jehoiachin was eighteen years old, &c.*] There is a great difference between this passage and 2 Chron. xxxvi. 9. where it is said that Jehoiachin *was eight years old* when he began to reign. But both the Syriac and Arabic versions read *eighteen* in that place in the Chronicles. Jehoiachin's succeeding his father in the throne of Judah may seem to disagree with the threat which the prophet denounces against his father, Jer. xxxvi. 30. *He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David*; but as Jehoiachin's reign lasted little more than three months, during which time he was absolutely subject to the Chaldeans, a reign

of

11 And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, and his servants did besiege it.

12 And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign.

13 And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said.

14 And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, *even* ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land.

15 And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, *those* carried he into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon.

16 And all the men of might, *even* seven thousand, and craftsmen and smiths a thousand, all *that were* strong and apt for war, even them the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon.

17 ¶ And the king of Babylon made Mataniah his father's brother king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

18 Zedekiah *was* twenty and one years old

when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.

19 And he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done.

20 For through the anger of the LORD it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, until he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

## CHAP. XXV.

*Nebuchadnezzar, having taken Jerusalem, puts out the eyes of Zedekiah, and carries him to Babylon. The temple is burned. Ishmael kills Gedaliah: the Jews who are left fly to Egypt, through fear of the Chaldeans. Jehoiachin, after thirty-seven years, is brought forth from prison, and treated humanely by Evil-merodach.*

[Before Christ 588.]

**A**ND it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth *day* of the month, *that* Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it; and they built forts against it round about.

2 And the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah.

3 And on the ninth *day* of the *fourth* month the famine prevailed in the city, and there was no bread for the people of the land.

4 ¶ And the city was broken up, and all the men of *war* fled by night, by the way of the gate between two walls, which *is* by the

of so short continuance, and of so small authority, may well be looked upon as nothing. See Ezek. xix. 6, &c.

*Ver. 13. And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the Lord, &c.]* Nebuchadnezzar carried away the treasures and rich furniture of the temple at three different times: *First*, In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim when he first took Jerusalem, he carried half of the vessels of the house of God away into the land of Shinar, and put them into the house of his god, Dan. i. 2. These were the vessels which his son Belshazzar profaned, Dan. v. 2. and which Cyrus restored to the Jews, Ezra, i. 7. to be set up in the temple again when rebuilt. *Secondly*, In the reign of Jehoiachin he took the city again, and cut in pieces a great part of the vessels of gold which Solomon had made, and which by some means or other had escaped his former plunder. *Thirdly*, In the eleventh year of Zedekiah he pillaged the temple once more, when he broke in pieces the pillars of brass, &c. and took along

with them all the vessels of silver and gold which he could find, and carried them to Babylon. See the next chapter, ver. 13, &c. It is something strange, that, among all this inventory, no mention is made of the ark of the covenant, which, of all other things, was held most sacred. But it is very probable, that it was burned together with the temple in the last desolation; for, what some say, of its being hidden by the prophet Jeremiah in a certain cave in mount Nebo, is a mere fable. See Calmet.

*Ver. 14. And he carried away all Jerusalem]* Among these were Ezekiel the prophet, and Mordecai the uncle of Esther.

## CHAP. XXV.

*Ver. 3. The famine prevailed]* See Ezek. ch. v. 10. and Lam. iv. 5.

*Ver. 4. The men of war fled by night]* It is difficult to conceive how the besieged could make their escape, as the Chaldees

king's garden: (now the Chaldees *were* against the city round about :) and *the king* went the way toward the plain.

5 And the army of the Chaldees pursued after the king, and overtook him in the plains of Jericho: and all his army were scattered from him.

6 So they took the king, and brought him up to the king of Babylon to Riblah; and they gave judgment upon him.

7 And they slew the sons of Zedekiah

before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with fetters of brass, and carried him to Babylon.

8 ¶ And in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which *is* the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem:

9 And he burned the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of

Chaldees had encompassed the city. Josephus indeed gives us this account, that as the city was taken about midnight, the captains with the rest of the soldiers went directly into the temple; which Zedekiah perceiving, he took his wives, children, commanders, and friends, and they all slipped away together by a *narrow passage* towards the wilderness; but then what this narrow passage was is still the question. The Jews think that there was a subterraneous passage from the palace to the plains of Jericho, and that the king and his courtiers might endeavour to make their escape that way. Dion, it is true, tells us, lib. lxi. that, in the last siege of Jerusalem, the Jews had covered ways, which lay under the walls of the city, to a considerable distance into the country, out of which they were wont to sally, and fall upon the Romans that were straggling from their camp; but since neither Josephus nor the sacred historian take notice of any such subterraneous passage at this siege, we may suppose that, the Chaldeans having made a breach in the wall, the besieged got away privately between the wall and the out-works, by a passage which they did not suspect. See Jer. xxv. 4. and Joseph. Hist. Bell. lib. x. cap. 11.

Ver. 7. *And put out the eyes of Zedekiah, &c.*] Josephus takes notice, that the seeming contradiction in the prophecies of Ezekiel and Jeremiah concerning the fate of Zedekiah, made that prince give no heed to what was foretold. Ezekiel's prophecy runs thus: *I will bring him to Babylon, to the land of the Chaldeans, yet shall he not see it, though he die there*, chap. xii. 13. Jeremiah's thus: *He shall be delivered into the hands of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes*, chap. xxxii. 4. Both of which were literally accomplished; for Zedekiah was carried to Riblah, where he saw the king of Babylon, and spake to him, and beheld his children executed, but had afterwards his eyes put out, and was then carried to Babylon, which however he was incapable of seeing. The reflection which Josephus makes upon this event is excellent: "This may serve to convince even the ignorant," says he, "of the power and wisdom of God; and of the constancy of his counsels through all the various ways of his operations. It may likewise shew us, that God's foreknowledge of things is certain, and his providence regular in the ordering of events; and besides it holds forth a most exemplary instance of the danger of our giving way to the motions of sin and iniquity, which deprive us

"of the means of discerning God's judgments, even though ready to fall upon us." Antiq. lib. x. cap. 11.

REFLECTIONS.—Zedekiah soon felt what an unequal match he was for the king whom he had by rebellion provoked; for, how could he hope to resist, who had not only the powers of earth but the arm of God against him?

1. Jerusalem is besieged, and, after suffering the greatest extremities of famine, Ezek. ch. v. 10. Jer. lii. 6. taken by storm. How terrible is war!

2. The king is taken prisoner as he attempted to escape, forsaken of his guards, and brought back with shame to the camp of the Chaldeans, to behold those miseries which, had he followed Jeremiah's advice, chap. xxxviii. 17. he might have escaped. He is condemned to suffer the reward of his deeds; first, to behold the tormenting sight of his sons all murdered before his eyes, and then for ever to close them upon this mournful scene, as left in misery to ruminate on the cause; while, languishing in fetters of iron, he passed his wretched days, a miserable spectacle, and monument of the wages of sin. *Note*: (1.) They who refuse God's counsel to escape, will find the vanity of their own contrivances. (2.) The impenitent sinner's doom is, to be bound in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

Ver. 9. *He burned the house of the Lord*] Josephus tells us, that the temple was burned four hundred and seventy years, six months, and ten days after the building of it; one thousand and sixty years, six months, and ten days from the time of the Israelites' coming out of the land of Egypt; one thousand nine hundred and fifty years, six months, and ten days from the deluge; and three thousand five hundred and thirty years, six months, and ten days from the creation\*; and he mentions it as a very remarkable circumstance, that the second temple was burned by the Romans in the same month, and on the very same day of the month, that this was set on fire by the Chaldeans; and, as some of the Jewish rabbis say, when the Levites were singing the very same passage; the 23d verse of the 94th Psalm. See Antiq. lib. x. cap. 11.

\* Archbishop Usher's chronology does not here agree with that of Josephus.

Ver.

Jerusalem, and every great *man's* house burned he with fire.

10 And all the army of the Chaldees, that *were with* the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about.

11 Now the rest of the people *that were* left in the city, and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Babylon, with the remnant of the multitude, did Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carry away.

12 But the captain of the guard left of the poor of the land *to be* vine-dressers and husbandmen.

13 ¶ And the pillars of brass that *were* in the house of the LORD, and the bases, and the brazen sea that *was* in the house of the LORD, did the Chaldees break in pieces, and carried the brass of them to Babylon.

14 And the pots, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the spoons, and all the vessels of brass wherewith they ministered, took they away.

15 And the fire-pans, and the bowls, *and such things as were* of gold, *in* gold, and of silver, *in* silver, the captain of the guard took away.

16 The two pillars, one sea, and the bases which Solomon had made for the house of the LORD; the brass of all these vessels was without weight.

17 The height of the one pillar *was* eighteen

cubits, and the chapter upon it *was* brass: and the height of the chapter three cubits; and the wreathen work, and pomegranates upon the chapter round about, all of brass: and like unto these had the second pillar with wreathen work.

18 ¶ And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door:

19 And out of the city he took an officer that was set over the men of war, and five men of them that were in the king's presence, which were found in the city, and the principal scribe of the host, which mustered the people of the land, and threescore men of the people of the land *that were* found in the city:

20 And Nebuzar-adan captain of the guard took these, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah:

21 And the king of Babylon smote them, and slew them at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was carried away out of their land.

22 ¶ And *as for* the people that remained in the land of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had left, even over them he made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, ruler.

*Ver. 18. Zephaniah, the second priest*] The Jews call their second priest their *Segan*, whose business it was to supply the function of the high-priest, in case he was sick, or under any other incapacity. We find no such particular institution under the law; but Eleazar, the son of Aaron, who is styled *the chief over the chief of the Levites, and who had the oversight of them who kept the charge of the sanctuary*, Numb. iii. 32., and whose authority was not much inferior to that of the high-priest, may not improperly be deemed one of that order. It is most probable that Nebuchadnezzar put to death the persons mentioned in this and the following verse, because he looked upon them as Zedekiah's principal counsellors in the advising him to rebel.

REFLECTIONS.—Near two months were spent in plundering the city, or given of God as a reprieve to the people, and then the decree went forth.

1. The temple, and all the palaces in Zion, are laid in ashes, the walls dismantled, and the whole city laid in ruins. *Note*; (1.) The temple is no longer precious in God's sight, when the people are apostate. (2.) God's

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patience with sinners by and by will end, and then judgment will overtake them to the uttermost.

2. The few vessels of silver and gold which remained in the temple, were now carried away, with all the brass, the pillars, the sea, the bases, and all the vessels belonging to the service, which for its vast quantity is said to be without weight. Thus a period was put to their worship. They who had so abused the house of God, and these consecrated vessels, deserved to be deprived of them.

3. Many of the great men are seized and executed, as being the supporters of the rebellion, and the rest carried away captive, Jer. lii. 29.; only the poor of the land were left to till the ground for their proud conquerors. Thus the same dignities cast the Jews out of Judea, which had been fatal to the Canaanites, on whom their ancestors had executed the judgments of God.

*Ver. 22. Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam*] Ahikam, the father of Gedaliah, was a man in such credit in all the latter reigns that he had been able to screen Jeremiah

34

from



23 And when all the captains of the armies, they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah governor, there came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, even Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan the son of Careah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah the son of a Maachathite, they and their men.

24 And Gedaliah sware to them, and to their men, and said unto them, Fear not to be the servants of the Chaldees: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon; and it shall be well with you.

25 But it came to pass in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah,

the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, came, and ten men with him, and smote Gedaliah, that he died, and the Jews and the Chaldees that were with him at Mizpah.

26 And all the people, both small and great, and the captains of the armies, arose, and came to Egypt: for they were afraid of the Chaldees.

27 ¶ And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, that Evil-merodach king of Babylon in the year that he began to reign did lift up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah out of prison;

from the resentment of the king, and the fury of the people; so that it is very probable that the prophet, in gratitude to the father, obtained this favour for the son from Nebuzar-adan. This might also be the motive which induced him to go and live with him in Judea, rather than to go to Babylon, when that general put it to his option, not without some considerable encouragements to invite him to the latter. See Jer. xxxix. 11, &c. and Univ. Hist.

*Ver. 23. To Mizpah*] See Gen. xxxi. 49, 50. where the reason of the name of this place will be found. It was situate on the east side of the river Jordan, and in the division of the land fell to the tribe of Dan; and here it was that Gedaliah chose to fix his habitation, or perhaps was ordered to fix it, because it lay nearest of any to Babylon, from whence he was to receive his instructions, as to the administration of the government. See Wells's Geography. A fuller account of the events recorded in the following verses will be found in the book of the prophet Jeremiah.

*Ver. 27. Evil-merodach, king of Babylon*] Nebuchadnezzar, the father of Evil-merodach, died in the year of the world 3442, and before Christ 562, after he had reigned from the death of his father, according to the Babylonish account, three and forty years. He was certainly one of the greatest princes that had appeared in the east for many ages; and, according to Megasthenes, as he is cited by Josephus, both for his enterprizes and performances far excelled even Hercules himself. The same historian, as he is quoted by Eusebius, informs us, that a little before his death he foretold to his subjects the coming of the Persians, and their subduing the kingdom of Babylon, which he might gather from the prophet Daniel, and especially from the interpretation of his dreams. His son Evil-merodach reigned but a short time; for his debaucheries and other crimes in the space of two years made him so intolerable, that even his own relations conspired against him, and put him to death. It is likely that Jehoiachin, whom he thus signally favoured, (ver. 28, 29.) fell with him, for that best agrees with Jeremiah's prophec-

sies concerning him; wherein it is denounced, (ch. xxii. 30.) that he should not prosper in his days, which could not be so well verified of him, had he died in the full possession of all that prosperity to which Evil-merodach advanced him. Prideaux.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The few who remained were put under the care of Gedaliah, a good man it should seem, and one who, if it had been possible, might have yet preserved them from utter ruin; but what the king of Babylon left unfinished, their own madness and folly completed. Ishmael, one of the seed-royal, was among the number of those who came to Gedaliah, under pretence of submission to his government: but envying his power, or to be revenged of the Chaldeans, who supported him, he treacherously fell upon him, slew him and his friends, whether Jews or Chaldeans; and then, in spite of Jeremiah's remonstrance, all the people who remained under him as their leader went down to Egypt, and mixed probably with that idolatrous people, (see Deut. xxviii. 68.) and thus their desolations were accomplished.

2dly, How hopeless, how desperate now appeared the case of Judah and her king! but in the midst of their captivity there ariseth up light in their darkness. Their captive king Jehoiachin is brought from his mournful prison, and, on the accession of Evil-merodach, Nebuchadnezzar's son, admitted into the royal favour. He obtains apartments in the palace, a noble provision for himself and family, and pre-eminence over the other kings who were captives with him. This happened just in the midst of the seventy years during which this captivity was to last, as a means to support the hopes, and confirm the faith of the people in the fulfilment of the promises in due time.]  
*Note*: (1.) While there is life, there is hope: we must not despair. God can turn the dungeon, when he pleases, into a palace. (2.) When our friend the great King shall sit on the throne of his kingdom, then he shall loose the bands of death, change the prison-garments of his saints, clothe them with immortality, and, placing them  
 throne

28 And he spake kindly to him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon;

29 And changed his prison garments: and he did eat bread continually before him all the

days of his life.

30 And his allowance was a continual allowance given him of the king, a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life.

throne next to his own, make them sit down with him, and reign in glory everlasting.

We defer, till we come to the end of the book of Chronicles, some reflections on the dreadful end of the Israelitish monarchy, after it had stood four hundred and sixty-eight years from the time that David began to reign over it; three hundred and eighty-eight years from the revolt of the ten tribes from it; and one hundred and thirty-four years from the excision of the Israelitish commonwealth; and might have continued under the sunshine

of the divine protection, which nothing could have eclipsed but the almost constant and horrid ingratitude of the people, and the invincible propensity to imitate the idolatries and witcheries of other nations; crimes, which, though become as abominable to God as they were universally practised by mankind, yet seem to have flowed from a purer source, though corrupted by degrees to this vast height through the amazing degeneracy of human nature. See the Appendix to the 3d vol. of Univ. Hist. 8vo.

THE  
FIRST BOOK of the CHRONICLES.

*THE ancient Hebrews made but one book of the Chronicles, which they called דברי הימים dibrei hayamim, "The words of the days;" that is, diaries or journals; and they supposed these books to have been taken from the ancient Chronicles of the kings of Judah and Israel, which are so often referred to in these, and the books of Kings. The LXX intitle them, the books of παραλειπομένων, that which is omitted; thereby signifying, that this work is a kind of supplement to the other books of Scripture; and, indeed, we find many particulars here which are omitted elsewhere. The writer of these books is not well known. They are generally attributed to Ezra, who is thought to have written them after the return from the captivity, assisted by the prophets Haggai and Zachariah. Compare the last verses of the second book of Chronicles with the beginning of Ezra. The design of the author certainly was to write, not a regular history, but a kind of supplement to the other books. It is remarkable, that he sometimes conceals the dishonour of the saints of God. He mentions not the fact of David with Uriah, nor the idolatry of Solomon. 2 Sam. xxiv. reckons four battles; 1 Chron. xx. but three. That wherein David came not off with honour is omitted,—the encounter of David and Ishbi-benob. St. Jerome, speaking of these books, says, that it is a folly to pretend to have a true idea of the sacred writings without them; because in almost every chapter we meet with anecdotes omitted in the books of Kings; and a great variety of circumstances related in the Gospel are herein illustrated and explained. The first book contains a kind of recapitulation of the Sacred History, by genealogies from the beginning of the world to the death of David, in the year of the world 2299. And the second contains the history of the kings of Judah, and of those of Israel in part, from the beginning of the reign of Solomon alone, to the return from captivity in the year 3468. Speaking of the difference of names, &c. found in these books, Calmet remarks very judiciously, that it is not extraordinary that books which have passed through so many hands for so many ages should have suffered some alterations in dates and numbers. In copies of books so ancient, and written in a language so little known, we may certainly rather wonder that there are so few mistakes, than that there are any. See Calmet's Preface, and Le Clerc's Sentimens de quelques Theologiens, &c.*

C H A P. I.

*The genealogy of Adam to Noah, and from Noah to Abraham: the sons of Abraham: the posterity of Ishmael and Esau.*

[Before Christ 4004.]

**A**DAM, Sheth, Enosh,  
2 Kenan, Mahalaleel, Jered,

- 3 Henoah, Methuselah, Lamech,
- 4 Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.
- 5 ¶ The sons of Japheth; Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras.
- 6 And the sons of Gomer; Assichenaz, and Riphath, and Togarmah.

C H A P. I.

*Ver. 1. Adam, Sheth, Enosh] Adam was the father of Sheth, and Sheth the father of Enosh, and so on to the*

sons of Noah. No mention is made of the posterity of Cain or Abel, nor of the other sons of Adam, because the sacred writer was only engaged to give a detail of the Patriarchs in the direct line from Adam to Noah. The history

7 And the sons of Javan; Elishah, and Tarshish, Kittim, and Dodanim,

8 ¶ The sons of Ham; Cush, and Mizraim, Put, and Canaan.

9 And the sons of Cush; Seba, and Havilah, and Sabta, and Raamah, and Sabtecah. And the sons of Raamah; Shebah and Dedan.

10 And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be mighty upon the earth.

11 And Mizraim begat Ludim, and Anamim, and Lehabim, and Naphtulim,

12 And Pathrusim, and Casluhim, (of whom came the Philistines,) and Caphthorim,

13 And Canaan begat Zidon his firstborn, and Heth,

14 The Jebusite also, and the Amorite, and the Girgashite,

15 And the Hivite, and the Arkite, and the Sinite.

16 And the Arvadite, and the Zemarite, and the Hamathite.

17 ¶ The sons of Shem; Elam, and Asshur, and Arphaxad, and Lud, and Aram, and Uz, and Hul, and Gether, and Meshech,

18 And Arphaxad begat Shelah, and Shelah begat Eber.

19 And unto Eber were born two sons: the name of the one *was* Peleg; because in his days the earth was divided: and his brother's name *was* Joktan.

20 And Joktan begat Almodad, and Sheleph,

and Hazarmaveth, and Jerah,

21 Hadoram also, and Uzal, and Diklah,

22 And Ebal, and Abimael, and Sheba,

23 And Ophir, and Havilah, and Jobab.

All these *were* the sons of Joktan.

24 ¶ Shem, Arphaxad, Shelah,

25 Eber, Peleg, Räu,

26 Serug, Nahor, Terah,

27 Abram; the same *is* Abraham.

28 The sons of Abraham; Isaac, and Ishmael.

29 ¶ These *are* their generations: The firstborn of Ishmael, Nebaioth; then Kedar, and Adbeel, and Mibsam,

30 Mishma, and Dumah, Massa, Hadad, and Tema,

31 Jetur, Naphish, and Kedemah. These *are* the sons of Ishmael.

32 ¶ Now the sons of Keturah, Abraham's concubine: she bare Zimran, and Jokshan, and Medan, and Midian, and Ishbak, and Shuah. And the sons of Jokshan; Sheba, and Dedan.

33 And the sons of Midian; Ephah, and Ephher, and Henoah, and Abida, and Eldaah. All these *are* the sons of Keturah.

34 ¶ And Abraham begat Isaac. The sons of Isaac; Esau and Israel.

35 The sons of Esau; Eliphaz, Reuel, and Jeuth, and Jaalam, and Korah.

36 The sons of Eliphaz; Teman, and Omar, Zephi, and Gatam, Kenaz, and Timna, and Amalek.

history of the Bible was not designed as a history of the world, but a history of the church, and of the deduction of the sacred promise of the seed of the woman.

Ver. 17. *And Lud, and Aram, and Uz*] *Lud and Aram. The sons of Uz, &c.* Houbigant. See Gen. x. 23.

REFLECTIONS.—Adam begins and Abraham closes this first genealogical line. The one, our common father after the flesh; the other, the common father of the faithful. By the guilt of Adam's sin, the universal curse descended on man: by Abraham's promised seed, the curse is removed; and all who believe on him are re-inflated in the favour of God.

The line of Christ, for whose sake the rest are preserved, reaches in the four first verses as far as Shem; and from him, in the four last, to Abraham: the others are more lightly passed over. Japhet's posterity originally peopled Europe; Ham's, Africa, Canaan, and Philistia; Shem's posterity, Asia; and, probably, from the northern parts of Asia, America received its first inhabitants. *Note*; As we

are originally of one stock, we should, undoubtedly, love all mankind as brethren.

Ver. 32. *Now the sons of Keturah, &c.*] *These sons of Keturah, Abraham's concubine, bare Zimran, &c.* Houb.

Ver. 36. *Kenaz, and Timna, and Amalek*] *Kenaz. And Timna, the concubine of Eliphaz, bare to him Amalek.* Houbigant and Cappellus. See Gen. xxxvi. 12.

REFLECTIONS.—Before the sacred historian passes on to the line of the Messiah, he dwells a moment on the descendants of Abraham after the flesh. Ishmael, according to Gen. xvii. 20., becomes the father of twelve princes. Midian, of the sons of Keturah, is most taken notice of, because with his descendants the people of God had especial contests. Esau's posterity, and their dignity, are particularly remarked. While the children of promise were suffering in Egypt, the children of the rejected Esau were reigning in Edom. The sons of wickedness have often in this world the chief portion; God has prepared a better country for the heirs of salvation.

37 The sons of Reuel; Nahath, Zerah, Shammah, and Mizzah.

38 ¶ And the sons of Seir; Lotan, and Shobal, and Zibeon, and Anah, and Dishon, and Ezar, and Dishan.

39 And the sons of Lotan; Hori, and Homam: and Timna *was* Lotan's sister.

40 The sons of Shobal; Alian, and Manahath, and Ebal, Shephi, and Onam. And the sons of Zibeon; Aiah, and Anah.

41 The sons of Anah; Dishon. And the sons of Dishon; Amram, and Eshban, and Ithran, and Cheran.

42 The sons of Ezer; Bilhan, and Zavan, and Jakan. The sons of Dishan; Uz, and Aran.

43 ¶ Now these *are* the kings that reigned in the land of Edom before *any* king reigned over the children of Israel; Bela the son of Beor: and the name of his city *was* Dinhabah.

44 And when Bela was dead, Jobab the son of Zerah of Bozrah reigned in his stead.

45 And when Jobab was dead, Husham of the land of the Temanites reigned in his stead.

46 And when Husham was dead, Hadad the son of Bedad, which smote Midian in the field of Moab, reigned in his stead: and the name of his city *was* Avith.

47 And when Hadad was dead, Samlah of Masrekah reigned in his stead.

48 And when Samlah was dead, Shaul of Rehoboth by the river reigned in his stead.

49 And when Shaul was dead, Baal-hanan the son of Achbor, reigned in his stead.

50 And when Baal-hanan was dead, Hadad reigned in his stead: and the name of his city *was* Pai; and his wife's name *was* Mehetabel, the daughter of Matred, the daughter of Mezahab.

51 ¶ Hadad died also. And the dukes of Edom were; duke Timnah, duke Aliah, duke Jetheth,

52 Duke Aholibamah, duke Elah, duke Pinon,

53 Duke Kenaz, duke Teman, duke Mibzar,  
54 Duke Magdiel, duke Iram. These *are* the dukes of Edom.

## CHAP. II.

*The genealogy of Jacob. The posterity of Judah to David. The sons of Jesse and of David.*

[Before Christ 1400.]

**T**HESE *are* the sons of Israel; Reuben, Simeon, Levi, and Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun,

2 Dan, Joseph, and Benjamin, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher.

3 ¶ The sons of Judah; Er, and Onan, and Shelah: *which* three were born unto him of the daughter of Shua the Canaanites. And Er, the firstborn of Judah, was evil in the sight of the LORD; and he slew him.

4 And Tamar his daughter-in-law bare him Pharez and Zerah. All the sons of Judah *were* five.

5 The sons of Pharez; Hezron, and Hamul.

6 And the sons of Zerah; Zimri, and Ethan, and Heman, and Calcol, and Dara: five of them in all.

7 And the sons of Carmi; Achar, the troubler of Israel, who transgressed in the thing accursed.

8 And the sons of Ethan; Azariah.

9 The sons also of Hezron, that were born unto him; Jerahmeel, and Ram, and Chelubai.

10 And Ram begat Amminadab; and Amminadab begat Nahshon, prince of the children of Judah;

11 And Nahshon begat Salma, and Salma begat Boaz,

12 And Boaz begat Obed, and Obed begat Jesse.

13 ¶ And Jesse begat his firstborn Eliab, and Abinadab the second, and Shimma the third,

14 Nethaneel the fourth, Raddai the fifth,

15 Ozem the sixth, David the seventh:

## CHAP. II.

*Ver. 3. The sons of Judah*] Judah is here placed first, for nearly the same reasons as those assigned in the note on the first verse of the former chapter. The Saviour of the world, the seed of the woman, was ordained to descend from him.

*Ver. 7. And the sons of Carmi; Achar*] *The sons of Zimri; Carmi. The sons of Carmi, Achar, &c.* Houbigant. See Josh. vii. 1.

*Ver. 15. Ozem the sixth, David the seventh*] *Ozem the sixth, Elihu the seventh, David the eighth.* Houbigant. Comp. 1 Sam. xvi. 11. and xvii. 12. from which it will

16 Whose sisters *were* Zerujah, and Abigail. And the sons of Zerujah; Abishai, and Joab, and Asahel, three.

17 And Abigail bare Amasa: and the father of Amasa *was* Jether the Ishmeelite.

18 ¶ And Caleb the son of Hezron begat *children* of Azubah *his* wife, and of Jerioth: her sons *are* these; Jether, and Shobab, and Ardon.

19 And when Azubah was dead, Caleb took unto him Ephrath, which bare him Hur.

20 And Hur begat Uri, and Uri begat Bezaleel.

21 ¶ And afterward Hezron went in to the daughter of Machir the father of Gilead, whom he married when he *was* threescore years old; and she bare him Segub.

22 And Segub begat Jair, who had three and twenty cities in the land of Gilead.

23 And he took Geshur, and Aram, with the towns of Jair, from them, with Kenath, and the towns thereof, *even* threescore cities. All these *belonged to* the sons of Machir the father of Gilead.

24 And after that Hezron was dead in Caleb-ephratah, then Abiah Hezron's wife bare him Ashur the father of Tekoa.

25 ¶ And the sons of Jerahmeel the firstborn of Hezron were, Ram the firstborn, and Bunah, and Oren, and Ozem, *and* Ahijah.

26 Jerahmeel had also another wife, whose name *was* Atarah; she *was* the mother of Onam.

27 And the sons of Ram the firstborn of Jerahmeel were, Maaz, and Jamin, and Eker.

28 And the sons of Onam were, Shammai,

and Jada. And the sons of Shammai; Nadab, and Abishur.

29 And the name of the wife of Abishur *was* Abihail, and she bare him Ahban, and Molid.

30 And the sons of Nadab; Seled and Appaim: but Seled died without children.

31 And the sons of Appaim; Ishi. And the sons of Ishi; Sheshau. And the children of Sheshan; Ahlai.

32 And the sons of Jada, the brother of Shammai; Jether, and Jonathan: and Jether died without children.

33 And the sons of Jonathan; Peleth, and Zara. These were the sons of Jerahmeel.

34 ¶ Now Sheshan had no sons, but daughters. And Sheshan had a servant, an Egyptian, whose name *was* Jarha.

35 And Sheshan gave his daughter to Jarha his servant to wife; and she bare him Attai.

36 And Attai begat Nathan, and Nathan begat Zabad,

37 And Zabad begat Ephlal, and Ephlal begat Obed,

38 And Obed begat Jehu, and Jehu begat Azariah,

39 And Azariah begat Helez, and Helez begat Eleasah,

40 And Eleasah begat Sisamai, and Sisamai begat Shallum,

41 And Shallum begat Jekamiah, and Jekamiah begat Elishama.

42 ¶ Now the sons of Caleb the brother of Jerahmeel *were*, Mesha his firstborn, which *was* the father of Ziph; and the sons of Maresnah the father of Hebron.

appear that Jesse had *eight sons*, and that David was the youngest of them. Houbigant follows the Syriac and Arabic.

REFLECTIONS.—We have here the illustrious family of Jacob; and of them, Judah, as most distinguished, has the pre-eminence in his genealogy. Of him we have the largest account, not only because he was of the royal tribe, but for the Messiah's sake, who sprung from him. The names of many of his descendants, Er, Onan, Achan, and Tamar, his incestuous daughter-in-law, are marked with infamy in Scripture: yet to these was the friend of sinners allied, and from her descended. Let not the greatest criminals despair!

The family of Jesse is particularly taken notice of, for David's sake, of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came. He is called the seventh son of Jesse; though in Sam. xvi. 10. Jesse had eight, and he was the youngest. Perhaps one of them died before he came to the crown, or one of the eight might be by another wife.

Ver. 18. *Begat children of Azubah his wife, and of Jerioth] Begat children of Azubah his wife; and her sons were these, Jerioth, Jether, &c.* Houbigant.

Ver. 24. *And after that Hezron was dead, &c.] And after that Hezron was dead, Caleb came into Ephratah; but the wife of Hezron was Abiah, who bare unto him, &c.* Houbigant.

Ver.

43 And the sons of Hebron; Korah, and Tappuah, and Rekem, and Shema.

44 And Shema begat Raham, the father of Jorkoam: and Rekem begat Shammai.

45 And the son of Shammai *was* Maon: and Maon *was* the father of Beth-zur.

46 And Ephah, Caleb's concubine, bare Haran, and Meza, and Gazez: and Haran begat Gazez.

47 And the sons of Jahdai; Regem, and Jotham, and Gesham, and Pelet, and Ephah, and Shaaph.

48 Maachah, Caleb's concubine, bare Sheber, and Tirhanah.

49 She bare also Shaaph the father of Madmannah, Sheva the father of Machbenah, and the father of Gibeaz: and the daughter of Caleb *was* Achsa.

50 ¶ These were the sons of Caleb the son of Hur, the firstborn of Ephrath; Shobal the father of Kirjath-jearim.

51 Salma the father of Beth-lehem, Hareph the father of Beth-gader.

52 And Shobal the father of Kirjath-jearim had sons; Haroeh, and half of the Manahethites.

53 And the families of Kirjath-jearim; the Ithrites, and the Puhites, and the Shumathites, and the Mishraites; of them came the Zareathites, and the Eshtaulites.

54 The sons of Salma; Beth-lehem, and the Netophathites, Ataroth, the house of Joab, and half of the Manahethites, the Zorites.

55 And the families of the scribes which dwelt at Jabez; the Tirathites, the Shimeathites, and Suchathites. These *are* the Kenites that came of Hemiath, the father of the house of Rechab.

### C H A P. III.

*The genealogy of the descendants of David, and of the kings of Judah his successors.*

[Before Christ 1055.]

**N**OW these were the sons of David, which were born unto him in Hebron;

the firstborn Amnon, of Ahinoam the Jezreelitess; the second Daniel, of Abigail the Carmelitess:

2 The third, Absalom the son of Maachah the daughter of Talmai king of Geshur: the fourth, Adonijah the son of Haggith:

3 The fifth, Shephatiah of Abital: the sixth, Ithream by Eglah his wife.

4 *These* six were born unto him in Hebron; and there he reigned seven years and six months: and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty and three years.

5 And these were born unto him in Jerusalem; Shimea, and Shobab, and Nathan, and Solomon, four, of Bath-shua the daughter of Ammiel:

6 Ibhar also, and Elishama, and Eliphelet,

7 And Nogah, and Nepheg, and Japhia,

8 And Elishama, and Eliada, and Eliphelet, nine.

9 *These were* all the sons of David, beside the sons of the concubines, and Tamar their sister.

10 ¶ And Solomon's son *was* Rehoboam, Abia his son, Aza his son, Jehoshaphat his son,

11 Joram his son, Ahaziah his son, Joash his son,

12 Amaziah his son, Azariah his son, Jotham his son,

13 Ahaz his son, Hezekiah his son, Manasseh his son,

14 Amon his son, Josiah his son.

15 And the sons of Josiah *were*, the firstborn Johanan, the second Jehoiakim, the third Zedekiah, the fourth Shallum.

16 And the sons of Jehoiakim, Jeconiah his son, Zedekiah his son.

17 ¶ And the sons of Jeconiah; Assir, Salathiel his son,

18 Malchiram also, and Pedaiah, and She-nazar, Jecamiah, Hoshama, and Nedabiah.

19 And the sons of Pedaiah *were*, Zerubbabel, and Shimei: and the sons of Zerubbabel; Meshullam, and Hananiah, and Shelomith their sister:

### C H A P. III.

*Ver. 50. These were the sons of Caleb, the son of Hur] These were the sons of Hur, the son of Caleb, the first born of Ephrath. Houbigant. See the 19th verse.*

*Ver. 1. Daniel] In 2 Sam. iii. 3. this son is called Chileab. Probably he had two names. The other alterations*



20 And Hashubah, and Ohel, and Berechiah, and Hafadiah, Jushab-besed, five.

21 And the sons of Hananiah; Pelatiah, and Jesaiah: the sons of Rephaiah; the sons of Arnan, the sons of Obadiah, the sons of Shechaniah.

22 And the sons of Shechaniah; Shemajah: and the sons of Shemaiah; Hattush, and Igeal, and Bariah, and Neariah, and Shaphat, six.

23 And the sons of Neariah; Elioenai, and Hezekiah, and Azrikam, three.

24 And the sons of Elioenai were, Hodaiah, and Eliashib, and Pelaiah, and Akkub, and Johanan, and Delaiah, and Anani, seven.

CHAP. IV.

*The second genealogy of Judah. The genealogy of Simeon. Their habitations.*

[Before Christ 1300.]

**T**HE sons of Judah: Pharez, Hezron, and Carmi, and Hur, and Shobal.

2 And Reaiah the son of Shobal begat Jahath; and Jahath begat Ahumai, and Lahad. These are the families of the Zorathites.

3 And these were of the father of Etam; Jezreel, and Ishma, and Idbash: and the name of their sister was Hazeleponi:

4 And Penuel the father of Gedor, and Ezer the father of Hushah. These are the sons of Hur, the firstborn of Ephratah, the father of Beth-lehem.

5 ¶ And Ashur the father of Tekoa had two wives, Helah and Naarah.

6 And Naarah bare him Ahuzam, and Hopher, and Temeni, and Haahashtari. These

were the sons of Naarah.

7 And the sons of Helah were, Zereth, and Jezoar, and Ethnan.

8 And Coz begat Anub, and Zobebah, and the families of Aharhel the son of Harum.

9 ¶ And Jabez was more honourable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow.

10 And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, Oh that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me! And God granted him that which he requested.

11 ¶ And Chelub the brother of Shuah begat Mehir, which was the father of Eshton.

12 And Eshton begat Beth-rapha, and Paseah, and Tehinnah the father of Irnahash. These are the men of Rechah.

13 And the sons of Kenaz; Othniel, and Seraiah; and the sons of Othniel; Hathath.

14 And Meonothai begat Ophrah: and Seraiah begat Joab, the father of the valley of Charashim; for they were craftsmen.

15 And the sons of Caleb the son of Jephunneh; Iru, Elah, and Naam: and the sons of Elah, even Kenaz.

16 And the sons of Jehaleleel; Ziph, and Ziphah, Tiria, and Asareel.

17 And the sons of Ezra were, Jether, and Mered, and Ephraim, and Jalon: and she bare Miriam, and Shammai, and Ishbah the father of Eshtemoa.

18 And his wife Jehudijah bare Jered the

alterations in names, which are found in the following verses, may be compared with the parallel passages in Samuel. As the genealogy of Judah was given first, so that of David is particularly mentioned, as the promise of the Messiah was peculiarly given to him.

Ver. 22. Six] Five. Houbigant. See Calmet.

REFLECTIONS.—For seventeen descents, the crown of Judah went from father to son in a direct line. Just before the captivity, the lineal descent was interrupted. Jeconiah, *Assir the captive*, v. 17. (not a descendant of his, but Jeconiah himself), though he was written childless respecting the succession to the throne, yet seems to have had several children in Babylon, ver. 17, 18. Zerubbabel, here said to be the son of Pedaiah, is elsewhere called the son of Salathiel: either his grandson, if Pedaiah was

Salathiel's son, or if his brother, as it seems more probable, Pedaiah, as next of kin, might, on his dying childless, marry his widow, and raise up seed to his brother, which seems the best solution of the difficulty. There is an observable difference between the descendants of Zerubbabel here, and in *St. Matthew*, which may be accounted for by the same person frequently having more names than one.

CHAP. IV.

Ver. 3. These were of the father of Etam] These are the race of Etam. Houbigant. The Hebrew may be rendered, says Kennicott, these or those are the father of Etam. The ancient versions read sons instead of father. At the end of the 7th verse Houbigant reads, and Coz, and so, at the end of the 8th, and Jabez.

father of Gedor, and Heber the father of Socho, and Jekuthiel the father of Zanoah. And these *are* the sons of Bethiah the daughter of Pharaoh, which Mered took.

19 And the sons of *his* wife Hodiah the sister of Naham, the father of Keilah the Garmite, and Eshtemoa the Maachathite.

20 And the sons of Shimon *were*, Amnon, and Rinnah, Ben-hanan, and Tilon. And the sons of Ishi *were*, Zoheth, and Ben-zoheth.

21 ¶ The sons of Shelah the son of Judah *were*, Er the father of Lecah, and Laadah the father of Mareshah, and the families of the house of them that wrought fine linen, of the house of Ashbea,

22 And Jokim, and the men of Chozeba, and Joash, and Saraph, who had the dominion in Moab, and Jashubi-lehem. And *these are* ancient things.

23 These *were* the potters, and those that dwelt among plants and hedges: there they dwelt with the king for his work.

24 ¶ The sons of Simeon *were*, Nemuel, and Jamin, Jarib, Zerach, and Shaul:

25 Shallum his son, Mibsam his son, Mishma his son.

26 And the sons of Mishma; Hamuel his son, Zacchur his son, Shimei his son.

27 And Shimei had sixteen sons and six daughters; but his brethren had not many children, neither did all their family multiply, like to the children of Judah.

28 And they dwelt at Beer-sheba, and Moladah, and Hazur-shual,

29 And at Billah, and at Ezem, and at Tolad,

30 And at Bethuel, and at Hormah, and at Ziklag,

31 And at Beth-marcaboth, and Hazar-susim, and at Beth-birei, and at Shaaraim. These *were* their cities unto the reign of David.

32 And their villages *were*, Etam, and Ain, Rimmon, and Tochen, and Ashan, five cities:

33 And all their villages that *were* round about the same cities, unto Baal. These *were* their habitations, and their genealogy.

34 And Meshobab, and Jamlech, and Joshabab the son of Amaziah,

*Ver. 18. The daughter of Pharaoh]* Pharaoh, in this place, is not the name of an Egyptian king, but of some Israelite called by that name.

*Ver. 23. Those that dwell among plants and hedges]* Amongst the plantations, and at Gederah. Houbigant. See the LXX.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Among the numerous descendants of Judah, in the line of Pharez, Jabez is especially taken notice of, who seems to be of the family of Aharhel.

1. His name was given him from the pangs of travail that his mother endured: a memorial of the mercy of God to herself, who restored her from the jaws of death; or to him, of the sorrow and trouble to which man is as naturally born, as the sparks fly upwards.

2. He was a great man, more honourable than his brethren, either for wealth, or courage, or wisdom; or, above all, as from his prayer it appears, for piety. Greatness, when united with goodness, is doubly distinguished.

3. His prayer and the answer are recorded to his honour; for, nothing is more truly noble, than in prayer to have power with God as a prince, and to prevail.

(1.) The prayer is addressed to the God of Israel, his covenant God. *Note;* They who draw near to God with faith, as interested in a covenant of grace, may expect with confidence that they shall be heard and answered.

(2.) The substance of it is, for God's blessing; either *temporal*, as the enlargement of his border in the expulsion of the Canaanites; the support of God in his attempts

against them, and preservation from danger; or *spiritual* blessings, as the enlargement of his heart in light and love, and every holy affection; the strength of divine grace to subdue his corruptions; and protection from that greatest of evils, sin, and its present and eternal consequences. *Note;* (1.) Every blessing, temporal and spiritual, comes from God, and should be sought in the way of prayer. (2.) They who wait upon God, will renew their strength, and be kept from the power of the evil one, the evil heart, and the evil world. (3.) Unless God strengthen us, we become a prey to the weakest of our enemies.

4. God granted his prayer: so ready is God to give to him that asketh, and to supply the largest desires of our souls.

2dly, We have here, among the descendants of Judah, two families distinguished as being craftsmen and weavers. These trades descended from father to son: one of these craftsmen was, it seems, nobly allied, ver. 18.; for it was not then counted mean to be an ingenious mechanic. Another family had, during the days of Moab's subjection, been sent thither as governors for David; but since those ancient conquests, times were now sadly changed, and they were reduced to be potters and husbandmen to the king of Babylon, and earned their bread with the sweat of their brow. *Note;* This world is a changing scene: nothing substantial or enduring is to be expected in it. Let it quicken our diligence, then, to secure a better, where our dignity will be secure *without variableness or shadow of turning.*

35 And Joel, and Jehu the son of Josibiah, the son of Seraiah, the son of Asiel,

36 And Elioenai, and Jaakobah, and Jeshohaiah, and Afaiah, and Adiel, and Jesimiel, and Benaiah,

37 And Ziza the son of Shiphi, the son of Allon, the son of Jedaiah, the son of Shimri, the son of Shemaiah;

38 These mentioned by *their* names were princes in their families: and the house of their fathers increased greatly.

39 ¶ And they went to the entrance of Gedor, *even* unto the east side of the valley, to seek pasture for their flocks.

40 And they found fat pasture and good, and the land *was* wide, and quiet, and peaceable; for *they* of Ham had dwelt there of old.

41 And these written by name came in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and smote their tents, and the habitations that were found there, and destroyed them utterly unto this day, and dwelt in their rooms: because *there* was pasture there for their flocks.

42 And *some* of them, *even* of the sons of Simeon, five hundred men, went to mount Seir, having for their captains Pelatiah, and Neariah, and Rephaiah, and Uzziel, the sons of Ishi.

43 And they smote the rest of the Amalekites that were escaped, and dwelt there unto this day.

## CHAP. V.

*The genealogies of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh; their captivity under Tiglath-pileser.*

[Before Christ 1300.]

**N**OW the sons of Reuben the firstborn of Israel, (for he *was* the firstborn; but, forasmuch as he defiled his father's bed, his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph the son of Israel: and the genealogy is not to be reckoned after the birthright.

2 For Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him *came* the chief ruler; but the birth-

right *was* Joseph's:)

3 The sons, *I say*, of Reuben the firstborn of Israel *were*, Hanoch, and Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi.

4 The sons of Joel; Shemaiah his son, Gog his son, Shimei his son,

5 Micah his son, Reaia his son, Baal his son,

6 Beerah his son, whom Tilgath-pileser king of Assyria carried away *captive*: he *was* prince of the Reubenites.

7 And his brethren by their families, when the genealogy of their generations was reckoned, *were* the chief, Jeiel, and Zechariah.

8 And Bela the son of Azaz, the son of Shema, the son of Joel, who dwelt in Aroer, *even* unto Nebo and Baal-meon:

9 And eastward he inhabited unto the entering-in of the wilderness from the river Euphrates: because their cattle were multiplied in the land of Gilead.

10 And in the days of Saul they made war with the Hagarites, who fell by their hand: and they dwelt in their tents throughout all the east *land* of Gilead.

11 ¶ And the children of Gad dwelt over against them, in the land of Bashan unto Salcah:

12 Joel the chief, and Shapham the next, and Jaanai, and Shaphat in Bashan.

13 And their brethren of the house of their fathers *were*, Michael, and Meshullam, and Sheba, and Jorai, and Jachan, and Zia, and Heber, seven.

14 These *are* the children of Abihail the son of Huri, the son of Jaroah, the son of Gilead, the son of Michael, the son of Jeshihai, the son of Jahdo, the son of Buz;

15 Ahi the son of Abdiel, the son of Guni, chief of the house of their fathers.

16 And they dwelt in Gilead in Bashan, and in her towns, and in all the suburbs of Sharon, upon their borders.

17 All these were reckoned by genealogies

## CHAP. V.

*Ver. 2. Of him came the chief ruler*] The reader will observe, that there is nothing for *came* in the original.

There can be no doubt that the sacred writer here refers to Jacob's prophecy in Gen. xlix. 10. See the note on that place. The Syriac renders it, *Christ the king*; and the Arabic, *Messiah the king*.

in the days of Jotham king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam king of Israel.

18 ¶ The sons of Reuben, and the Gadites, and half the tribe of Manasseh, of valiant men, men able to bear buckler and sword, and to shoot with bow, and skilful in war, *were* four and forty thousand seven hundred and threescore, that went out to the war.

19 And they made war with the Hagarites, with Jetur, and Nephish, and Nodab.

20 And they were helped against them, and the Hagarites were delivered into their hand, and all that *were* with them: for they cried to God in the battle, and he was intreated of them; because they put their trust in him.

21 And they took away their cattle; of their camels fifty thousand, and of sheep two hundred and fifty thousand, and of asses two thousand, and of men an hundred thousand.

22 For there fell down many slain, because the war *was* of God. And they dwelt in their steads until the captivity.

23 ¶ And the children of the half-tribe of Manasseh dwelt in the land: they increased from Bashan unto Baal-hermon and Senir, and unto mount Hermon.

24 And these *were* the heads of the house of their fathers, even Ephraim, and Ishi, and Eliel, and Azriel, and Jeremiah, and Hodaviah, and Jahdiel, mighty men of valour, famous men, *and* heads of the house of their fathers.

25 ¶ And they transgressed against the God of their fathers, and went a whoring after the gods of the people of the land, whom God

destroyed before them.

26 And the God of Israel stirred up the spirit of Pul king of Assyria, and the spirit of Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria, and he carried them away, even the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, and brought them unto Halah, and Habor, and Hara, and to the river Gozan, unto this day.

## CHAP. VI.

*The genealogy of Levi, and of Aaron: the offices of the priests and Levites. The cities which were assigned them.*

[Before Christ 1300.]

**T**HE sons of Levi; Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

2 And the sons of Kohath; Amram, Izhar, and Hebron, and Uzziel.

3 And the children of Amram; Aaron, and Moses, and Miriam. The sons also of Aaron; Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

4 ¶ Eleazar begat Phinehas, Phinehas begat Abishua,

5 And Abishua begat Bukki, and Bukki begat Uzzi,

6 And Uzzi begat Zerariah, and Zerariah begat Meraioth,

7 Meraioth begat Amariah, and Amariah begat Ahitub,

8 And Ahitub begat Zadok, and Zadok begat Ahimaaz,

9 And Ahimaaz begat Azariah, and Azariah begat Johanan,

10 And Johanan begat Azariah, (*he it is*

*Ver. 26. Unto this day] And there they were unto this day. Houbigant.*

**REFLECTIONS.**—The half tribe of Manasseh is here mentioned, who with Reuben and Gad living together, separate from their brethren, by the river Jordan, were particularly associated together both in their victories and their captivity.

1. With an army of 44,760 chosen men, they invaded the Hagarites, and, trusting more in the blessing of God than the sword and spear, they prayed as they fought, and God gave them a distinguished victory with immense spoils, and enlarged their borders with the extensive country of their vanquished enemies; for the war was of God, undertaken at his command, and prosecuted under his blessing. *Note;* (1.) When we cry to God, then shall

our spiritual enemies be put to flight. (2.) Every success should be gratefully ascribed, not to the arm of flesh, but to the help of God.

2. By the king of Assyria they were led away captive together, as the just punishment of their revolt from God's worship and service, and their ungrateful returns of the divine mercy. God first stirred up one king to chastise them; and, when they were incorrigible, another to destroy them; and from their captivity they never returned. *Note;* Incorrigible offenders, who are cut off in their sins, perish in them for ever. When death has seized the impenitent, there is no more hope.

## CHAP. VI.

*Ver. 10. He it is that executed the priest's office, &c.]* Some suppose that this Azariah is he who strenuously opposed

that executed the priest's office in the temple that Solomon built in Jerusalem:)

11 And Azariah begat Amariah, and Amariah begat Ahitub,

12 And Ahitub begat Zadok, and Zadok begat Shallum,

13 And Shallum begat Hilkiah, and Hilkiah begat Azariah,

14 And Azariah begat Seraiah, and Seraiah begat Jehozadak,

15 And Jehozadak went *into captivity*, when the LORD carried away Judah and Jerusalem by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

16 ¶ The sons of Levi; Gershom, Kohath, and Merari.

17 And these *be* the names of the sons of Gershom; Libni and Shimei.

18 And the sons of Kohath *were*, Amram, and Izhar, and Hebron, and Uzziel.

19 The sons of Merari; Mahli, and Musi. And these *are* the families of the Levites according to their fathers.

20 ¶ Of Gershom; Libni his son, Jahath his son, Zimmah his son.

21 Joah his son, Iddo his son, Zerah his son, Jeaterai his son.

22 ¶ The sons of Kohath; Amminadab his son, Korah his son, Affir his son,

23 Elkanah his son, and Ebiaph his son, and Affir his son,

24 Tahath his son, Uriel his son, Uziah his son, and Shaul his son.

25 And the sons of Elkanah; Amasai, and Ahimoth.

26 *As for* Elkanah: the sons of Elkanah; Zophai his son, and Nahath his son,

27 Eliab his son, Jeroham his son, Elkanah his son.

28 And the sons of Samuel; the firstborn Vashni, and Abiah.

29 ¶ The sons of Merari; Mahli, Libni his son, Shimei his son, Uzza his son,

30 Shimei his son, Haggiah his son, Afsaiah his son.

31 ¶ And these *are they* whom David set over the service of song in the house of the LORD, after that the ark had rest.

32 And they ministered before the dwelling-

opposed king Uziah; and that, therefore, he is thus mentioned. Houbigant thinks that he was the son of Zadok, mentioned 1 Kings, iv. 2.

*Ver. 14. Azariah begat Seraiah, &c.]* Seraiah was put to death by Nebuchadnezzar. In him ended the succession of high-priests under the first temple. Their number from Zadok amounted to twelve.

*Ver. 16. &c. The sons of Levi]* This pedigree of the posterity of Levi is given again, ver. 43. It appears most probable, that in this catalogue the name of the son of Gershom was omitted, and לִבְנִי Libni, inserted, from בְּנֵי בנו, his son, since the name of Gershom's son in the Syriac and Arabic, ver. 20, is said to be Nahath instead of Jahath, as we find it in the second catalogue. See Pilkington, p. 29.

*Ver. 28. The sons of Samuel]* The sons of Samuel, Joel his first-born, Abiah his second. See ver. 33. and 1 Sam. viii. 2. At the end of the 27th verse, instead of *Elkanah his son*, read *Samuel his son*. Houbigant.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, As Judah had the pre-eminence, and Joseph the birthright, Levi had the honour of the priesthood. Among the descendants of Kohath were Moses, Aaron, and Miriam, whose names are great in God's book. Two of the sons of Aaron, on whom the priesthood was settled, suffered for their daring presumption. In the others, the priestly line was maintained. The line of Eleazar to the captivity is drawn, during which the high-priesthood in general continued in that family; though, in the time of the judges, we find it for a

while transferred to the descendants of Ithamar, till Solomon again restored Zadok. Azariah is mentioned as officiating in Solomon's temple, perhaps when Uziah invaded the priest's office, whom he so nobly withstood. They who have a zeal for God, fear not to testify against the sins of the greatest men, though at the hazard of prison or death.

2dly, When David had brought up the ark from Obededom's house, he appointed a solemn choir of Levites, for the constant singing of God's praises; at the head of which were Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, one out of each of the three great houses of Levi, with their children, as many as were musical at least. The other Levites, according to the classes into which they were divided, did the rest of the service, kept the gates, prepared the sacrifices, &c. *Note;* (1.) The work of praise in the great congregation should be as much the minister's care, as the work of prayer. It is a sure sign of a decay of godliness, when there is a neglect of divine psalmody. (2.) That only is to God a pleasing service of song, when in the heart, as well as the lips, we make melody to God. (3.) In God's house there must be no idlers; the work is important, and calls for labour and diligence.

3dly, Sacrificing was peculiarly appropriated to the priests, the sons of Aaron. They alone shed the blood of atonement, and burnt incense; and herein they were typical of him, who, himself both priest and sacrifice, by one oblation of himself once offered, hath obtained eternal redemption for us.

*Ver.*

place of the tabernacle of the congregation with singing, until Solomon had built the house of the LORD in Jerusalem: and *then* they waited on their office according to their order.

33 And these *are* they that waited with their children. Of the sons of the Kohathites: Heman a singer, the son of Joel, the son of Shemuel,

34 The son of Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Eliel, the son of Toah,

35 The son of Zuph, the son of Elkanah, the son of Mahath, the son of Amasai,

36 The son of Elkanah, the son of Joel, the son of Azariah, the son of Zephaniah,

37 The son of Tahath, the son of Assir, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah,

38 The son of Izhar, the son of Kohath, the son of Levi, the son of Israel.

39 And his brother Asaph, who stood on his right hand, *even* Asaph the son of Berechiah, the son of Shimea,

40 The son of Michael, the son of Baaseiah, the son of Malchiah,

41 The son of Ethni, the son of Zerah, the son of Adaiah,

42 The son of Ethan, the son of Zimmah, the son of Shimei,

43 The son of Jahath, the son of Gershom, the son of Levi.

44 And their brethren the sons of Merari stood on the left hand: Ethan the son of Kishi, the son of Abdi, the son of Malluch,

45 The son of Hashabiah, the son of Amaziah, the son of Hilkiyah,

46 The son of Amzi, the son of Bani, the son of Shamer,

47 The son of Mahli, the son of Mushi, the son of Merari, the son of Levi.

48 Their brethren also the Levites *were* appointed unto all manner of service of the

tabernacle of the house of God.

49 ¶ But Aaron and his sons offered upon the altar of the burnt-offering, and on the altar of incense, *and were appointed* for all the work of the *place* most holy, and to make an atonement for Israel according to all that Moses the servant of God had commanded.

50 And these *are* the sons of Aaron; Eleazar his son, Phinehas his son, Abishua his son,

51 Bukki his son, Uzzi his son, Zerariah his son,

52 Meraioth his son, Amariah his son, Ahitub his son,

53 Zadok his son, Ahimaaz his son.

54 ¶ Now these *are* their dwelling-places throughout their castles in their coasts, of the sons of Aaron, of the families of the Kohathites, for their's was the lot.

55 And they gave them Hebron in the land of Judah, and the suburbs thereof round about it.

56 But the fields of the city, and the villages thereof, they gave to Caleb the son of Jephunneh.

57 And to the sons of Aaron they gave the cities of Judah, *namely*, Hebron, *the city* of refuge, and Libnah with her suburbs, and Jattir, and Eshtemoa, with their suburbs,

58 And Hilen with her suburbs, Debir with her suburbs,

59 And Ashan with her suburbs, and Bethshemesh with her suburbs:

60 And out of the tribe of Benjamin; Geba with her suburbs, and Alemeth with her suburbs, and Anathoth with her suburbs. All their cities throughout their families *were* thirteen cities.

61 And unto the sons of Kohath, *which were* left of the family of that tribe, *were* cities given out of the half-tribe, *namely*, out

Ver. 54. For theirs was the lot] *The first lot.* Syriac and Houbigant. See Josh. xxi. 10.

Ver. 57. The cities of Judah] The author of this book, as well as the author of the book of Joshua, (chap. xxi. 19.) expressly asserts, that the cities given to the Levites were *thirteen*. In the catalogue before us, two of the names are omitted, and only five of them written as they are in Joshua. The differences in the 4th, 5th, and 6th names are very immaterial. The transposition of the two last

names shews no want of correctness in either catalogue. See Pilkington, p. 30. Houbigant translates the beginning of this verse, *moreover to the sons of Aaron they gave for a city of refuge, Hebron with her suburbs, and Libna, &c.*

Ver. 61. And unto the sons of Kohath—were given, &c.] *And to the rest of the sons of Kohath from the families of the tribe of Ephraim, and the tribe of Dan, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, were given by lot ten cities.*

of the half-tribe of Manasseh, by lot, ten cities.

62 And to the sons of Gershom throughout their families out of the tribe of Issachar, and out of the tribe of Asher, and out of the tribe of Naphtali, and out of the tribe of Manasseh in Bashan, thirteen cities.

63 Unto the sons of Merari *were given* by lot, throughout their families, out of the tribe of Reuben, and out of the tribe of Gad, and out of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve cities.

64 And the children of Israel gave to the Levites *these* cities with their suburbs.

65 And they gave by lot out of the tribe of the children of Judah, and out of the tribe of the children of Simeon, and out of the tribe of the children of Benjamin, *these* cities, which are called by *their* names.

66 And *the residue* of the families of the sons of Kohath had cities of their coasts out of the tribe of Ephraim.

67 And they gave unto them, of the cities of refuge, Shechem in mount Ephraim with her suburbs; *they gave* also Gezer with her suburbs,

68 And Jokmeam with her suburbs, and Beth-horon with her suburbs.

69 And Aijalon with her suburbs, and Gath-rimmon with her suburbs:

70 And out of the half-tribe of Manasseh; Aner with her suburbs, and Bileam with her suburbs, for the family of the remnant of the sons of Kohath.

71 Unto the sons of Gershom *were given* out of the family of the half-tribe of Manasseh, Golan in Bashan with her suburbs, and Ath-taroth with her suburbs:

72 And out of the tribe of Issachar; Kedesh with her suburbs, Daberath with her suburbs,

73 And Ramoth with her suburbs, and

Anem with her suburbs:

74 And out of the tribe of Asher; Mashal with her suburbs, and Abdon with her suburbs,

75 And Hukok with her suburbs, and Rehob with her suburbs:

76 And out of the tribe of Naphtali; Kedesh in Galilee with her suburbs, and Hammon with her suburbs, and Kirjath-aim with her suburbs.

77 Unto the rest of the children of Merari *were given* out of the tribe of Zebulun, Rimmon with her suburbs: Tabor with her suburbs:

78 And on the other side Jordan by Jericho, on the east side of Jordan, *were given them* out of the tribe of Reuben, Bezer in the wilderness with her suburbs, and Jahzah with her suburbs,

79 Kedemoth also with her suburbs, and Mephaath with her suburbs:

80 And out of the tribe of Gad; Ramoth in Gilead with her suburbs, and Mahanaim with her suburbs,

81 And Heshbon with her suburbs, and Jazer with her suburbs.

#### C H A P. VII.

*The genealogies of Issachar, of Benjamin, of Naphtali, of Manasseh, of Ephraim, and of Asher.*

[Before Christ 1444.]

**N**OW the sons of Issachar *were*, Tola, and Puah, Jathub, and Shimrom, four.

2 And the sons of Tola; Uzzi, and Rephaiah, and Jeriel, and Jahmai, and Jibsam, and Shemuel, heads of their father's house, *to wit*, of Tola: *they were* valiant men of might in their generations; whose number *was* in the days of David two and twenty thousand and six hundred.

3 And the sons of Uzzi; Izrahiah: and the

*Ver. 77. Out of the tribe of Zebulun*] Here are some names changed, and some omitted; for in Josh. xxi. 34, 35, four cities are assigned to the *Merarites* out of the tribe of Zebulun; whereas two only are mentioned here, the names of which are not the same. See and compare the places.

REFLECTIONS.—The Levites were distributed throughout the tribes, that the people might be better taught; taken off all worldly employments, that they might give

themselves up to the work of the ministry; and liberally provided with cities to dwell in, and the tithes for their maintenance. The names of the cities are much the same as Josh. xxi. except some trivial differences, which time may be supposed to have made. *Note*; (1.) They deserve a liberal provision, who labour in the word and doctrine. (2.) They who neglect the Levites' work, to eat the bread of the church in idleness, not only rob their brethren, but rob God also.



sons of Izrahiah; Michael, and Obadiah, and Joel, Ishiah, five: all of them chief men.

4 And with them by their generations, after the house of their fathers, *were* bands of soldiers for war, six and thirty thousand *men*: for they had many wives and sons.

5 And their brethren among all the families of Issachar *were* valiant men of might, reckoned in all by their genealogies fourcore and seven thousand.

6 ¶ *The sons* of Benjamin; Bela, and Becher, and Jediel, three.

7 And the sons of Bela; Ezbon, and Uzzi, and Uzziel, and Jerimoth, and Iri, five; heads of the house of *their* fathers, mighty men of valour; and were reckoned by their genealogies twenty and two thousand and thirty and four.

8 And the sons of Becher; Zemira, and Joash, and Eliezer, and Elioenai, and Omri, and Jerimoth, and Abiah, and Anathoth, and Alameth. All these *are* the sons of Becher.

9 And the number of them, after their genealogy by their generations, heads of the house of their fathers, mighty men of valour, *was* twenty thousand and two hundred.

10 The sons also of Jediel; Bilhan: and the sons of Bilhan; Jeush, and Benjamin, and Ehud, and Chenaanah, and Zethan, and Tharshish, and Ahishahar.

11 All these the sons of Jediel, by the heads of their fathers, mighty men of valour, *were* seventeen thousand and two hundred *soldiers*, fit to go out for war *and* battle.

12 Shuppim also, and Huppim, the children of Ir, *and* Hushim, the sons of Aber.

13 ¶ The sons of Naphtali; Jahziel, and Guni, and Jezer, and Shallum, the sons of Bilhah.

14 ¶ The sons of Manasseh; Ashriel, whom she bare: (*but* his concubine the Aramites bare Machir, the father of Gilead:

15 And Machir took to wife *the sister* of Huppim and Shuppim, whose sister's name *was* Maachah;) and the name of the second *was* Zelophehad: and Zelophehad had daughters.

16 And Maachah the wife of Machir bare a son, and she called his name Perefth; and the name of his brother *was* Shereth; and his sons *were* Ulam and Rakem.

17 And the sons of Ulam; Bedan. These *were* the sons of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh.

18 And his sister Hammoleketh bare Ishod, and Abiezer, and Mahalah.

19 And the sons of Shemidah were, Ahian, and Shechem, and Likhi, and Aniam.

20 ¶ And the sons of Ephraim; Shuthelah, and Bered his son, and Tahath his son, and Eladah his son, and Tahath his son,

21 And Zabad his son, and Shuthelah his son, and Ezer, and Elead, whom the men of Gath *that were* born in *that* land slew, because they came down to take away their cattle.

22 And Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brethren came to comfort him.

23 ¶ And when he went in to his wife,

#### CHAP. VII.

*Ver. 3. All of them chief men] Heads of families. They are said to have been five. Four only are reckoned; the name of one is omitted.*

REFLECTIONS.—Ephraim, the most distinguished of the tribes next to Judah, suffers more than any of them at first. We have here,

1. The breach made in his family. The men of Gath, who had gone up from Egypt to settle there, now made an irruption upon that part of Goshen where Zabad (who seems to be a second son of Ephraim after Shuthelah) and his sons fed their cattle, in defending which they lost their lives. *Note;* (1.) We are nowhere safe from danger; therefore, as those who are in jeopardy every hour, let us be always ready for the stroke of death. (2.) A good cause is not always successful. God now often permits the wicked to prosper; but a day is coming, when all God's dispensations will be cleared up to us.

2. Ephraim beheld with anguish the losses of his family, and was ready to lay down his grey hairs with sorrow in the grave; but his brethren pour the friendly balm of consolation into his wounded heart, and encourage him to trust still in God. *Note;* (1.) They who live long, often live to see their sorrows multiplied, and to bury the choicest of their worldly comforts. (2.) To soothe the grief of the afflicted, is to act the part of a brother: an unfeeling heart cannot be in a true Israelite.

3. God gave him another son in his old age, whom, in remembrance of the evils which had happened to his family, he called בְּרִיעַר *Beriah, in evil*; a fit name for every miserable babe born in sin, exposed to an evil world, and liable to eternal suffering.

4. The genealogy closes with Joshua, so famed in the book of God, who was the peculiar glory of this tribe. *Note;* A great good man reflects honour on all who are related to him.

she conceived, and bare a son, and he called his name Beriah, because it went evil with his house.

24 (And his daughter *was* Sherah, who built Beth-horon the nether, and the upper, and Uzzen-sherah.)

25 And Rephah *was* his son, also Resheph, and Telah his son, and Tahan his son,

26 Laadan his son, Ammihud his son, Elishama his son,

27 Non his son, Jehoshuah his son.

28 ¶ And their possessions and habitations *were*, Beth-el and the towns thereof, and eastward Naaran, and westward Gezer, with the towns thereof; Shechem also and the towns thereof, unto Gaza and the towns thereof:

29 And by the borders of the children of Manasseh, Beth-shean and her towns, Taanach and her towns, Megiddo and her towns, Dor and her towns. In these dwelt the children of Joseph the son of Israel.

30 ¶ The sons of Asher; Imnah, and Ifuah, and Ithuai, and Beriah, and Serah their sister.

31 And the sons of Beriah; Heber, and Malchiel, who *is* the father of Birzavith.

32 And Heber begat Japhlet, and Shomer, and Hotham, and Shua their sister.

33 And the sons of Japhlet; Pasach, and Bimhal, and Ashvath. These *are* the children of Japhlet.

34 And the sons of Shamer; Ahi, and Rohgah, Jehubbah, and Aram.

35 And the sons of his brother Helem; Zophah, and Imna, and Shelesh, and Amal.

36 The sons of Zophah; Suah, and Harnepher, and Shual, and Beri, and Imrah,

37 Bezer, and Hod, and Shamma, and Shilshah, and Ithran, and Beera.

38 And the sons of Jether; Jephunneh, and Pispah, and Ara.

39 And the sons of Ulla; Arah, and Haniel, and Rezia.

40 All these *were* the children of Asher,

heads of *their* father's house, choice *and* mighty men of valour, chief of the princes. And the number throughout the genealogy of them that were apt to the war *and* to battle *was* twenty and six thousand men.

## C H A P. VIII.

*The genealogy of Benjamin to Saul. The sons of Saul.*

[Before Christ 1444.]

**N**OW Benjamin begat Bela his firstborn, Ashbel the second, and Aharah the third,

2 Nohah the fourth, and Rapha the fifth.

3 And the sons of Bela were, Addar, and Gera, and Abihud,

4 And Abishua, and Naaman, and Ahoah,

5 And Gera, and Shephuphan, and Hiram.

6 And these *are* the sons of Ehud: these are the heads of the fathers of the inhabitants of Geba, and they removed them to Manahath:

7 And Naaman, and Ahiah, and Gera, he removed them, and begat Uzza, and Ahihud.

8 And Shaharaim begat *children* in the country of Moab, after he had sent them away; Hushim and Baara *were* his wives.

9 And he begat of Hodesh his wife, Jobab, and Zibia, and Meshah, and Malcham,

10 And Jeuz, and Shachia, and Mirma. These *were* his sons, heads of the fathers.

11 And of Hushim he begat Ahitub, and Elpaal.

12 The sons of Elpaal; Eber, and Misham, and Shamed, who built Ono, and Lod, with the towns thereof:

13 Beriah also, and Shema, who *were* heads of the fathers of the inhabitants of Aijalon, who drove away the inhabitants of Gath:

14 And Ahio, Shashak, and Jeremoth,

15 And Zebadiah, and Arad, and Ader,

16 And Michael, and Issah, and Joha, the sons of Beriah;

17 And Zebadiah, and Meshullam, and Hezeki, and Heber,

## C H A P. VIII.

*Ver. 2. And Rapha the fifth*] In Gen. xvi. 21. ten sons of Benjamin are reckoned; in the 6th verse of the preceding Vol. II.

ing chapter *three* only, and here *five*. The genealogy here seems to be introduced principally on account of Bela, and therefore there was no necessity of mentioning it at large. See Houbigant's note on this and the 6th verse.

18 Ishmerai also, and Jezliah, and Jobab, the sons of Elpaal;

19 And Jakim, and Zichri, and Zabdi,

20 And Elienai, and Zilthai, and Eliel,

21 And Adaiah, and Beraiah, and Shimrath, the sons of Shimhi;

22 And Ishpan, and Heber, and Eliel,

23 And Abdon, and Zichri, and Hanan,

24 And Hananiah, and Elam, and Antothijah,

25 And Iphedeiah, and Penuel, the sons of Shashak:

26 And Shamsherai, and Shehariah, and Athaliah,

27 And Jarefiah, and Eliah, and Zichri, the sons of Jeroham.

28 These *were* heads of the fathers, by their generations, chief *men*. These dwelt in Jerusalem.

29 And at Gibeon dwelt the father of Gibeon; whose wife's name *was* Maachah:

30 And his firstborn son Abdon, and Zur, and Kish, and Baal, and Nadab,

31 And Gedor, and Ahio, and Zachir.

32 And Mikloth begat Shimeah. And these also dwelt with their brethren in Jerusalem, over against them.

33 ¶ And Ner begat Kish, and Kish begat Saul, and Saul begat Jonathan, and Malchishua, and Abinadab, and Esh-baal.

34 And the son of Jonathan *was* Merib-baal; and Merib-baal begat Micah.

35 And the sons of Micah *were*, Pithon, and Melech, and Tarea, and Ahaz.

36 And Ahaz begat Jehoadah; and Jehoadah begat Alemeth, and Azmaveth, and Zimri; and Zimri begat Moza,

37 And Moza begat Binea: Rapha *was* his son, Eleasah his son, Azel his son:

38 And Azel had six sons, whose names *are* these, Azrikam, Bocheru, and Ishmael, and Sheariah, and Obadiah, and Hanan. All these *were* the sons of Azel.

39 And the sons of Eshek his brother *were*, Ulam his firstborn, Jehush the second, and Eliphelet the third.

40 And the sons of Ulam were mighty men of valour, archers, and had many sons, and sons' sons, an hundred and fifty. All these *are* of the sons of Benjamin.

## CHAP. IX.

*The first inhabitants of Jerusalem after their return from the captivity; the officers; the functions of the priests and Levites. The genealogy of Saul.*

[Before Christ 1200.]

**S**O all Israel were reckoned by genealogies; and, behold, they *were* written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah, *who* were carried away to Babylon for their transgression.

2 ¶ Now the first inhabitants that *dwelt* in their possessions in their cities *were*, the Israelites, the priests, Levites, and the Nethinims.

*Ver. 40. Archers]* דורכי קשת *dorkei keseth; those who tread the bow.* Hebrew. For their steel bows were so strong, says Bishop Patrick, that they could not bend them with their arms, but sat down, and pressing them with their feet, drew the arrow with both hands, that it might fly with the greater force. See Psalm xxxvii. 14.

**REFLECTIONS.**—1st, The names of some of Benjamin's descendants vary a little from those in Gen. xli. ; but what seems variety and intricacy to us, was, at the time when this was written, no doubt, well understood. In ver. 8. after *sent them away*, it may best be read, *even Husbin and Baara his wives*, as divorced. The Ehud mentioned ver. 6. seems not to be the judge of that name. Those who dwelt at Jerusalem are twice mentioned, as an inducement to their posterity to settle there after their return from Babylon. When we depart from the prison of the body, happy will it be for those who have a part in the new Jerusalem.

2dly, The family of Saul is here taken notice of. He

had several sons; but the line of Jonathan only is continued for about ten generations to Ulam, whose family was much increased, and were remarkable for their valour, and their skill in the use of the bow or sling. The name of a valiant soldier is great, but that of a saint of God greater.

## CHAP. IX.

*Ver. 1. So all Israel, &c.] But all Israel were reckoned by genealogies; and behold they were written in the book of the kings of Israel. But Judah were carried away to Babylon for their transgression.* Houbigant. The first clause in this verse is written to give a reason why the genealogies of Israel, that is, of the ten tribes, are omitted; because they were already written in the book of the kings of Israel. Houbigant renders the beginning of the next verse thus: *now they who first returned, every one into the possession of his own city, were, &c.*

*Ver. 2. The Nethinims]* נתנינים *Nethinim*, from the word נתן *natan*, to give, signifies persons given to the priests and Levites

3 ¶ And in Jerusalem dwelt of the children of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin, and of the children of Ephraim, and Manasseh;

4 Uthai the son of Ammihud, the son of Omri, the son of Imri, the son of Bani, of the children of Pharez the son of Judah.

5 And of the Shilonites; Asaiah the first-born, and his sons.

6 And of the sons of Zerach; Jeuel, and their brethren, six hundred and ninety.

7 And of the sons of Benjamin; Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Hodaviah, the son of Hasenuah,

8 And Ibneiah the son of Jeroham, and Elah the son of Uzzi, the son of Michri, and Meshullam the son of Shephathiah, the son of Reuel, the son of Ibnijah;

9 And their brethren, according to their generations, nine hundred and fifty and six. All these men *were* chief of the fathers in the house of their fathers.

10 ¶ And of the priests; Jedaiah, and Jehoiarib, and Jachin,

11 And Azariah the son of Hilkiyah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, the ruler of the house of God;

12 And Adaiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pashur, the son of Malchijah, and Maasiai the son of Adiel, the son of Jahzerah,

the son of Meshullam, the son of Meshille-mith, the son of Immer;

13 And their brethren, heads of the house of their fathers, a thousand and seven hundred and threescore; very able men for the work of the service of the house of God.

14 ¶ And of the Levites; Shemaiah the son of Hashtub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, of the sons of Merari;

15 And Bakbakkar, Hereesh, and Galal, and Mattaniah the son of Micah, the son of Zichri, the son of Asaph;

16 And Obadiah the son of Shemaiah, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun, and Berechiah the son of Asa, the son of Elkanah, that dwelt in the villages of the Netophathites.

17 And the porters *were*, Shallum, and Akkub, and Talmon, and Ahiman, and their brethren: Shallum *was* the chief;

18 Who hitherto *waited* in the king's gate eastward: they *were* porters in the companies of the children of Levi.

19 And Shallum the son of Kore, the son of Ebiasaph, the son of Korah, and his brethren, of the house of his father, the Korahites, *were* over the work of the service, keepers of the gates of the tabernacle: and their fathers, *being* over the host of the LORD, *were* keepers of the entry.

20 And Phinehas the son of Eleazar was

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Levites for performing the servile offices of the tabernacle or temple: accordingly, the LXX in this place render the word by Δεσπονοι, *persons given*. The Gibeonites, of whom we read, (Josh. ix. 21, 27.) that Joshua נתן *itum*, "gave them for hewers of wood, and drawers of water for the congregation and altar of Jehovah," were the first of this kind. We next read of the *Nethinims*, which David and the princes נתן *natan*, gave for the service of the Levites, Ezra, viii. 20. It is likely that these were taken from some of the people conquered by David; and it is highly probable, that of the remaining Canaanites also conquered by Solomon, some were devoted to his service. Compare Ezra, ii. 58. 1 Kings, ix. 20, 21. and see Calmet.

*Ver. 11. The ruler of the house of God*] Rather a ruler; for he was not the high-priest. See Ezra, iii. 2. and Haggai, i. 1.

REFLECTIONS. — Israel never more returned from Assyria; there all their genealogies perished; so that the writer could carry them no farther: but Judah (as it should be rendered) being returned again, their families

were preserved, and the places where their ancestors resided, particularly those who were fixed at Jerusalem. It is remarked, that they were carried away for their transgression, a warning to those who were returned, to beware of their fathers' sins. Many of Ephraim and Manasseh, either at the captivity of Israel, or when Judah was in Babylon, joined them, and returned with them to Jerusalem. It is a mercy if afflictions drive us together, and, forgetting former variance, we unite in the work and service of God, Ephraim no more vexing Judah, nor Judah Ephraim. The priests appear to have the greatest zeal for returning to Jerusalem: more of them came, than of Judah and Benjamin put together; and their peculiar commendation was, that they were as able as willing for the service of God. It is an unspeakable mercy, when abilities and zeal unite in a minister of the sanctuary: under such rulers in the house of God, the cause may be expected to prosper.

*Ver. 18. Who hitherto waited in the king's-gate eastward*] And Adanê was over the eastern gate, which is called the king's. Houbigant.

3 X 2

*Ver.*

the ruler over them in time past, and the LORD was with him.

21 And Zechariah the son of Meshelemiah was porter of the door of the tabernacle of the congregation.

22 All these which were chosen to be porters in the gates were two hundred and twelve. These were reckoned by their genealogy in their villages, whom David and Samuel the seer did ordain in their set office.

23 So they and their children had the oversight of the gates of the house of the LORD, namely, the house of the tabernacle, by wards.

24 In four quarters were the porters, toward the east, west, north, and south.

25 And their brethren, which were in their villages, were to come after seven days from time to time with them.

26 For these Levites, the four chief porters, were in their set office, and were over the chambers and treasuries of the house of God.

27 And they lodged round about the house of God, because the charge was upon them, and the opening thereof every morning pertained to them.

28 And certain of them had the charge of the ministering vessels, that they should bring them in and out by tale.

29 Some of them also were appointed to oversee the vessels, and all the instruments of the sanctuary, and the fine flour, and the wine, and the oil, and the frankincense, and the spices.

30 And some of the sons of the priests made the ointment of the spices.

31 And Mattithiah, one of the Levites, who was the firstborn of Shallum the Korahite, had the set office over the things that were made in the pans.

32 And other of their brethren, of the sons of the Kohathites, were over the shew-bread, to prepare it every sabbath.

33 And these are the singers, chief of the fathers of the Levites, who remaining in the chambers were free: for they were employed in that work day and night.

34 These chief fathers of the Levites were chief throughout their generations; these dwelt at Jerusalem.

35 ¶ And in Gibeon dwelt the father of Gibeon, Jehiel, whose wife's name was Maachah:

36 And his firstborn son Abdon, then Zur, and Kish, and Baal, and Ner, and Nadab,

37 And Gedor, and Ahio, and Zechariah, and Mikloth.

38 And Mikloth begat Shimeam. And they also dwelt with their brethren at Jerusalem, over against their brethren.

39 And Ner begat Kish; and Kish begat Saul; and Saul begat Jonathan, and Malchishua, and Abinadab, and Esh-baal.

40 And the son of Jonathan was Merib-baal: and Merib-baal begat Micah.

41 And the sons of Micah were, Pithon, and Melech, and Tahrea, and Abaz.

42 And Ahaz begat Jarah; and Jarah begat

Ver. 22. In their set office] In their stations. Houbigant.

Ver. 25, 26. And their brethren, &c.] And their brethren were in their villages, that they might come at set times after seven days; for they had their stated turns; ver. 26. and with these were four chief porters, Levites, who were over, &c. Houbigant.

Ver. 33. And these are the singers, &c.] And these were the ministers, the chief of the families of the Levites, who dwelt in their chambers, every one in his turn, because they were employed day and night in their work. Houbigant.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The Levites imitated their brethren the priests in their zeal for the work of the Lord. Long had they been destitute of temple, altar, and sacrifice; immediately on their return, therefore, till a temple can be built, a tabernacle is reared, ver. 19. and the service commences. According to their distribution in the days

of David, which he had planned with Samuel the prophet, they were divided into courses, two hundred and twelve by turns succeeding to keep the charge of the tabernacle. Those who were in waiting, had their lodging round about the house of God, that they might be at hand for their work. Every one had his several duty; and some, discharged from all other employments, were, at stated hours, by turns, engaged day and night in singing God's praises. Note; (1.) Order in the house of God conduces greatly to the profitableness of the service. (2.) They who begin with God, may hope to prosper in their undertakings. (3.) Residence, labour, and zeal, are indispensably required from every minister of God.

2dly, The verses from ver. 35 to 44, are a repetition of chap. viii. 29—38. to introduce the history of Saul in the following chapter.

Alemeth, and Azmaveth, and Zimri; and Zimri begat Moza;

43 And Moza begat Binea; and Rephaiah his son, Eleafah his son, Azel his son.

44 And Azel had six sons, whose names *are* these, Azrikam, Bocheru, and Ishmael, and Sheariah, and Obadiah, and Hanan: these *were* the sons of Azel.

CHAP. X.

*Saul is conquered by the Philistines, and dies: his three sons are slain: the inhabitants of Jabesh-gilead bury them. The kingdom is transferred from Saul to David.*

[Before Christ 1056.]

**N**OW the Philistines fought against Israel; and the men of Israel fled from before the Philistines, and fell down slain in mount Gilboa.

2 And the Philistines followed hard after Saul, and after his sons; and the Philistines slew Jonathan, and Abinadab, and Malchishua, the sons of Saul.

3 And the battle went fore against Saul, and the archers hit him, and he was wounded of the archers.

4 Then said Saul to his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was fore afraid. So Saul took a sword, and fell upon it.

5 And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise on the sword, and died.

6 So Saul died, and his three sons, and all his house died together.

7 And when all the men of Israel that *were* in the valley saw that they fled, and that Saul and his sons were dead, then they forsook their cities, and fled: and the Philistines came and dwelt in them.

8 ¶ And it came to pass on the morrow, when the Philistines came to strip the slain, that they found Saul and his sons fallen in mount Gilboa.

9 And when they had stripped him, they took his head, and his armour, and sent into the land of the Philistines round about, to carry tidings unto their idols, and to the people.

10 And they put his armour in the house of their gods, and fastened his head in the temple of Dagon.

11 ¶ And when all Jabesh-gilead heard all that the Philistines had done to Saul,

12 They arose, all the valiant men, and took away the body of Saul, and the bodies of his sons, and brought them to Jabesh, and buried their bones under the oak in Jabesh, and fasted seven days.

13 ¶ So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the LORD, *even* against the word of the LORD, which he kept not, and also for asking *counsel* of *one that had* a familiar spirit to enquire *of it*;

14 And enquired not of the LORD: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse.

CHAP. X.

*Ver. 6. All his house died together*] i. e. All of his house or family who were with him that day. In 1 Sam. xxxi. 6. it is *all his men*.

*Ver. 9. To carry tidings unto their idols*] *That the tidings might be told in the temples of their idols.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 13. To enquire of it*] See the note on 1 Sam. xxxi. 1. The two great offences of Saul, which are recapitulated in this verse, were, his sparing the Amalekites, and consulting the witch of Endor.

*Ver. 14. And enquired not of the Lord*] This seems to contradict what is said 1 Sam. xxviii. 6. But the Jews and others reconcile the two passages by saying, that as he did not *persevere* to inquire of God, nor inquire at all with a truly religious and faithful spirit, but went to a witch, it was just the same as if he had not inquired at all. "He

"whose heart is perfect with God," says a learned Jew, "lifts up his eyes to him and fixes them on him, hoping in him, though he do not presently hear or grant his request; and perseveres in his hopes, setting a resolution to wait upon him. But so did not Saul, who was remiss and negligent, saying in the pride of his heart, If the Lord will not answer me, I will consult a familiar spirit." The Vulgate renders the words in this place, *and put not his trust in the Lord.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, For the account of Saul's death, see 1 Sam. xxxi. It was a just judgment on Saul; and, no doubt, his bloody house, following his ill example, deserved to fall with him. Thus a way was made for David to the crown, most of his competitors being removed. We pity Jonathan, that lovely name, fallen among the slain; but all is wise and good which God doth,

## C H A P. XI.

*David is anointed king in Hebron. He takes Zion from the Jebusites. A catalogue of his worthies.*

[Before Christ 1048.]

**T**HEN all Israel gathered themselves to David unto Hebron, saying, Behold, we *are* thy bone and thy flesh.

2 And moreover in time past, even when Saul was king, thou *wast* he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel: and the LORD thy God said unto thee, Thou shalt feed my people Israel, and thou shalt be ruler over my people Israel.

3 Therefore came all the elders of Israel to the king to Hebron; and David made a covenant with them in Hebron before the LORD; and they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the LORD by Samuel.

4 ¶ And David and all Israel went to Jerusalem, which *is* Jebus; where the Jebusites *were*, the inhabitants of the land.

5 And the inhabitants of Jebus said to David, Thou shalt not come hither. Nevertheless David took the castle of Zion, which *is* the city of David.

6 And David said, Whosoever smiteth the Jebusites first shall be chief and captain. So Joab the son of Zeruiah went first up, and was chief.

7 And David dwelt in the castle; therefore they called it the city of David.

8 And he built the city round about, even from Millo round about: and Joab repaired the rest of the city.

9 So David waxed greater and greater: for the LORD of hosts *was* with him.

10 ¶ These also *are* the chief of the mighty men whom David had, who strengthened themselves with him in his kingdom, and with all Israel, to make him king, according to the word of the LORD concerning Israel.

11 And this *is* the number of the mighty men whom David had; Jathobeam, an Hachmonite, the chief of the captains: he lifted up his spear against three hundred slain *by him* at one time.

12 And after him *was* Eleazar the son of Dodo, the Ahohite, who *was one* of the three mighties.

13 He was with David at Pas-dammim, and there the Philistines were gathered together to battle, where was a parcel of ground full of barley; and the people fled from before the Philistines.

14 And they set themselves in the midst of *that* parcel, and delivered it, and slew the Philistines; and the LORD saved *them* by a great deliverance.

15 Now three of the thirty captains went down to the rock to David, into the cave of Adullam; and the host of the Philistines encamped in the valley of Rephaim.

16 And David *was* then in the hold, and the Philistines' garrison *was* then at Bethlehem.

17 And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Beth-lehem, that *is* at the gate!

18 And the three brake through the host of the Philistines, and drew water out of the well of Bethlehem, that *was* by the gate, and took *it*, and brought *it* to David: but David would not drink of *it*, but poured it out to the LORD,

doth, though we are short-sighted, and see not always the reasons of his procedure.

2dly, The indignity offered to the bodies of Saul and his sons, and the bold attempt of the men of Jabesh-gilead, were before observed. *Note*; (1.) God will visit for sin, and the highest are not above his arm. (2.) They who abused their power when alive, deserve to be stigmatized when dead, as a warning to others. (3.) Ruin must be near, when men, like Saul, turn away from God, and abandon themselves to the devil.

## C H A P. XI.

*Ver. 13. He was with David at Pas-dammim*] See 2 Sam. xxiii. 9, &c. In general, the seeming differences

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which are found in this book, and that of Samuel, may be reconciled from the latter.

*Ver. 15. Now three of the thirty captains*] In 2 Sam. xxiii. 13. *three of the thirty chief*. There were thirty-seven heads or chiefs, if we reckon all; and but seven if we reckon only those who were most honourable, and to whom also the name *ראש* *rash*, head, or chief, is peculiarly attributed. The Hebrew words in Samuel rendered *in the time of harvest*, never have that signification throughout the Bible: the verse there should be translated, *three captains went down who were over the thirty, and came to the rock to David, into the cave Adullam, &c.* Kennicott.

*Ver. 17—19. David longed; and said, O that one would give me drink, &c.*] The 17th verse seems to contain, not barely



19 And said, My God forbid it me, that I should do this thing: shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy? for with *the jeopardy of* their lives they brought it. Therefore he would not drink it. These things did these three mightiest.

20 And Abishai the brother of Joab, he was chief of the three: for lifting up his spear against three hundred, he slew *them*, and had a name among the three.

21 Of the three, he was more honourable than the two; for he was their captain: howbeit he attained not unto the *first* three.

22 Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the son of a valiant man of Kabzeel, who had done many acts; he slew two lion-like men of Moab: also he went down and slew a lion in a pit in a snowy day.

23 And he slew an Egyptian, a man of *great* stature, five cubits high; and in the Egyptian's hand *was* a spear like a weaver's beam; and he went down to him with a staff, and plucked the spear out of the Egyptian's hand, and slew him with his own spear.

24 These *things* did Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and had a name among the three mighties.

25 Behold, he was honourable among the thirty, but attained not to the *first* three: and David set him over his guard.

26 Also the valiant men of the armies *were*, Afahel the brother of Joab, Elhanan the son of Dodo of Beth-lehem,

27 Shammoth the Harorite, Helez the Pelonite,

28 Ira the son of Ikkezh the Tekoite, Abiezer the Antothite,

29 Sibbecai the Hushathite, Ilai the Ahoite,

30 Maharai the Netophathite, Heled the son of Baanah the Netophathite,

31 Ithai the son of Ribai of Gibeah, *that pertained* to the children of Benjamin, Benaiah the Pirathonite,

32 Hurai of the brooks of Gaash, Abiel the Arbathite,

33 Azmaveth the Baharumite, Eliahba the Shaalbonite,

34 The sons of Hashem the Gizonite, Jonathan the son of Shage the Hararite,

35 Ahiam the son of Sacar the Hararite, Eliphal the son of Ur,

36 Hopher the Mecherathite, Ahijah the Pelonite,

37 Hezro the Carmelite, Naari the son of Ezbai,

38 Joel the brother of Nathan, Mibhar the son of Haggeri,

39 Zelek the Ammonite, Naharai the Berrothite, the armourbearer of Joab the son of Zeruiah,

40 Ira the Ithrite, Gareb the Ithrite,

41 Uriah the Hittite, Zabad the son of Ahlai,

42 Adina the son of Shiza the Reubenite, a captain of the Reubenites, and thirty with him,

barely David's longing for the water of Bethlehem, but his passionate wish to see his native town freed from the troops of the Philistines; and should he rendered, *David longed and said, who will give me to drink, &c.?* The action of pouring out water before the Lord, was used with great solemnity; see 1 Sam. vii. 6.; and here David seems, in consequence of that sacred custom, to have poured out the water which was thus unexpectedly brought him, ver. 16. either by way of prayer that God would forgive his having thus undesignedly hazarded the lives of three of his bravest warriors, or else as an act of thanksgiving for their safe return. The humane and generous reader's heart will suggest to him reflections sufficiently suited to this great resolution. Curtius relates something similar of Alexander the Great, who, when his army was near being destroyed by thirst, and two of his soldiers had got a cufe of water for their children, and, happening to meet

with Alexander, offered it to him to drink, returned the cup, full as it was, to his soldiers, and said, "I cannot bear to drink it alone, and it is too little to be divided among all; give it the children." See Kennicott and Chandler. As it would not suit the nature of our work to enter into a minute discussion of all the variations between this list of David's worthies, and that in 2 Sam. xxiii. we beg leave to refer the critical reader to Dr. Kennicott's Dilertations, vol. i.

Ver. 21. *Of the three he was more honourable, &c.] He was after these three, in the second place of honour, although he commanded them; nor did he attain to their glory.* Houbigant.

Ver. 42. *And thirty with him]* Though the author of the book of Samuel concludes with Uriah, the last of the thirty-seven, yet the author of this book adds fifteen warriors more. These fifteen are, undoubtedly, recorded because

43 Hanan the son of Maachah, and Josaphat the Mithnite,

44 Uzzia the Asherathite, Shama and Jehiel the sons of Hothan the Aroerite,

45 Jediael the son of Shimri, and Joha his brother, the Tizite,

46 Eliel the Mahavite, and Jeribai, and Joshaviah, the sons of Elnaam, and Ithmah the Moabite,

47 Eliel, and Obed, and Jafiel the Meboabite.

## C H A P. XII.

*The names of those brave men who came to David at Ziklag. The armies that came to him at Hebron.*

[Before Christ 1048.]

**N**OW these *are* they that came to David to Ziklag, while he yet kept himself close because of Saul the son of Kish: and they *were* among the mighty men, helpers of the war.

2 *They were* armed with bows, and could use both the right hand and the left in *hurling* stones and *shooting* arrows out of a bow, *even* of Saul's brethren of Benjamin.

3 The chief *was* Ahiezer, then Joash, the sons of Shemaah the Gibeathite; and Jeziel, and Pelet, the sons of Azmaveth; and Berachah, and Jehu the Antothite,

4 And Imaiah the Gibeonite, a mighty man among the thirty; and over the thirty; and Jeremiah, and Jahaziel, and Johanan, and Josabad the Gederathite,

5 Eluzai, and Jerimoth, and Bealiah, and Shemariah, and Shephatiah the Haruphite,

6 Elkanah, and Jehiah, and Azareel, and Joecer, and Jathobeam, the Korhites,

7 And Joelah, and Zebadiah, the sons of Jeroham of Gedor.

8 And of the Gadites there separated themselves unto David into the hold to the wilderness men of might, *and* men of war *fit* for the

because they were brave men; and we may fairly presume that they were recorded after the thirty-seven, because their bravery was not equally eminent and serviceable. As the thirty were inferior to the seven, to the captain-general, and to the three generals of the two ternaries, so were these fifteen inferior to the thirty; and, indeed, this is expressly observed of Adina, and very properly observed of him as being the first of the following number; for in this verse we read, *Adina, a captain of the Reubenites, ועליו שלשים* *vealav shelshim*, which is just the reverse of what is said of Benaiah, chap. xxvii. 6. *על השלשים* *al basheleshim*. He was superior to the thirty, as he certainly was by being the second general of the second series. Junius and Tremellius have rendered the words *vealav sheleshim*, as the nature of the history, and their remarkable situation in the chapter, required they should be rendered, *but the thirty were superior to him*. To the authority of Junius and Tremellius may be added that of Arias Montanus, and the greater authority of the LXX, both in the Alexandrian and Vatican editions.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, David, on Saul's death, was soon received in Judah, and reigned in Hebron, though he was not, till seven years afterwards, acknowledged as king by the other tribes. But God's counsel must stand: the time came, when Israel bowed before him, swore allegiance, and received the reciprocal assurance of an equitable and righteous government. The obligation between prince and people is mutual; the one is as much bound to rule with justice, as the other to obey with cheerfulness. When they were gathered together on this solemn occasion, David led them against the fortress of Jebus, where he intended to fix his royal residence; and though strong by art and nature, yet, animated by the prospect of prefer-

ment, Joab entered the place. Shall the prospect of a post of honour thus engage the soldier to hazard his life; and shall we hesitate at any difficulties in our spiritual warfare, where we are assured of success, and are animated by promises of eternal glory?

2dly, The catalogue of worthies we have had before, 2 Sam. xxiii. Others are here added to them. By their assistance the kingdom was confirmed to David, and by supporting him they strengthened and advanced themselves. They who have been our helpers in any way, have a right to our grateful returns. The exploits performed by these were great and astonishing; but every believer lifted under the banner of Jesus is strengthened for mightier conflicts, and enabled for more glorious achievements; for we wrestle not with flesh and blood only, but with angels, principalities, and powers, and the rulers of the darkness of this world. It was not, however, till after enduring many dangers with their king, that they came to reign with him. Through much tribulation, and suffering hardship, as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, can we only hope to sit down with him in his kingdom.

## C H A P. XII.

*Ver. 2. Even of Saul's brethren of Benjamin*] Bishop Patrick observes, that possibly these persons came to David from a generous motive, as they could not bear to see an innocent man persecuted in so violent a manner, especially after he had refused, when he had it in his power, to hurt the person who thus pursued him.

*Ver. 4. And over the thirty*] *And with him thirty, Jeremiah, &c.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 8. Like the faces of lions*] See 2 Sam. i. 23. ii. 18.

battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces *were like* the faces of lions, and *were* as swift as the roes upon the mountains;

9 Ezer the first, Obadiah the second, Eliab the third,

10 Mishmannah the fourth, Jeremiah the fifth,

11 Attai the sixth, Eliel the seventh,

12 Johanan the eighth, Elzabad the ninth,

13 Jeremiah the tenth, Machbanai the eleventh.

14 These *were* of the sons of Gad, captains of the host: one of the least *was* over an hundred, and the greatest over a thousand.

15 These *are* they that went over Jordan in the first month, when it had overflowed all his banks; and they put to flight all *them* of the vallies, *both* toward the east, and toward the west.

16 And there came of the children of Benjamin and Judah to the hold unto David.

17 And David went out to meet them, and answered and said unto them, If ye be come peaceably unto me to help me, mine heart shall be knit unto you: but if *ye be* come to betray me to mine enemies, seeing *there is* no wrong in mine hands, the God of our fathers look *thereon*, and rebuke *it*.

18 Then the spirit came upon Amasai, *who was* chief of the captains, *and he said*, Thine *are we*, David, and on thy side, "thou son of Jesse: Peace, peace *be* unto thee, and peace *be* to thine helpers; for thy God helpeth thee. Then David received them, and made them captains of the band.

19 And there fell *some* of Manasseh to David, when he came with the Philistines against Saul to battle: but they helped them not: for the lords of the Philistines upon advisement sent him away, saying, He will fall to his master Saul to *the jeopardy* of our heads.

20 As he went to Ziklag, there fell to him of Manasseh, Adnah, and Jozabad, and Jediahel,

and Michael, and Jozabad, and Elihu, and Zilthai, captains of the thousands that *were* of Manasseh.

21 And they helped David against the band of *the rovers*: for they *were* all mighty men of valour, and were captains in the host.

22 For at *that* time day by day there came to David to help him, until *it was* a great host, like the host of God.

23 ¶ And these *are* the numbers of the bands *that were* ready armed to the war, *and* came to David to Hebron, to turn the kingdom of Saul to him, according to the word of the LORD.

24 The children of Judah that bare shield and spear *were* six thousand and eight hundred, ready armed to the war.

25 Of the children of Simeon, mighty men of valour for the war, seven thousand and one hundred.

26 Of the children of Levi four thousand and six hundred.

27 And Jehoiada *was* the leader of the Aaronites, and with him *were* three thousand and seven hundred;

28 And Zadok, a young man mighty of valour, and of his father's house twenty and two captains.

29 And of the children of Benjamin, the kindred of Saul, three thousand: for hitherto the greatest part of them had kept the ward of the house of Saul.

30 And of the children of Ephraim twenty thousand and eight hundred, mighty men of valour, famous throughout the house of their fathers.

31 And of the half-tribe of Manasse eighteen thousand, which were expressed by name, to come and make David king.

32 And of the children of Issachar, *which were men* that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them *were* two hundred; and all their brethren *were* at their commandment.

Ver. 15. *These are they that went over Jordan*] This seems to be mentioned as a mark of their intrepidity, who ventured to pass the Jordan at a time when its current was most rapid, and the passage extremely hazardous.

VOL. II.

Ver. 18. *Then the spirit came upon Amasai*] See Judg. vi. 34.

Ver. 32. *Children of Issachar—that had understanding of the times*] See Gen. xlix. 15. *To know what Israel ought*

33 Of Zebulun, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, with all instruments of war, fifty thousand, which could keep rank: *they were* not of double heart.

34 And of Naphtali a thousand captains, and with them with shield and spear thirty and seven thousand.

35 And of the Danites expert in war twenty

and eight thousand and six hundred.

36 And of Asher, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, forty thousand.

37 And on the other side of Jordan, of the Reubenites, and the Gadites, and of the half-tribe of Manasseh, with all manner of instruments of war for the battle, an hundred and twenty thousand.

*to do;* that is, says Houbigant, when the passover, the feast of pentecost, and the new moons were to be celebrated; a meaning plainly to be inferred from the foregoing words, and agreeable to Jacob's prediction concerning Issachar.

REFLECTIONS. — 1st, As the time drew nearer for David's accession to the throne, God, in whose hand are the hearts of all men, appears here inclining them towards his anointed. Some of these joined him before Saul's death, but the most of them, it is probable, immediately after it.

1. Some of Saul's relations of Benjamin, men of great dexterity and valour, came to him in Ziklag.

2. Of the Gadites, some of most distinguished courage joined him in the wilderness; men who had afterwards great commands in their tribe, like lions for strength and boldness, and swift as roes to pursue their enemies. Not deterred by the overflowings of Jordan, they plunged into the rapid stream, and swam through; and on their way to the hold, meeting some plundering bands of Philistines or Moabites, they fell upon them, and routed them. *Note;* (1.) When we are in the way to Jesus, no difficulties must discourage us. (2.) As swift to fly from evil, and as bold in the cause of truth, ought every follower of the Son of David to be.

3. Many of Judah and Benjamin, besides those under the conduct of Amasai or Amasa, David's nephew, came to him; till, becoming a numerous body, David had suspicion that they might have some ill design. They who have been once endangered by false friends, have need to be somewhat jealous of future professions. [1.] He questions them, therefore, on their intentions: *If they came peaceably*, as real friends to assist him, *his heart would be knit unto them*; he would love them affectionately, and they should share his future welfare: if, under colour of friendship, to betray him, then he refers himself to God, as the avenger of the perfidious and deceitful. *Note;* (1.) There is one who seeth and judgeth, and upon whom lying lips and a deceitful tongue cannot impose. (2.) They who come to us in friendship, with professions of real regard, are entitled to a warm return of equal affection. (3.) They who have a good cause, and a good conscience, can comfortably leave their all in God's hands. [2.] Amasai, as the mouth of the company, with a spirit of wisdom and genuine affection, silences David's fears; assuring him of their fidelity; praying for his peace, and for all his friends; and professing a full confidence, that God would strengthen him to overcome all his enemies. Such a frank and zealous good wish removed David's suspicions: he received them, and preferred them, probably, when he came to the crown. *Note;* (1.) It is prudence to seek

those for our friends who have God for their helper. (2.) He who is under the divine protection shall be kept in peace in the midst of trouble. (3.) It is our duty thus to make an unreserved surrender of ourselves to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to spend and be spent in his honourable service. (4.) Whatever strength, zeal, or diligence, God has blessed us with for his work, we must never forget to be importunate for his blessing; else we shall labour in vain, and spend our strength for nought.

4. Of Manasseh, several chief men joined him as he went to battle with the Philistines, and in his return to Ziklag, who, being all valiant warriors, assisted him greatly in the pursuit and conquest of the Amalekites. *Note;* God will often, just at the critical moment, raise us up those very friends that we want.

5. After the defeat of Saul, multitudes flocked to him from every side, till his little band became a vast army. *Note;* They who patiently wait by faith on the promise, shall assuredly see at last the salvation of God.

2dly, During the life of Ish-bosheth the cause of the house of Saul daily weakened; on his death, all the tribes, convinced of the divine appointment of David, with joint consent assembled to make him king; and they brought with them such a force as would enable him to maintain his pretensions against all opposers. Near 350,000 valiant men met on this occasion, and, among the rest,

1. The priests and Levites shewed great zeal for David. *Note;* A faithful minister of God cannot but be a loyal subject to his prince.

2. The men of Issachar sent a deputation of two hundred of their chiefs, men of deep understanding, able counsellors, who knew what was for Israel's advantage, and therefore gladly welcomed David to the throne; and men of great influence, the whole tribe being under their sway. *Note;* A wise and able head is of greater weight to a cause, than the sword of the mighty.

3. All these are said to have a perfect heart. It was the result of conviction, that David *ought*, and the wish of their hearts that he *might* reign over them. He is truly a great king, whom his subjects obey, not only from a consciousness of duty, but from real love of his person and government.

4. So great a camp required vast provision; and so liberally did the country supply them, that they were not only fed, but feasted, while Israel rang for joy to see upon the throne the man after God's own heart. *Note;* When Jesus erects his throne in the heart, he gives present joy in believing; and when he comes at last to reign over his saints, then shall we be for ever filled with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

38 All these men of war, that could keep rank, came with a perfect heart to Hebron, to make David king over all Israel: and all the rest also of Israel were of one heart to make David king.

39 And there they were with David three days, eating and drinking: for their brethren had prepared for them.

40 Moreover they that were nigh them, even unto Issachar and Zebulun and Naphtali, brought bread on asses, and on camels, and on mules, and on oxen, and meat, meal, cakes of figs, and bunches of raisins, and wine, and oil, and oxen, and sheep abundantly: for there was joy in Israel.

CHAP. XIII.

*The ark, by David's command, is brought from the house of Abinadab. Uzza being smitten, the ark is brought to the house of Obed-edom, and continues there three months.*

[Before Christ 1044.]

AND David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader.

2 And David said unto all the congregation of Israel, If it seem good unto you, and that it be of the LORD our God, let us send abroad unto our brethren every where, that are left in all

the land of Israel, and with them also to the priests and Levites which are in their cities and suburbs, that they may gather themselves unto us:

3 And let us bring again the ark of our God to us: for we enquired not at it in the days of Saul.

4 And all the congregation said that they would do so: for the thing was right in the eyes of all the people.

5 So David gathered all Israel together, from Shihor of Egypt even unto the entering of Hemath, to bring the ark of God from Kirjath-jearim.

6 And David went up, and all Israel, to Baalah, that is, to Kirjath-jearim, which belonged to Judah, to bring up thence the ark of God the LORD, that dwelleth between the cherubims, whose name is called on it.

7 And they carried the ark of God in a new cart out of the house of Abinadab: and Uzza and Ahio drave the cart.

8 And David and all Israel played before God with all their might, and with singing, and with harps, and with psalteries, and with timbrels, and with cymbals, and with trumpets.

9 ¶ And when they came unto the threshing-floor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled.

CHAP. XIII.

*Ver. 3. For we enquired not at it in the days of Saul] For we consulted him not in the days of Saul. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 5. Shihor of Egypt] The Nile, according to Dr. Shaw. The LXX render it, from the borders of Egypt. See Travels, p. 283.*

*Ver. 6. The ark of God the Lord, that dwelleth, &c.] The ark of the Lord God, who sitteth upon the cherubim, where his name is invoked. Houbigant.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, No sooner was David gone up from Hebron, and had secured the fortress of Jerusalem, where he resolved to take up his future abode, than he was solicitous to raise the neglected ark from its obscurity, and to bring it to a more honourable place.

1. He proposes the matter to his great men and officers for their advice and concurrence. They had neglected the ark in the days of Saul, when religion went greatly to decay. It would be now the stability of the kingdom, and the happiness of the land, to enjoy the divine presence and favour; and therefore, if it seemed good to them, as he doubted not they would approve the motion, they would without delay collect the priests and Levites, and the principal men of the land, to attend the solemnity of bringing up the ark to Jerusalem. Note: (1.) To have

God with us, should be our first and chief desire, as the foundation of all true felicity. (2.) Respect paid to those whom we might command, engages their consent to our wishes, and is the way to be obeyed with cheerfulness.

2. The proposal was very much applauded; the congregation assembled from one end of the land to the other, and with great joy began the procession. Note: (1.) It is matter of unspeakable joy to true Israelites, to see the drooping cause of God revive. (2.) When princes are promoters of godliness, it should stir up ministers and people to correspond with their pious designs.

2dly, The error they committed in removing the ark, has been already observed, 2 Sam. vi. as well as the death of Uzza, and the interruption of the solemnity consequent thereupon. It may teach us, 1. Careful attention to the divine prescription, and not to make light of the least commandment. 2. That ignorance in those who minister before the ark, is especially criminal. 3. That in the midst of every earthly joy, we have need to tremble. 4. That discouraging providences are apt to cool our zeal in the way of duty; so that, like David in the present instance, we stop short. 5. The same word of God, like the ark to Uzzah and Obed-edom, is to one man the favour of life unto life, to another the favour of death unto death.

10 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzza, and he smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God.

11 And David was displeased, because the LORD had made a breach upon Uzza: wherefore that place is called Perez-uzza to this day.

12 And David was afraid of God that day, saying, How shall I bring the ark of God home to me?

13 So David brought not the ark home to himself to the city of David, but carried it aside into the house of Obed-edom the Gittite.

14 And the ark of God remained with the family of Obed-edom in his house three months. And the LORD blessed the house of Obed-edom, and all that he had.

#### CHAP. XIV.

*Hiram sends to David timber and artificers to build him a palace: David marries more wives, and begets sons and daughters: he twice conquers the Philistines.*

[Before Christ 1044.]

**N**OW Hiram king of Tyre sent messengers to David, and timber of cedars, with masons and carpenters, to build him an house.

2 ¶ And David perceived that the LORD had confirmed him king over Israel, for his kingdom was lifted up on high, because of his people Israel.

3 ¶ And David took more wives at Jerusalem: and David begat more sons and daughters.

4 Now these are the names of his children which he had in Jerusalem; Shammua, and Shobab, Nathan, and Solomon,

5 And Ibhar, and Elishua, and Elpalet,

6 And Nogah, and Nepheg, and Japhia,

7 And Elishama, and Beeliada, and Eliphalet.

8 ¶ And when the Philistines heard that David was anointed king over all Israel, all the Philistines went up to seek David. And David heard of it, and went out against them.

9 And the Philistines came and spread themselves in the valley of Rephaim.

10 And David enquired of God, saying, Shall I go up against the Philistines? and wilt thou deliver them into mine hand? And the LORD said unto him, Go up; for I will deliver them into thine hand.

11 So they came up to Baal-perazim; and David smote them there. Then David said, God hath broken in upon mine enemies by mine hand like the breaking forth of waters: therefore they called the name of that place Baal-perazim.

12 And when they had left their gods there, David gave a commandment, and they were burned with fire.

13 And the Philistines yet again spread themselves abroad in the valley.

14 Therefore David enquired again of God; and God said unto him, Go not up after them; turn away from them, and come upon them over against the mulberry-trees.

15 And it shall be, when thou shalt hear a found of going in the tops of the mulberry-trees, that then thou shalt go out to battle: for God is gone forth before thee to smite the host of the Philistines,

16 David therefore did as God commanded him: and they smote the host of the Philistines from Gibeon even to Gazer.

17 And the fame of David went out into all lands; and the LORD brought the fear of him upon all nations.

#### CHAP. XIV.

*Ver. 7. And Beeliada*] In the parallel place, 2 Sam. ch. v. 16., as also in the third chapter and eighth verse of this book, the same person is called *Eliada*. See Houbigant and Pilkington.

*Ver. 16. And they smote*] *He smote*. Houbigant.

*Ver. 17. All lands*] The word כל *kal*, translated *all*, is to be rendered according to the subject to which it is applied; sometimes by *all* is meant only a *great many*, or the greatest part: sometimes it does not signify a *whole*,

but only complete or perfect; and sometimes, only in a more restrained sense, sincere or well disposed. Hence Bishop Patrick in the present passage very justly limits the term to the neighbouring countries and people. See Noldius on כל.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The account of Hiram's kindness and David's family we had 2 Sam. ch. v. 11. (1.) Like Hiram, we should not envy our neighbour's prosperity, but rejoice in it, and wish to increase it. (2.) Like David, we should consider every temporal blessing that we possess, as  
lent

## CHAP. XV.

*The priests and Levites, at the command of David, bring the ark of God with great pomp to the city of David: Michal derides David for dancing before the ark.*

[Before Christ 1044.]

**A**ND David made him houses in the city of David, and prepared a place for the ark of God, and pitched for it a tent.

2 Then David said, None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God, and to minister unto him for ever.

3 And David gathered all Israel together to Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the LORD unto his place, which he had prepared for it.

4 And David assembled the children of Aaron, and the Levites:

5 Of the sons of Kohath; Uriel the chief, and his brethren an hundred and twenty:

6 Of the sons of Merari; Afsaiah the chief, and his brethren two hundred and twenty:

7 Of the sons of Gershom; Joel the chief, and his brethren an hundred and thirty:

8 Of the sons of Elizaphan; Shemaiah the chief, and his brethren two hundred:

9 Of the sons of Hebron; Eliel the chief, and his brethren fourscore:

10 Of the sons of Uzziel; Amminadab the chief, and his brethren an hundred and twelve.

11 And David called for Zadok and Abiathar the priests, and for the Levites, for Uriel, Afsaiah, and Joel, Shemaiah, and Eliel, and Amminadab,

12 And said unto them, Ye are the chief of the fathers of the Levites: sanctify yourselves, both ye and your brethren, that ye may bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel unto the place that I have prepared for it.

13 For because ye *did it* not at the first, the LORD our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought him not after the due order.

14 So the priests and the Levites sanctified themselves to bring up the ark of the LORD God of Israel.

15 And the children of the Levites bare the ark of God upon their shoulders with the staves thereon, as Moses commanded according to the word of the LORD.

16 And David spake to the chief of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers with instruments of musick, psalteries and harps and cymbals, sounding, by lifting up the voice with joy.

17 So the Levites appointed Heman the son of Joel; and of his brethren, Asaph the son of Berechiah; and of the sons of Merari their brethren, Ethan the son of Kufhaiah;

18 And with them their brethren of the second degree, Zechariah, Ben, and Jaaziel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Unni, Eliab, and Benaiah, and Maaseiah, and Mattithiah, and Elipheleh, and Mikneiah, and Obed-edom, and Jeiel, the porters.

19 So the singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, were appointed to sound with cymbals of brass;

20 And Zechariah, and Aziel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Unni, and Eliab, and Maaseiah, and Benaiah, with psalteries on Alamoth;

21 And Mattithiah, and Elipheleh, and Mikneiah, and Obed-edom, and Jeiel, and Azaziah, with harps on the Sheminith to excel.

22 And Chenaniah, chief of the Levites, was for song: he instructed about the song, because he was skilful.

lent us of the Lord, to be improved for his glory, and the good of mankind.

2dly, The Philistines' invasions, and David's victories we heard before. They give us, (1.) A comfortable emblem of the conquests which Jesus hath made for us of all our enemies. (2.) They admonish us of the restless enmity of the seed of the serpent against the children of God. (3.) They teach us, with David, to cry to God for direction in all our difficulties, and to ascribe to him the praise of all our mercies. (4.) David's son and

David's Lord hath gotten him a greater name, by his victories over sin, and death, and hell: in him his people rejoice; before him his enemies tremble.

## CHAP. XV.

*Ver. 20. With psalteries on Alamoth* } *With psalteries of a deeper sound.* Houbigant. But respecting this, the word *Sheminith* in the next verse, and other words of the like sort, we refer to our notes upon the Psalms.

*Ver.*



23 And Berechiah and Elkanah *were* door-keepers for the ark.

24 And Shebaniah, and Jehoshaphat, and Nethaneel, and Amasai, and Zechariah, and Benaiah, and Eliezer, the priests, did blow with the trumpets before the ark of God: and Obed-edom and Jehiah *were* door-keepers for the ark.

25 ¶ So David, and the elders of Israel and the captains over thousands, went to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the house of Obed-edom with joy.

26 And it came to pass, when God helped the Levites, that bare the ark of the covenant of the LORD, that they offered seven bullocks and seven rams.

27 And David *was* clothed with a robe of fine linen, and all the Levites that bare the ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song with the singers: David also *had* upon him an ephod of linen.

28 Thus all Israel brought up the ark of the covenant of the LORD with shouting, and with sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps.

29 ¶ And it came to pass, *as* the ark of the covenant of the LORD came to the city of David, that Michal the daughter of Saul looking out at a window saw king David dancing and playing: and she despised him in her heart.

*Ver. 26. When God helped the Levites] i. e. He favoured those who bare the ark, and inflicted no plague upon them, as had happened to Uzza. Or it may be, God added strength to the Levites bearing the ark, enabling them to support the burthen during all the time that the sacrifices were offered. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 27. A robe of fine linen—also—an ephod of linen] David was clothed with a double garment, with a robe of fine linen, and with a linen ephod. These two garments are expressly distinguished in the account of the vestments of the high-priest, Exod. xxviii. 4. 6. xxix. 5. xxxix. 23. The fabric of them was different; the ephod was made of gold, blue, purple, scarlet; whereas the robe was formed all of blue. The shape of them was different; the ephod reaching only to the knees, the robe flowing down to the very covering of the feet. The robe had no division in it throughout, but was made whole and round, with an opening in the middle of it, at the top, so that it was impossible that any part of the body could be seen through it, especially as the ephod on this occasion of David's dancing, was thrown over it, and tied probably with a girdle, as the priest's ephod always was. David clothed himself with these linen garments on this solemnity out of reverence to God. It may be further observed, that this robe, which covered their other garments, was worn by kings, their children, princes, priests, Levites, and prophets, when they appeared on any solemn occasion. See 1 Sam. xxviii. 14. 2 Sam. xiii. 18. David, therefore, dressed himself on this occasion with this long flowing linen robe, instead of the robe of state proper to him as king of Israel, and which was made of richer materials; and hence he was scornfully insulted by Saul's daughter as *uncovering himself*, &c. i. e. uncovering himself as a king, and appearing in a habit wholly unworthy, as she thought, of his royal character and dignity. See 2 Sam. vi. 20. and Chandler's Review.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The first attempt to remove the ark proved abortive. The reason of their misfortune David had now learnt; he therefore justifies God, humbles himself, and warns the Levites to be more exact for the

future. When we mean well, yet suffer for our mistakes, we must not be discouraged, but apply with greater circumspection to the work before us.

1. David having built his own house, and reared a tabernacle for the reception of the ark, gathers the priests and Levites to the amount of eight hundred and sixty-two, besides their six chiefs; and having admonished them of the cause of the late disaster, exhorts them to prepare for the solemnity, and be more exactly observant of the divine prescription. *Note;* (1.) The greatest reformers are but men, and therefore not faultless. (2.) It is a mercy when we discover our errors, and amend them.

2. The Levites now carefully observed the divine rule, and God enabled them for their work. Each man had his several post; some bore the ark, others were porters to keep the doors of the tabernacle from intruders, and now probably surrounded the ark, that others might not touch it as Uzza had done. Some with musical instruments joined in concert, while others were appointed to lead the sacred song, and join the vocal with instrumental harmony. *Note;* (1.) When we have a right understanding of the way of duty, and ability to walk in it, both these come from the Lord. (2.) Church-music, when under good regulations, may still be made a great blessing; though the absurd and irreligious manner in which it is too often performed, is justly offensive, and a disturbance to devotion.

2dly, With solemn sacrifices, as atonements for past mistakes, and to obtain present assistance, the Levites proceeded, divinely supported under their burden; and with every expression of joy David and the people rejoiced before the ark. Michal, David's wife, seems the only discontented spirit that was that day in Israel. She could not without indignation and contempt behold her husband thus, as she thought, degrading himself. *Note;* (1.) Songs of praise are the natural expressions of the soul that is happy in God. (2.) They who have no relish for a Christian's joys are apt to despise them, and think those services of religion mean and contemptible which the believer accounts his most honourable and happy enjoyment.

## C H A P. XVI.

*The ark being placed in the tent, David offers sacrifices: he places singers before the ark. His song of thanksgiving.*

[Before Christ 1044.]

**S**O they brought the ark of God, and set it in the midst of the tent that David had pitched for it: and they offered burnt-sacrifices and peace-offerings before God.

2 And when David had made an end of offering the burnt-offerings and the peace-offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the LORD.

3 And he dealt to every one of Israel, both man and woman, to every one a loaf of bread, and a good piece of flesh, and a flagon of wine.

4 ¶ And he appointed *certain* of the Levites to minister before the ark of the LORD, and to record, and to thank and praise the LORD God of Israel:

5 Asaph the chief, and next to him Zechariah, Jeiel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehiel, and Mattithiah, and Eliab, and Benaiah, and Obededom: and Jeiel with psalteries and with harps; but Asaph made a sound with cymbals;

6 Benaiah also and Jahaziel the priests with trumpets continually before the ark of the covenant of God.

7 ¶ Then on that day David delivered first *this psalm* to thank the LORD into the hand of Asaph and his brethren.

8 Give thanks unto the LORD, call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people.

9 Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him, talk ye of all his wondrous works.

10 Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD.

11 Seek the LORD and his strength, seek his face continually.

12 Remember his marvellous works that he hath done, his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth;

13 O ye seed of Israel his servant, ye chil-

dren of Jacob, his chosen ones.

14 He *is* the LORD our God; his judgments *are* in all the earth.

15 Be ye mindful always of his covenant; the word *which* he commanded to a thousand generations;

16 *Even of the covenant* which he made with Abraham, and of his oath unto Isaac;

17 And hath confirmed the same to Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant,

18 Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance;

19 When ye were but few, even a few, and strangers in it.

20 And *when* they went from nation to nation, and from *one* kingdom to another people;

21 He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproveth kings for their sakes,

22 *Saying*, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.

23 Sing unto the LORD, all the earth; shew forth from day to day his salvation.

24 Declare his glory among the heathen; his marvellous works among all nations.

25 For great *is* the LORD, and greatly to be praised: he also *is* to be feared above all gods.

26 For all the gods of the people *are* idols: but the LORD made the heavens.

27 Glory and honour *are* in his presence; strength and gladness *are* in his place.

28 Give unto the LORD, ye kindreds of the people, give unto the LORD glory and strength.

29 Give unto the LORD the glory *due* unto his name: bring an offering, and come before him: worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

30 Fear before him, all the earth: the world also shall be stable, that it be not moved.

31 Let the heavens be glad, and let the

## C H A P. XVI.

*Ver. 3. A flagon of wine] A draught of wine. Miller, p. 333.*

*Ver. 7. Then—David delivered first this psalm, &c.] On that same day David delivered this psalm, that Asaph and his brethren might praise the Lord by it. Houbigant. See the 96th and 105th Psalms.*

*Ver:*

earth rejoice: and let *men* say among the nations, The LORD reigneth.

32 Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof: let the fields rejoice, and all that *is* therein.

33 Then shall the trees of the wood sing out at the presence of the LORD, because he cometh to judge the earth.

34 O give thanks unto the LORD; for *he is* good; for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

35 And say ye, Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen, that we may give thanks to thy holy name, and glory in thy praise.

36 Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel for ever and ever. And all the people said, Amen, and praised the LORD.

37 ¶ So he left there before the ark of the covenant of the LORD Asaph and his brethren, to minister before the ark continually, as every day's work required:

38 And Obed-edom with their brethren, threescore and eight; Obed-edom also the son

of Jeduthun, and Hosah, *to be* porters:

39 And Zadok the priest, and his brethren the priests, before the tabernacle of the LORD in the high place that *was* at Gibeon.

40 To offer burnt-offerings unto the LORD upon the altar of the burnt-offering continually morning and evening, and *to do* according to all that is written in the law of the LORD, which he commanded Israel;

41 And with them Heman and Jeduthun, and the rest that were chosen, who were expressed by name, to give thanks to the LORD, because his mercy *endureth* for ever;

42 And with them Heman and Jeduthun with trumpets and cymbals for those that should make a sound, and with musical instruments of God. And the sons of Jeduthun *were* porters.

43 And all the people departed every man to his house: and David returned to bless his house.

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*Ver. 39. And Zadok the priest, and his brethren, &c.]* Zadok was the chief of the secondary priests, and ministered in the tabernacle of Moses then at Gibeon. Here the ordinary worship of God was performed, and the daily sacrifices offered on the altar made by Moses; but the extraordinary worship was performed before the ark at Jerusalem, where Abiathar the high priest attended. See Bishop Patrick. The words, *and with them Heman and Jeduthun*, at the beginning of the 42d verse, are omitted by the LXX. Instead of, *cymbals for those that should make a sound*, in that verse, Houbigant reads, *well-sounding cymbals*. See ch. xv. 19.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The ark being safely lodged, great sacrifices were offered in honour to God; the people nobly feasted, and a constant course of Levites was now appointed to sing God's praises, and to commemorate the mercies which they had received from him. *Note*; (1.) Grateful praise is the most acceptable sacrifice. (2.) The hungry who wait upon God shall be filled with his good things. (3.) Our worship of God must be regular and constant: whatever engagements may call us off, we must never omit the daily work of prayer and praise.

2dly, David's psalm opens [1.] with thanksgiving. God's people are bound (1.) to praise him. (2.) To call upon him in prayer, for the continuance of his mercies. (3.) To publish his glory to others. (4.) To rejoice in him; yea, to glory in his name, in his love, power, faithfulness, and mercy. [2.] It contains grateful memorials of God's dealings, which deserve everlasting remembrance. (1.) The covenant established with their fathers, and fulfilled to them. (2.) The miraculous works and provi-

dential preservation for which they were indebted to him. (3.) The statutes and judgments of his revealed will, with which they were so peculiarly favoured. [3.] It proceeds to declare the transcendent excellency of Israel's God. (1.) He, as the Creator, is alone deserving of worship, fear, and adoration. (2.) His perfections are great beyond compare, his strength almighty, his goodness unutterable, his glory surpassing, his dominion universal. (3.) He who is the universal governor, is also the universal judge; at whose bar the eternal state of man must be determined. [4.] In consequence of these views of God's glory, and past experience of his mercy, the Psalmist closes his song of praise with the language of prayer. (1.) He begs salvation from every enemy. (2.) That God would gather together his people, now in the land of promise, and shortly in the regions of glory. (3.) Lastly, he declares, that the consequence of his continual grace will engage their everlasting praise. [5.] The people hereunto added their joyful amen, and praised the Lord: and so may every faithful soul, in every age and place, exalt God's glory, grace, and faithfulness; and, as in duty bound, earnestly supplicate the continuance of the same blessings.

3dly, The ark being fixed at Jerusalem, and the Levites appointed to minister before it, David takes a little care of the tabernacle at Gibeon. There Zadok attended, with the priests and Levites, to offer the appointed sacrifices continually, while Abiathar probably abode at Jerusalem, to consult the Lord before the ark. The service of God being thus settled, the people departed with joy, and David went down to bless his house, to pray with them, and for them. *Note*; Public services must never supersede private and family devotion.

## C H A P. XVII.

*Nathan, first approving the purpose of David to build God a house, afterwards by the word of the Lord informs him, that not he, but his son, should build it: David gives thanks to God.*

[Before Christ 1044]

**N**OW it came to pass, as David sat in his house, that David said to Nathan the prophet, Lo, I dwell in an house of cedars, but the ark of the covenant of the LORD remaineth under curtains.

2 Then Nathan said unto David, Do all that *is* in thine heart; for God *is* with thee.

3 ¶ And it came to pass the same night, that the word of God came to Nathan, saying,

4 Go and tell David my servant, Thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not build me an house to dwell in:

5 For I have not dwelt in an house since the day that I brought up Israel unto this day; but have gone from tent to tent, and from *one* tabernacle to *another*.

6 Wheresoever I have walked with all Israel, spake I a word to any of the judges of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people, saying, Why have ye not built me an house of cedars?

7 Now therefore thus shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheepcote, *even* from following the sheep, that thou shouldest be ruler over my people Israel:

8 And I have been with thee whithersoever thou hast walked, and have cut off all thine enemies from before thee, and have made thee a name like the name of the great men that *are* in the earth.

9 Also I will ordain a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, and they shall dwell in their place, and shall be moved no

more; neither shall the children of wickedness waste them any more, as at the beginning,

10 And since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel. Moreover I will subdue all thine enemies. Furthermore I tell thee that the LORD will build thee an house.

11 ¶ And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom.

12 He shall build me an house, and I will stablish his throne for ever.

13 I will be his father, and he shall be my son: and I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took *it* from *him* that was before thee:

14 But I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom for ever: and his throne shall be established for evermore.

15 According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David.

16 ¶ And David the king came and sat before the LORD, and said, Who *am* I, O LORD God, and what *is* mine house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?

17 And *yet* this was a small thing in thine eyes, O God; for thou hast *also* spoken of thy servant's house for a great while to come, and hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree, O LORD God.

18 What can David  *speak* more to thee for the honour of thy servant? for thou knowest thy servant.

19 O LORD, for thy servant's sake, and according to thine own heart, hast thou done all this greatness, in making known all *these* great things.

## C H A P. XVII.

*Ver. 5. Since the day that I brought up Israel] Out of Egypt. See 2 Sam. vii. 6.*

*Ver. 14. Settle him in mine house, &c.] In 2 Sam. vii. 16. In thine house, and in thy kingdom. The Jews understand this as a prophetic description of the reign of the Messiah. See Heb. i. 5.*

*Ver. 17. And hast regarded me according to the estate, &c.] Word for word from the Hebrew, And thou hast exhibited me according to the form of a man of high degree.*

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Houbigant renders it, *And hast made me remarkable above other men.* Some understand this also as a prophecy of the Messiah.

*Ver. 19. Hast thou done all this greatness, &c.?] Thou hast done all these great things, that thou mightest shew all thy glory in thy servant.* Houbigant.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, David's pious purpose, Nathan's encouragement, and God's gracious acceptance of his intentions, though he restrained him from the service, we had before, 2 Sam. vii. We may observe, (1.) How

3 Z

solicitous

20 O LORD, *there is none like thee, neither is there any god beside thee, according to all that we have heard with our ears.*

21 And what one nation in the earth *is like thy people Israel, whom God went to redeem to be his own people, to make thee a name of greatness and terribleness, by driving out nations from before thy people, whom thou hast redeemed out of Egypt?*

22 For thy people Israel didst thou make thine own people for ever; and thou, LORD, becamest their God.

23 Therefore now, LORD, let the thing that thou hast spoken concerning thy servant and concerning his house be established for ever, and do as thou hast said.

24 Let it even be established, that thy name may be magnified for ever, saying, The LORD of hosts *is the God of Israel, even a God to Israel: and let the house of David thy servant be established before thee.*

25 For thou, O my God, hast told thy servant that thou wilt build him an house: therefore thy servant hath found *in his heart to pray before thee.*

26 And now, LORD, thou art God, and hast promised this goodness unto thy servant:

27 Now therefore let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant, that it may be before thee for ever: for thou blessest, O LORD, and *it shall be blessed for ever.*

### CHAP. XVIII.

*David subdues the Philistines, Moabites, Hadarezer king of Zobah, the king of Syria, and the Edomites. Tou, king of Hamath, congratulates David, and sends him presents. David reigns over all Israel with the greatest equity.*

[Before Christ 1040.]

**N**OW after this it came to pass, that David smote the Philistines, and subdued them,

and took Gath and her towns out of the hand of the Philistines.

2 And he smote Moab; and the Moabites became David's servants, *and brought gifts.*

3 ¶ And David smote Hadarezer king of Zobah unto Hamath, as he went to establish his dominion by the river Euphrates.

4 And David took from him a thousand chariots, and seven thousand horsemen, and twenty thousand footmen: David also houghed all the chariot-horses, but reserved of them an hundred chariots.

5 And when the Syrians of Damascus came to help Hadarezer king of Zobah, David slew of the Syrians two and twenty thousand men.

6 Then David put *garrisons* in Syria-damascus; and the Syrians became David's servants, *and brought gifts.* Thus the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went.

7 And David took the shields of gold that were on the servants of Hadarezer, and brought them to Jerusalem.

8 Likewise from Tibhath, and from Chun, cities of Hadarezer, brought David very much brass, wherewith Solomon made the brazen sea, and the pillars, and the vessels of brass.

9 ¶ Now when Tou king of Hamath heard how David had smitten all the host of Hadarezer king of Zobah;

10 He sent Hadoram his son to king David, to enquire of his welfare, and to congratulate him, because he had fought against Hadarezer, and smitten him; (for Hadarezer had warred with Tou;) and *with him* all manner of vessels of gold and silver and brass.

11 Them also king David dedicated unto the LORD, with the silver and the gold that he brought from all *these* nations; from Edom,

solicitous the heart of every faithful Israelite is, that God's glory may be set forth. (2.) That God's ministers should delight to encourage others to every good word and work. (3.) A gracious desire, though ineffectual, is not forgotten of God. (4.) Blessings on our children, are mercies to ourselves. (5.) In Jesus Christ is the promise fulfilled, ver. 14. who is exalted to sit upon the throne of David for ever and ever.

2dly, David's prayer differs little here from the former, except in a few expressions. It teaches, (1.) With what deep humility we should approach God. (2.) That those

are the truly honourable of the earth, whom God regards. (3.) That the highest glory of the greatest king, is to be the servant of God. (4.) As there is no God like the Lord, so there is no happiness equal to a sense of his favour. (5.) When we have God's promises, we may confidently plead them, and be assured that we shall be heard and answered.

### CHAP. XVIII.

*Ver. 4. David—houghed all the chariot-horses, &c.] David destroyed all the chariots, save a hundred, which he reserved*

and from Moab, and from the children of Ammon, and from the Philistines, and from Amalek.

12 Moreover Abishai the son of Zeruah slew of the Edomites in the valley of Salt eighteen thousand.

13 ¶ And he put garrisons in Edom; and all the Edomites became David's servants. Thus the LORD preserved David whithersoever he went.

14 ¶ So David reigned over all Israel, and executed judgment and justice among all his people.

15 And Joab the son of Zeruah *was* over the host; and Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud, recorder.

16 And Zadok the son of Ahitub, and Abimelech the son of Abiathar, *were* the priests; and Shavsha *was* scribe;

17 And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada *was* over the Cherethites and the Pelethites; and the sons of David *were* chief about the king.

#### C H A P. XIX.

*Hanun, the king of the Ammonites, treats with contempt the messengers of David; who fights against and overcomes the Ammonites and the Syrians.*

[Before Christ 1037-]

**N**OW it came to pass after this, that Nahash the king of the children of Ammon died, and his son reigned in his stead.

2 And David said, I will shew kindness unto Hanun the son of Nahash, because his

father shewed kindness to me. And David sent messengers to comfort him concerning his father. So the servants of David came into the land of the children of Ammon to Hanun, to comfort him.

3 But the princes of the children of Ammon said to Hanun, Thinkest thou that David doth honour thy father, that he hath sent comforters unto thee? are not his servants come unto thee for to search, and to overthrow, and to spy out the land?

4 Wherefore Hanun took David's servants, and shaved them, and cut off their garments in the midst hard by their buttocks, and sent them away.

5 Then there went *certain*, and told David how the men were served. And he sent to meet them: for the men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, Tarry at Jericho until your beards be grown, and *then* return.

6 ¶ And when the children of Ammon saw that they had made themselves odious to David, Hanun and the children of Ammon sent a thousand talents of silver to hire them chariots and horsemen out of Mesopotamia, and out of Syria-maachah, and out of Zobah.

7 So they hired thirty and two thousand chariots, and the king of Maachah and his people; who came and pitched before Medeba. And the children of Ammon gathered themselves together from their cities, and came to battle.

*reserved.* Houbigant. We observe, once for all, upon these chapters, that having enlarged on the subjects of them in the notes on Samuel, we shall make our annotations on them very short.

*Ver. 16. Abimelech, the son of Abiathar*] Read, as in the parallel place, Ahimelech. Some inconsiderately would read, *Abiathar, the son of Abimelech*; when that Ahimelech, who was the son of Abiathar, is mentioned, ch. xxiv. 6. and in other places, and was another man. Houbigant.

REFLECTIONS.—Ht, David's conquests here recorded, we had 2 Sam. viii. They followed upon the prayer and promise of the preceding chapter; for, they who have God for their friend have nothing to fear from their enemies. *Note*; (1.) Such shall be the believer's victories over all his corruptions: though they are numerous, and often return to the attack, yet sin shall not prevail against him. (2.) The associated forces of earth and hell in vain oppose God's church; it shall stand triumphant at last over every

foe. (3.) Shields of gold cannot defend us; but the shield of faith never faileth.

2dly, They who are prosperous, like David, will be courted; but a true friend is best known in adversity. Thou counted David's favour well worth the most valuable present that he could send him; and shall we not be more solicitous to secure *him* for our friend, whose favour is better than life itself, and which may be obtained without price or present? David's government appears to be as excellent as his victories were glorious; and no wonder, when God prospered him in every undertaking. The son of David rules with greater equity, as well as enjoys a more universal dominion: happy the people who are subjects of his righteous government, and enjoy his divine protection.

#### C H A P. XIX.

*Ver. 7. Thirty and two thousand chariots*] Waterland and Houbigant read, *Thirty-two thousand men, with chariots.* See 2 Sam. x. 18.

8 And when David heard *of it*, he sent Joab, and all the host of the mighty men.

9 And the children of Ammon came out and put the battle in array before the gate of the city: and the kings that were come *were* by themselves in the field.

10 Now when Joab saw that the battle was set against him before and behind, he chose out of all the choice of Israel, and put *them* in array against the Syrians.

11 And the rest of the people he delivered unto the hand of Abishai his brother, and they set *themselves* in array against the children of Ammon.

12 And he said, If the Syrians be too strong for me, then thou shalt help me: but if the children of Ammon be too strong for thee, then I will help thee.

13 Be of good courage, and let us behave ourselves valiantly for our people, and for the cities of our God: and let the LORD do *that which is good* in his sight.

14 So Joab and the people that *were* with him drew nigh before the Syrians unto the battle; and they fled before him.

15 And when the children of Ammon saw that the Syrians were fled, they likewise fled before Abishai his brother, and entered into the city. Then Joab came to Jerusalem.

16 ¶ And when the Syrians saw that they were put to the worse before Israel, they sent messengers, and drew forth the Syrians that *were* beyond the river: and Shophach the captain of the host of Hadarezer *went* before them.

17 And it was told David; and he gathered

all Israel, and passed over Jordan, and came upon them, and set *the battle* in array against them. So when David had put the battle in array against the Syrians, they fought with him.

18 But the Syrians fled before Israel; and David slew of the Syrians seven thousand *men which fought in* chariots, and forty thousand footmen, and killed Shophach the captain of the host.

19 And when the servants of Hadarezer saw that they were put to the worse before Israel, they made peace with David, and became his servants: neither would the Syrians help the children of Ammon any more.

## CHAP. XX.

*Joab takes the city of Rabbah. The Philistines are three times overcome by David and his servants.*

[Before Christ 1037.]

**A**ND it came to pass, that after the year was expired, at the time that kings go out *to battle*, Joab led forth the power of the army, and wasted the country of the children of Ammon, and came and besieged Rabbah. (But David tarried at Jerusalem. And Joab smote Rabbah, and destroyed it.)

2 And David took the crown of their king from off his head, and found it to weigh a talent of gold, and *there were* precious stones in it; and it was set upon David's head: and he brought also exceeding much spoil out of the city.

3 And he brought out the people that *were* in it, and cut *them* with saws, and with harrows of iron, and with axes. Even so dealt David with all the cities of the children of

*Ver. 18. Seven thousand men, &c.] Seven thousand men, with chariots. Houbigant renders it, David destroyed seven thousand horsemen of the Syrians, seven hundred chariots, and forty thousand footmen. See the parallel place.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, This history we may find, 2 Sam. x. It shows, (1.) How the kindest actions may be misinterpreted, and the most friendly concern be repaid with ingratitude. (2.) That the most innocent character may suffer much reproach. (3.) Where whisperers are heard, nearest friends are separated. (4.) That they who receive damage in our service, ought to be tenderly taken care of, and provided for.

2dly, 1. Had the Ammonites submitted, they might at

much less expence have obtained their peace with David, than by the useless assistance of Syria; but the mischief which pride begins, obstinacy often completes.

2. Joab seems to have been in imminent danger; like the christian, who is often sore beset behind and before, only to excite his faith and fortitude, and to exalt the power and grace of God in his preservation.

3. One loss only whetted the Syrian's revenge; but their united forces met no more success the second time than the first. In vain do they strive, who fight against God.

4. Experience taught them at last to submit. It is a mercy if our sufferings drive us at last to God, to take hold of his strength, and make peace with him.



Ammon. And David and all the people returned to Jerusalem.

4 ¶ And it came to pass after this, that there arose war at Gezer with the Philistines; at which time Sibbechai the Hushathite slew Sippai, *that was* of the children of the giant: and they were subdued.

5 And there was war again with the Philistines; and Elhanan the son of Jair slew Lahmi the brother of Goliath the Gittite, whose spear-staff *was* like a weaver's beam.

6 And yet again there was war at Gath, where was a man of *great* stature, whose fingers and toes *were* four and twenty, six on *each hand*, and six on *each foot*: and he also was the son of the giant.

7 But when he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimea David's brother slew him.

8 These were born unto the giant in Gath; and they fell by the hand of David, and by the hand of his servants.

CHAP. XXI.

*David numbers the people: God is displeased, and gives him the choice of three punishments. He chooses the pestilence; and appeaseth the Lord at the threshing-floor of Ornan.*

[Before Christ 1017.]

AND Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.

2 And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, Go, number Israel from Beer-sheba even to Dan; and bring the number of them to me, that I may know *it*.

CHAP. XX.

REFLECTIONS.—While Joab conquered the country of the Ammonites, David stayed at Jerusalem: we learn, with grief, to how bad purpose, 2 Sam. xi. Here his crime is passed over. A veil should be drawn over the sins which are repented of, and they should no more be mentioned to a man's shame.

CHAP. XXI.

*Ver. 1. Satan stood up] An adversary stood up. Le Clerc. See the note on 2 Sam. xxiv. 1, &c. Bishop Warburton observes (perhaps the reader will think with rather too much refinement) upon this passage as follows: "This "evil Being [Satan] was little known to the Jewish people "till about this time: their great lawgiver, where he so "frequently enumerates and warns them of the snares and "temptations which would draw them to transgress the "law of God, never once mentions this capital enemy of "heaven: but as the fulness of time drew near, they were*

3 And Joab answered, The LORD make his people an hundred times so many more as they *be*: but, my lord the king, *are* they not all my lord's servants? why then doth my lord require this thing? why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel?

4 Nevertheless the king's word prevailed against Joab. Wherefore Joab departed, and went throughout all Israel, and came to Jerusalem.

5 ¶ And Joab gave the sum of the number of the people unto David. And all *they of* Israel were a thousand thousand and an hundred thousand men that drew sword: and Judah *was* four hundred threescore and ten thousand men that drew sword.

6 But Levi and Benjamin counted he not among them: for the king's word was abominable to Joab.

7 ¶ And God was displeased with this thing; therefore he smote Israel.

8 And David said unto God, I have sinned greatly, because I have done this thing: but now, I beseech thee, do away the iniquity of thy servant; for I have done very foolishly.

9 ¶ And the LORD spake unto Gad, David's seer, saying,

10 Go and tell David, saying, Thus saith the LORD, I offer thee three *things*: chuse thee one of them, that I may do *it* unto thee.

11 So Gad came to David, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Chuse thee

"made more and more acquainted with this their capital  
"enemy. When Ahab was suffered to be infatuated, (see  
"on 1 Kings, xxii. 19, &c.) Satan is not recorded by  
"name. On the return from the captivity we find him  
"better known, and things are then ascribed to him as the  
"immediate and proper author, which were before given  
"in an improper sense to the first and ultimate cause of  
"all things. Thus in 2 Sam. xxiv. 1. it seems to be said  
"that God moved David to number the people: *the anger  
"of the Lord was kindled—and he moved, &c.* But in the  
"passage before us, which was written after the captivity,  
"Satan is said to have moved David to this folly: for his  
"history having an inseparable connection with the re-  
"demption of mankind, the knowledge of them was to  
"be conveyed together; and now their later prophets  
"had given very lively descriptions of the Redeemer, and  
"the other attendant truths." Div. Leg.

*Ver. 5. All—[Israel were a thousand thousand] See on 2 Sam. xxiv. 9.*

*Ver.*

12 Either three years famine; or three months to be destroyed before thy foes, while that the sword of thine enemies overtaketh thee; or else three days the sword of the LORD, even the pestilence, in the land, and the angel of the LORD destroying throughout all the coasts of Israel. Now therefore advise thyself what word I shall bring again to him that sent me.

13 And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let me fall now into the hand of the LORD; for very great *are* his mercies: but let me not fall into the hand of man.

14 ¶ So the LORD sent pestilence upon Israel: and there fell of Israel seventy thousand men.

15 And God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it: and as he was destroying, the LORD beheld, and he repented him of the evil, and said to the angel that destroyed, It is enough, stay now thine hand. And the angel of the LORD stood by the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

16 ¶ And David lifted up his eyes, and saw the angel of the LORD stand between the earth and the heaven, having a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem. Then David and the elders of Israel, who were clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces.

17 And David said unto God, *Is it not I that* commanded the people to be numbered? even I it is that have sinned and done evil indeed; but *as for* these sheep, what have they done? let thine hand, I pray thee, O LORD my God, be on me, and on my father's house; but not on thy people, that they should be plagued.

18 ¶ Then the angel of the LORD commanded Gad to say to David, that David should go up, and set up an altar unto the LORD in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

19 And David went up at the saying of Gad, which he spake in the name of the LORD.

20 And Ornan turned back, and saw the angel; and his four sons with him hid themselves. Now Ornan was threshing wheat.

21 And as David came to Ornan, Ornan looked and saw David, and went out of the threshing-floor, and bowed himself to David with *his* face to the ground.

22 Then David said to Ornan, Grant me the place of *this* threshing-floor, that I may build an altar therein unto the LORD: thou shalt grant it me for the full price: that the plague may be stayed from the people.

23 And Ornan said unto David, Take it to thee, and let my lord the king do *that which is* good in his eyes: lo, I give thee the oxen *also* for burnt-offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat-offering; I give it all.

24 And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take *that which is* thine for the LORD, nor offer burnt-offerings without cost.

25 So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight.

26 And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt-offerings and peace-offerings, and called upon the LORD; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt-offering.

27 And the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof.

28 ¶ At that time when David saw that the LORD had answered him in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite, then he sacrificed there.

29 For the tabernacle of the LORD, which Moses made in the wilderness, and the altar of the burnt-offering, were at that season in the high place at Gibeon.

30 But David could not go before it to enquire of God: for he was afraid because of the sword of the angel of the LORD.

Ver. 15. Ornan the Jebusite] In Samuel, Araunah: there is no great difference between the words in the Hebrew.

Ver. 20. And saw the angel] And saw the king. Houbigant. See the LXX, and 2 Sam. xxiv. 20.

Ver. 30. But David could not go before it, &c.] i. e. David could not delay so long as to go to Gibeon, because he

was convinced that God had consecrated the present spot, and that it was necessary to offer sacrifice there immediately.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Observe,

1. The greatest faults of God upon earth are but men, against whom Satan despairs not of prevailing; and they have

CHAP. XXII.

*David prepares materials for building the temple; he instructs his son Solomon concerning it, and exhorts him to obey the law of Moses.*

[Before Christ 1017.]

**T**HEN David said, This is the house of the LORD God, and this is the altar of the burnt-offering for Israel.

2 And David commanded to gather together the strangers that were in the land of Israel; and he set masons to hew wrought stones to build the house of God.

3 And David prepared iron in abundance for the nails for the doors of the gates, and for the joinings; and brass in abundance without weight;

4 Also cedar-trees in abundance: for the Zidonians and they of Tyre brought much cedar-wood to David.

5 And David said, Solomon my son is young and tender, and the house that is to be builded for the LORD must be exceeding magnificent, of fame and of glory throughout all countries: I will therefore now make preparation for it. So David prepared abundantly before his death.

6 ¶ Then he called for Solomon his son, and charged him to build an house for the LORD God of Israel.

7 And David said to Solomon, My son, as for me, it was in my mind to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God:

8 But the word of the LORD came to me, saying, Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my fight.

9 Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days.

10 He shall build an house for my name; and he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever.

11 Now, my son, the LORD be with thee; and prosper thou, and build the house of the LORD thy God, as he hath said of thee.

12 Only the LORD give thee wisdom and understanding, and give thee charge concerning Israel, that thou mayest keep the law of the LORD thy God.

13 Then shalt thou prosper, if thou takest heed to fulfil the statutes and judgments which the LORD charged Moses with concerning Israel: be strong, and of good courage; dread not, nor be dismayed.

have need to take heed lest they fall, as David did here.

2. Pride of heart was the corruption on which the devil wrought in David, and deep it lies in the bosom of man. If once he can strike a spark on this tinder, it easily kindles. O that we may all be delivered from it!

2dly, Observe,

1. God's love to the sinner's soul will not spare the rod of chastisement.

2. God's reproof brought David to his knees; but this could not save him from the threatened judgment. We shall suffer in the flesh for our sins, though our spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

3. Our folly usually brings us into our greatest straits, and we have nobody but ourselves to blame.

4. If God's mercy was not infinite, verily we should be utterly consumed.

5. The only resource which we have left is that God whom we have offended; when, humbled in the dust, we fly to him, he will lay the uplifted thunderbolt aside.

3dly, David is relieved from his terrible distress: God, the messenger of his plague, brings him notice of reconciliation, and directs him what to do, in which David makes no delay.

1. He purchases the threshing-floor of Ornan, or Araunah, where the angel appeared, to rear an altar for sacrifice.

2. He offers there the blood of atonement, and God testifies his acceptance by fire from heaven on the sacrifice. There is one sacrifice in which God is well pleased; if his blood be upon us, then the sword of judgment shall not hurt us.

3. David continued ever after to sacrifice on this altar. At first, he was afraid to stir from Jerusalem (where he had seen the terrible angel) till the judgment was removed; but afterwards God's gracious acceptance of his offering encouraged him to continue his attendance at the same place. Note; Where we have found especial blessings to our souls, it is our wisdom there to continue our attendance upon God.

CHAP. XXII.

*Ver. 1. David said, This is the house, &c.] This shall be the house—This shall be the altar, Houbigant; who renders the 11th and 12th verses also in the future.*

*Ver.*

14 Now, behold, in my trouble I have prepared for the house of the LORD an hundred thousand talents of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver; and of brass and iron without weight; for it is in abundance: timber also and stone have I prepared; and thou mayest add thereto.

15 Moreover *there are* workmen with thee in abundance, hewers and workers of stone and timber, and all manner of cunning men for every manner of work.

16 Of the gold, the silver, and the brass, and the iron, *there is* no number. Arise *therefore*, and be doing, and the LORD be with thee.

*Ver. 14. In my trouble I have prepared—an hundred thousand talents of gold, &c.] But I, according to my poor ability, have prepared an hundred talents of gold, and a thousand talents of silver. Houbigant. See Joseph. Antiq. lib. vii. c. xiv. sect. 2.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, That a house should be built, was before resolved: here the spot is fixed upon, and the preparations begun.

1. The reasons given for the immediate concern David was in to make preparation for the building, though he himself might not enjoy the honour of it, were, 1. The magnificence of the house of God: an abode, though not becoming the divine inhabitant, yet superior to all that earth had seen beside, to engage the attention of strangers who might be induced by its grandeur to visit it. 2. Solomon was young; and should the crown devolve to him, it would encourage him to proceed, when so much was ready to his hand. *Note;* (1.) While our moment is prolonged, it becomes us to labour for God. (2.) They who are strong should ease their younger and weaker brethren of the more difficult services.

2. The persons whom he employed were strangers; either they were more able artists, or he would have no servile work laid on free-born Israelites; or, as a figure of things to come, when gentiles should not only be called into the church, but be employed as master-builders.

3. The preparations made were vast and costly. No labour nor expence should be spared where God's glory is concerned.

2dly, The work of building the temple being by Divine appointment delegated to Solomon, David gives him instructions concerning it.

1. Because of the perpetual wars in which he was engaged, and the blood that he had shed, God forbade him to do it; but assured him withal, that a son should be born to him, in whose days Israel should be at peace, and he at leisure to undertake the arduous task. *Note;* (1.) The church of Christ may not be built by the sword of war, but by the preaching of the gospel of peace. (2.) They who have leisure from other avocations, are more immediately called to employ it in the work of God.

3

17 ¶ David also commanded all the princes of Israel to help Solomon his son, *saying*,

18 *Is* not the LORD your God with you? and hath he *not* given you rest on every side? for he hath given the inhabitants of the land into mine hand; and the land is subdued before the LORD, and before his people.

19 Now set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God; arise, therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the LORD God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and the holy vessels of God, into the house that is to be built to the name of the LORD.

2. As an encouragement, David informs him, (1.) That vast preparations were already made, notwithstanding the troubles in which he had been involved. They were immense indeed; amounting, in silver and gold, beside brass, iron, cedar, and stone, to near eight hundred million of our money: but it is rather thought, כִּכָּר *Kikkar* here signifies an ingot of less value than the Molauic talent. (2.) That God had promised to establish his kingdom for ever; therefore, that he could never do enough to shew his gratitude for the mercy. *Note;* The more God has done for us, the greater is our obligation to serve him.

3. He exhorts him not to be discouraged at the greatness of the work, or the difficulties in the way; as also to take heed to all God's commandments: from obedience to which, he might hope for God's blessing. *Note;* (1.) They who are intent on building up Christ's church need much courage, for they will find many adversaries and great difficulties. (2.) It is not the importance of the work, but the spirituality of the temper, with which it is performed, that gives it value before God.

4. David prays that God would give him wisdom and understanding thus to walk and act, and bids him without delay address himself to the work, "up and be doing," assuredly concluding that the Lord would be with him. *Note;* (1.) When we arise from prayer, we may comfortably and confidently expect that God will prosper the work of our hands. (2.) Reliance on his support and blessing should quicken our own endeavours.

3dly, David exhorts the princes to assist his son in the undertaking. Kings have need of able ministers to execute the good that they design.

1. They must set their hearts to seek the Lord, as most bound by his mercies. *Note;* The great and leading concern should be, that the heart be right with God.

2. He calls upon them to help Solomon to build the sanctuary. *Note;* (1.) When the heart is engaged, head, hand, and purse, will be employed in the service. (2.) The most zealous and active minister wants assistance, and every private christian is called upon to lend a helping hand.

## C H A P. XXIII.

*David makes Solomon king. The Levites are numbered, and appointed to their several offices.*

[Before Christ 1015.]

**S**O when David was old and full of days, he made Solomon his son king over Israel.

2 ¶ And he gathered together all the princes of Israel, with the priests and the Levites.

3 Now the Levites were numbered from the age of thirty years and upward: and their number by their polls, man by man, was thirty and eight thousand.

4 Of which, twenty and four thousand were to set forward the work of the house of the LORD; and six thousand were officers and judges:

5 Moreover four thousand were porters; and four thousand praised the LORD with the instruments which I made, said David, to praise therewith.

6 And David divided them into courses among the sons of Levi, namely, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari.

7 ¶ Of the Gershonites were, Laadan, and Shimei.

8 The sons of Laadan; the chief was Jehiel, and Zetham, and Joel, three.

9 The sons of Shimei; Shelomith, and Haziel, and Haran, three. These were the chief of the fathers of Laadan.

10 And the sons of Shimei were, Jahath, Zina, and Jeush, and Beriah. These four were the sons of Shimei.

11 And Jahath was the chief, and Zizah the second: but Jeush and Beriah had not many sons; therefore they were in one reckoning, according to their father's house.

12 ¶ The sons of Kohath; Amram, Izhar, Hebron, and Uzziel, four.

13 The sons of Amram; Aaron and Moses: and Aaron was separated, that he should sanctify the most holy things, he and his sons for ever, to burn incense before the LORD, to minister unto him, and to bless in his name for ever.

14 Now concerning Moses the man of God, his sons were named of the tribe of Levi.

15 The sons of Moses were, Gershom, and Eliezer.

16 Of the sons of Gershom, Shebuel was the chief.

17 And the sons of Eliezer were, Rehabiah the chief. And Eliezer had none other sons; but the sons of Rehabiah were very many.

18 Of the sons of Izhar; Shelomith the chief.

19 Of the sons of Hebron; Jeriah the first, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, and Jekameam the fourth.

20 Of the sons of Uzziel; Micah the first, and Jesiah the second.

21 ¶ The sons of Merari; Mahli, and Mushi. The sons of Mahli; Eleazar, and Kish.

22 And Eleazar died, and had no sons, but daughters: and their brethren the sons of Kish took them.

23 The sons of Mushi; Mahli, and Eder, and Jeremoth, three.

24 ¶ These were the sons of Levi after the house of their fathers; even the chief of the fathers, as they were counted by number of names by their polls, that did the work for the service of the house of the LORD, from the age of twenty years and upward.

## C H A P. XXIII.

*Ver. 4. Were to set forward the work] Were to preside over the works. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 24. Twenty years and upward] In the 3d verse it is thirty years and upward; but it appears that a different poll is there referred to: and from the 25th and 26th verses it seems to follow, that David made this second appointment of the Levites from twenty years of age, after he had made the former one mentioned in the 3d verse.*

**REFLECTIONS.**—1st, David, having declared Solomon his successor, convokes a solemn assembly to recognize his appointment, and prevent all competition when he should  
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sleep with his fathers, as he shortly expected, being now grown aged and infirm; and this aggravated the crime of Adonijah and his adherents. At this assembly, David perfected the settlement of the Levites.

1. He numbered them. Thirty-eight thousand men, a vast increase since the time of Moses, Numb. iv. 48. even if we suppose that those above fifty were now reckoned, who were then omitted. It is a distinguished mercy to any people when God giveth the word, and great is the company of the preachers.

2. David appointed to them all their several employments. Twenty-four thousand were employed, by a thousand weekly,

25 For David said, The LORD God of Israel hath given rest unto his people, that they may dwell in Jerufalem for ever :

26 And also unto the Levites ; they shall no more carry the tabernacle, nor any vessels of it for the service thereof.

27 For by the last words of David the Levites were numbered from twenty years old and above :

28 Because their office was to wait on the fons of Aaron for the service of the house of the LORD, in the courts, and in the chambers, and in the purifying of all holy things, and the work of the service of the house of God ;

29 Both for the shew-bread, and for the fine flour for meat-offering, and for the unleavened cakes, and for that which is baked in the pan, and for that which is fried, and for all manner of measure and size ;

30 And to stand every morning to thank and praise the LORD, and likewise at even ;

31 And to offer all burnt-sacrifices unto the LORD in the sabbaths, in the new-moons, and on the set feasts, by number, according to the order commanded unto them, continually before the LORD :

32 And that they should keep the charge of the tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the holy place, and the charge of the fons of Aaron their brethren, in the service of the house of the LORD.

#### CHAP. XXIV.

*David divides the families of Eleazar and Ithamar into twenty-four orders. The Kohathites and the Merarites divided by lot.*

[Before Christ 1015.]

**N**OW these are the divisions of the fons of Aaron. The fons of Aaron ; Nadab, and Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar.

2 But Nadab and Abihu died before their father, and had no children : therefore Eleazar and Ithamar executed the priest's office.

3 And David distributed them, both Zadok of the fons of Eleazar, and Ahimelech of the fons of Ithamar, according to their offices in their service.

4 And there were more chief men found of the fons of Eleazar than of the fons of Ithamar ; and thus were they divided. Among the fons of Eleazar there were sixteen chief men of the house of their fathers, and eight among the

in rotation, to set forward the work of the temple, kill the sacrifices, wash, divide them, keep the temple and all the vessels clean and in order, and be assistants in all the service to the priests, &c. Six thousand were appointed judges and officers, as best skilled in the laws civil and ecclesiastical, and distributed through the cities of Israel, to maintain peace and execute justice. Four thousand were the porters, a kind of guards, to prevent any unfit person from entering into the temple, or going farther than their limits. Four thousand more were singers, divided into choirs, and constantly in succession praising God day and night. *Note;* (1.) The work will go on well, where every man knows his post and business. (2.) In whatever station a Levite is placed, diligence and zeal in the service of God is his bounden duty.

3. The whole were divided into three classes, according to the three fons of Levi, from whom they descended : thus the nearest relations were employed together. Those who are united in blood should be more united in love, and give assistance to each other. The family of Moses classes with common Levites, and has no mark of distinction ; an evidence of the disinterested conduct of their great progenitor. Rehabiah, one of his descendants, is remarked for his numerous family. Aaron's family appears with chief dignity, consecrated to God, to minister in the most holy things. God has a right to choose his own servants ; and it were impious and perjured hypocrisy, for any man

to take this honour to himself, who is not inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost, and called of God.

2dly, The ark and all the sacred furniture being no more to be removed, as they had been during their marches through the wilderness, David, by divine appointment, makes an alteration in the age at which the Levites were to begin their ministrations, from twenty years old and upwards (see Numb. viii. 24.) ; and this was the more necessary, as the temple-service would be much more frequented than the tabernacle had been at Shiloh or Gibeon. *Note;* (1.) God proportions our strength to our burdens. (2.) If the harvest be plentiful, the Lord in mercy will raise up labourers. The particular business of the attendant Levites, who assisted the priests, is here marked out to them. 1. They were to keep the courts and chambers clean, prepare the sacrifices and meat and drink-offerings, that the priests might have them ready to their hands ; and this with exactness, according to the weights and measures prescribed. 2. Others, morning and evening, at the time of the daily sacrifice, offered up praises to God, with vocal and instrumental music. 3. The porters were to take care that nothing came into or was carried out of the temple, contrary to the law ; and to execute the commands of their brethren the priests. *Note;* Let not those whom God has advanced to honour grow proud and imperious ; but remember, that, though exalted above their brethren, they are still to treat them as brethren.

sons of Ithamar according to the house of their fathers.

5 Thus were they divided by lot, one sort with another; for the governors of the sanctuary, and governors of *the house* of God, were of the sons of Eleazar, and of the sons of Ithamar.

6 And Shemaiah the son of Nethaneel the scribe, *one* of the Levites, wrote them before the king, and the princes, and Zadok the priest, and Ahimelech the son of Abiathar, and *before* the chief of the fathers of the priests and Levites: one principal household being taken for Eleazar, and *one* taken for Ithamar.

7 Now the first lot came forth to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiah,

8 The third to Harim, the fourth to Seorim,

9 The fifth to Malchijah, the sixth to Mijamin,

10 The seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah,

11 The ninth to Jeshuah, the tenth to Shecaniah,

12 The eleventh to Eliahib, the twelfth to Jakim,

13 The thirteenth to Huppah, the fourteenth to Jeshebeab,

14 The fifteenth to Bilgah, the sixteenth to Immer,

15 The seventeenth to Hezir, the eighteenth to Aphses,

16 The nineteenth to Pethahiah, the twentieth to Jehezkel,

17 The one and twentieth to Jachin, the two and twentieth to Gamul.

18 The three and twentieth to Delaiah, the

four and twentieth to Maaziah.

19 These *were* the orderings of them in their service to come into the house of the LORD, according to their manner, under Aaron their father, as the LORD God of Israel had commanded him.

20 ¶ And the rest of the sons of Levi *were these*: Of the sons of Amram; Shubael: of the sons of Shubael; Jehdeiah.

21 Concerning Rehabiah: of the sons of Rehabiah, the first *was* Isfhiah.

22 Of the Izharites; Shelomoth: of the sons of Shelomoth; Jahath.

23 And the sons of *Hebron*; Jeriah *the first*, Amariah the second, Jahaziel the third, Jekameam the fourth.

24 Of the sons of Uzziel; Michah: of the sons of Michah; Shamir.

25 The brother of Michah *was* Isfhiah: of the sons of Isfhiah; Zechariah.

26 ¶ The sons of Merari *were* Mahli and Musfi: the sons of Jaaziah; Beno.

27 The sons of Merari by Jaaziah; Beno, and Shoham, and Zaccur, and Ibri.

28 Of Mahli *came* Eleazar, who had no sons.

29 Concerning Kish: the son of Kish *was* Jerahmeel.

30 The sons also of Musfi; Mahli, and Eder, and Jerimoth. These *were* the sons of the Levites after the house of their fathers.

31 These likewise cast lots over against their brethren the sons of Aaron in the presence of David the king, and Zadok, and Ahimelech, and the chief of the fathers of the priests and Levites, even the principal fathers over against their younger brethren.

#### C H A P. XXIV.

*Ver. 5. Governors of the house of God*] *Governors of God*, i. e. the judges, says Houbigant. The ministers of religion are expressed in the foregoing words, *the governors of the sanctuary*. Grotius has very justly observed, that *governors of God*, never signify in the sacred writings those who minister to God, but governors in the common-wealth, *chiefs*, or *judges*.

*Ver. 6. One principal household being taken for Eleazar*] That is, one of the principal families of Eleazar was first taken, and then one of Ithamar's, and thus alternately till the whole was finished. See Houbigant's note.

*Ver. 10. Under Aaron their father*] The high-priest is here called by the general name of Aaron, as being his

successor. The meaning is, "under the inspection of the "high-priest."

*Ver. 31. Even the principal fathers over against their younger brethren*] The meaning, says Bishop Patrick, is, that both elder and younger had their places by lot, not by seniority of houses: they who were of greater dignity drew lots against those who were of less, and all were to take their courses according to the lot that they drew.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The family of Eleazar, being most numerous, had sixteen courses; Ithamar only eight. That there might be no dispute about precedence, God appoints the determination of the order in which they should minister to be by lot: and these courses, though interrupted probably



## C H A P. XXV.

*The number and offices of the singers: their division by lot into four-and-twenty orders.*

[Before Christ 1015.]

**M**OREOVER David and the captains of the host separated to the service of the sons of Asaph, and of Heman, and of Jeduthun, who should prophesy with harps, with psalteries, and with cymbals: and the number of the workmen according to their service was:

2 Of the sons of Asaph; Zaccur, and Joseph, and Nethaniah, and Asarelah, the sons of Asaph under the hands of Asaph, which prophesied according to the order of the king.

3 Of Jeduthun: the sons of Jeduthun; Gedaliah, and Zeri, and Jeshaiah, Hashabiah, and Mattithiah, six, under the hands of their father Jeduthun, who prophesied with a harp, to give thanks and to praise the LORD.

4 Of Heman: the sons of Heman; Bukkiah, Mattaniah, Uzziel, Shebuel, and Jerimoth, Hananiah, Hanani, Eliathah, Giddalti, and Romamti-ezer, Joshbekashah, Mallothi, Hothir, and Mahazioth:

5 All these were the sons of Heman the king's seer in the words of God, to lift up the horn. And God gave to Heman fourteen sons and three daughters.

6 All these were under the hands of their

father for song in the house of the LORD, with cymbals, psalteries, and harps, for the service of the house of God, according to the king's order to Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman.

7 So the number of them, with their brethren that were instructed in the songs of the LORD, even all that were cunning, was two hundred fourscore and eight.

8 ¶ And they cast lots, ward against ward, as well the small as the great, the teacher as the scholar.

9 Now the first lot came forth for Asaph to Joseph: the second to Gedaliah, who with his brethren and sons were twelve:

10 The third to Zaccur, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve:

11 The fourth to Izri, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve:

12 The fifth to Nethaniah, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve:

13 The sixth to Bukkiah, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve:

14 The seventh to Jesharelah, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve:

15 The eighth to Jeshaiah, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve:

16 The ninth to Mattaniah, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve:

17 The tenth to Shimei, he, his sons, and his brethren, were twelve:

probably during the reigns of wicked kings, or in the captivity, yet subsisted still at their return, and till the destruction of the second temple. In Luke, i. 5. we find John the Baptist's father of the course of Abijah, ver. 10. *Note;* Order and regularity in God's worship must be carefully preserved.

2dly, The Levites, divided into the same number of courses as the priests, cast lots also to determine their order of service. When God determined their lot, there could be no room for strife. The priests are called their brethren, because, though the Levites were in a station inferior, yet they were employed in the same sacred service, and to be regarded, not as servants, but as assistants in their work.

## C H A P. XXV.

*Ver. 1. Should prophesy*] i. e. Sing prophecies or sacred hymns, composed by the prophets, in the temple of God. See Numb. xi. 25. *The captains of the host*, at the beginning of this verse, is rendered very properly by Houbigant, *the chiefs, or heads of the orders in the ministry*; those priests,

5

whom David had lately appointed and divided into four-and-twenty classes; and not, as some have absurdly supposed, the commanders of the army, who certainly could have nothing to do with the appointment of singers for the temple. In the third verse the sons of Jeduthun are said to be six, though five only are enumerated. *Shimei*, mentioned in the 17th verse, is supplied in the Arabic version.

*Ver. 5. To lift up the horn*] *To celebrate the praises*; Houbigant. For there is no example in Scripture; says he, of such an expression as *lifting up the horn*, for any thing in music. Some, however, think that it means to blow aloud with trumpets made of horns.

*Ver. 7. Was two hundred fourscore and eight*] That is, after the classes were appointed from the sons of Asaph, Jeduthun, and Heman, as well as from those which each one introduced into his class: for the sons of those three, when David appointed the classes of the singers, were no more than twenty-four.

*Ver. 8. They cast lots ward against ward*] *They cast lots, according to each of their classes*. Houbigant.

*Ver.*

18 The eleventh to Azareel, *be*, his sons, and his brethren, *were* twelve :

19 The twelfth to Hashabiah, *be*, his sons, and his brethren, *were* twelve :

20 The thirteenth to Shubael, *be*, his sons, and his brethren, *were* twelve :

21 The fourteenth to Mattathiah, *be*, his sons, and his brethren, *were* twelve :

22 The fifteenth to Jeremoth, *be*, his sons, and his brethren, *were* twelve :

23 The sixteenth to Hananiah, *be*, his sons, and his brethren, *were* twelve :

24 The seventeenth to Joshbekashah, *be*, his sons, and his brethren, *were* twelve :

25 The eighteenth to Hanani, *be*, his sons, and his brethren, *were* twelve :

26 The nineteenth to Mallothi, *be*, his sons, and his brethren, *were* twelve :

27 The twentieth to Eliatha, *be*, his sons, and his brethren, *were* twelve :

28 The one and twentieth to Hothir, *be*, his sons, and his brethren, *were* twelve :

29 The two and twentieth to Giddalti, *be*, his sons, and his brethren, *were* twelve :

30 The three and twentieth to Mahazioth, *be*, his sons, and his brethren, *were* twelve :

31 The four and twentieth to Romamti-ezer, *be*, his sons, and his brethren, *were* twelve.

CHAP. XXVI.

*The division of the porters: the several gates assigned them. The Levites who had charge of the treasures. The officers and judges.*

[Before Christ 1015.]

**C**ONCERNING the divisions of the porters: of the Korhites was Meshelemiah the son of Kore, of the sons of Asaph.

2 And the sons of Meshelemiah *were*, Zechariah the firstborn, Jediael the second, Zebadiah the third, Jathniel the fourth.

3 Elam the fifth, Jehohanan the sixth, Elioenai the seventh.

4 Moreover the sons of Obed-edom *were*, Shemaiah the firstborn, Jehozabad the second, Joah the third, and Sacar the fourth, and Nethaneel the fifth,

5 Ammiel the sixth, Issachar the seventh, Peulthai the eighth: for God blessed him.

6 Also unto Shemaiah his son were sons born, that ruled throughout the house of their father: for they *were* mighty men of valour.

7 The sons of Shemaiah; Othni, and Rephael, and Obed, Elzabad, whose brethren *were* strong men, Elihu, and Semachiah.

8 All these of the sons of Obed-edom: they and their sons and their brethren, able men for strength for the service, *were* threescore and two of Obed-edom.

9 And Meshelemiah had sons and brethren, strong men, eighteen.

10 Also Hofah, of the children of Merari, had sons; Simri the chief, (for *though* he was not the firstborn, yet his father made him the chief;)

11 Hilkiyah the second, Tebaliah the third, Zechariah the fourth: all the sons and brethren of Hofah *were* thirteen.

12 Among these *were* the divisions of the porters, *even* among the chief men, *having* wards one against another, to minister in the house of the LORD.

13 ¶ And they cast lots, as well the small as the great, according to the house of their fathers, for every gate.

14 And the lot eastward fell to Shelemiah.

*Ver. 18. The eleventh to Azareel*] His name is written Uzziel in the fourth verse. Probably he was sometimes called by one of those names, and sometimes by the other.

**REFLECTIONS.**—The courses of singers are here appointed to accompany the priests and Levites in their service. Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, or Ethan, were the three great masters, and their sons under them, four-and-twenty, according to the number of courses. Their service is called prophesying (see 1 Cor. xi. 4. xiv. 24.); for the songs in which they praised God were chiefly pro-

phetical of the Messiah. A variety of instruments were used to fill the sacred chorus, while their hearts and voices joined in the songs of the Lord. Music is highly pleasing; but we must not lose the sense in the sound. Songs of praise are no longer harmonious, than while we are making melody in our hearts unto God. Each of these twenty-four had eleven assistant singers, of the most musical of their brethren; in all 288: and, as four thousand are before said to be appointed for song, either they were divided into classes, and followed when these principal singers led; or they might be employed in teaching the divine hymns of David to the rest of the people

Then for Zechariah his son, a wise counsellor, they cast lots; and his lot came out northward.

15 To Obed-edom southward; and to his sons, the house of Asuppim.

16 To Shuppim and Hoshah *the lot came forth* westward, with the gate Shallecheth, by the causeway of the going up, ward against ward.

17 Eastward *were* six Levites, northward four a day, southward four a day, and toward Asuppim two *and* two.

18 At Parbar westward, four at the causeway, *and* two at Parbar.

19 These *are* the divisions of the porters among the sons of Kore, and among the sons of Merari.

20 ¶ And of the Levites, Ahijah *was* over the treasures of the house of God, and over the treasures of the dedicated things.

21 *As concerning* the sons of Laadan; the sons of the Gershonite Laadan, chief fathers, *even* of Laadan the Gershonite, *were* Jehieli.

22 The sons of Jehieli; Zetham, and Joel his brother, *which were* over the treasures of the house of the LORD.

23 Of the Amramites, *and* the Izharites, the Hebronites, *and* the Uzzielites:

24 And Shebuel the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, *was* ruler of the treasures.

25 And his brethren by Eliezer; Rehabiah his son, and Jeshaiiah his son, and Joram his son, and Zichri his son, and Shelomith his son.

26 Which Shelomith and his brethren *were* over all the treasures of the dedicated things, which David the king, and the chief fathers, the captains over thousands and hundreds, and the captains of the host, had dedicated.

27 Out of the spoils won in battles did they dedicate to maintain the house of the LORD.

28 And all that Samuel the seer, and Saul the son of Kish, and Abner the son of Ner, and Joab the son of Zeruah, had dedicated; *and* whosoever had dedicated *anything*, *it was* under the hand of Shelomith, and of his brethren.

29 ¶ Of the Izharites, Chenaniah and his sons *were* for the outward business over Israel, for officers and judges.

people in the country. The singers were appointed by lot as before, and we may observe that many of the younger sons were preferred before their elders. *Note*; The younger in years are often the elder in grace.

#### CHAP. XXVI.

*Ver. 1. The porters*] The word שְׂעָרִים *shoarim* should be rendered *guards*, according to Dr. Delaney. This was an office of dignity, and conferred on men of the best quality, as appears plainly from this chapter.

*Ver. 15. The house of Asuppim*] *The storehouse*, or that place in which the provision of the porters was laid up. Houbigant. See Micah, vii. 1. and Neh. xii. 25. in the Hebrew. Others suppose, that it was a place where the vessels and treasure of the temple were deposited.

*Ver. 16. With the gate Shallecheth, &c.*] *With the gate of ejections*, [or by which the filth of the temple and of the courts was cast out] *towards the paved ascent*. Houbigant. In the 17th verse, instead of *four a day*, Houbigant reads *four Levites*.

*Ver. 20. And of the Levites, Ahijah, &c.*] *But their brethren the Levites were over, &c.* Houbigant, who reads the 21st and 22d verses thus: *ver. 21. The sons of Laadan; of the sons of Laadan the Gershonite, the chiefs of the family of Laadan the Gershonite, were Jehiel, and his sons: ver. 22. But Jehiel, Zetham, and Joel, his brethren, were set over the treasures of the house of the Lord.*

*Ver. 29. Were for the outward business*] That is, the business without the city of Jerusalem, which consisted in their being assessors with the ordinary judges. By

the *business of the Lord*, in the next verse, is meant such causes as might be judged by the divine law; by *the service of the king*, such causes as were not determined by the law, but were left to the judgment of the king. See Bertram de Rep. Jud.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The porters seem to have been divided into the same number of courses as the rest of their brethren, each posted at their several gates by lot. They are spoken of as mighty men, strong and able, such as their post required, to keep constant guard, that no profane intruder might be admitted, nor the sacred house violated. The family of Obed-edom were employed in this office. He was blessed with a numerous family, and none more deserving of keeping the charge of the temple, than he who had so cheerfully entertained, and diligently waited on, the ark at his own house. They who have been faithful in lesser services, deserve to be preferred. Simri, one of the sons of Hoshah, was chief, his elder brother being, probably by bodily indisposition, incapacitated for the service.

2dly, In the house of God there were great stores for the daily use and service of the altar, vestments, utensils, &c. and also great treasures, either offerings of the people, or things which had been dedicated to God by Samuel, David, Saul, Abner, and Joab, chiefly of the spoil won in war. Over these Ahijah at first presided; but afterwards they were under the care of different persons. *Note*; (1.) When God increases our stores with providential blessings, he is entitled to a part at least of the

the

30 *And* of the Hebronites, Hashabiah and his brethren, men of valour, a thousand and seven hundred, *were* officers among them of Israel on this side Jordan westward in all business of the LORD, and in the service of the king.

31 Among the Hebronites *was* Jerijah the chief, *even* among the Hebronites, according to the generations of his fathers. In the fortieth year of the reign of David they were fought for, and there were found among them mighty men of valour at Jazer of Gilead.

32 And his brethren, men of valour, *were* two thousand and seven hundred chief fathers, whom king David made rulers over the Reubenites, the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, for every matter pertaining to God, and affairs of the king.

## C H A P. XXVII.

*The twelve captains for every several month. The princes of the twelve tribes: the officers over the treasures, fields, cattle, &c.*

[Before Christ 1015.]

**N**OW the children of Israel after their number, *to wit*, the chief fathers and captains of thousands and hundreds, and their officers that served the king in any matter of the courses, which came in and went out month by month throughout all the months of the year, of every course *were* twenty and

four thousand.

2 Over the first course for the first month *was* Jathobeam the son of Zabdiel: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand.

3 Of the children of Perez *was* the chief of all the captains of the host for the first month.

4 And over the course of the second month *was* Dodai an Ahohite, and of his course *was* Mickloth also the ruler: in his course likewise *were* twenty and four thousand.

5 The third captain of the host for the third month *was* Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, a chief priest: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand.

6 This *is that* Benaiah, *who was* mighty among the thirty, and above the thirty: and in his course *was* Ammizabad his son.

7 The fourth *captain* for the fourth month *was* Afahel the brother of Joab, and Zebadiah his son after him: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand.

8 The fifth captain for the fifth month *was* Shamhuth the Izrahite: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand.

9 The sixth *captain* for the sixth month *was* Ira the son of Ikkeih the Tekoite: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand.

10 The seventh *captain* for the seventh month *was* Helez the Pelonite, of the children of Ephraim: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand.

the wealth that he bestows. (2.) There are in the church of Christ greater treasures, not indeed of silver and gold, for his kingdom is not of this world; but more valuable and durable treasures, of spiritual wisdom and divine grace; and not, like these, locked up, but freely dispensed to every faithful worshipper; and yet there still remains enough and to spare.

3dly, The service at Jerusalem was well provided for: now the business of the country is alike taken care of. The Levites had the administration of justice, with the princes and elders of the several tribes, who may be supposed not so well skilled in the law, and in need of their assistance. All matters relating to God's worship also, and the king's revenue, came under their care. In the remote tribes beyond Jordan, the greatest number was stationed, where they would be most in danger; but by their presence might be preserved faithful in the service of God, and loyal to their sovereign. These regulations employed the last year of David, whose usefulness ended only with his life. *Note*; (1.) While life endures, there is always something to be done for God. (2.) They are

likely to be a happy people, who are taught to fear God and honour the king.

## C H A P. XXVII.

*Ver. 1. Now the children of Israel, &c.]* We have here an account of the manner in which the army was disposed. It was distributed into twelve legions, each consisting of twenty-four thousand men, who were commanded by one of the *chief of the fathers*, under whom there were captains of thousands and captains of hundreds. Each of these legions attended one month for the security of the king and kingdom; at the end of which they retired to their respective places of abode, and were succeeded by another legion. See Patrick and Lowman.

*Ver. 5. Benaiah—a chief priest]* As Benaiah was neither high-priest nor second priest, the marginal rendering, namely, *principal officer*, seems most proper; and the word *כהן* *cohen*, is doubtless used for a great officer in a king's court, from his office of regulating civil affairs. See 2 Sam. viii. 18. xx. 26. 1 Kings, iv. 5. Job, xii. 19.

11 The eighth *captain* for the eighth month *was* Sibbecai the Hushathite, of the Zarhites: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand.

12 The ninth *captain* for the ninth month *was* Abiezer the Anetothite, of the Benjamites: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand.

13 The tenth *captain* for the tenth month *was* Maharai the Netophathite, of the Zarhites: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand.

14 The eleventh *captain* for the eleventh month *was* Benaiah the Pirathonite, of the children of Ephraim: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand.

15 The twelfth *captain* for the twelfth month *was* Heldai the Netophathite, of Othniel: and in his course *were* twenty and four thousand.

16 ¶ Furthermore over the tribes of Israel: the ruler of the Reubenites *was* Eliezer the son of Zichri: of the Simeonites, Shephatiah the son of Maachah:

17 Of the Levites, Hahabiah the son of Kemuel: of the Aaronites, Zadok:

18 Of Judah, Elihu, *one* of the brethren of David: of Issachar, Omri the son of Michael:

19 Of Zebulun, Ithmaiah the son of Obadiah; of Naphtali, Jerimoth the son of Azriel:

20 Of the children of Ephraim, Hoshea the son of Azaziah: of the half-tribe of Manasseh, Joel the son of Pedaiah:

21 Of the half-tribe of Manasseh in Gilead,

Iddo the son of Zechariah: of Benjamin, Jaasiel the son of Abner:)

22 Of Dan, Azareel the son of Jeroham. These *were* the princes of the tribes of Israel.

23 ¶ But David took not the number of them from twenty years old and under: because the LORD had said he would increase Israel like to the stars of the heavens.

24 Joab the son of Zeruiah began to number, but he finished not, because there fell wrath for it against Israel; neither was the number put in the account of the chronicles of king David.

25 ¶ And over the king's treasures *was* Azmaveth the son of Adiel: and over the storehouses in the fields, in the cities, and in the villages, and in the castles, *was* Jehonathan the son of Uziah:

26 And over them that did the work of the field for tillage of the ground *was* Ezri the son of Chelub:

27 And over the vineyards *was* Shimei the Ramathite: over the increase of the vineyards for the wine-cellars *was* Zabdi the Shiphmite:

28 And over the olive-trees and the sycamore-trees that *were* in the low plains *was* Baal-hanan the Gederite: and over the cellars of oil *was* Joash:

29 And over the herds that fed in Sharon *was* Shitrai the Sharonite: and over the herds *that were* in the vallies *was* Shaphat the son of Adlai:

*Ver. 17. Of the Aaronites, Zadok]* The Aaronites were the priests, and not a distinct tribe; but being a different order from the rest of the tribe of Levi, they had a peculiar chief to preside over them. See ch. xxiv. 19.

*Ver. 27. Over the increase of the vineyards, &c.] And over the wine-cellars, which were in the vineyards, &c.* Houbigant.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The military establishment was divided into twelve courses of twenty-four thousand men, serving monthly, amounting in all to 288,000 men. This regulation, though now mentioned, seems to have taken place early in David's reign, Asahel, ver. 7. being killed while David reigned in Hebron. Without the expence of a standing army, a vast force was thus always ready; a well ordered militia, the nation's best security. The chief fathers, ver. 1. were not the real fathers of the soldiers, but the general officers, who had the chief superintendance. *Note;* It is wise to be always ready

for our spiritual warfare, and never to think ourselves so safe, as not to need a constant watch and guard against our enemies.

2dly, 1. Every tribe seems to have still a president, or prince; who, though subject to the king, had great authority under him among his brethren. Among these we find a son of Abner: his father's opposition to David prevented not the son's preferment.

2. About his person and court David had select persons eminent for their wisdom. One was preceptor to his children: he knew the advantage of a good education, and was desirous therefore to train up his sons betimes in the way they should go. Others were his counsellors, and, among them, Ahitophel. Hushai had the distinguished honour of being his companion and friend. *Note;* (1.) A wicked man may be a wise counsellor. (2.) Though a good king may find it necessary to make use of such in his cabinet for counsel, he will chuse a better man for his companion and friend.

30 Over the camels also *was* Obil the Ishmaelite: and over the asses *was* Jedeiah the Meronothite.

31 And over the flocks *was* Jaziz the Hagerite. All these *were* the rulers of the substance which *was* king David's.

32 Also Jonathan David's uncle was a counsellor, a wise man, and a scribe: and Jehiel the son of Hachmoni *was* with the king's sons:

33 And Ahithophel *was* the king's counsellor: and Hushai the Archite *was* the king's companion:

34 And after Ahithophel *was* Jehoiada the son of Benaiah, and Abiathar: and the general of the king's army *was* Joab.

CHAP. XXVIII.

*David, having assembled the princes, declares to them that the temple was to be built by Solomon: he exhorts them to obey the commandments of God. He delivers to Solomon the patterns of the future temple.*

[Before Christ 1015.]

**A**ND David assembled all the princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the captains of the companies that ministered to the king by course, and the captains over the thousands, and captains over the hundreds, and the stewards over all the substance and possession of the king, and of his sons, with the officers, and with the mighty men, and with all the valiant men, unto Jerusalem.

2 Then David the king stood up upon his feet, and said, Hear me, my brethren, and my people: *As for me, I had* in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and for the footstool of our God, and had made ready for the building:

3 But God said unto me, Thou shalt not build an house for my name, because thou *hast been* a man of war, and hast shed blood.

4 Howbeit the LORD God of Israel chose

me before all the house of my father to be king over Israel for ever: for he hath chosen Judah *to be* the ruler; and of the house of Judah, the house of my father; and among the sons of my father he liked me to make *me* king over all Israel:

5 And of all my sons, (for the LORD hath given me many sons,) he hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel.

6 And he said unto me, Solomon thy son, he shall build my house and my courts: for I have chosen him *to be* my son, and I will be his father.

7 Moreover I will establish his kingdom for ever, if he be constant to do my commandments and my judgments, as at this day.

8 Now therefore in the sight of all Israel the congregation of the LORD, and in the audience of our God, keep and seek for all the commandments of the LORD your God: that ye may possess this good land, and leave *it* for an inheritance for your children after you for ever.

9 ¶ And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.

10 Take heed now; for the LORD hath chosen thee to build an house for the sanctuary: be strong, and do *it*.

11 ¶ Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses thereof, and of the treasuries thereof, and of the upper chambers thereof, and of the inner parlours thereof, and of the place of the mercy-seat.

12 And the pattern of all that he had by the spirit, of the courts of the house of the

CHAP. XXVIII.

*Ver. 2. For the footstool of our God.] Rather even for the footstool of our God. See Lam. ii. 1.*

*Ver. 8. Keep, &c.] I conjure you to keep, &c. Houbigant and Le Clerc.*

VOL. II.

*Ver. 11. Then David gave to Solomon his son the pattern.] It appears evidently from the remainder of this chapter, that the Lord did by David, as by Moses heretofore; giving him an exact pattern or model, not only of the temple which was to be built, but of all the furniture and utensils thereof. See Exod. xxv. 40.*

4 B

*Ver.*

LORD, and of all the chambers round about, of the treasuries of the house of God, and of the treasuries of the dedicated things:

13 Also for the courses of the priests and the Levites, and for all the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and for all the vessels of service in the house of the LORD.

14 He gave of gold by weight for things of gold, for all instruments of all manner of service; silver also for all instruments of silver by weight, for all instruments of every kind of service:

15 Even the weight for the candlesticks of gold, and for their lamps of gold, by weight for every candlestick, and for the lamps thereof: and for the candlesticks of silver by weight, both for the candlestick and also for the lamps thereof, according to the use of

every candlestick.

16 And by weight he gave gold for the tables of shew-bread, for every table; and likewise silver for the tables of silver:

17 Also pure gold for the fleshhooks, and the bowls, and the cups: and for the golden basons he gave gold by weight for every bason; and likewise silver by weight for every bason of silver:

18 And for the altar of incense refined gold by weight; and gold for the pattern of the chariot of the cherubims, that spread out their wings, and covered the ark of the covenant of the LORD.

19 All this, said David, the LORD made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern.

20 ¶ And David said to Solomon his son,

*Ver. 18. Gold for the pattern of the chariot of the cherubims.] Lastly, a pattern of the situation of the cherubim, how they should spread their wings, and cover the ark, &c. For the meaning of the word רכב rakub is, to sit, to be placed upon. "We should say in French," says Houbigant, "la position et l'attitude des cherubims, the position and attitude of the cherubims." I cannot conceive how it could enter the mind of an interpreter to render the word chariot. See Parkhurst on the word.*

*Ver. 19. All this, said David, the Lord made me understand, &c.] All these were delineated, as the Lord gave him understanding, of all the work which the pattern set forth. Houbigant. That the architecture of the temple was of divine original, I, for my part, am fully satisfied from this passage; and I am confirmed in this persuasion by finding from Villalpandus, that the Roman, or at least the Greek architecture, is derived from this, as from its fountain: and, in my humble opinion, even an infidel may easily believe these to be of divine original, inasmuch as they are (at least the latter is) found perfect in the earliest models: nor has the utmost reach of human wisdom, invention, and industry, been ever able (though often endeavouring) to improve or alter it, but to disadvantage, throughout the course of so many ages. See Delaney's Life of David.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Sinking under age and infirmities, the good old king makes one last effort to address the grand assembly that he had convened for the solemn appointment of his successor.

1. He opens his speech with the most gracious expressions; and while as their king he demands attention, he calls them his brethren, and beloved people, to testify the affection that he bore them, and to engage a more ready concurrence with his intentions. *Note;* (1.) Christ, the greater king of his Israel, is not ashamed of his endeared relation, Heb. ii. 11. (2.) Respect and kindness to inferiors will engage their more cheerful service.

2. He lets them know his intentions to have built a temple for the ark, the footstool of God, his presence being visible over it between the cherubims; but God, for the reasons given, chap. xxii. 7, 8. prevented him, and reserved it for his son's reign, who should have leisure for the vast undertaking. However, he had made vast preparations to facilitate the work.

3. He informs them of the divine appointment of Solomon for his successor; nor need it seem strange to them, that a younger son of his family was preferred to this honour. Judah and Jesse were younger branches, and himself the youngest son, yet advanced to the kingdom by the appointment of the Lord. God has a right to chuse who shall rule his people, and Solomon is appointed to that station of eminence, and ordained to build the glorious temple; and if he approved himself faithful to God, as he had begun, the prosperity of his kingdom would be forever established. *Note;* (1.) Every son of God, and heir of his kingdom, reigns, not in right of nature, but of grace. (2.) Perseverance in the path of duty is the only way to make our calling and election sure.

4. He solemnly, in the presence of God and the congregation, charges them to search what is the will of God, and diligently and faithfully to obey it, which was not only their bounden duty, but also their highest interest, as what would secure to them and theirs the possession of their glorious inheritance. *Note;* (1.) If we would follow God faithfully, we must search the scriptures diligently, that we may know what he would have us to do. (2.) The best inheritance we can leave our children, is the example of our piety, and the blessing of God promised thereupon.

Lastly, He concludes with a striking exhortation to his son: [1.] To know his father's God, to be acquainted with his glorious perfections, and to remember the mercies received from him, as the strongest obligation to love and obey him. [2.] To serve him in sincerity and truth, with delight



Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not, nor be dismayed: for the LORD God, *even my God, will be with thee*; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work for the service of the house of the LORD.

21 And behold, the courses of the priests and the Levites, *even they shall be with thee* for all the service of the house of God: and *there shall be with thee* for all manner of workmanship every willing skilful man, for any manner of service: also the princes and all the people *will be wholly* at thy commandment.

## CHAP. XXIX.

*David, having enumerated all his gifts designed for the building of the temple, exhorts the princes and people to make their offerings, which they do willingly. David acknowledges that nothing is given to God, but what had been before received from Him. Solomon is a second time anointed. David's death.*

[Before Christ 1015.]

**F**URTHERMORE David the king said unto all the congregation, Solomon my son, whom God alone hath chosen, *is yet young and tender, and the work is great*: for the palace *is not for man, but for the LORD God.*

2 Now I have prepared with all my might for the house of my God the gold for *things to be made* of gold, and the silver for *things*

of silver, and the brass for *things* of brass, the iron for *things* of iron, and wood for *things* of wood; onyx-stones, and *stones* to be set, glittering stones, and of divers colours, and all manner of precious stones, and marble stones in abundance.

3 Moreover, because I have set my affection to the house of my God, I have of mine own proper good, of gold and silver, *which* I have given to the house of my God, over and above all that I have prepared for the holy house,

4 *Even* three thousand talents of gold, of the gold of Ophir, and seven thousand talents of refined silver, to overlay the walls of the houses *withal*:

5 The gold for *things* of gold, and the silver for *things* of silver, and for all manner of work *to be made* by the hands of artificers. And who *then* is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the LORD?

6 ¶ Then the chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers of the king's work, offered willingly,

7 And gave for the service of the house of God, of gold five thousand talents and ten thousand drams, and of silver ten thousand talents, and of brass eighteen thousand talents, and one hundred thousand talents of iron.

delight and readiness. *Note*; Love to God makes us count none of his commandments grievous. [3.] He urges this exhortation with the consideration of God's all-searching wisdom, who knows the secrets of all hearts, and who rewards and punishes with unbiassed equity those who faithfully seek him, or those who perfidiously forsake him. *Note*; It is just, that they who forsake God should be forsaken by him. [4.] As he was peculiarly honoured, as chosen of God to build the temple, he was more especially called upon to take heed to his ways, that he might walk and please God, and not be discouraged at any difficulties, since God, who had appointed him to the work, was able to carry him through. *Note*; (1.) We can never be sufficiently jealous of ourselves, or confident in God. (2.) When God employs us, we may be sure that he will support us.

2dly, We have here,

1. An exact copy given to Solomon of the temple, vessels, and manner of service in it, either by divine inspiration communicated to David, or written by the finger of God, as the tables of the law were.

2. That the vessels might be exact, David weighed the gold and silver for each; vast and immense they were

in number and size, amounting, according to a Jewish author, to no less than 810,000. Beside the original golden table and candlestick which were in the tabernacle, ten others of the same sort were placed in the temple opposite each other. The silver candlesticks seem to have been for the priests' apartments, and the silver tables probably for the use of the court where the sacrifices were prepared and offered. *Note*; When Jesus, the true temple, appeared among them, his outward form seemed not to correspond to this glorious type; but they who by faith discovered the incarnate God, beheld his glory infinitely surpassing.

3. David repeats his encouragement. No expence, danger, or difficulty, must deter him. God being his helper, he might be assured of success, as David could testify by experience; and he might expect ready assistance from priests, princes, and people, whom God would incline to further the work to the utmost of their power. *Note*; (1.) If we have God's promises on our side, it becomes us to renounce every unbelieving fear. (2.) When ministers and people are truly influenced by the spirit of God, they become hearty in the work, and the spiritual building rises gloriously.

4 B 2

8 And they with whom *precious* stones were found gave *them* to the treasure of the house of the LORD, by the hand of Jehiel the Gershonite.

9 Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy.

10 ¶ Wherefore David blessed the LORD before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed *be* thou, LORD God of Israel our father, for ever and ever.

11 Thine, O LORD, *is* the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all *that is* in the heaven and in the earth *is* thine; thine *is* the kingdom, O LORD, and thou art exalted as head above all.

12 Both riches and honour *come* of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thine hand *is* power and might; and in thine hand *it is* to make great, and to give strength unto all.

13 Now therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name.

14 But who *am* I, and what *is* my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things *come* of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.

15 For we *are* strangers before thee, and sojourners, as *were* all our fathers: our days on the earth *are* as a shadow, and *there is* none abiding.

16 O LORD our God, all this store that we have prepared to build thee an house for thine holy name *cometh* of thine hand, and *is* all thine own.

17 I know also, my God, that thou triest

the heart, and hast pleasure in uprightnefs. As for me, in the uprightnefs of mine heart I have willingly offered all these things: and now have I seen with joy thy people, which are present here, to offer willingly unto thee.

18 O LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, our fathers, keep this for ever in the imagination of the thoughts of the heart of thy people, and prepare their heart unto thee:

19 And give unto Solomon my son a perfect heart, to keep thy commandments, thy testimonic, and thy statutes, and to do all *these things*, and to build the palace, for the which I have made provision.

20 ¶ And David said to all the congregation, Now bless the LORD your God. And all the congregation blessed the LORD God of their fathers, and bowed down their heads, and worshipped the LORD, and the king.

21 And they sacrificed sacrifices unto the LORD, and offered burnt-offerings unto the LORD, on the morrow after that day, *even* a thousand bullocks, a thousand rams, and a thousand lambs, with their drink-offerings, and sacrifices in abundance for all Israel:

22 And did eat and drink before the LORD on that day with great gladness. And they made Solomon the son of David king the second time, and anointed *him* unto the LORD *to be* the chief governor, and Zadok *to be* priest.

23 ¶ Then Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him.

24 And all the princes, and the mighty men, and all the sons likewise of king

#### CHAP. XXIX.

Ver. 11. *Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, &c.*] The Talmudists paraphrase this and the next verse as follows: "*Thine, O Lord, is the greatness,*" for thou createdst the world; *and the power,* for thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt, and carriedst them through the Red Sea, *and revealedst thyself in glory* upon mount Sinai, to give the law to thy people; and *obtainedst victory* over Amalek, Sihon, Og, and the Canaanites, and madest the sun and the moon to stand still by the majesty of thy Spirit, till thy people were avenged of their enemies; *for all things both in heaven and in earth* are the work of thy hands: thou supportest

"and rulest all things, and *thou art exalted above all the* angels in heaven, as well as all the kings upon earth. "*The riches* of the wealthy, and the glory of kings and dominions, are given them by thee: *thou rulest over all;*" and they rule by thy power; for thou art able to multiply "*and strengthen all things.*" See Bishop Patrick, and Callimachus's hymn to Jupiter, ver. 125. in the translation.

Ver. 22. *Anointed him unto the Lord, to be the chief governor*] *And anointed him chief governor for the Lord:* i. e. the governor whom the Lord had chosen to command his people: for the theocracy still continued, and the kings only reigned in the name and under the authority of God, the supreme lord and ruler of Israel. See Houbigant.

Ver.

David, submitted themselves unto Solomon the king.

25 And the LORD magnified Solomon exceedingly in the sight of all Israel, and bestowed upon him *such* royal majesty as had not been on any king before him in Israel.

26 ¶ Thus David the son of Jesse reigned over all Israel.

27 And the time that he reigned over Israel was forty years; seven years reigned he in Hebron, and thirty and three years reigned he

in Jerusalem.

28 And he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour: and Solomon his son reigned in his stead.

29 Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold, they *are* written in the book of Samuel the seer, and in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer;

30 With all his reign and his might, and the times that went over him, and over Israel, and over all the kingdoms of the countries.

*Ver. 30. And the times that went over him]* The *transactions* are to be understood, which are usually denoted by the *times*, and which shew what was the nature of the times; a mode of speaking which is common to almost all languages. *The kingdoms of the countries*, is rendered by Houbigant and the LXX, *the kingdoms of the land*; i. e. the kingdoms of the land of promise. See Matt. iv. 8. Luke, iv. 5.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Having finished his discourse to Solomon, David addresses himself to the people, to exhort them to a liberal contribution. The work was great: a palace for God deserved the utmost magnificence; we can never do enough for him. Solomon was young, and therefore their help was the more needful: beginners must be encouraged. What he himself had done should engage their liberality. He intended not to lay the chief burden on them; he had prepared with his utmost might, and led the way; for he had a hearty affection to the service, which made him so cheerful a giver, and so warm an advocate for it; and therefore he might well ask, *Who is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?* not doubting but they would be as ready immediately to give, as he was to solicit. *Note;* (1.) That is a pleasing service to God, which is done from hearty affection to him. (2.) When our heart is right, our hand will be open; a niggard soul cannot be a child of God. (3.) God loveth a cheerful giver. (4.) When we lead the way ourselves in what is good, we can with confidence say, Be ye followers of me. (5.) It is not enough to give ourselves, but we are bound to stir up others also to every work of faith and labour of love. (6.) What we do for God, must be done without delay.—The success of his exhortation was great. Willingly the princes and people offered a sum immense! amounting, according to Brerewood's computation, to 22,607,500*l.* besides precious stones, and of brass and iron a prodigious weight. The people were happy that they had it to give, and hearts to offer it; and David rejoiced at a liberality which testified such real zeal for God's glory, and afforded such a promising prospect for his son. *Note;* (1.) What we bestow in God's service usually brings its own reward in present comfort. (2.) Every christian is happy to see a mutual emulation in good works. (3.) It is a joy to God's departing saints, to leave the world in the comfortable prospect of the growing increase of God's church.

2dly, Big with the sense of divine mercy, and filled with joy at the gracious inclinations which appeared in the people, David pours out in thankful adoration his grateful heart before God and this great congregation. *Note;* Praise and thanksgiving are ever our bounden duty; but they especially become departing saints of God, ready to enter on the service of everlasting praise.

1. We have here his grateful prayer. [1.] With adoration he begins, blessing the name of Israel's God, exalting his almighty power, his transcendent greatness and glory, his sovereign dominion, and universal agency and government: of him and from him came all that they possessed, and to him alone the praise of all was due. *Note;* When we approach God in prayer, our hearts should be impressed with a sense of his adorable perfections, that with reverence and godly fear we may bow before him. [2.] With thankfulness he ascribes to God the ability and inclination that he had given them to contribute so liberally for his service. *Note;* No works merit any thing at God's hands; but it is a fresh obligation upon ourselves, that we are inclined or enabled to do good. [3.] With deep humility he mentions their poor imperfect services. Though so great a king, so good a man, he speaks of himself as a worm before God; and of his people, though so rich, numerous, and great, as strangers and sojourners; as creatures of a day, whose momentary existence here below made their greatest services appear trivial before the eternal God. And what they had offered, was but out of the abundance that God had bestowed, only a part of what was lent them of the Lord. *Note;* (1.) They who have the deepest sense of God's perfections, will have the lowliest apprehensions of themselves. (2.) Whatever we are enabled to do for God, from him both the holy desire and the just work proceed; so that boasting is for ever excluded. (3.) The more we consider how short our moment is, the greater diligence we should use to fill it with works of faith and labours of love, which, through Jesus Christ, may redound to the praise and glory of God. [4.] He could appeal to God for the simplicity of his heart before him, as he was comfortably confident also in the people. *Note;* It is a solid satisfaction to have the testimony of our conscience, that in godly sincerity we have our conversation in the world. [5.] He begs, that God, as their covenant God, would ever keep alive in the hearts of the people the same gracious dispositions, and incline them to his blessed service; and that Solomon might possess

possess an upright heart, be enabled exactly to correspond with the pattern given him to build God's palace, and, above all, to follow God's holy law, without which the temple-service could profit him nothing. *Note;* (1.) Our good purposes will be of no long continuance, unless he who hath excited them continues to preserve them. (2.) This must awaken our unceasing prayers for continual strength to persevere. (3.) A heart sincerely fixed upon God, is the greatest blessing that God can bestow upon us here below.

2. As the king enjoined, the people gladly gave their assent to this grateful prayer, bowing their heads in token of adoration, and withal paying their respects to the king, whom they regarded as the chief human means of their present happy state. On this occasion a great sacrifice was offered of burnt-offerings in honour of God, and peace-offerings of thanksgiving; on which the whole congregation were nobly feasted, and rejoiced before the Lord. Solomon was now a second time solemnly invested with the sovereign power, as he had been more hastily before, on Adonijah's aspiring to the throne; and Abiathar being degraded for his adherence to Adonijah, Zadok was appointed chief priest in his stead. *Note;* (1.) While we bow the head before God, we must lift up the heart to him. (2.) Those who in God's hands are made to us the instruments of spiritual good, we must ever love and respect. (3.) Holy joy should enliven every act of communion with God. (4.) We have now an unction from the Holy One; but we expect a second more glorious inauguration, when the Son of David shall bring his saints to sit down with him on his throne.

3dly, We have here,

1. Solomon on the throne. It is called the Lord's throne, he being Israel's immediate king, setting up whom he pleased for his vicegerents, prescribing all their laws, and directing them in all their undertakings. Great prosperity was the natural consequence therefore, as long as the king continued faithful to him who had appointed him. All the great men of the kingdom, and David's sons, though elder than Solomon, peaceably acquiesced in the divine appointment, and swore fidelity and allegiance to him; so that he appeared with distinguished splendour, and out-shone all his predecessors. Perhaps his person was as majestic as his throne was resplendent, and commanded awe and respect from all around him. *Note;* Since David's son, the greater than Solomon, now sits on the throne, it should be our happiness and honour to submit to his government, and pledge to him our faithful hearts.

2. David in the grave. After a long reign, distinguished with glory, and crowned with riches and honour, the good old king, full of days, like a ripe sheaf in time of harvest, was gathered to the tomb; and went to awake up in God's likeness, in which alone he hoped to enjoy perfect felicity. For a fuller account of his life and victories, we are referred to the books of Samuel, Nathan, and Gad; either the canonical books of Samuel, the latter of which these prophets might have written, or to some authentic records that they kept, which, not being divinely inspired, or not designed to be preserved in the church, have since perished. *Note;* (1.) The throne and the tomb are but a step asunder. This stamps vanity on all sublunary greatness, and should quicken us to seek a more enduring kingdom. (2.) A good man, however

distinguished his station, will have enough of this world, and wait with desire his dismissal to that blest abode where alone true joys are to be found.

THUS died DAVID, that great prince and saint, who at once possessed every royal, religious, and political virtue. Valiant and intrepid in danger; just, clement, and wise in government; penetrated with a filial and respectful fear, and at the same time a tender and solid love for his God; sensible of the punishments and disgraces of his people, even to the offering of his own life to save them from death, 2 Sam. xxiv. 17. A man after God's own heart, the pattern of all other princes; who always walked in the ways of the Lord, and obeyed his commandments with a perfect heart; to whom Scripture bears testimony that he can only be reproached with the crime he committed with Bath-sheba, and against Uriah, 1 Kings, xv. 5. But then, what repentance did this crime produce! With what pious sentiments did he confess and proclaim it in the face of all the earth! What can be more wonderful than that lenity which he testified towards Saul, and which he always preserved amid the most cruel and unjust persecutions? Being only under the law, did he not attain the summit of gospel perfection and christian philosophy? And did he not more than once deserve the crown of martyrdom, for sparing the life of his enemy when God had delivered him into his hands?

But that which is most consolatory to christians in the person and life of this prince, is, that there are remarked in them an infinite number of admirable relations with those of Jesus Christ; and that we find in them not only the promises of the birth and reign of the Saviour, but also types which represent him to us in a very sensible manner. *David*, born at Bethlehem, and distinguished for the beauty which shone in his aspect, is chosen from amidst his brethren, to receive regal unction from the hands of Samuel, and to govern Israel instead of Saul, cast off for his disobedience and presumption. *Jesus*, the well-beloved of the Father, the fairest of all the sons of men, is born in the same town of Bethlehem, and is anointed above his brethren; i. e. is declared the Messiah and anointed of the Lord, and *the first born amongst many brethren*; destined to be the head and king of his church, and of the chosen people; and this by the abrogation of the first covenant, which becomes useless by the death of Jesus Christ.

Do not David's victory over Goliath, the jealousy of his brethren against him, and the persecutions which he suffered from Saul, represent to us Jesus Christ, the conqueror of the devil, of death, and of sin, by the cross; and persecuted in his person by the synagogue, and in his disciples by the Gentiles? But as *David*, upheld by the protection of the Lord, surmounts every danger, avoids all the snares of his enemies, and sees himself at length, in spite of all, upon the throne of his people; so the SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD remains victorious over all who attack his person and his servants, and establishes his throne upon the ruins of theirs who strive to abolish his empire.

Abalom revolts against David; who is forced to fly from Jerusalem on foot, tears in his eyes, his head covered, and abandoned by most of his people. *Ahitophel* in a manner delivers him up to his enemy, by giving Abalom pernicious counsel against him; all which, however, hinders not David from overcoming his adversaries, and returning to the possession of his dominions more glorious

glorious and more powerful than ever. And thus too the Saviour of the world, betrayed and delivered up by one of his disciples, quits Jerusalem loaded with his cross, to suffer upon Calvary an ignominious death: but this punishment, which his enemies considered as his destruction, and their triumph, became the victory and exaltation of Jesus: it is thereby that he is entered into his kingdom, and hath gained to himself a faithful people, a chosen inheritance: I mean the christian church, the object of his favour and his love.

Thus far Calmet has delineated the character of David. It were easy to mark out a variety of other circumstances in which the typical resemblance holds between Christ and David. But, leaving these to the reader's reflection, we conclude the whole concerning this monarch in Dr. Delaney's words:

“ Not to insist upon his great personal accomplishments, such as beauty, stature, strength, swiftness, and eloquence; his character is sufficiently distinguished by the noblest qualities, endowments, and events.

“ Exalted from an humble shepherd to a mighty monarch, without the least tincture of pride, disdain, or

“ envy! Nay, quite otherwise, remarkably humble in  
 “ exaltation, or rather humbled by it! Exalted unenvied!  
 “ Exalted himself, and equally exalting the state he  
 “ ruled; raising it from contempt, poverty, and oppression,  
 “ to wealth, dignity, and sway! A man experienced  
 “ in every vicissitude of life, and equal to them all!  
 “ Thoroughly tried in adversity, and tempted by success;  
 “ yet still superior! Cruelly and unjustly persecuted; yet  
 “ not to be provoked even to just revenge! In the saddest  
 “ and suddenest reverse of fortune, depressed by nothing,  
 “ but the remembrance of guilt; and in consequence of  
 “ that, unhumiliated to any thing but God.

“ To sum up all; a true believer and zealous adorer of  
 “ God! Teacher of his law and worship, and inspirer of  
 “ his praise! A consummate and unequalled hero! A  
 “ skilful captain! A steady patriot, a wise ruler, a faithful,  
 “ a generous, and a magnanimous friend! And,  
 “ what is yet rarer, a no less generous and magnanimous  
 “ enemy! A true penitent, a divine musician, a sublime  
 “ poet, and an inspired prophet! By birth a peasant;  
 “ by desert a prince! In youth a hero; in manhood  
 “ a monarch; and in age a saint!”

## SECOND BOOK of the CHRONICLES.

## CHAP. I.

*Solomon goes to Gibeon, where was the tabernacle erected by Moses, and offers sacrifice: his choice of wisdom is approved by God, who moreover promises him riches, and wealth, and honour. Solomon provides himself chariots and horses.*

[Before Christ 1012.]

**A**ND Solomon the son of David was strengthened in his kingdom, and the LORD his God *was* with him, and magnified him exceedingly.

2 Then Solomon spake unto all Israel, to the captains of thousands and of hundreds, and to the judges, and to every governor in all Israel, the chief of the fathers.

3 So Solomon, and all the congregation with him, went to the high place that *was* at Gibeon; for there was the tabernacle of the congregation of God, which Moses the servant of the LORD had made in the wilderness.

4 But the ark of God had David brought up from Kirjath-jearim to *the place which* David had prepared for it: for he had pitched a tent for it at Jerusalem.

5 Moreover the brazen altar, that Bezaliel the son of Uri, the son of Hur, had made, he put before the tabernacle of the LORD: and Solomon and the congregation sought unto it.

6 And Solomon went up thither to the brazen altar before the LORD, which *was* at the tabernacle of the congregation, and offered a thousand burnt-offerings upon it.

7 ¶ In that night did God appear unto Solomon, and said unto him, Ask what I shall give thee.

8 And Solomon said unto God, Thou hast shewed great mercy unto David my father,

and hast made me to reign in his stead.

9 Now, O LORD God, let thy promise unto David my father be established: for thou hast made me king over a people like the dust of the earth in multitude.

10 Give me now wisdom and knowledge; that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people *that is so* great?

11 And God said to Solomon, Because this was in thine heart, and thou hast not asked riches, wealth, or honour, nor the life of thine enemies, neither yet hast asked long life; but hast asked wisdom and knowledge for thyself, that thou mayest judge my people, over whom I have made thee king:

12 Wisdom and knowledge *is* granted unto thee; and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honour, such as none of the kings have had that *have been* before thee, neither shall there any after thee have the like.

13 ¶ Then Solomon came *from his journey* to the high place that *was* at Gibeon to Jerusalem, from before the tabernacle of the congregation, and reigned over Israel.

14 And Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen: and he had a thousand and four hundred chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen, which he placed in the chariot-cities, and with the king at Jerusalem.

15 And the king made silver and gold at Jerusalem *as plentiful* as stones, and cedar-trees made he as the sycamore-trees that *are* in the vale for abundance.

16 And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt, and linen yarn: the king's merchants received the linen yarn at a price.

## CHAP. I.

*Ver. 5. Solomon and the congregation sought unto it] There, therefore, Solomon and the congregation sought the Lord. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 13. Then Solomon came from his journey, &c.] After-*

*wards Solomon, departing from the high place of Gibeon, from the presence of the Lord, came to Jerusalem, where he reigned over Israel. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 16. And Solomon had horses, &c.] See the note on 1 Kings, x. 28. Moses had expressly prohibited the multiplying*

17 And they fetched up and brought forth out of Egypt a chariot for six hundred *shekels* of silver, and an horse for an hundred and fifty: and so brought they out *horses* for all the kings of the Hittites, and for the kings of Syria, by their means.

## CHAP. II.

*Solomon, having prepared for the building of the temple, sends to Hiram, king of Tyre, for a skilful workman, and for wood from Lebanon. Hiram grants his request.*

[Before Christ 1012.]

**A**ND Solomon determined to build an house for the name of the LORD, and an house for his kingdom.

2 And Solomon told out threescore and ten thousand men to bear burdens, and fourscore thousand to hew in the mountain, and three thousand and six hundred to oversee them.

3 ¶ And Solomon sent to Hiram the king of Tyre, saying, As thou didst deal with David

my father, and didst send him cedars to build him an house to dwell therein, *even so deal with me.*

4 Behold, I build an house to the name of the LORD my God, to dedicate *it* to him, and to burn before him sweet incense, and for the continual shew-bread, and for the burnt-offerings morning and evening, on the sabbaths, and on the new moons, and on the solemn feasts of the LORD our God. This *is an ordinance* for ever to Israel.

5 And the house which I build *is great*: for great *is our God* above all gods.

6 But who is able to build him an house, seeing the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him? who *am* I then, that I should build him an house, save only to burn sacrifice before him?

7 Send me now therefore a man cunning to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass, and in iron, and in purple, and crimson, and blue,

multiplying of horses, Deut. xvii. 16. by which the future king was forbidden to establish a body of cavalry, because this could not be effected without sending into Ægypt, with which people the Lord had forbidden any communication; as, of all foreign commerce, that was the most dangerous to true religion. When Solomon had violated this law, and multiplied horses to excess, (1 Kings, iv. 26.) it was soon attended with those fatal consequences which the law foretold: for, this wisest of kings having likewise, in violation of another law of Moses, married Pharaoh's daughter, (the early fruits of this commerce,) and then, by a repetition of the same crime, but a transgression of another law, espoused more strange women (1 Kings, iv. 26. xi. 1.); they first, in defiance of a fourth law, persuaded him to build them idol temples for their use; and afterwards, against a fifth law, still more fundamental, brought him to erect other temples for his own. Now the origin of all this mischief was the forbidden traffic with Ægypt for *horses*; for thither, we are told in this and the next verse, the agents of Solomon were sent to mount his cavalry. Nay, this great king even turned factor for the neighbouring monarchs; ver. 17. This opprobrious commerce was kept up by his successors, and attended with the same pernicious consequences. Isaiah, with his usual majesty, denounces the mischiefs of this traffic, and foretels that one of the good effects of leaving it would be the forsaking of their idolatries. Isaiah, xxxi. 1. 4. 6, 7. Div. Leg. vol. iii. p. 289.

REFLECTIONS.—We left Solomon in quiet possession of Israel's throne. His authority was still more firmly established by the removal of some secret enemies; and, God being evidently with him, his prosperity increased.

1. He summoned the chief men of Israel to attend him

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at Gibeon, where the tabernacle was; for he well knew, that having God for his friend was the only sure establishment of his throne. By his own example also he laboured to diffuse an universal attachment to God and his ordinances through his kingdom; as being persuaded that good men would be the most loyal subjects. There he offered a thousand burnt-offerings, beside peace-offerings, and all the assembled congregation kept a feast with him before the Lord. *Note*; (1.) Great is the influence of a good magistrate's example. (2.) When we begin well, we have half ended. (3.) The more God does for us, the more should we labour to testify our gratitude towards him.

2. God appeared to him at night, and bid him ask and have whatever he chose. His prayer and happy choice, with God's gracious answer, we find 1 Kings, iii. 5. We may farther observe here, (1.) That a man's state is best known by the secret desires of his soul. (2.) Faith, which through the great sacrifice enables us to realize eternal things, will make us count all things dung and loss, compared with spiritual graces, and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom. (3.) Our fathers' mercies are an encouragement to us to pray and hope for the same blessing. (4.) The more eminent our predecessors, the more earnestly had we need beg, that, being in their place, we may be strengthened with equal ability and fidelity for our work. (5.) If we have God's promises with us, we may pray in faith, nothing doubting. (6.) God often exceeds our desires. When, seeking only his favour, we are content to trust all our worldly affairs on his providence, the blessing of the Lord shall enrich us; and, better than all our gains, he will give us a heart to enjoy what he bestows with thankfulness to his glory.

4 C



and that can skill to grave with the cunning men that *are* with me in Judah and in Jerusalem, whom David my father did provide.

8 Send me also cedar-trees, fir-trees, and algum-trees, out of Lebanon: for I know that thy servants can skill to cut timber in Lebanon; and, behold, my servants *shall be* with thy servants,

9 Even to prepare me timber in abundance: for the house which I am about to build *shall be* wonderful great.

10 And, behold, I will give to thy servants, the hewers that cut timber, twenty thousand measures of beaten wheat, and twenty thousand measures of barley, and twenty thousand baths of wine, and twenty thousand baths of oil.

11 ¶ Then Hiram the king of Tyre answered in writing, which he sent to Solomon, Because the LORD hath loved his people, he hath made thee king over them.

12 Hiram said moreover, Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel, that made heaven and earth, who hath given to David the king a wise son, endued with prudence and under-

standing, that might build an house for the LORD, and an house for his kingdom.

13 And now I have sent a cunning man, endued with understanding, of Hiram my father's,

14 The son of a woman of the daughters of Dan, and his father *was* a man of Tyre, skilful to work in gold, and in silver, in brass, in iron, in stone, and in timber, in purple, in blue, and in fine linen, and in crimson; also to grave any manner of graving, and to find out every device which shall be put to him, with thy cunning men, and with the cunning men of my lord David thy father.

15 Now therefore the wheat, and the barley, the oil, and the wine, which my lord hath spoken of, let him send unto his servants:

16 And we will cut wood out of Lebanon, as much as thou shalt need: and we will bring it to thee in floats by sea to Joppa; and thou shalt carry it up to Jerusalem.

17 ¶ And Solomon numbered all the strangers that *were* in the land of Israel, after the numbering wherewith David his father had numbered them; and they were found an-

## CHAP. II.

*Ver: 13. And now I have sent a cunning man, &c.] Therefore I have sent unto thee a man of understanding, whom my father Hiram had for his instructor. Houbigant.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Solomon, being appointed to build God's house, and by his wisdom so highly-qualified for it, begins to set about the glorious structure; and afterwards resolves to raise a palace for himself. *Note;* Let God be always first and best served. For this purpose he sends an embassy to Hiram, or Hiram, king of Tyre, whose assistance he wanted in the work. He mentions the kindness that Hiram had shewn to David, as a reason for continuing his friendship to him his son; informs him of his design to build the house of God, of whose glory he speaks most highly. The God of Israel was above all gods, therefore a temple became him, such as nowhere else could be found: not that the most pompous structure could be worthy of the infinite God, or his immensity be circumscribed by the largest palace, since the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain him. He pretended only to build a place to worship and sacrifice before him. The Tyrians being most expert workmen, he begs him to send him a capital artist in engraving and embroidery, who might instruct those that were ingenious among his own people; and requests that he would cut down, and convey to him from Lebanon, cedars and other timber; in which service he would send his own servants, with Hiram's, who were more skilled in the business. In consideration for

which services, he offers to give, as wages and maintenance for Hiram's servants, twenty thousand measures of wheat and barley, and as many baths of wine and oil, commodities which Tyre wanted, and in which Canaan abounded. *Note;* (1.) We should desire to make our father's friends our own. (2.) They who have the knowledge of the true God themselves, would fain have others acquainted with him also. (3.) Though, when we have done our best, it is poor and unworthy of God, yet it speaks at least our humble gratitude.

2dly, Hiram was as ready to grant, as Solomon to ask, and that in the most friendly manner, congratulating Israel on so good a king, and blessing God for giving so gracious a son to his friend. He sent him an ingenious artist, half an Israelite, and therefore more likely to be hearty in the service; undertook to convey the timber to Joppa by sea, and accepted of the wages proposed. *Note;* (1.) The polite manner in which a favour is conferred doubles the obligation. (2.) The assistance of the Gentiles in building the church, was a figure of their incorporation in the fulness of time with the Israel of God.

Solomon immediately dispatched his servants to Lebanon, to meet Hiram's. He employed no Israelites in servile work, but the strangers who, probably by becoming proselytes, were incorporated among them; whether of the remnant of the old inhabitants or others. These, to the number of 153,600, David had registered before; and Solomon now set them to work for him, and, no doubt, well paid them for their labour.

hundred and fifty thousand and three thousand and six hundred.

18 And he set threescore and ten thousand of them *to be* bearers of burdens, and fourscore thousand *to be* hewers in the mountain, and three thousand and six hundred overseers to set the people a-work.

C H A P. III.

*Solomon, in the fourth year of his reign, builds the temple. The measure and ornaments thereof: the cherubims and pillars.*

[Before Christ 1011.]

**T**HEN Solomon began to build the house of the LORD at Jerusalem in mount Moriah, where *the LORD* appeared unto David his father, in the place that David had prepared in the threshing-floor of Ornan the Jebusite.

2 And he began to build in the second day of the second month, in the fourth year of his reign.

3 ¶ Now these are the things wherein Solomon was instructed for the building of the house of God. The length by cubits after the first measure was threescore cubits, and the breadth twenty cubits.

4 And the porch that was in the front of the house, the length of it was according to the breadth of the house, twenty cubits, and the height was an hundred and twenty: and he overlaid it within with pure gold.

5 And the greater house he ceiled with fir-tree, which he overlaid with fine gold, and set thereon palm-trees and chains.

6 And he garnished the house with precious

stones for beauty: and the gold was gold of Parvaim.

7 He overlaid also the house, the beams, the posts, and the walls thereof, and the doors thereof, with gold; and graved cherubims on the walls.

8 ¶ And he made the most holy house, the length whereof was according to the breadth of the house, twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof twenty cubits: and he overlaid it with fine gold, amounting to six hundred talents.

9 And the weight of the nails was fifty shekels of gold. And he overlaid the upper chambers with gold.

10 And in the most holy house he made two cherubims of image work, and overlaid them with gold.

11 And the wings of the cherubims were twenty cubits long: one wing of the one cherub was five cubits, reaching to the wall of the house: and the other wing was likewise five cubits, reaching to the wing of the other cherub.

12 And one wing of the other cherub was five cubits, reaching to the wall of the house: and the other wing was five cubits also, joining to the wing of the other cherub.

13 The wings of these cherubims spread themselves forth twenty cubits: and they stood on their feet, and their faces were inward.

14 ¶ And he made the veil of blue, and purple, and crimson, and fine linen, and wrought cherubims thereon.

15 ¶ Also he made before the house two

C H A P. III.

*Ver. 3. Now these are the things wherein Solomon, &c.] Now Solomon made these mensurations for the building, &c. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 4. And the height was an hundred and twenty.] And the height was twenty cubits. Houbigant. See 1 Kings, vi. 2.*

*Ver. 6. And he garnished the house with precious stones for beauty.] And he paved the floor with beautiful and excellent stones. Houbigant. The Vulgate has it, with marble. Houbigant thinks that the next clause belongs to the 7th verse, where accordingly he places it. The doors thereof with gold, and the gold was gold of Parvaim; which some take for the name of a place, supposed by them to have been the island Taprobanes, now called Sumatra, which abounds with fine gold: while others imagine, that the*

word is expressive of the quality of the gold, deep and red in its colour, like the blood of bullocks; deriving the word פֶּרְוַיִּים parvaim from פֶּרַי par, a bullock. See Parkhurst's Lexicon.

*Ver. 9. The upper chambers.] This would have been rendered more properly here, the ceiling, the upper part of the house.*

*Ver. 10. Cherubims of image work.] Of wrought work. Le Clerc. Opere coagmentato, or of work formed in different parts, which might easily be taken in pieces. Houbigant. Parkhurst says, that the original word צִעֲצָיִים tsaatsum expresses the manner of the workmanship, or of covering the cherubims with gold, to have been by spreading or laying along the gold close upon all the parts. See his Lexicon תִּשְׁבָּעִים tshab.*

*Ver. 15. Two pillars of thirty and five cubits.] See 1 Kings, vii. 15.*

pillars of thirty and five cubits high, and the chapiter that *was* on the top of each of them *was* five cubits.

16 And he made chains, *as* in the oracle, and put *them* on the heads of the pillars; and made an hundred pomegranates, and put *them* on the chains.

17 And he reared up the pillars before the temple, one on the right hand, and the other on the left; and called the name of that on the right hand Jachin, and the name of that on the left Boaz.

#### CHAP. IV.

*The brazen altar, molten sea, the lavers, the candlesticks, the tables, and other parts of the sacred furniture, are formed.*

[Before Christ 1011.]

**M**OREOVER he made an altar of brass, twenty cubits the length thereof, and twenty-cubits the breadth thereof, and ten cubits the height thereof.

2 ¶ Also he made a molten sea of ten cubits from brim to brim, round in compass, and five cubits the height thereof; and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about.

3 And under it *was* the similitude of oxen, which did compass it round about: ten in a cubit, compassing the sea round about. Two rows of oxen *were* cast, when it was cast.

4 It stood upon twelve oxen, three looking toward the north, and three looking toward the west, and three looking toward the south, and three looking toward the east: and the

sea *was set* above upon them, and all their hinder parts *were* inward.

5 And the thickness of it *was* an hand-breadth, and the brim of it like the work of the brim of a cup, with flowers of lilies; and it received and held three thousand baths.

6 ¶ He made also ten lavers, and put five on the right hand, and five on the left, to wash in them: such things as they offered for the burnt-offering they washed in them; but the sea *was* for the priests to wash in.

7 And he made ten candlesticks of gold according to their form, and set *them* in the temple, five on the right hand, and five on the left.

8 He made also ten tables, and placed *them* in the temple, five on the right side, and five on the left. And he made an hundred basons of gold.

9 ¶ Furthermore he made the court of the priests, and the great court, and doors for the court, and overlaid the doors of them with brass.

10 And he set the sea on the right side of the east end, over against the south.

11 ¶ And Hiram made the pots, and the shovels, and the basons. And Hiram finished the work that he was to make for king Solomon for the house of God;

12 *To wit*, the two pillars, and the pommels, and the chapiters *which were* on the top of the two pillars, and the two wreaths to cover the two pommels of the chapiters *which were* on the top of the pillars;

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The account of the building of the temple, we had, 1 Kings, vi. more at large. Three years were taken up in needful preparations; on the fourth, Solomon laid the foundation. The dimensions exactly corresponded with the pattern given him by David, 1 Chron. xxviii. 2. The porch led into the *greater house*, or the holy place; and that into the holiest of all, within the veil. The whole was covered throughout, on the inside, with plates of gold, with golden chains, and palm-trees embossed; the very nails were fine gold, each of fifty shekels weight, or perhaps of that value. In the gold, the precious stones were set, glittering by the light of the lamps with inconceivable lustre; yet how poor all this, great and glorious as it was, compared with that heavenly temple, where every faithful believer consecrated to God is not only for a time to minister, but for eternity to dwell! See Rev. xxi. 18, 19-21.

2dly, The cherubims represented the angels, bending in adoration towards the mercy-seat, to teach us, that what is their work should be ours. A veil separated the most holy place: that dispensation was dark; but the veil is done away in Christ, and the mercy-seat open to every believing sinner. On this veil cherubims were wrought, or *caused to ascend*, either raised work, or in an ascending posture, as if mounting to heaven, whither in our devotions our hearts should soar. The two pillars were at the entrance; see 1 Kings, vii. 15. Every true believer is like these, firm and immoveable against all enemies; and adorned with divine graces more precious than wrought gold.

#### CHAP. IV.

Ver. 3. *Similitude of oxen*] *The similitude of grapes.* Houbigant. See the parallel passage, 1 Kings, vii. 24.

13 And four hundred pomegranates on the two wreaths; two rows of pomegranates on each wreath, to cover the two pommels of the chapters which *were* upon the pillars.

14 He made also basins, and lavers made he upon the basins;

15 One sea, and twelve oxen under it.

16 The pots also, and the shovels, and the fleshhooks, and all their instruments, did Hiram his father make to king Solomon for the house of the LORD of bright brass.

17 In the plain of Jordan did the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zeredathah.

18 Thus Solomon made all these vessels in great abundance: for the weight of the brass could not be found out.

19 ¶ And Solomon made all the vessels that *were* for the house of God, the golden altar also, and the tables whereon the shew-bread *was set*;

20 Moreover the candlesticks with their lamps, that they should burn after the manner before the oracle, of pure gold;

21 And the flowers, and the lamps, and the tongs, *made he of gold, and that perfect gold*;

22 And the snuffers, and the basins, and the spoons, and the censers, *of pure gold*: and the entry of the house, the inner doors thereof for

the most holy *place*, and the doors of the house of the temple, *were of gold*.

## C H A P. V.

*Solomon brings the gifts of David into the treasury of the temple: the Levites place the ark under the wings of the cherubim, amidst sacrifices and songs of praise. The glory of the Lord fills the temple.*

[Before Christ 1003.]

**T**HUS all the work that Solomon made for the house of the LORD was finished: and Solomon brought in *all* the things that David his father had dedicated; and the silver, and the gold, and all the instruments, put he among the treasures of the house of God.

2 ¶ Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel, unto Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which *is* Zion.

3 Wherefore all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto the king in the feast which *was* in the seventh month.

4 And all the elders of Israel came; and the Levites took up the ark.

5 And they brought up the ark, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that *were* in the tabernacle, these did the priests *and* the Levites bring up.

*Ver. 22. And the entry, &c.] And the hinges, and the doors of the inner house. Houbigant. See 1 Kings, vii. 50.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The making of all these vessels, except the brazen altar, we had, 1 Kings, vii. This was four times as wide, and more than thrice as high, as that of Moses. Israel being increased, and their sacrifices now likely to be more numerous, a larger altar was needful. According as God increases us, we must honour him with our substance. The sea, and the lavers, were of brass. These stood in the open air without, in the court of the priests; within all was gold:—the nearer we approach to God, the purer we must grow. The golden altar, ten new candlesticks, and as many tables of pure gold, were placed within the holy place, where lights continually burned, where incense was daily offered, and the shew-bread was placed: all which were shadows of good things to come.

1. The brazen altar, which sanctified the gift where the sacrifice was accepted, prefigured that Divine Redeemer, both altar and sacrifice, who, by one oblation once offered, obtained eternal redemption for us.

2. The lavers and sea pointed out the sanctifying work

of the Spirit of God upon the hearts of God's spiritual priests, cleansing them from their remaining filthiness of flesh and spirit.

3. The table of shew-bread typified the constant provision which in the gospel-church should be made for all God's people, who should eat and drink before him to the refreshing of their souls.

4. The candlesticks represented the word of gospel-truth, shining as a light in a dark place, and their number, the clearer and increasing discoveries which God makes of himself to his people.

5. The altar of incense signified that intercession which Jesus our high-priest makes, who, whilst we are praying without, is standing before the mercy-seat, and effectually presenting our supplications, that they may be accepted and answered.

2dly, Hiram the great artificer, called his *father*, ver. 16. being the president and master over all the rest, completely finished his work. He who gave him understanding gave him strength. *Note*: The work of grace in the soul, the spiritual temple which the Divine Artificer hath begun, he will not fail to complete in every faithful soul, till we shall be perfect in glory, lacking nothing.

6 Also king Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel that were assembled unto him before the ark, sacrificed sheep and oxen, which could not be told nor numbered for multitude.

7 And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD unto his place, to the oracle of the house, into the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims:

8 For the cherubims spread forth *their* wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark and the flaves thereof above.

9 And they drew out the flaves of the ark, that the ends of the flaves were seen from the ark before the oracle; but they were not seen without. And there it is unto this day.

10 *There was* nothing in the ark save the two tables which Moses put *therein* at Horeb, when the LORD made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of Egypt.

11 ¶ And it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the holy place: (for all the priests *that were* present were sanctified, and did not *then* wait by course:

12 Also the Levites *which were* the singers,

all of them of Asaph, of Heman, of Jeduthun, with their sons and their brethren, *being* arrayed in white linen, having cymbals and psalteries and harps, stood at the east end of the altar, and with them an hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets:)

13 It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers *were* as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking the LORD; and when they lifted up *their* voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of musick, and praised the LORD, *saying*, For *he is* good; for his mercy *endureth* for ever: that *then* the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the LORD;

14 So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of God.

## CHAP. VI.

*Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple.*

[Before Christ 1003.]

**T**HEN said Solomon, The LORD hath said that he would dwell in the thick darkness.

## CHAP. V.

*Ver. 3. Unto the king in the feast, &c.] Unto the king on the feast day, in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month.* Houbigant. See 1 Kings, viii. 2.

*Ver. 11. For all the priests that were present were sanctified, &c.] For all the priests then present had purified themselves, nor did any one wait for his course:* that is, being all desirous of ministering at this solemn assembly, they did not observe the particular turn or course of waiting which was appointed for them. Houbigant.

REFLECTIONS.— 1st, This solemnity we met with 1 Kings, viii. 2. The treasures that his father had dedicated, besides what were used in the building, or for the vessels, Solomon laid up in the temple for any future occasion. The pious and charitable bequests of our parents we must carefully discharge. The ark he brought up with great ceremony, at a general convention assembled for that purpose, with all the appurtenances belonging to it, and placed it under the cherubims in the most holy place; where it continued to the day when the records were written whence Ezra made this extract.

The sacrifices on this occasion were immense, and sacred festal joy was universally diffused around. *Note;* (1.) The most gorgeous structure, without the presence of God, is not to be compared with a poor tent where he is pleased to manifest his glory. (2.) Wherever the faithful assemble, there Jesus hath promised to be in the midst of them. This ark, probably, was carried into captivity with the

people, and is long since lost; but *he is* with us always to the end of the world. (3.) When the Divine Spirit is pleased to come and take up his abode in our heart, then shall we taste greater joys, unspeakable and full of glory.

2dly, Not all the gold or jewels could be compared with the presence of the celestial inhabitant whose glory filled the temple. No sooner were the priests retired from the holy place, and the song of thanksgiving with united voice and instruments had begun to sound, than lo! the present Deity appears, answering their grateful acknowledgments, that his mercy endureth for ever; testifying how pleasing the work of praise was to him, and that he intended to take up his abode with them, as he did with their fathers in the wilderness. The priests, who were all assembled on this occasion, with the courses of Levites and singers, were no longer able to minister by reason of the cloud: a proof of their infirmity, and an intimation of the imperfection of the Levitical priesthood. *Note;* (1.) When with united voice we join in prayer and praise, then shall the cloud of glory be in the midst of us. (2.) The enduring mercy of God deserves to be the subject of our continual songs. (3.) Great as the glory of the first temple was, the glory of the second was greater; as being favoured with the visits of Him in whom dwelt the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

## CHAP. VI.

*Ver. 1. The Lord hath said, &c.] Thou hast promised, O Lord, that thou wouldest dwell.* Houbigant.

*Ver.*

2 But I have built an house of habitation for thee, and a place for thy dwelling for ever.

3 And the king turned his face, and blessed the whole congregation of Israel: and all the congregation of Israel stood.

4 And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who hath with his hands fulfilled *that* which he spake with his mouth to my father David, saying,

5 Since the day that I brought forth my people out of the land of Egypt I chose no city among all the tribes of Israel to build an house in, that my name might be there; neither chose I any man to be a ruler over my people Israel:

6 But I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name might be there; and have chosen David to be over my people Israel.

7 Now it was in the heart of David my father to build an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel.

8 But the LORD said to David my father, Forasmuch as it was in thine heart to build an house for my name, thou didst well in that it was in thine heart:

9 Notwithstanding thou shalt not build the house; but thy son which shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house for my name.

10 The LORD therefore hath performed his word that he hath spoken: for I am risen up in the room of David my father, and am set on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and have built the house for the name of the LORD God of Israel.

11 And in it have I put the ark, wherein is

the covenant of the LORD, that he made with the children of Israel.

12 ¶ And he stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands:

13 For Solomon had made a brazen scaffold, of five cubits long, and five cubits broad, and three cubits high, and had set it in the midst of the court: and upon it he stood, and kneeled down upon his knees before all the congregation of Israel, and spread forth his hands toward heaven,

14 And said, O LORD God of Israel, *there is* no god like thee in the heaven, nor in the earth; which keepest covenant, and *shewest* mercy unto thy servants, that walk before thee with all their hearts:

15 Thou which hast kept with thy servant David my father that which thou hast promised him; and spakest with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled *it* with thine hand, as *it is* this day.

16 Now therefore, O LORD God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father: that which thou hast promised him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my fight to sit upon the throne of Israel; yet so that thy children take heed to their way to walk in my law, as thou hast walked before me.

17 Now then, O LORD God of Israel, let thy word be verified, which thou hast spoken unto thy servant David.

18 But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth! Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house which I have built!

*Ver. 18. But will God in very deed dwell with men? That God may dwell in very deed with men upon the earth: Hou-  
bignant; who supposes, that Solomon in these words refers to God's promise to David, and that he entreats in them God's continual presence and rule over the people of Israel.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, For the above, see 1 Kings, viii. 12—53. We have only farther to observe,

1. That it is our duty to correspond with the divine appointment, and earnestly prosecute the work that God hath appointed us.

2. When our eye is single to please God, we shall have comfort in our labours.

3. The fulfilment of God's promise is sure; we have only to be faithful, and we shall find that God is true.

4. Grateful acknowledgments of God's faithfulness must be made, not only for his honour, but for the encouragement of others to trust in the same faithful God.

2dly, In respect to the whole of Solomon's prayer, we may farther learn,

1. That this temple was figurative of the Lord Jesus, through whom alone our supplications and services find any acceptance with God.

2. To love, honour, and fear this holy God of power, faithfulness, mercy, and incomprehensible glory.

3. To be impressed with a sense of his heart-searching eye, that no allowed evil may be harboured in us.

4. Though

19 Have respect therefore to the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to hearken unto the cry and the prayer which thy servant prayeth before thee:

20 That thine eyes may be open upon this house day and night, upon the place whereof thou hast said that thou wouldest put thy name there; to hearken unto the prayer which thy servant prayeth toward this place.

21 Hearken therefore unto the supplications of thy servant, and of thy people Israel, which they shall make toward this place: hear thou from thy dwelling-place, *even* from heaven; and when thou hearest, forgive.

22 ¶ If a man sin against his neighbour, and an oath be laid upon him to make him swear, and the oath come before thine altar in this house;

23 Then hear thou from heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, by requiting the wicked, by recompensing his way upon his own head; and by justifying the righteous, by giving him according to his righteousness.

24 ¶ And if thy people Israel be put to the worse before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee; and shall return and confess thy name, and pray and make supplication before thee in this house;

25 Then hear thou from the heavens, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest to them and to their fathers.

26 ¶ When the heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; *yet* if they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou dost afflict them;

27 Then hear thou from heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy

people Israel, when thou hast taught them the good way, wherein they should walk; and send rain upon thy land, which thou hast given unto thy people for an inheritance.

28 ¶ If there be dearth in the land, if there be pestilence, if there be blasting, or mildew, locusts, or caterpillars; if their enemies besiege them in the cities of their land; whatsoever sore or whatsoever sickness *there be*:

29 *Then* what prayer or what supplication soever shall be made of any man or of all thy people Israel, when every one shall know his own sore and his own grief, and shall spread forth his hands in this house:

30 Then hear thou from heaven thy dwelling-place, and forgive, and render unto every man according unto all his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou only knowest the hearts of the children of men:)

31 That they may fear thee, to walk in thy ways, so long as they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers.

32 ¶ Moreover concerning the stranger, which is not of thy people Israel, but is come from a far country for thy great name's sake, and thy mighty hand, and thy stretched-out arm; if they come and pray in this house;

33 Then hear thou from the heavens, *even* from thy dwelling-place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for; that all people of the earth may know thy name, and fear thee, as *doth* thy people Israel, and may know that this house which I have built is called by thy name.

34 ¶ If thy people go out to war against their enemies by the way that thou shalt send them, and they pray unto thee toward this city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name;

35 Then hear thou from the heavens their

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4. Though we may not, for the sake of our prayers, expect to be heard of God, yet assuredly we shall not be heeded without them.

5. There is no difference between Jew or Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free; but whosoever in faith calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. The prayer closes with two verses out of the Psalms: no words so expressive as those which God's spirit has dictated. He begs the constant residence of God among them; his blessing upon the ministers of the sanctuary, to enable

them to save their own souls, and be instruments of salvation to the people; and the abiding consolations of his spirit with all his saints, making them rejoice in the experience of his goodness. He finishes with pleading the covenant-mercies of his father, and those shewn to himself, whom God had anointed: or this may refer emphatically to the effectual intercession of the Messiah, whom God always heareth, and in whose sure mercies we may confidently place our hopes for time and for eternity.



prayer, and their supplication, and maintain their cause.

36 ¶ If they sin against thee, (for *there is no man which sinneth not,*) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them over before *their* enemies, and they carry them away captives unto a land far off or near;

37 Yet *if* they bethink themselves in the land whither they are carried captive, and turn and pray unto thee in the land of their captivity, saying, We have sinned, we have done amiss, and have dealt wickedly:

38 If they return to thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their captivity, whither they have carried them captives, and pray toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, and *toward* the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house which I have built for thy name:

39 Then hear thou from the heavens, *even* from thy dwelling-place, their prayer and their supplications, and maintain their cause, and forgive thy people which have sinned against thee.

40 ¶ Now, my God, let, I beseech thee, thine eyes be open, and *let* thine ears *be* attent unto the prayer *that is made* in this place.

41 Now therefore arise, O LORD God, into thy resting-place, thou, and the ark of thy strength: let thy priests, O LORD God, be clothed with salvation, and let thy saints rejoice in goodness.

42 O LORD God, turn not away the face of thine anointed: remember the mercies of David thy servant.

#### CHAP. VII.

*Solomon offers sacrifices; keeps the feast of dedication, and afterwards the feast of tabernacles. The Lord appears to Solomon, and promises prosperity to the people, if they obey his commands.*

[Before Christ 1003.]

**N**OW when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the LORD

filled the house.

2 And the priests could not enter into the house of the LORD, because the glory of the LORD had filled the LORD's house.

3 And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the LORD upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the LORD, *saying*, For *he is good*; for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

4 ¶ Then the king and all the people offered sacrifices before the LORD.

5 And king Solomon offered a sacrifice of twenty and two thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep: so the king and all the people dedicated the house of God.

6 And the priests waited on their offices: the Levites also with instruments of musick of the LORD, which David the king had made to praise the LORD, because his mercy *endureth* for ever, when David praised by their ministry; and the priests sounded trumpets before them, and all Israel stood.

7 Moreover Solomon hallowed the middle of the court that *was* before the house of the LORD: for there he offered burnt-offerings, and the fat of the peace-offerings, because the brazen altar which Solomon had made was not able to receive the burnt-offerings, and the meat-offerings, and the fat.

8 ¶ Also at the same time Solomon kept the feast seven days, and all Israel with him, a very great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt.

9 And in the eighth day they made a solemn assembly: for they kept the dedication of the altar seven days, and the feast seven days.

10 And on the three-and-twentieth day of the seventh month he sent the people away into their tents, glad and merry in heart for the goodness that the LORD had shewed unto David, and to Solomon, and to Israel his people.

#### CHAP. VII.

*Ver. 9. And the feast seven days.] That is, emphatically, the feast of tabernacles.*

*Ver. 10. Glad and merry in heart for the goodness, &c.]*

VOL. II.

11

That is, according to the Targum, "*for the goodness of the Lord shewn unto David, in opening the doors of the sanctuary; and unto Solomon, whose prayer God had accepted, and had honoured him with his presence*"

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11 Thus Solomon finished the house of the LORD, and the king's house: and all that came into Solomon's heart to make in the house of the LORD, and in his own house, he prosperously effected.

12 ¶ And the LORD appeared to Solomon by night, and said unto him, I have heard thy prayer, and have chosen this place to myself for an house of sacrifice.

13 If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people;

14 If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

15 Now mine eyes shall be open, and mine ears attent unto the prayer *that is made* in this place.

16 For now have I chosen and sanctified this house, that my name may be there for ever: and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually.

17 And as for thee, if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, and do according to all that I have commanded thee, and shalt observe my statutes and my judgments;

18 Then will I stablish the throne of thy kingdom, according as I have covenanted with David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man *to be* ruler in Israel.

19 But if ye turn away, and forsake my statutes and my commandments, which I have set before you, and shall go and serve other gods, and worship them;

20 Then will I pluck them up by the roots out of my land which I have given them; and this house, which I have sanctified for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and will make it *to be* a proverb and a byword among all nations.

21 And this house, which is high, shall be an astonishment to every one that passeth by it; so that he shall say, Why hath the LORD done thus unto this land, and unto this house?

22 And it shall be answered, Because they

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“ in the house that he had built; and *unto his people* “ *Israel*, in his acceptance of their sacrifices, and sending “ down fire from heaven to consume them.”

REFLECTIONS.—1st, A glorious answer was given to Solomon's fervent prayer. Fire from heaven, either distinct from the former, or issuing from the cloud which had filled the house, consumed the sacrifices. Struck with the awful sight, the people reverentially bowed and worshipped, and, regarding it as a token of God's especial favour, adored his goodness and never-ending mercy. A vast multitude of sacrifices fed this sacred fire, which was maintained continually. The priests and Levites with diligence and zeal discharged their offices; the singers, with the psalms and instruments that David appointed, set forth God's praises; the people with delight and joy feasted before the Lord fourteen days; and Solomon enjoyed the peculiar satisfaction of seeing the labours of his hands accepted and prosperous; an encouragement never to be weary of serving so great and good a master. *Note;* (1.) The fire which once broke forth on Jesus our sacrifice, though terrible to behold, speaks God now reconciled to believing sinners, as having taken one for all. (2.) When God has kindled the fire of divine love in our hearts, it becomes us to feed it with the continual sacrifices of prayer and praise; and whilst it is thus kept burning, we may be assured that our sacrifice is accepted. (3.) A sinner, conscious of his deserts, is ashamed and confounded before a holy God. (4.) We can never be in any situation, in which praise is not

our bounden duty. As long as we are out of hell, we must ever say, He is good, for his mercy endureth for ever. (5.) They who delight in God's worship, will never count the time long which they spend in his service. (6.) All our prosperity in our undertakings must be ascribed wholly to the divine blessing; and when we make God's glory our first concern, we may confidently expect it.

2dly, God's second gracious visit to Solomon we had before, 1 Kings, ix. The Almighty expressly grants all the particulars that he had prayed for. Whenever the people, according as he had spoken, should return in penitence and prayer, their sin should immediately be pardoned, and their sufferings removed. He consents to make this house his abode for ever, and to establish his kingdom to the latest posterity, provided he approved himself faithful; but warns him withal, that if he or they (as it was too possible, and they were too prone to do,) should turn aside after other gods, and be unfaithful in his covenant, then they might expect no protection from this temple, their land should be wasted, the people destroyed, the sanctuary made desolate, and such terrible judgments overtake them, as should astonish their heathen neighbours, and even make them reflect with just reproach on their apostacy. *Note;* (1.) If God is so gracious, let us beware not to anger him. The heart of man is deceitful and desperately wicked, and we had need fear for ourselves continually. (2.) Whenever God engages the heart in humiliation to return to him, it is a sign that there is still mercy in store.

forfook the LORD God of their fathers, which brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods, and worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath he brought all this evil upon them.

## C H A P. VIII.

*Solomon's building: the people whom he made tributary. He sends ships to Ophir.*

[Before Christ 991.]

**A**ND it came to pass at the end of twenty years, wherein Solomon had built the house of the LORD, and his own house,

2 That the cities which Hiram had restored to Solomon, Solomon built them, and caused the children of Israel to dwell there.

3 And Solomon went to Hamath-zobah, and prevailed against it.

4 And he built Tadmor in the wilderness, and all the store-cities which he built in Hamath.

5 Also he built Beth-horon the upper, and Beth-horon the nether, fenced cities, with walls, gates, and bars;

6 And Baalath, and all the store-cities that Solomon had, and all the chariot-cities, and the cities of the horsemen, and all that Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, and in

Lebanon, and throughout all the land of his dominion.

7 ¶ *As for* all the people *that were* left of the Hittites, and the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, which *were* not of Israel,

8 *But* of their children, who were left after them in the land, whom the children of Israel consumed not, them did Solomon make to pay tribute until this day.

9 *But* of the children of Israel did Solomon make no servants for his work; but they *were* men of war, and chief of his captains, and captains of his chariots and horsemen.

10 And these *were* the chief of king Solomon's officers, *even* two hundred and fifty, that bare rule over the people.

11 ¶ And Solomon brought up the daughter of Pharaoh out of the city of David unto the house that he had built for her: for he said, My wife shall not dwell in the house of David king of Israel, because *the places are* holy, whereunto the ark of the LORD hath come.

12 ¶ Then Solomon offered burnt-offerings unto the LORD on the altar of the LORD, which he had built before the porch,

13 *Even* after a certain rate every day, offering according to the commandment of

## C H A P. VIII.

*Ver. 2. Which Hiram had restored] Had left. See 1 Kings, ix. 13.*

*Ver. 4. And all the store-cities, &c.] And also other store-cities, which are in Hamath. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 7. Which were not of Israel] i. e. Who did not observe the Jewish law and religion.*

*Ver. 10. And these were the chief of king Solomon's officers, &c.] But those chief officers who presided over the works of Solomon, were two hundred and fifty. See 1 Kings, ix. 23. where they are said to be five hundred and fifty. Other inferior officers were included perhaps in the former account.*

**REFLECTIONS.**—1st, The only warlike expedition that Solomon was engaged in, we have in ver. 3. reducing to his obedience Hamath-zobah, which seems to have revolted. His buildings, to which his genius led him, still went forward; and the old inhabitants of the land, now brought under tribute and proselyted, afforded him a number of workmen, without employing the nobler free-born Israelites. Having built a palace for his wife, the daughter of Pharaoh, he removed her from the city of David, where she had her residence before; for, though probably a proselyte herself, many of her Egyptian ser-

vants might retain the idols and iniquities of Ægypt; and a place which had been favoured with the ark of God, so long the seat of worship, and where David prayed and sung before the Lord, ought not to be profaned by such inhabitants. *Note;* They who marry into improper families, will find a burden and a snare from the evil manners of their wife's friends and relations, with whom they become necessarily connected.

2dly, Solomon had not only built a temple for the honour of God, but took care to continue waiting upon him there in his instituted ways. Building churches will do a man no good, if his spirit be not engaged in the service of the sanctuary.

1. The temple work was carried on exactly according to the divine prescription, and the courses of priests and Levites in waiting according to David's institution. *Note;* Regular and stated returns of worship are carefully to be observed.

2. Solomon's trade flourished. He visited his sea-ports in person, and, with the assistance of Hiram's mariners, made a very successful voyage to Ophir. *Note;* (1.) The master's eye is most necessary over his own affairs. (2.) Men brave every danger of the seas for the gold of Ophir, and shall we be less solicitous to secure the more enduring treasures of grace and glory?

Moses, on the sabbaths, and on the new-moons, and on the solemn feasts, three times in the year, *even* in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles.

14 ¶ And he appointed, according to the order of David his father, the courses of the priests to their service, and the Levites to their charges, to praise and minister before the priests, as the duty of every day required: the porters also by their courses at every gate: for so had David the man of God commanded.

15 And they departed not from the commandment of the king unto the priests and Levites concerning any matter, or concerning the treasures.

16 ¶ Now all the work of Solomon was prepared unto the day of the foundation of the house of the LORD, and until it was finished. So the house of the LORD was perfected.

17 ¶ Then went Solomon to Ezion-geber, and to Eloth, at the sea-side in the land of Edom.

18 And Hiram sent him, by the hands of his servants, ships, and servants that had knowledge of the sea; and they went with the servants of Solomon to Ophir, and took thence four hundred and fifty talents of gold, and brought *them* to king Solomon.

#### CHAP. IX.

*The queen of Sheba admires the wisdom of Solomon. His great glory. He reigns forty years, and is succeeded by his son Rehoboam.*

[Before Christ 991.]

**A**ND when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon, she came to prove Solomon with hard questions at Jerusalem, with a very great company, and camels that bare spices, and gold in abundance, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart.

2 And Solomon told her all her questions: and there was nothing hid from Solomon

which he told her not.

3 And when the queen of Sheba had seen the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built,

4 And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel; his cup-bearers also, and their apparel; and his ascent by which he went up into the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her.

5 And she said to the king, *It was* a true report which I heard in mine own land of thine acts, and of thy wisdom:

6 Howbeit I believed not their words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen *it*: and, behold, the one half of the greatness of thy wisdom was not told me: *for* thou exceedest the fame that I heard.

7 Happy *are* thy men, and happy *are* these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and hear thy wisdom.

8 Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee to set thee on his throne, *to be* king for the LORD thy God: because thy God loved Israel, to establish them for ever, therefore made he thee king over them, to do judgment and justice.

9 And she gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices great abundance, and precious stones: neither was there any such spice as the queen of Sheba gave king Solomon.

10 And the servants also of Hiram, and the servants of Solomon, which brought gold from Ophir, brought alnum-trees and precious stones.

11 And the king made *of* the alnum-trees terraces to the house of the LORD, and to the king's palace, and harps and psalteries for fingers: and there were none such seen before in the land of Judah.

12 And king Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside *that* which she had brought unto the king. So she turned, and went away to her own land, she and her servants.

#### CHAP. IX.

*Ver. 4. And his ascent, &c.] And his offerings which he*

*offered in the house of the Lord; as it should also be rendered 1 Kings, x. 5. Houbigant.*

*Ver.*

13 ¶ Now the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred and threescore and six talents of gold;

14 Besides *that which* chapmen and merchants brought. And all the kings of Arabia and governors of the country brought gold and silver to Solomon.

15 ¶ And king Solomon made two hundred targets of beaten gold: six hundred *shekels* of beaten gold went to one target.

16 And three hundred shields *made he of* beaten gold: three hundred *shekels* of gold went to one shield. And the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon.

17 ¶ Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with pure gold.

18 And *there were* six steps to the throne, with a footstool of gold, *which were* fastened to the throne, and stays on each side of the sitting-place, and two lions standing by the stays:

19 And twelve lions stood there on the one side and on the other upon the six steps. There was not the like made in any kingdom.

20 ¶ And all the drinking vessels of king Solomon *were of* gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon *were of* pure gold: none *were of* silver; it was *not* any thing accounted of in the days of Solomon.

21 For the king's ships went to Tarshish with

the servants of Hiram: every three years once came the ships of Tarshish bringing gold, and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks.

22 And king Solomon passed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom.

23 ¶ And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, that God had put in his heart.

24 And they brought every man his present, vessels of silver, and vessels of gold, and raiment, harness, and spices, horses, and mules, a rate year by year.

25 ¶ And Solomon had four thousand stalls for horses and chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen; whom he bestowed in the chariot-cities, and with the king at Jerusalem.

26 ¶ And he reigned over all the kings from the river even unto the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt.

27 And the king made silver in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar-trees made he as the sycamore-trees, that *are* in the low plains, in abundance.

28 And they brought unto Solomon horses out of Egypt, and out of all lands.

29 ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, first and last, *are* they not written in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite, and in the visions of Iddo the seer against Jeroboam the son of Nebat?

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*Ver. 21. The ships of Tarshish]* That this was some place in the East Indies, appears, as Bochart thinks, from the commodities, *elephants' teeth, apes, and peacocks*, brought from thence; and because the ships sent thither were built at Ezion-geber, on the Red Sea. He is of opinion, that this Tarshish was properly the promontory *Cory*, on the north of the island of *Ceylon*, which, according to him, was the land of *Ophir*, whither the ships of Solomon went. If this opinion be admitted, *Tarshish* may seem to have been so called from being the farthest place then known eastward, as *Tarshish* in Spain was westward; just as we from the *East Indies* call part of America, since discovered, the *West Indies*. But, after all that Bochart has written on this subject, I must not omit to observe, that another very ingenious writer is of opinion, that the Tarshish to which Solomon's fleet sailed, was no other than the Tarshish in Spain, whither the Phoenicians had before traded with vast advantage; that he fitted out his fleet from Ezion-geber on the Red Sea, because he had no other convenient port on the Mediterranean; that this fleet coasted along the shore of Africa, and, doubling

the cape of Good Hope, came to Tarshish in Spain, and thence back again the same way. In this manner our author accounts for their spending so long a time as three years in their voyage out and home; and remarks, that Spain and the coast of Africa furnish all the commodities which Solomon's fleet is said to have brought back: and to confirm this, it seems certain, from the account given by Herodotus, lib. iv. cap. 42. that in the reign of *Necus*, or *Pharaoh Necho*, king of *Egypt*, above six hundred years before Christ, some Phoenicians sent out by him did, in like manner, set sail from the Red Sea, and coast round Africa to the straits of Gibraltar; though indeed, instead of going back by the cape of Good Hope, they returned to *Egypt* the third year by the Mediterranean. See *Nature Displayed*, vol. iv., and *Parkhurst's Lexicon* on the word.

*Ver. 29. Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, &c.]* According to *Abarbanel* there were two books of the *acts of Solomon*: one containing an account of the beginning of his reign, written by *Nathan the prophet*; and the other an account of what passed in the latter part of his

30 And Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years.

31 And Solomon slept with his fathers, and he was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.

### C H A P. X.

*All Israel intreat Rehoboam to lighten the yoke laid upon them by Solomon. Rehoboam, despising the counsel of the old men, follows that of the young ones. Ten tribes separate themselves from him.*

[Before Christ 975.]

**A**ND Rehoboam went to Shechem: for to Shechem were all Israel come to make him king.

2 And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who *was* in Egypt, whither he had fled from the presence of Solomon the king, heard *it*, that Jeroboam returned out of Egypt.

3 And they sent and called him. So Jeroboam and all Israel came and spake to Rehoboam, saying,

4 Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore ease thou somewhat the grievous servitude of thy father, and his heavy yoke that he put upon us, and we will serve thee.

5 And he said unto them, Come again unto me after three days. And the people departed.

6 ¶ And king Rehoboam took counsel with the old men that had stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, saying, What counsel give ye *me* to return answer to this people?

7 And they spake unto him, saying, If thou be kind to this people, and please them, and speak good words to them, they will be thy servants for ever.

8 But he forsook the counsel which the old men gave him, and took counsel with the young men that were brought up with him, that stood before him.

9 And he said unto them, What advice give ye that we may return answer to this people, which have spoken to me, saying,

his life, written by Ahijah the Shilonite, and Iddo the Seer. Antiquity scarcely produces a more illustrious (though I must not say a more holy) personage than Solomon: wise, wealthy, magnificent, peaceful; honoured like his father to be the penman of a considerable and useful part of the inspired writings; by which he has made great compensation to the church of God for the offence he has given to all good men by the sad apostacy of his advanced years. That he was a figure of the Messiah seems evident, from what God said concerning him by the prophet Nathan; which is applied by a New Testament writer to Jesus Christ; (*I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son;*) from what David says in the 72d Psalm, and from the Song of Songs, which is generally supposed to refer to the marriage of Christ with his church; nor is it difficult to find out several things in Solomon's character and history, which greatly resemble the character and history of a far greater personage than he.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The account of the queen of Sheba has been considered, 1 Kings, x. It remains only to observe, (1.) That they who know the value of divine truth will account no pains too great to search after it. (2.) They are truly great, whose piety and zeal for God distinguish them. (3.) Whatever gifts we enjoy, they are lent us for the edifying of the body of Christ, and to be employed diligently. (4.) We have abundant cause to bless God for the useful instruments that he is pleased to raise up for the service of his church, and especially for those who have been made instruments of good to our own souls. (5.) Great souls are ever generous. (6.) Though for a time absence from home may be needful and profitable, yet we must, whatever pleasing engage-

ments intervene, remember that *there* is our post, and hasten our return.

2dly, 1. Solomon appears in the zenith of his grandeur. Wealth flowing in upon him like a river; surrounding potentates courting his favour with the most noble presents, and eager to hear his wisdom; and his magnificence, palaces, guards, throne, &c. all tended to excite the admiration of his neighbours, and the reverence of his subjects. *Note;* (1.) Great was the glory of Solomon; but our Prince of Peace shines with glory infinitely more transcendent: before his throne all human magnificence vanishes, as the stars lose their lustre before the meridian sun. (2.) It will be our happiness as well as duty to pay our grateful homage at his feet; and offer, not the gold of Arabia, but that more valuable present, our bodies, souls, and spirits, a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable, which is our reasonable service.

2. Solomon is laid low in the grave. *Mors aqua pede pulsat, &c.* No greatness bars death from entering. A veil is here drawn over his former miscarriages, of which, no doubt, he had repented; and which, being forgiven, shall not be mentioned any more against him. His sun sets in glory; but his crown descends to a son whose folly quickly tarnishes all this greatness. *Note;* (1.) The faults of great good men should be forgotten, and their virtues remembered for imitation. (2.) One foolish son will quickly run out all the acquisitions of his wife and illustrious ancestors.

### C H A P. X.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, After what has been said on this chapter in 1 Kings, xii. we have only to add, (1.) That men are readier to complain of the least expence which

Ease somewhat the yoke that thy father did put upon us?

10 And the young men that were brought up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou answer the people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou *it* somewhat lighter for us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little *finger* shall be thicker than my father's loins.

11 For whereas my father put a heavy yoke upon you, I will put more to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but *I will chastise you* with scorpions.

12 ¶ So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, as the king bade, saying, Come again to me on the third day.

13 And the king answered them roughly; and king Rehoboam forsook the counsel of the old men,

14 And answered them after the advice of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add thereto: my father chastised you with whips, but *I will chastise you* with scorpions.

15 So the king hearkened not unto the people: for the cause was of God, that the LORD might perform his word, which he spake by the hand of Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

16 ¶ And when all Israel *saw* that the king would not hearken unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? and *we have* none inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to your tents, O Israel: *and* now, David, see to thine own house. So all Israel went to their tents.

17 But *as for* the children of Israel that dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.

18 Then king Rehoboam sent Hadoram

that *was* over the tribute; and the children of Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. But king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to *his* chariot to flee to Jerusalem.

19 And Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.

## CHAP. XI.

*Rehoboam raises an army to fight against the ten tribes. God interposes, and sends the prophet Shemaiah, at whose command the army is dispersed. Rehoboam builds cities, and destines his son Abijah to the throne.*

[Before Christ 974.]

**A**ND when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he gathered of the house of Judah and Benjamin an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen *men*, which were warriors, to fight against Israel, that he might bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam.

2 But the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying,

3 Speak unto Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all Israel in Judah and Benjamin, saying,

4 Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren: return every man to his house: for this thing is done of me. And they obeyed the words of the LORD, and returned from going against Jeroboam.

5 ¶ And Rehoboam dwelt in Jerusalem, and built cities for defence in Judah.

6 He built even Beth-lehem, and Etam, and Tekoa,

7 And Beth-zur, and Shoco, and Adullam,

8 And Gath, and Maresbah, and Ziph,

9 And Adoraim, and Lachish, and Azekah,

10 And Zorah, and Aijalon, and Hebron, which *are* in Judah and in Benjamin, fenced cities.

11 And he fortified the strong holds, and

the wants of government call for, than to acknowledge how much indebted they are for the mercies and protection that they enjoy. (2.) Young heads are too hot to be wise counsellors. (3.) A soft answer disarms those whom opposition makes only more furious.

2dly, The ill effects of Rehoboam's severity appear in the revolt of the ten tribes. They who drive too furiously overturn themselves. He rejected good advice,

and deserved to be given up to his folly. God's counsel thus was fulfilled, though Rehoboam had only himself to blame for his loss. It was a mercy that God left him yet a part of his father's dominions, and that all had not revolted. But God in wrath still remembers mercy, and does not give us all the chastisements which our iniquities deserve.



put captains in them, and store of victual, and of oil and wine.

12 And in every several city *he put* shields and spears, and made them exceeding strong, having Judah and Benjamin on his side.

13 ¶ And the priests and the Levites, that *were* in all Israel resorted to him out of all their coasts.

14 For the Levites left their suburbs and their possession, and came to Judah and Jerusalem: for Jeroboam and his sons had cast them off from executing the priest's office unto the LORD:

15 And he ordained him priests for the high places, and for the devils, and for the calves which he had made.

16 And after them out of all the tribes of Israel such as set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel came to Jerusalem, to sacrifice unto the LORD God of their fathers.

17 So they strengthened the kingdom of Judah, and made Rehoboam the son of Solomon strong, three years: for three years they

walked in the way of David and Solomon.

18 ¶ And Rehoboam took him Mahalath the daughter of Jerimoth the son of David to wife, and Abihail the daughter of Eliab the son of Jesse;

19 Which bare him children; Jeush, and Shamariah, and Zaham.

20 And after her he took Maachah the daughter of Absalom; which bare him Abijah, and Attai, and Ziza, and Shelomith.

21 And Rehoboam loved Maachah the daughter of Absalom above all his wives and his concubines: for he took eighteen wives, and threescore concubines; and begat twenty and eight sons, and threescore daughters.

22 And Rehoboam made Abijah the son of Maachah the chief, *to be* ruler among his brethren: for *he thought* to make him king.

23 And he dealt wisely, and dispersed of all his children throughout all the countries of Judah and Benjamin, unto every fenced city: and he gave them victual in abundance. And he desired many wives.

## CHAP. XI.

*Ver. 13. And the priests and the Levites—resorted to him]* Thus the tribe of Levi was added to that of Judah. Part of the tribe of Simeon too seems to have united itself with Judah; for we read, ver. 6. that Rehoboam *built* or rather *repaired Etam*, which was a town in the tribe of Simeon. See Bishop Patrick.

*Ver. 17. In the way of David and Solomon]* That is, in the laws, agreeably to the statutes and appointments of David and Solomon.

*Ver. 23. And he desired many wives]* *And he took wives for them; i. e. for his sons.* Houbigant.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Though Rehoboam had been unsuccessful in his attempt to reduce the people by fair words, he resolved to try the sword before Jeroboam was strengthened in his kingdom: and he soon raised out of Judah and Benjamin a formidable force. But,

1. On the prophet's warning he disbanded them. *Note;* Opposition to the divine will, will only end in our greater confusion.

2. He fortified his country, weakened by such a defection; and as many of the loyal Israelites, as well as the Levites, chose to live under his government, they might be fixed in some of the cities that he built. *Note;* When our loss is irrecoverable, it is our wisdom to make the best of what remains.

2dly, We have here,

1. The noble conduct of the priests and Levites. Since their country was become idolatrous, and they were no more permitted to exercise their sacred functions at home,

or to go up in course to Jerusalem, they quitted their cities, and the lands assigned them; rather choosing to suffer any hardships, than be debarred from God's service, which they valued above all possessions. Their brethren of Judah gladly received and entertained them. *Note;* (1.) The enjoyment of the free exercise of our religion cannot be too dearly purchased. (2.) Better is it to beg our bread from door to door with a good conscience, than by base compliances secure ease and affluence. (3.) They who for the sake of God forsake all, shall one day find themselves no losers. (4.) They should be received with open arms, and treated with every kindness, who, suffering for conscience sake, seek among us a refuge from persecution.

2. Many pious Israelites followed their example, and rather chose to forsake all, than be destitute of the pastors thus driven from them. *Note;* (1.) They who know the value of their souls, will prefer the care of them to every other consideration. (2.) When God's ministers are persecuted and cast out, we must still adhere to them, and share with them in weal and woe. (3.) Trying seasons of persecution serve to separate the precious from the vile.

3. Israel lost, and Judah gained exceedingly by them. They added not only strength by their numbers, but more by the blessing which attended them. Three years they walked in the way of David; but afterwards Rehoboam, and they led by his example, grievously turned aside, and lost thereby the divine protection. *Note;* (1.) All persecution is as impolitic as it is wicked. (2.) We can only expect support, while we continue faithful to God.

(3.) Many

CHAP. XII.

*Rehoboam, forsaking God, is delivered into the hands of Shishak, king of Egypt. He dies, and is succeeded by his son Abijah.*

[Before Christ 972.]

AND it came to pass, when Rehoboam had established the kingdom, and had strengthened himself, he forsook the law of the LORD, and all Israel with him.

2 And it came to pass, that in the fifth year of king Rehoboam Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, because they had transgressed against the LORD,

3 With twelve hundred chariots, and threescore thousand horsemen: and the people were without number that came with him out of Egypt; the Lubims, the Sukkiims, and the Ethiopians.

4 And he took the fenced cities which pertained to Judah, and came to Jerusalem.

5 ¶ Then came Shemaiah the prophet to Rehoboam, and to the princes of Judah, that were gathered together to Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said unto them, Thus saith the LORD, Ye have forsaken me, and therefore have I also left you in the hand of Shishak.

6 Whereupon the princes of Israel and the king humbled themselves; and they said, The LORD is righteous.

7 And when the LORD saw that they humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah, saying, they have humbled themselves; therefore I will not destroy them, but I will grant them some deliverance; and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jeru-

salem by the hand of Shishak.

8 Nevertheless they shall be his servants; that they may know my service, and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.

9 So Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem, and took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house: he took all: he carried away also the shields of gold which Solomon had made.

10 Instead of which king Rehoboam made shields of brass, and committed them to the hands of the chief of the guard, that kept the entrance of the king's house.

11 And when the king entered into the house of the LORD, the guard came and fetched them, and brought them again into the guard chamber.

12 And when he humbled himself, the wrath of the LORD turned from him, that he would not destroy him altogether: and also in Judah things went well.

13 ¶ So king Rehoboam strengthened himself in Jerusalem, and reigned: for Rehoboam was one-and-forty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. And his mother's name was Naamah an Ammonitess.

14 And he did evil, because he prepared not his heart to seek the LORD.

15 Now the acts of Rehoboam, first and last, are they not written in the book of Shemaiah the prophet, and of Iddo the seer concerning genealogies? And there were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually.

(3.) Many a refugee, in the place of his asylum, has found greater danger from ease and peace, than from the sword of the persecutor.

4. Rehoboam, following the unjustifiable example of his fathers, greatly multiplied his wives and increased his family. However, he chose to match among his brethren, and those chiefly of the seed royal, and took not strange wives, as Solomon did. Abijah, his son by Maachah the daughter of Absalom, (not the son of David, see 1 Kings, xv. 2. and xiii. 2.) was appointed his successor, and his other sons were dispersed in the several cities of Judah and Benjamin, as persons in whom he could confide.

CHAP. XII.

Ver. 3. The Lubims, the Sukkiims] The Lubims were a Vol. II.

people of *Lybia*, which adjoined to *Ægypt*, and are sometimes in Scripture called *Phut*, and sometimes *Lubims*, from the Arabic word *Lub*, which signifies *dry* or *thirsty*, as was the land which they inhabited. The *Sukkiims* were the people called *Troglodites*, because they dwelt in *Troglais*, caves and dens in the earth, on the coast of the Red Sea. The people called *Cush*, which we translate *Ethiopians*, were either inhabitants of a country on the south of *Ægypt*, or the *Scenita* of Arabia; for the name was common to both.

Ver. 13. Rehoboam was one-and-forty years old when he began to reign] Was sixteen years old. Houbigant. As also in the parallel place of Kings.

Ver. 15. Concerning genealogies? And there were wars, &c.] In which the wars of Rehoboam and Jeroboam are related. Houbigant.

4 E

REFLEC-

16 And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David: and Abijah his son reigned in his stead.

### CHAP. XIII.

*Abijah, succeeding, makes war with Jeroboam, and overcomes him. He dies, and is succeeded by his son Asa.*

[Before Christ 957.]

**N**OW in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam began Abijah to reign over Judah.

2 He reigned three years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Michaiiah the daughter of Uriel of Gibeah. And there was war between Abijah and Jeroboam.

3 And Abijah set the battle in array with an army of valiant men of war, even four hundred thousand chosen men: Jeroboam also set the battle in array against him with eight hundred thousand chosen men, being mighty men of valour.

4 ¶ And Abijah stood up upon mount

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Short was the gleam of sun-shine which brightened the first years of Rehoboam's government.

1. He forsook the law of God, and Judah followed his example. Their sin is recorded, 1 Kings, xiv. 22.—24. Now that the kingdom was strengthened, they not only cast off the fear of man, but of God. *Note*, Prosperity is a common cause of the ruin of men's souls.

2. God left them not unpunished. Shishak king of Egypt, in the fifth year of Rehoboam, invaded the land, and easily took the fenced cities, in which Rehoboam had reposed his confidence. *Note*; Human supports will prove but refuges of lies, when God's favour is withdrawn.

3. In this distress, God sends a prophet to the king and princes, assembled probably in council, to enforce the providence for their conviction and humiliation. *Note*; (1.) The word of God comes with peculiar force, when joined with awakening providences. (2.) It is vain to consult about our defence, if we continue unhumiliated for our sins.

4. The prophet's word was attended with deep effects. Conviction seized their hearts, and they confessed the judgment of God just. *Note*; A sinner is never truly humble, till he justifies God in his sufferings.

5. God, on their humiliation, sends his prophet again to comfort them. Though corrected, they should not be consumed. God would prevent the threatened ruin of Jerusalem; but they should for a time smart for their wickedness, and prove, under an Egyptian yoke, how bad a choice they had made, when they rejected God for their master. *Note*; (1.) God waits to be gracious: the moment we return in penitence, as prodigal sons, his bowels, as a father, yearn over us. (2.) God makes us often smart in the flesh, even when the guilt of our sin is done away. (3.) They who count God a hard master, and the perfect freedom of his service burdensome, will find the slavery to their lusts, and the wages of sin, a miserable exchange.

6. Shishak, restrained of God, after plundering the country, and carrying off the shields of gold, and all the treasures of Rehoboam which David and Solomon had amassed, retired into Egypt; and the king, stripped of his grandeur, was forced to substitute shields of brass in their stead. *Note*; The greatest conquerors are restrained by an invisible arm, who gives them their commission, which they cannot exceed.

7. On Shishak's return, and Rehoboam's repentance, God had mercy on Judah; the ravaged country recovered; and religion, which was decayed, again revived and flourished. *Things went well in Judah; or, in Judah there were good things.* *Note*; (1.) In the worst days, God has had a faithful few. (2.) The judgments which teach us righteousness, are mercies in disguise.

2dly, On Shishak's retiring, Rehoboam recovered strength, and fortified Jerusalem against any future attacks. His wars with Jeroboam were continued to the end of his reign; for, though no pitched battle was fought, there were constant acts of hostility on the borders. His humiliation seems to have been of no long continuance. His heart was not right with God; he did not apply to him for advice, or pray for his assistance. His reign continued seventeen years, and then his son, too like himself, succeeded him. *Note*; If our hearts be not engaged truly in the service of God, all is nought.

### CHAP. XIII.

*Ver. 2. His mother's name—was Michaiiah, the daughter of Uriel* ] In the 20th verse of the 11th chapter, and in 1 Kings, xv. 2. she is called *Maachab the daughter of Absalom*: the same persons, perhaps, having different names.

*Ver. 3. Even four hundred thousand chosen men* ] Houbigant thinks the numbers right in this and the 17th verse. Dr. Kennicott observes upon them as follows: "It is probable, that the Hebrew numbers may have been anciently expressed by marks, analogous to our common figures; for, indeed, several numbers seem greatly corrupted from the addition or subtraction of a cypher; and the numbers of this very passage, instead of 400,000, and 800,000, and 500,000, were probably at first 40,000, 80,000 and 50,000. On a particular examination of the Latin or Vulgate version, it appears that the number of chosen men here slain, which the Vulgate of Clement's edition in 1592 determines to be 500,000, the Vulgate of Sextus, printed two years before, determined to be only 50,000; and the two preceding numbers in the edition of Sextus are 40,000, and 80,000, and that of Clement 400,000 and 800,000. As to different printed editions, out of fifty-two different editions from the year 1462 to 1592, thirty-one contained the lesser number: and out of fifty-one manuscript copies, twenty-three in the Bodleian library, four in the library

Zemaraim, which *is* in mount Ephraim, and said, Hear me, thou Jeroboam, and all Israel;

5 Ought ye not to know that the LORD God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, *even* to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt?

6 Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, is risen up, and hath rebelled against his lord.

7 And there are gathered unto him vain men, the children of Belial, and have strengthened themselves against Rehoboam the son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young and tender-hearted, and could not withstand them.

8 And now ye think to withstand the kingdom of the LORD in the hand of the sons of David; and ye *be* a great multitude, and *there are* with you golden calves, which Jeroboam made you for gods.

9 Have ye not cast out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and have made you priests after the manner of the nations of *other* lands? so that whosoever cometh to consecrate himself with a young bullock and seven rams, *the same* may be a priest of *them that are* no gods.

10 But as for us, the LORD *is* our God, and we have not forsaken him; and the priests, which minister unto the LORD, *are* the sons of Aaron, and the Levites *wait* upon *their* business:

11 And they burn unto the LORD every morning and every evening burnt-sacrifices and sweet incense: the shew-bread also *set they in order* upon the pure table; and the candlestick of gold with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening: for we keep the charge of the LORD our God; but ye have forsaken him.

12 And, behold, God himself *is* with us for *our* captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you. O children of Israel, fight ye not against the LORD God of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper.

13 ¶ But Jeroboam caused an ambushment to come about behind them: so they were before Judah, and the ambushment *was* behind them.

14 And when Judah looked back, behold, the battle *was* before and behind: and they cried unto the LORD, and the priests sounded with the trumpets.

15 Then the men of Judah gave a shout: and as the men of Judah shouted, it came to pass, that God smote Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah.

16 And the children of Israel fled before Judah: and God delivered them into their hand.

17 And Abijah and his people slew them with a great slaughter: so there fell down slain of Israel five hundred thousand chosen men.

18 Thus the children of Israel were brought under at that time, and the children of Judah prevailed, because they relied upon the LORD God of their fathers.

19 And Abijah pursued after Jeroboam, and took cities from him, Beth-el with the towns thereof, and Jeshanah with the towns thereof, and Ephraim with the towns thereof.

20 Neither did Jeroboam recover strength again in the days of Abijah: and the LORD struck him, and he died.

21 ¶ But Abijah waxed mighty, and married fourteen wives, and begat twenty and two sons, and sixteen daughters.

22 And the rest of the acts of Abijah, and

“ library of Dean Aldrich, and two in that of Exeter College, contain the *less* number, or else are corrupted irregularly, varying only one or two numbers.” Dissert. vol. i. p. 532. vol. ii. 197—221—564.

Ver. 5. *By a covenant of salt*] See Numb. xviii. 19.  
Ver. 21. *Abijah waxed mighty, and married, &c.*] But *Abijah had not delayed to marry fourteen wives.* Houbigant.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Abijah is scarcely fixed on the throne, before we find him involved in a dangerous war. Perhaps Jeroboam thought to take advantage of him on his accession, as unprepared, and unable to withstand him.

1. Immense armies on both sides were drawn into the field, but the men of Israel were twice as many as those of Judah. The forces were unequal; but what was wanting in number, was more than supplied by the justice of Abijah's cause.

2. Abijah, if possible to prevent bloodshed, obtains a parley, and tries by force of argument to prevail, rather than by the sword. He sought not conquest, but would gladly part in peace. Every method of accommodation should be tried before we have recourse to war, or the law, where generally much is lost on both sides, and little gained by either. Abijah with his party being on mount Ephraim,

his ways, and his sayings, are written in the story of the prophet Iddo.

#### C H A P. XIV.

*Afa reigns piously. He destroys idolatry. He overcomes Zerah, and smites the Ethiopians.*

[Before Christ 941.]

**S**O Abijah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David: and Afa his son reigned in his stead. In his days the land was quiet ten years.

2 And Afa did *that which was* good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God:

3 For he took away the altars of the strange gods, and the high places, and brake down the images, and cut down the groves:

4 And commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers, and to do the law and the commandment.

5 Also he took away out of all the cities of Judah the high places and the images: and the kingdom was quiet before him.

6 ¶ And he built fenced cities in Judah: for the land had rest, and he had no war in those years; because the LORD had given him rest.

and Jeroboam and his party within hearing, he expostulates with him, [1.] On the injustice of Jeroboam's design. His former rebellion against his father was perfidious and base: he had taken advantage of his weakness during the infancy of his government: and, supported by men apostate from God, and sons of Belial, had withdrawn ten tribes from their allegiance: yet not satisfied with this, in opposition to the divine promises, he was now impiously attempting to dispossess David's successors of the little which was left, and, in so doing, fighting against God, by whom the kings of Judah reigned. *Note;* (1.) Ambition is never satisfied. (2.) Success emboldens sinners. (3.) Prosperous iniquity is but a short-lived joy. [2.] He warns him of the danger to which he exposed himself. What could he hope for? an apostate, an idolater, a persecutor, who had calves for his gods, and the vilest people for his priests. Little could his numerous army profit him in such a case; whilst Abijah boasts of Judah's fidelity to the great Jehovah; constant and exact in his worship at home; supported and strengthened by him, as the captain of their host; animated by his ministers founding the silver trumpets, the earnest of certain victory. Wisely, therefore, he persuades him to desist from war, and not think to fight against the God of their fathers, since in such a case inevitable ruin awaited him. Abijah's own character, we find, 1 Kings, xv. 3. was not the best; yet he maintained God's worship; and, though his own state was evil, his kingdom was under God's protection. *Note;* (1.) They who have God for their enemy will find all human efforts vain. (2.) It is just in God to give up those to ruin, who apostatize from his service. (3.) Diligent observance of God's instituted ordinances will bring its own reward. (4.) A good cause gives men courage; and how much more the presence and support of the great God! (5.) Fair warning of their danger leaves sinners inexcusable in their obstinacy.

adly, They who are devoted to destruction, are deaf to admonition.

1. Jeroboam, perhaps while Abijah was speaking, took the advantage to plant an ambuscade behind him; and, instead of answering his reasoning, produced, as he concluded, the weightier argument of the longest sword.

2. Abijah and his servants put the battle in array; but

no sooner was the front engaged, than a cry in the rear alarmed and terrified him. In deep distress they cried to the Lord, Save, or we perish! and, trusting all on his succour, endured the shock. The priests, with trumpets sounding, inspired more than mortal courage; and loud the men of Judah shout as for victory, rush on their foes, dispirited, and smitten of God with panic fear. A terrible havoc ensued, such as no other history affords in any one battle; for, five hundred thousand men lay dead on the field. *Note;* (1.) God often leaves his people to fall into the most imminent danger, to awaken their cries, to exercise their faith, and make his deliverance of them more glorious. (2.) If we are enabled to trust in God, then shall we not be moved. (3.) The prayer of faith and the shout of victory, are inseparable. (4.) Civil wars and disputes among brethren are usually most bitter and bloody.

3. Abijah pursued his blow in the recovery of part of the revolted cities, particularly Beth-el, from whence Jeroboam had either withdrawn the calf, or Abijah had not zeal enough to destroy it. We find it still there, 2 Kings, x. 29.

4. Death, soon after this, removed them both from the throne, to give an account of their government to the King of kings. Jeroboam, weakened with his defeat, and smitten of God with sickness, perhaps broken-hearted through pride and vexation on his losses, lingered for a while, and then died as miserably as he had lived wickedly. Mark the end of those men who forsake God. Abijah, strengthened by his acquisitions, and blessed with a numerous family, waxed mighty; but his greatness was short-lived; (such is the fate of all sublunary possessions!) he soon slept with his fathers; and in the book of Iddo, which has long since perished, a farther account of his wars, private character, and sayings, was recorded. *Note;* The preservation of the inspired writings from the ravages of time, is a singular instance of divine providence, which we are bound to acknowledge with thankfulness.

#### C H A P. XIV.

*Ver. 3. Altars of the strange gods] Altars of the strangers; i. e. which the strangers had erected to their several gods. Houbigant.*

*Ver.*

7 Therefore he said unto Judah, Let us build these cities, and make about *them* walls, and towers, gates, and bars, while the land is yet before us; because we have fought the LORD our God, we have fought *him*, and he hath given us rest on every side. So they built and prospered.

8 ¶ And Asa had an army of *men* that bare targets and spears, out of Judah three hundred thousand; and out of Benjamin, that bare shields and drew bows, two hundred and fourscore thousand: all these *were* mighty men of valour.

9 ¶ And there came out against them Zerah the Ethiopian with an host of a thousand thousand, and three hundred chariots; and came unto Marethah.

10 Then Asa went out against him, and they set the battle in array in the valley of

Zephathah at Marethah.

11 And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, *it is* nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou art our God; let not man prevail against thee.

12 So the LORD smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled.

13 And Asa and the people that *were* with him pursued them unto Gerar: and the Ethiopians were overthrown, that they could not recover themselves; for they were destroyed before the LORD, and before his host; and they carried away very much spoil.

14 And they smote all the cities round about Gerar; for the fear of the LORD came

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*Ver. 7. Because we have fought the Lord our God, &c.]* For, because we have not forsaken the Lord our God, he hath not forsaken us, but hath given us peace on every side. Houbigant.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Abijah left the crown at his decease to a worthy successor, whose piety and prosperity are here recorded.

1. His character was excellent. His eye was single to please God, and he met with his approbation and blessing; and so shall we, when, like him, our only great and prevailing concern is to do that which is right in the eyes of the Lord.

2. He gave a striking proof of the uprightness of his heart, in his zeal for God's service. No sooner was he come to the crown, than he abolished every monument of idolatry, which had remained since the days of Solomon, and had received the royal sanction, or at least was connived at, during the last reigns. And this reformation he carried through all his dominions, bringing back the people to the service of the temple, which, though kept up, had been grievously neglected; and to the observance of God's laws, about which they had become too careless. No foreign enemy disturbed him, and none of his own subjects dared oppose him. *Note;* (1.) However difficult or dangerous it may appear to repress the torrent of iniquity, zeal for God, and dependance upon his support, will work wonders. (2.) Every body can do something for God; but magistrates and ministers are especially called upon to labour for the establishment of pure religion.

3. Asa improved the peace he enjoyed for the strengthening of his kingdom, as well as reforming it. Acknowledging with thankfulness the mercy he enjoyed, which he regarded as the blessing of the fidelity they had shewed, he stirs up his chief men to assist him in fortifying the cities; and, though in profound tranquillity, prepared for what

might happen, by keeping his militia in constant exercise, consisting of 300,000 men of Judah, and 280,000 men of Benjamin, differently armed for the various methods of attack, at a distance, or in close fight. *Note;* (1.) Peace is a most unspeakable blessing, for which we can never be too thankful. (2.) Prosperity, when the reward of fidelity, is doubly sweet. (3.) They who stay themselves on God, shall find abiding rest to their souls. (4.) We may expect trials; however calm the scene at present, it is our wisdom to be armed and watchful.

2dly, Clouds overcast the brightest day. We have here,

1. Asa in trouble. A vast army of Ethiopians and their confederates threaten to swallow him up. The waves of the sea are thus permitted often to rage horribly, that the Lord, who dwelleth on high, may make his power more mightily to appear.

2. His prayer; fervent, humble, believing. He drew near to God as his covenant-God, in whose favour and regard he had a sure interest; persuaded of his almighty power, against which numbers signified nothing; dependent on his support, and pleading his own glory now engaged, which would be dishonoured if mortal man should prevail against his cause and people. *Note;* (1.) When we can say in prayer, *My God*, we shall be heard. (2.) There is no might which can prevail against the Lord. (3.) We need not fear the faces of the mighty: man is but a worm: if God be for us, who shall be against us?

3. His prayer was crowned with victory. The enemy in confusion fled, smitten of God with terrible dismay; and Asa and his forces pursued them with great slaughter; stormed the cities of their confederates, whither they had run for shelter, struck with panic fear, and unable to resist; and plundered their camp, the cities, and the country, carrying away immense spoils, and vast droves of cattle.

upon them : and they spoiled all the cities ; for there was exceeding much spoil in them.

15 They smote also the tents of cattle, and carried away sheep and camels in abundance, and returned to Jerusalem.

### CHAP. XV.

*Azariah prophesies that Israel should be a long time without God, without priest, and without law; but that in their trouble they should return unto the Lord: Afa, encouraged by him, puts away the idols, and removes Maachab his mother from being queen.*

[Before Christ 941.]

**A**ND the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded :

2 And he went out to meet Afa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Afa, and all Judah and Benjamin ; The LORD is with you, while ye be with him ; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you ; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you.

3 Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching

### CHAP. XV.

*Ver. 3—6. Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, &c.]* It is very plain from the first verse, that Azariah was about to foretel something, as the *spirit of God came upon him*; and therefore, as Houbigant well observes, these verses should be rendered in the future. *Now for a long time Israel shall be, &c.*

*Ver. 8. The prophecy of Oded.]* Of Azariah, the son of Oded, according to many of the ancient versions. See the first verse.

**REFLECTIONS.**—1st, Not so much to congratulate them on their victory, as to admonish them of the right improvement they should make of it, the prophet Azariah met the victor host returning.

1. He let them know, that the continuance of their prosperity depended upon their perseverance in well-doing. God was now evidently among them ; and while they continued to seek his favour, so long they might be assured of his protection ; but, if they forsook him, the consequences would be fatal. *Note*; None ever seek God's face in vain ; while they who forsake him forsake their own mercies.

2. He exhorts the king and people, therefore, to be zealous for God ; and assures them, as they had now found by experience, that their labour should meet an abundant recompence. *Note*; Steady perseverance is sure to win the crown of life eternal.

2dly, Encouraged by his victory, but more by the prophet's exhortation, Afa zealously renewed the work of reformation.

1. He sought out and extirpated every abomination which yet remained, or that had crept in since the begin-

priest, and without law.

4 But when they in their trouble did turn unto the LORD God of Israel, and fought him, he was found of them.

5 And in those times *there was* no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in, but great vexations *were* upon all the inhabitants of the countries.

6 And nation was destroyed of nation, and city of city : for God did vex them with all adversity.

7 Be ye strong therefore, and let not your hands be weak : for your work shall be rewarded.

8. ¶ And when Afa heard these words, and the prophecy of Oded the prophet, he took courage, and put away the abominable idols out of all the land of Judah and Benjamin, and out of the cities which he had taken from mount Ephraim, and renewed the altar of the LORD, that *was* before the porch of the LORD.

9 And he gathered all Judah and Benjamin,

ning of his reign, or that was found in the cities of Israel which he had taken ; nor spared his own grandmother, though a queen, but destroyed her image, cut down her grove, degraded her from her station, and removed her from court. *Note*; No greatness of station, or nearness of kin, must lead us to unjust partiality, or connivance at sin.

2. He convoked a great assembly at Jerusalem, not only of Judah and Benjamin, but of the Israelites, who had come over to him on his victory, from a conviction of the blessing of God which was upon him. This convocation was held probably at the feast of Pentecost, when Afa repaired the altar, the brass of which might have been damaged by long use, and offered numerous sacrifices of the spoil they had taken. Mercies received deserve returns of grateful praise.

3. The people assembled, solemnly renewed the dedication of themselves to God as his people, and, by the ceremony of passing through the divided calf, confirmed their covenant with the God of their fathers, engaging to seek him with all their heart and soul, in sincerity and truth, to worship him according to his institutions, and execute judgment upon all idolaters, according to his law : and, to strengthen the bond, they swore aloud, as happy in their present resolution, to be faithful, and with trumpets, cornets, and shouting for joy, celebrated the auspicious day of their return to God. *Note*; (1.) Solemn surrenders of ourselves to God, though binding us to nothing but what was before our duty, may be useful to affect our own minds with a sense of our obligations. (2.) That service only is pleasing to God, in which the heart is truly engaged. (3.) It were happy for us, could we always preserve that gracious frame of mind which some-



and the strangers with them out of Ephraim and Manasseh, and out of Simeon: for they fell to him out of Israel in abundance, when they saw that the LORD his God *was* with him.

10 So they gathered themselves together at Jerusalem in the third month, in the fifteenth year of the reign of Asa.

11 And they offered unto the LORD the same time, of the spoil *which* they had brought, seven hundred oxen and seven thousand sheep.

12 And they entered into a covenant to seek the LORD God of their fathers with all their heart and with all their soul;

13 That whosoever would not seek the LORD God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman.

14 And they sware unto the LORD with a loud voice, and with shouting, and with trumpets, and with cornets.

15 And all Judah rejoiced at the oath: for they had sworn with all their heart, and fought him with their whole desire; and he was found of them: and the LORD gave them rest round about.

16 ¶ And also *concerning* Maachah the mother of Asa the king, he removed her from *being* queen, because she had made an idol in a grove: and Asa cut down her idol, and stamped *it*, and burnt *it* at the brook Kidron.

17 But the high places were not taken away out of Israel: nevertheless the heart of Asa was perfect all his days.

18 ¶ And he brought into the house of God the things that his father had dedicated, and that he himself had dedicated, silver, and gold, and vessels.

19 And there was no *more* war unto the five and thirtieth year of the reign of Asa.

times we enjoy. (4.) The service of God, when the soul is truly engaged, brings its own comfort and reward along with it.

4. Asa now brought the dedicated treasures into the temple, which his father had laid aside for this purpose, and which he had increased. It is but justice to render unto God the things which are God's: the due return that we owe for mercies is, to present God with a part of the wealth which he bestows.

5. Peace hereupon ensued for many years; and, though some hostilities continued on the borders, (see 1 Kings, xv. 16.) yet in general the nation had rest from war;

CHAP. XVI.

*Ben-hadad, king of Syria, at the instigation of Asa, makes war upon Baasha. Hanani is put into prison. Asa dies in the forty-first year of his reign, having confided in the physicians, not in God.*

[Before Christ 940.]

**I**N the six-and-thirtieth year of the reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and built Ramah, to the intent that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah.

2 Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of the LORD, and of the king's house, and sent to Ben-hadad king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying,

3 *There is* a league between me and thee, as *there was* between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent thee silver and gold; go, break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me.

4 And Ben-hadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel; and they smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abel-maim, and all the store-cities of Naphtali.

5 And it came to pass, when Baasha heard *it*, that he left off building of Ramah, and let his work cease.

6 Then Asa the king took all Judah; and they carried away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha was building; and he built therewith Geba and Mizpah.

7 ¶ And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the LORD thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand.

a present reward for their fidelity. For, though the high places still remained, (those at least which before the temple was built were used as places of sacrifice to the Lord,) yet Asa's heart was perfect all his days. *Note;* He who knows our simplicity, for Jesus' sake, pities and pardons our infirmities.

CHAP. XVI.

*Ver. 1. In the six-and-thirtieth year of the reign] In the twenty-sixth year; Houbigant: for Baasha died in the twenty-sixth year of Asa.*

*Vv. 3. There is a league between me and thee] Let there be a league, I pray thee, between me and thee. Houbigant.*

*Ver.*

8 Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the LORD, he delivered them into thine hand.

9 For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of *them* whose heart is perfect towards him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars.

10 Then Asa was wroth with the seer, and put him in a prison-house; for *he was* in a rage with him because of this *thing*. And Asa oppressed *some* of the people the same time.

11 ¶ And, behold, the acts of Asa, first and last, lo, they *are* written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

12 And Asa in the thirty-and-ninth year of his reign was diseased in his feet, until his

disease *was* exceeding *great*: yet in his disease he sought not to the LORD, but to the physicians.

13 ¶ And Asa slept with his fathers, and died in the one-and-fortieth year of his reign.

14 And they buried him in his own sepulchres, which he had made for himself in the city of David, and laid him in the bed which was filled with sweet odours and divers kinds of *spices* prepared by the apothecaries' art: and they made a very great burning for him.

### CHAP. XVII.

*Jehoshaphat, the son of Asa, reigns well and prosperously. He sends priests and Levites to instruct the people in the law. His greatness, captains, and armies.*

[Before Christ 914.]

**A**ND Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead, and strengthened himself against Israel.

*Ver. 10. For he was in a rage with him, &c.] Though this thing displeased his people, and at that time Asa slew some of the people. Houbigant.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The event here recorded we had 1 Kings, xv. The six-and-thirtieth year of Asa is reckoned from the division of the kingdoms, which is no more than the sixteenth of his reign. The expedient that Asa adopted to divert Baasha was unjustifiable and sinful: it shewed distrust of God, led Ben-hadad into a perfidious breach of his league, and all the mischiefs which ensued lay at Asa's door; whilst himself, with half the expence probably, and without robbing God's temple, might, in dependance on his assistance, have much more nobly succeeded against Baasha. *Note*; Wrong expedients may succeed to extricate us from present trouble; but we shall afterwards be made to smart for using them.

2dly, Asa now, probably, pleased himself in the success of his policy; but God embittered his joys.

1. By Hanani the prophet he sends him a severe rebuke for his distrust of the divine assistance, and dependance upon an arm of flesh, which was like changing a rock for a reed: and the experience of his past deliverance was an aggravation of his sin, especially when the promises of the same providential care engaged him to rely upon that strong arm which would ever be stretched out for the protection of those who leaned upon it. And herein also his folly was as great as his sin: he lost the glory that he might have gotten by victory over the confederate hosts of Syria and Israel, and entailed upon himself the wars which he thus sought to avoid. *Note*; (1.) Distrust of God's power and love is exceedingly displeasing to him. (2.) The more we have experienced his mercy in time past, the more sinful is it to distrust him in present trials. (3.) All our departures from God arise from the infidelity of our hearts. *Tush, God shall not see, and, the Lord hath*

*forsaken the earth, are at the bottom of every evil. (4.) The very means that we use unlawfully to avert approaching danger, often serve to bring it more heavily upon us. (5.) All the wisdom of the sinner will at last appear the most egregious folly.*

2. Far from submitting with penitent shame to the just rebuke, the angry king vents his rage on the prophet, casts him into prison, as if his faithfulness was criminal; and because, probably, the people espoused the prophet's cause, and encouraged him in his sufferings, he wreaked his vengeance upon them in oppressive fines, or corporal punishments. *Note*; (1.) Passion, and impatience of reproof, even in a man otherwise good, are exceedingly sinful, and will end in bitter groans. (2.) They who know their own hearts had need be jealous of themselves. (3.) Faithful reprovers must expect to meet severe rebuffs. (4.) The prison-house is often the preferment of God's zealous ministers. (5.) We are called upon to support God's persecuted prophets, though by so doing we may be involved in their sufferings.

3. Asa grew diseased in the last years of his life: either the gout, or some oedematous swelling, seized his feet, and he languished for a while in great misery; a just rebuke for his injury to the prophet. In his disease he placed more dependance on his physicians than on God, and was more solicitous for their assistance than to obtain God's blessing upon it. So apt are we still to be looking to man more than to God for help!

4. Medicine, without God's blessing, is no elixir of life. Death mocked at his confidence, and brought him to the grave. In respect of the good things that he had done for Israel, the people gave him a most sumptuous funeral, and the clods of the valley were made sweet unto him. The good report afterwards made of him gives us ground to believe that he lamented his sin, and was forgiven. *Note*; Though the best of men have their blemishes,

2 And he placed forces in all the fenced cities of Judah, and set garrisons in the land of Judah, and in the cities of Ephraim, which Afa his father had taken.

3 And the LORD was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and fought not unto Baalim;

4 But sought to the LORD God of his father, and walked in his commandments, and not after the doings of Israel.

5 Therefore the LORD stablished the kingdom in his hand; and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents; and he had riches and honour in abundance.

6 And his heart was lifted up in the ways of the LORD: moreover he took away the high places and groves out of Judah.

7 ¶ Also in the third year of his reign he sent to his princes, *even* to Ben-hail, and to Obadiah, and to Zechariah, and to Nethaneel, and to Michaiah, to teach in the cities of Judah.

8 And with them *he sent* Levites, *even* Shemaiah, and Nethaniah, and Zebadiah, and Afahel, and Shemiramoth, and Jehonathan, and Adonijah, and Tobijah, and Tob-adonijah,

Levites; and with them Elishama, and Jehoram, priests.

9 And they taught in Judah, and *had* the book of the law of the LORD with them, and went about throughout all the cities of Judah, and taught the people.

10 ¶ And the fear of the LORD fell upon all the kingdoms of the lands that *were* round about Judah, so that they made no war against Jehoshaphat.

11 Also *some* of the Philistines brought Jehoshaphat presents, and tribute-silver; and the Arabians brought him flocks, seven thousand and seven hundred rams, and seven thousand and seven hundred he-goats.

12 ¶ And Jehoshaphat waxed great exceedingly; and he built in Judah castles, and cities of store.

13 And he had much business in the cities of Judah; and the men of war, mighty men of valour, *were* in Jerusalem.

14 And these *are* the numbers of them according to the house of their fathers: Of Judah, the captains of thousands; Adnah the chief, and with him mighty men of valour three hundred thousand.

blemishes, their memory is deservedly had in honour. Let their infirmities sleep in the grave, and their virtues rouse us to an imitation of them.

#### CHAP. XVII.

*Ver. 3. He walked in the first ways of his father David] He walked in the ways of his father David, first and last. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 6. And his heart was lifted up] And when he had elevated his mind in following the commandments of God, he took yet from Judah high places and groves: i. e. he destroyed yet other monuments of idolatry, which had escaped the diligence of his father Afa, though he took not away those high places and altars which had been erected in Jerusalem for the true God. See 1 Kings, xxii. 43. and ch. xx. 33. of this book.*

*Ver. 7. He sent to his princes, even to Ben-hail, &c.] He sent of his princes Ben-hail, Obadiah, &c. The proper business of these princes in their circuit round the kingdom, says Bishop Patrick, was to admonish and require the people to observe the laws of God, and to leave the particular explication and enforcement of them to those of the sacred order who went with them, supporting them in the execution of their office, and obliging the people to receive them with respect, to hear them with attention, and to practise what they taught.*

*Ver. 14. And these are the numbers of them] That is, of*

the soldiers, as well as of those who were employed in the king's works, in the several cities, &c. which he built. See ver. 19.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Jehoshaphat no sooner comes to the throne, than we see the dawns of a glorious reign.

1. He strengthened his kingdom, by placing strong garrisons in the cities of Judah, and those which his father had recovered from Israel; and prepared against that danger which Ahab's growing power seemed to threaten.

2. Religion was his great concern. He copied after the best of his predecessors in their best days; such as were the first of David, before the matter of Uriah, and the numbering of the people, had blotted his fair copy. Faithful to the worship of God, he abhorred all idols: the law of God was his rule of duty, and Israel's apostacy rendered his fidelity more singular and exemplary. Inspired with holy zeal, his heart with delight and sincerity was engaged for God; and no difficulties deterred him from the path of duty. The idols and groves, which in the declining days of Afa might have been set up again, he utterly destroyed, with all the high places where they still offered sacrifices to these abominations. *Note:* (1.) In the fairest human pattern there will be found imperfections; but there is a Son of David, more than man, who has set us a spotless example, that we should follow his steps. (2.)

15 And next to him *was* Jehohanan the captain, and with him two hundred and fourscore thousand.

16 And next him *was* Amasiah the son of Zichri, who willingly offered himself unto the LORD; and with him two hundred thousand mighty men of valour.

17 And of Benjamin; Eliada a mighty man of valour, and with him armed men with bow and shield two hundred thousand.

18 And next him *was* Jehozabad, and with him an hundred and fourscore thousand ready prepared for the war.

19 These waited on the king, besides *those* whom the king put in the fenced cities throughout all Judah.

### C H A P. XVIII.

*Jehoshaphat goes to war with Ahab against the Syrians. Ahab, seduced by false prophets, is slain.*

[Before Christ 897.]

**N**OW Jehoshaphat had riches and honour in abundance, and joined affinity with Ahab.

2 And after *certain* years he went down to Ahab to Samaria. And Ahab killed sheep and oxen for him in abundance, and for the people that *he had* with him, and persuaded him to go up *with him* to Ramoth-gilead.

3 And Ahab king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramoth-gilead? And he answered him, I *am* as thou *art*, and my people as thy people; and *we will be* with thee in the war.

4 ¶ And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Enquire, I pray thee, at the word of the LORD to-day.

5 Therefore the king of Israel gathered together of prophets four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for God will deliver *it* into the king's hand.

6 ¶ But Jehoshaphat said, *Is there* not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might enquire of him?

7 And the king of Israel said unto Jeho-

Fidelity in God's service is the stability of a nation. (3.) A lively soul on wings of faith and love mounts up to God, rises superior to every difficulty, and looks down upon every thing, besides his favour, as altogether vanity.

3. He not only removed the temptations to sin, but took care to instruct the people in the path of duty. Ignorance of God's law had greatly prevailed; and to oblige them merely to conform to his reformation, without grounding them on the true foundation of God's word, promised little stability. The Levites and priests, therefore, are sent in progress through the cities of Judah, with the book of the law, to explain and enforce the commandments of God; and several princes accompanied them, in order to engage the people to hear them, and give countenance to these preachers by their weight and influence. *Note;* (1.) It is a blessed thing, when princes countenance faithful ministers. Though they cannot make men true converts, their example and authority will induce them to attend. (2.) They who are sent to teach, must see that they take the pure word of God along with them. A true preacher wishes for nothing in his hand but his Bible. (3.) Religion is a reasonable service. Conviction alone, not compulsion, or education, can make a man a christian.

4. The blessing of God attended his labours. The Lord was with him; or, as the Targum generally expresses it, "the word of the Lord," the divine Logos, to whom all things are committed, strengthened him in his labours, and established his kingdom. The people, charmed with his government, liberally sent their presents to him; and, abounding in riches and honour, his heart, far from being

intoxicated by prosperity, was lifted up in greater love and thankfulness to the gracious giver. *Note;* (1.) God often here rewards piety with prosperity. (2.) Worldly comforts are then truly blessings, when, as the steps of Jacob's ladder, they raise our hearts to heaven.

2dly, Like the light of the morning, which shineth more and more, so did Jehoshaphat's glory increase.

1. Feared by his enemies, as beloved by his subjects, the neighbouring princes did not offer to molest him, while those of Philistia and Arabia courted his favour, either by a voluntary present, or exact payment of the tribute which Aha had imposed on them, see ver. 11. God had put an awe upon them of the majesty of his king in Zion. *Note;* God hath access to the spirits of men; and, by secret yet irresistible influence, can bow them to his sovereign will.

2. His military preparations greatly advanced. While he reformed the people, he fortified their ramparts, and built new castles and store-cities, strengthening them within and without against their enemies. Under five chief officers, an immense army was enlisted. Probably, all the able men in the country were enrolled, and regularly mustered, though not drawn out except in case of necessity: and this may easily account for the greatness of their number, if we consider also the long peace they had enjoyed, the accession of Israelites to them, and especially the blessing of Abraham, which, no doubt, was eminently fulfilled. Amasiah, one of the officers, is mentioned with an honourable mark of distinction, as a volunteer, who served for the glory of God, not for the sake of pay. Such patriots are scarce.

Jehoshaphat, *There is yet one man, by whom we may enquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil: the same is Micaiah the son of Imla.* And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so.

8 And the king of Israel called for one of his officers, and said, Fetch quickly Micaiah the son of Imla.

9 And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah sat either of them on his throne, clothed in *their* robes, and they sat in a void place, at the entering in of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them.

10 And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah, had made him horns of iron, and said, Thus saith the LORD, With these thou shalt push Syria until they be consumed.

11 And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramoth-gilead, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver *it* into the hand of the king.

12 And the messenger that went to call Micaiah spake to him, saying, Behold, the words of the prophets *declare* good to the king with one assent; let thy word therefore, I pray thee, be like one of their's, and speak thou good.

13 And Micaiah said, *As the LORD liveth, even what my God saith, that will I speak.*

14 And when he was come to the king, the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And he said, Go ye up, and prosper, and they shall be delivered into your hand.

15 ¶ And the king said to him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou say nothing but the truth to me in the name of the LORD?

16 Then he said, I did see all Israel scattered upon the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no master; let them return *therefore* every man to his house in peace.

17 And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee *that* he would not prophesy good unto me, but evil?

18 Again he said, Therefore hear the word of the LORD; I saw the LORD sitting upon his throne, and all the host of heaven standing on his right hand and *on* his left.

19 And the LORD said, Who shall entice Ahab king of Israel, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead? And one spake saying after this manner, and another saying after that manner.

20 Then there came out a spirit, and stood

### CHAP. XVIII.

*Ver. 2. And Ahab killed [sheep and oxen]* That is, made a grand entertainment for him and his retinue; most likely in consequence of the affinity mentioned in the foregoing verse.

*Ver. 14. Go ye up, and prosper]* The king's answer plainly shews, that he understood these words of Micaiah to be ironical.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Jehoshaphat's growing greatness, probably, made the king of Israel desirous of his alliance; and Jehoshaphat too readily consented. An Israelitish prince's seemed an eligible match for his son; and he might hope to make some advantage of it, by recovering the house of Israel to the service of God, or the kingdom to his posterity. The connection, however, proved dangerous to himself, and ruinous to his family. The first bad effect produced by it was, his involving himself in a war with the Syrians, in complaisance to Ahab, who, having nobly entertained him at Samaria, drew him in to be his auxiliary for the recovery of Ramoth-gilead. *Note;* (1.) Marriages founded on pride and worldly-mindedness cannot fail of bringing misery along with them. (2.) The strongest expressions of friendship from a wicked man are

to be suspected; at bottom, he means to serve only himself.

2dly, For the account of Micaiah, &c. see 1 Kings, xxii. We may only farther remark, (1.) How needful it is to consult God in all our ways. (2.) When, for worldly ends, we maintain fellowship with those who are enemies to God, for fear of offending, we shall often hear what we dare not rebuke, and countenance by our presence what we are bound to condemn. (3.) Faithful prophets are few, false prophets numerous. It becomes us to beware of following the multitude, and to attach ourselves to the faithful few. (4.) They who love prophets that prophesy smooth things, and hate plain dealing, are justly given up to their own delusions. (5.) Suffering for the truth's sake, is the hereditary portion of God's ministers. (6.) The day is coming, when the despised word of God's prophets shall be fulfilled, and their enemies too late will wonder and perish.

3dly, Ahab pretends to honour Jehoshaphat, but in fact intends to expose him; so deceitful are the kisses of an enemy: but God turns his wicked devices on his own head. Jehoshaphat, by divine interposition, escapes; while Ahab falls in his disguise; and his armour is no protection from the arrow that God shoots against the persecutors. Man in vain contrives to escape, when

before the LORD, and said, I will entice him. And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith?

21 And he said, I will go out, and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And the LORD said, Thou shalt entice *him*, and thou shalt also prevail: go out, and do even so.

22 Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil against thee.

23 ¶ Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near, and smote Micaiah upon the cheek, and said, Which way went the Spirit of the LORD from me to speak unto thee?

24 And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see on that day when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself.

25 Then the king of Israel said, Take ye Micaiah, and carry him back to Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son;

26 And say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I return in peace.

27 And Micaiah said, If thou certainly return in peace, then hath not the LORD spoken by me. And he said, Harken, all ye people.

28 ¶ So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-gilead.

29 And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and will go to the battle; but put thou on thy robes. So the king of Israel disguised himself; and they went to the battle.

30 Now the king of Syria had commanded the captains of the chariots that were with him, saying, Fight ye not with small or great, save only with the king of Israel:

31 And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, It is the king of Israel. Therefore they compassed about him to fight: but Jehoshaphat cried out, and the LORD helped him;

and God moved them to depart from him.

32 For it came to pass, that, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it was not the king of Israel, they turned back again from pursuing him.

33 ¶ And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: therefore he said to his chariot-man, Turn thine hand, that thou mayest carry me out of the host; for I am wounded.

34 And the battle increased that day: howbeit the king of Israel stayed *himself* up in his chariot against the Syrians until the even: and about the time of the sun going down he died.

## CHAP. XIX.

*Jehoshaphat is reproved by the prophet Jehu: he visits his kingdom, and establishes judges in the land.*

[Before Christ 896.]

**A**ND Jehoshaphat the king of Judah returned to his house in peace to Jerusalem.

2 And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD.

3 Nevertheless there are good things found in thee, in that thou hast taken away the groves out of the land, and hast prepared thine heart to seek God.

4 ¶ And Jehoshaphat dwelt at Jerusalem: and he went out again through the people from Beer-sheba to mount Ephraim, and brought them back unto the LORD God of their fathers.

5 ¶ And he set judges in the land throughout all the fenced cities of Judah, city by city.

6 And said to the judges, Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man, but for the LORD, who is with you in the judgment.

God hath determined his fall. *There is neither counsel nor might against the Lord.*

## CHAP. XIX.

*Ver. 2. Therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord]*

*Therefore was the wrath of the Lord upon thee; i. e. in the late battle, from which he had fled. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 6. Who is with you in the judgment] And the judgment shall be determined by your words. Houbigant. The Targum renders the verse thus: "Take heed what you do;*

7 Wherefore now let the fear of the LORD be upon you; take heed and do it: for *there is* no iniquity with the LORD our God, nor respect of persons, nor taking of gifts.

8 ¶ Moreover in Jerusalem did Jehoshaphat set of the Levites, and of the priests, and of the chief of the fathers of Israel, for the judgment of the LORD, and for controversies, when they returned to Jerusalem.

9 And he charged them, saying, Thus shall ye do in the fear of the LORD, faithfully, and

with a perfect heart.

10 And what cause soever shall come to you of your brethren that dwell in their cities, between blood and blood, between law and commandment, statutes and judgments, ye shall even warn them that they trespass not against the LORD, and so wrath come upon you, and upon your brethren: this do, and ye shall not trespass.

11 And, behold, Amariah the chief priest is over you in all matters of the LORD; and

“do; for you do not judge before the sons of men, but before the word of the Lord; and his glorious presence presides among you in the act of judgment.” It is a remarkable saying of Cicero, That judges, being sworn to do justice, should remember, when they come to pass sentence, *Deum habere testem, id est, ut ego arbitror, mentem suam, qua nihil homini dedit ipse Deus divinius.* De Offic. l. iii. c. 13., where he has left us this excellent instruction, that a man must lay aside the person of a friend, when he puts on the person of a judge. See also Hesiod de Oper. et Diebus, line 246.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Imminent was the danger that Jehoshaphat had escaped; yet, through mercy, he arrives at his house in peace, while Ahab was left dead at Samaria. *Note;* Providential escapes from danger deserve to be deeply and gratefully remembered. But, though God suffered him not to fall in the battle, he goes not without a just rebuke for his folly.

1. Jehu the son of Hanani is sent, nor fears to deliver his message, though his father's sufferings, chap. xvi. 10. admonished him of his danger. He expostulates with him on the evil of his conduct: ought such a man as he to help an idolater and persecutor, or join in affinity and friendship with such a hater of God as Ahab? He threatens him, therefore, with the displeasure of God. War was his choice, and war he should have; and that Jehoram, whom he matched so wickedly, should prove a deadly scourge to his family. But, as there were good things found in him, and his heart was found with God, he is not finally cast off, or rejected. *Note;* (1.) We must never make those our friends who are the enemies of God. (2.) Every disobedient sinner is, at bottom, a hater of God. (3.) God's wrath respecting the eternal consequences of sin may be removed, when, for our correction, our present sufferings may be grievous. (4.) God is not unrighteous, to forget the works of faith, and labours of love.

2. The rebuke was received with silence, and the effect of it gracious. He no more visited his idolatrous neighbours, but stayed at home to mind his own concerns: and, as he had been told by the prophet, that God approved of what he had done for the reformation of the people, he sought to carry it on still by a progress through his dominions, to engage them to seek the God of their fathers, and to bring back those who had departed from him, perhaps emboldened by seeing his connection with

Ahab. *Note;* (1.) A good man esteems rebuke the most friendly office. (2.) When we have, though undesignedly, encouraged others to do evil, we cannot but be solicitous to recover them from the error of their ways. (3.) The commendations of good men should quicken us to greater zeal and diligence in the cause of God.

2dly, To continue the people in the careful observance of the divine ordinances, and to provide for the equitable administration of justice,

1. Jehoshaphat placed judges in every city, with a solemn injunction to take heed to the diligent discharge of their office, with all circumspection and impartiality; and especially to have the fear of God upon their minds, the great preservative from all injustice. And this he urges, because they acted as God's vicegerents; and would be directed by him, if they looked up to him, or be detected if they judged iniquitously: and, as no bribe, or respect of persons, found place before him, they must shew no favour, nor receive gifts. *Note;* The impartial distribution of justice is among the greatest blessings that a nation can enjoy.

2. He established a supreme court of judicature at Jerusalem, on his return from the progress that he had made. It consisted of priests and Levites, as most skilled in the law; and the chief fathers, that is, those most distinguished for their station, men of age and experience; with inferior officers, who saw the sentence executed, under the high-priest, as president in ecclesiastical causes, and Zebadiah in the matters of civil government. To this court all cases of murder and manslaughter were referred, and appeals made from the inferior judges in difficult cases of controversy, where the law seemed dubious. Jehoshaphat enjoins them to act faithfully and conscientiously, as men fearing God, and judging righteously. They must warn the people of the great evil of sin in general; of the danger of false witness, and of stubborn disobedience against the law; and, undismayed by any man's greatness, impartially administer justice; that so they might deliver their own souls, and not trespass against God: the issue of which upright conduct would be, God's blessing upon them. *Note;* (1.) Ability and integrity are essential qualities of a good judge. (2.) Magistrates are chargeable with the crimes which they either connive at, or neglect to punish. (3.) They who have courage to act for God, will find his support and blessing carrying them through every danger.



Zebadiah the son of Ishmael, the ruler of the house of Judah, for all the king's matters: also the Levites *shall be* officers before you. Deal courageously, and the LORD shall be with the good.

### CHAP. XX.

*The children of Moab and Ammon come against Jehoshaphat, who proclaims a fast through the land. His prayer. Jahaziel the prophet promises the king victory without fighting. The armies of the enemy fall upon and destroy each other. Jehoshaphat joins himself with Ahaziah, and builds a fleet.*

[Before Christ 896.]

**I**T came to pass after this also, *that* the children of Moab, and the children of Ammon, and with them *other* beside the Ammonites, came against Jehoshaphat to battle.

2 Then there came some that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multitude against thee from beyond the sea on this side Syria; and, behold, they *be* in Hazazon-tamar, which *is* En-gedi.

3 And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah.

4 And Judah gathered themselves together, to ask *help* of the LORD: even out of all the cities of Judah they came to seek the LORD.

5 ¶ And Jehoshaphat stood in the congregation of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the LORD, before the new court,

6 And said, O LORD God of our fathers, *art* not thou God in heaven? and rulest *not* thou over all the kingdoms of the heathen? and in thine hand *is there not* power and might, so that none is able to withstand thee?

7 *Art* not thou our God, *who* didst drive out the inhabitants of this land before thy people Israel, and gavest it to the seed of Abraham thy friend for ever?

8 And they dwelt therein, and have built thee a sanctuary therein for thy name, saying,

9 If, *when* evil cometh upon us, *as* the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name *is* in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help.

10 And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and mount Seir, whom thou wouldest not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not;

11 Behold, *I say*, *how* they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit.

12 O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes *are* upon thee.

13 And all Judah stood before the LORD

### CHAP. XX.

*Ver. 1. And with them other beside the Ammonites] And the Edomites. Houbigant. See ver. 10. 22, 23. In the second verse, instead of Syria, he reads Edom, agreeable to a correction of Calmet's.*

*Ver. 6. And said, O Lord God, &c.] This prayer of Jehoshaphat is deservedly accounted one of the most excellent that we meet with in sacred history. He begins with an acknowledgment of God's supreme and irresistible power, which extends itself every where, over all creatures in heaven and earth, which are every one subject to his authority. Then he remembers the peculiar relation which the people of Israel have to him; the promise that he made to Abraham, as a reward of his fidelity; and *the deed of gift* which he made to him and his posterity, of this country for ever, ver. 7. He then reminds them of the long possession they had had of the country, and of the temple which Solomon built for his worship; to whom, at the consecration, (and therefore he refers to Solomon's words at the consecration, 1 Kings, viii.) he promised a gracious regard to all the prayers that should be*

offered there, ver. 8, 9. In the next place, he represents the foul ingratitude of their enemies, in invading a country to which they had no manner of title, even though the Israelites did them not the least harm when they came to take possession of it, but took the pains to march a long way about to get to it, rather than give them any molestation; and, in aggravation of their wickedness in this regard, he suggests, that, by this invasion, they made an attempt, not only upon the rights of the Israelites, but of God himself, who was the great Lord and proprietor, from whom they held the land: ver. 10, 11. Then he appeals to the justice of God, the righteous judge, who helps those that suffer wrong, especially when they have no other helper; for this is the last argument he makes use of to conciliate the divine assistance, even the weak condition wherein he and his people were, which made them the objects of the divine pity, especially since they placed their hope and confidence in him alone, ver. 12.

*Ver. 12. Wilt thou not judge them.] That is, inflict judgments upon them, or punish them. When Jehoshaphat speaks*

with their little ones, their wives, and their children.

14 ¶ Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Afaph, came the Spirit of the LORD in the midst of the congregation.

15 And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the LORD unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not your's, but God's.

16 To-morrow go ye down against them: behold, they come up by the cliff of Ziz; and ye shall find them at the end of the brook, before the wilderness of Jeruel.

17 Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to-morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you.

18 And Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground: and all Judah and the

inhabitants of Jerusalem fell before the LORD, worshipping the LORD.

19 And the Levites, of the children of the Kohathites, and of the children of the Korhites, stood up to praise the LORD God of Israel with a loud voice on high.

20 ¶ And they rose early in the morning, and went forth into the wilderness of Tekoa: and as they went forth, Jehoshaphat stood and said, Hear me, O Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem: Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.

21 And when he had consulted with the people, he appointed singers unto the LORD, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever.

22 ¶ And when they began to sing and to praise, the LORD set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab, and mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten.

speaks of having no might against this great company, we must understand that they came upon him unprovided and unawares; for we have seen before, that he had more than eleven hundred thousand fighting men.

Ver. 15. For the battle is not your's, but God's] For the battle will not be your's, but God's. Houbigant.

Ver. 22. The Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, &c.] The Lord set against the children of Ammon and Moab ambushments of those who came from mount Seir against Judah; and the children of Ammon and Moab were smitten: ver. 23. But they afterwards rose up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, and utterly destroyed them; who being destroyed, they rose up one against another, and mutually destroyed each other. Houbigant.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Little did Jehoshaphat apprehend, in the midst of the pious and useful establishments in which he was engaged, the threatening storm that hung over him. *Notes*; When we are most faithful, we may be involved in uncommon difficulties, God permitting our faith to be tried, that it may appear to praise, and honour, and glory.

1. The Moabites, Ammonites, and their confederates, assemble their forces, and march to the borders of Judah, before intelligence is brought of their designs; so sudden and unexpected was the attack. *Note*; While we are on this side the grave, we are never safe.

2. Terrified at the danger; and fearing, lest the wrath he had deserved, chap. xix. 2, was about to overtake him, in deep humiliation the king set himself earnestly to

seek the Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout Judah that they might together mourn over the sins which had provoked their God: and, at his command, all Judah assembled; not so much as warriors, to oppose their enemies, but as penitents, to avert the divine displeasure, without which every effort would be vain; and with their wives and children, as in deep distress, appeared at the temple, before the new court, probably the court of the priests lately repaired, to ask help of the Lord. • *Note*; (1.) In national calamities, national fasts are highly expedient, that a sinful people, humbled before a holy God, may find mercy in his fight. (2.) The danger which drives us to God, will not destroy us. (3.) While we have a God of mercy to flee to, let us never despair. (4.) The cries of the distressed will enter into the ears of the righteous Judge. Woe to those who provoke him. (5.) The more entirely we are taken off from every self-dependance in the view of our wants and wretchedness, the surer we are to find mercy in every time of need. (6.) While the eye of faith and hope looks upwards, underneath us will be the everlasting arms.

2dly, Swift is the answer sent from God. Jahaziel, a Levite of the sons of Afaph, filled with the spirit of prophecy, in the midst of the congregation foretels the approaching victory.

1. He bids them lift their drooping heads, and not be afraid: the cause is God's, and he will appear for them. He fixes the time and place when and where they should meet the enemy, not to fight, but to be spectators of the glorious victory that God would give them.

23 For the children of Ammon and Moab stood up against the inhabitants of mount Seir, utterly to slay and destroy *them*: and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, every one helped to destroy another.

24 And when Judah came toward the watch tower in the wilderness, they looked unto the multitude, and, behold, they *were* dead bodies fallen to the earth, and none escaped.

25 And when Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away the spoil of them, they found among them in abundance both riches with the dead bodies, and precious jewels, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away: and they were

three days in gathering of the spoil, it was fo much.

26 ¶ And on the fourth day they assembled themselves in the valley of Berachah; for there they blessed the LORD: therefore the name of the same place was called, The valley of Berachah, unto this day.

27 Then they returned, every man of Judah and Jerusalem, and Jehohaphat in the forefront of them, to go again to Jerusalem with joy; for the LORD had made them to rejoice over their enemies.

28 And they came to Jerusalem with psalteries and harps and trumpets unto the house of the LORD.

29 And the fear of God was on all the

them. *Note*; (1.) Unbelieving fear must be suppressed and opposed, as dishonourable to God. (2.) They who go forth at the word of God against their spiritual enemies, shall see the salvation of God.

2. The message was received by the king and people with humble thankfulness and adoration. They doubted not the promise; and shouted, as sure of victory. *Note*; Faith realizes the unseen things, and can enable us to rejoice in future promises, as equally secure with present possessions.

3dly, The order of battle bespoke the temper of the combatants, and their confidence in God.

1. Jehoshaphat, as the army passed in review before him, encourages their trust in God, and the word of his prophet, with assurance of success; and, with the advice of his council, instead of the mighty men of valour, they appointed the singers to lead the van, and charged their foes, not with the arm of flesh, but with the sharp two-edged sword of God's praises in their mouths, as if the victory was already gotten, and the triumphant song begun. *Note*; (1.) Unshaken faith is certain victory. (2.) Praise is a mighty weapon to overcome our spiritual foes.

2. The event exceeded their expectations. No sooner was the song of praise begun, than the Lord set ambushments; either the angelic hosts his ministers, say some; or their own ambushments, say others, who, infatuated of God, fell upon their army; which created such confusion, and apprehension of treachery, that each man's sword was against his fellow; the Moabites and Ammonites against the Edomites, and then against each other. *Note*; (1.) Though the enemies of God's people assemble themselves, they shall be broken to pieces. (2.) God can make those the instruments of mutual destruction, who are leagued against his people. (3.) Division produces ruin, wherever it arises.

3. On the approach of Jehoshaphat's army towards the watch-tower, which probably stood on the cliff of Ziz, and overlooked the plain beneath, behold, it was covered with carcases, and not a living foe remained. Immense

spoils loaded the people: three days they were employed in collecting them; on the fourth, the whole army assembled, with the king at their head, and kept a day of solemn thanksgiving on the field of victory, giving it a name to perpetuate the memorial of the mercy; and returned to Jerusalem, as they had come from thence, with increasing joy, and with louder songs of praise, for the amazing interposition of God which they had experienced. *Note*; (1.) Praise is all the tribute that we poor worms can pay; and God accepts our gratitude as a more welcome sacrifice than a hecatomb. (2.) The memory of past mercies ought to be preserved for the encouragement of future generations.

4. The effect of this glorious victory was, peace in their borders. Their neighbours heard and trembled, nor dared provoke those for whom God so eminently appeared; and all was quiet at home, under Jehoshaphat's happy government. *Note*; They who have God for their protector, will be kept in peace, and no evil shall come nigh their dwellings.

4thly, Jehoshaphat's conduct in general was excellent and exemplary; but the sacred historian spares not his faults: two of them are here recorded.

1. The suffering the high places to remain, where sacrifices to God had been offered before the temple was built, and to which the people still resorted, in opposition to the divine command, Deut. xii. 5—7.

2. That, after the danger he had run, and the reproof he had received for his connection with Ahab, he joined in league with Ahaziah his son, taking him in as a partner in a voyage to Tarshish. But he suffered for it. A prophet was sent to rebuke him for his folly and perverseness, and to predict the storm which destroyed their navy in the port. We find, 1 Kings, xxii. 49. that these warnings had their desired effect, and broke off the evil alliance. *Note*; (1.) They who are connected with the wicked, will certainly fare the worse for them. (2.) It is a great gain, when our providential losses turn us from the path of evil.

kingdoms of *those* countries, when they had heard that the LORD fought against the enemies of Israel.

30 So the realm of Jehoshaphat was quiet: for his God gave him rest round about.

31 ¶ And Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah: *he was* thirty-and-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-and-five years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name *was* Azubah the daughter of Shilhi.

32 And he walked in the way of Afa his father, and departed not from it, doing *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD.

33 Howbeit the high places were not taken away: for as yet the people had not prepared their hearts unto the God of their fathers.

34 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, first and last, behold, they *are* written in the book of Jehu the son of Hanani, who *is* mentioned in the book of the kings of Israel.

35 ¶ And after this did Jehoshaphat king of Judah join himself with Ahaziah king of Israel, who did very wickedly:

36 And he joined himself with him to make ships to go to Tarshish: and they made the ships in Ezion-gaber.

37 Then Eliezer the son of Dodavah of Marefhah prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, Because thou hast joined thyself with Ahaziah, the LORD hath broken thy works. And the ships were broken, that they were not able to go to Tarshish.

### CHAP. XXI.

*Jehoram succeeds Jehoshaphat, and reigns eight years wickedly. His incurable disease, infamous death, and burial.*

[Before Christ 889.]

**N**OW Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. And Jehoram his son reigned in his stead.

2 And he had brethren the sons of Jehoshaphat, Azariah, and Jehiel, and Zechariah, and Azariah, and Michael, and Shephatiah: all

these *were* the sons of Jehoshaphat king of Israel.

3 And their father gave them great gifts of silver, and of gold, and of precious things, with fenced cities in Judah: but the kingdom gave he to Jehoram; because he *was* the first-born.

4 Now when Jehoram was risen up to the kingdom of his father, he strengthened himself, and slew all his brethren with the sword, and *divers* also of the princes of Israel.

5 ¶ Jehoram *was* thirty-and-two years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem.

6 And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, like as did the house of Ahab: for he had the daughter of Ahab to wife: and he wrought *that which was* evil in the eyes of the LORD.

7 Howbeit the LORD would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that he had made with David, and as he promised to give a light to him and to his sons for ever.

8 ¶ In his days the Edomites revolted from under the dominion of Judah, and made themselves a king.

9 Then Jehoram went forth with his princes, and all his chariots with him: and he rose up by night, and smote the Edomites which compassed him in, and the captains of the chariots.

10 So the Edomites revolted from under the hand of Judah unto this day. The same time *also* did Libnah revolt from under his hand; because he had forsaken the LORD God of his fathers.

11 Moreover he made high places in the mountains of Judah, and caused the inhabitants of Jerusalem to commit fornication, and compelled Judah *thereto*.

12 ¶ And there came a writing to him from Elijah the prophet, saying, Thus saith the LORD God of David thy father, Because

### CHAP. XXI.

*Ver. 2. Jehoshaphat king of Israel] King of Judah; Houbigant; after almost all the ancient versions.*

VOL. II.

*Ver. 11. And compelled Judah thereto] And made Judah most contemptible. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 12. From Elijah the prophet] It being plain from 2 Kings, ii. 11. that Elijah was taken up into heaven in*

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thou hast not walked in the ways of Jehoshaphat thy father, nor in the ways of Aza king of Judah,

13 But hast walked in the way of the kings of Israel, and hast made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to go a whoring like to the whoredoms of the house of Ahab, and also hast slain thy brethren of thy father's house, *which were better than thyself*:

14 Behold, with a great plague will the LORD smite thy people, and thy children, and thy wives, and all thy goods:

15 And thou shalt have great sickness by

disease of thy bowels, until thy bowels fall out by reason of the sickness day by day.

16 ¶ Moreover the LORD stirred up against Jehoram the spirit of the Philistines, and of the Arabians, that *were* near the Ethiopians:

17 And they came up into Judah, and brake into it, and carried away all the substance that was found in the king's house, and his sons also, and his wives; so that there was never a son left him, save Jehoahaz, the youngest of his sons.

18 ¶ And after all this the LORD smote him in his bowels with an incurable disease.

in the time of Jehoshaphat, the question is, how could Elijah send his son a letter. Josephus and others imagine, that this writing was indited by Elijah in heaven, and sent to Jehoram by the ministry of angels: but there is no reason to suppose that so singular a miracle was wrought in favour of an idolatrous prince, who had Moses and the prophets, which, in our Saviour's opinion, were sufficient to instruct him in all points necessary to salvation; and needed not any additional writing to be sent to him from the other world. Others are of opinion, therefore, that this letter was written before Elijah's ascension into heaven; that, foreseeing by the spirit of prophecy, the great wickedness that Jehoram would fall into, he dictated the contents thereof to one of the prophets, charging him to put them down in writing, to send them in a letter to Jehoram when he grew as impious as is here related, and to let him know that Elijah commanded this writing to be delivered to him, upon the presumption that it would affect him the more, as it came from a person translated into heaven. Lastly, others have supposed, that the Elijah by whom this letter was sent was not the prophet who was taken up into heaven, but another of that name, who lived in the subsequent age, and was cotemporary with Jehoram. Which of these conjectures seems most probable, must be left to the judgment of the reader. See Le Clerc and Houbigant.

Ver. 18. *The Lord smote him in his bowels with an incurable disease*] Dr. Mede observes, that "two impious kings are recorded to have had the same end; Antiochus Epiphanes, and Agrippa, of whom it was said, εἰς τὰ σπλάγχνα τοῖς ἡσπλάγχμιόεντοισ, of what avail are bowels to those who have no bowels? Now, this distemper seems to me to be no other than a severe dysentery; for in this the intestines are ulcerated, and blood flows from the eroded vessels, together with some excrement, which is always liquid and slimy matter; and sometimes also some fleshy strings come away, so that the very intestines may seem to be ejected." See Mede's Med. Sacr. ch. iv. It is remarkable, that there was no calamity which could be thought of, that did not befall this wicked prince. His kingdom was destroyed and depopulated by the fiercest nations; his treasures ransacked; his wives carried into captivity; his children slain; himself afflicted with a sore disease for two years;

and, when he was dead, denied the honour of a royal sepulchre, such as his father had. All which calamities were threatened in a writing sent him in the name of Elijah, that he might not think that they came by chance, but be assured that they took place by the special direction of Almighty God, as a punishment for his iniquity.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Jehoshaphat's death opened the succession to the unworthy Jehoram, whom, during his lifetime, he had associated with him in the government.

1. Jehoram's reign opened with the most bloody and unnatural murder of his brethren, lest any of them, more pious than himself, should oppose the idolatry that he intended to introduce; and the princes of Israel, the great men who had settled in Judah under Jehoshaphat, were massacred, because probably they refused to comply with his abominable innovations, or remonstrated against his crimes. *Note*; (1.) Ambition is deaf to the cries of nature or humanity. (2.) Tyrants ever rule in fear, and all their precautions shew the tormented state of their own minds. (3.) Kingdoms supported by bloodshed are in a tottering condition indeed.

2. Those whom he feared as his opposers being removed, he throws off the mask, and, like Ahab his father-in-law, establishes gross and bare-faced idolatry; not only inviting the people by his countenance, but compelling them by force, to frequent his abominable sacrifices. What a curse on a land is a wicked king!

2dly, 1. Elijah, by his letter, reproaches him with his iniquities, and his forsaking the ways of his pious forefathers, to whom he was a great scandal. Tyranny, idolatry, and murder, are particularly charged upon him, and judgment pronounced for these crimes. Ruin should overtake his family and people; and, smitten of God by a disease terrible and loathsome, he should linger out the remains of his life without ease or remedy. *Note*; Diseases are God's scourges: he can soon make those a burden to themselves who are by their crimes a burden to the earth.

2. The war being disregarded, the accomplishment of the threatening was speedy. [1.] The Arabians, stirred up of God, made an irruption into Judah; plundered the king's palace, either that at Jerusalem, or it may be some palace in the country, where the court at that time

19 And it came to pass, that in process of time, after the end of two years, his bowels fell out by reason of his sickness: so he died of sore diseases. And his people made no burning for him, like the burning of his fathers.

20 Thirty-and-two years old was he when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years, and departed without being desired. Howbeit they buried him in the city of David, but not in the sepulchres of the kings.

## C H A P. XXII.

*Abaziah's wicked reign. He is slain by Jehu. Athaliah, destroying all the seed royal, except Jashb, usurps the kingdom.*

[Before Christ 884.]

**A**ND the inhabitants of Jerusalem made Ahaziah his youngest son king in his stead: for the band of men that came with the Arabians to the camp had slain all the eldest. So Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah reigned.

2 Forty-and-two years old was Ahaziah when he began to reign, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem. His mother's name also was Athaliah the daughter of Omri.

3 He also walked in the ways of the house of Ahab: for his mother was his counsellor to do wickedly.

4 Wherefore he did evil in the fight of the

LORD like the house of Ahab: for they were his counsellors after the death of his father to his destruction.

5 ¶ He walked also after their counsel, and went with Jehoram the son of Ahab king of Israel to war against Hazael king of Syria at Ramoth-gilead: and the Syrians smote Joram.

6 And he returned to be healed in Jezreel because of the wounds which were given him at Ramah, when he fought with Hazael king of Syria. And Azariah the son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to see Jehoram the son of Ahab at Jezreel, because he was sick.

7 And the destruction of Ahaziah was of God by coming to Joram: for when he was come, he went out with Jehoram against Jehu the son of Nimshi, whom the LORD had anointed to cut off the house of Ahab.

8 And it came to pass, that, when Jehu was executing judgment upon the house of Ahab, and found the princes of Judah, and the sons of the brethren of Ahaziah, that ministered to Ahaziah, he slew them.

9 And he sought Ahaziah: and they caught him, (for he was hid in Samaria,) and brought him to Jehu: and when they had slain him, they buried him: Because, said they, he is the son of Jehoshaphat, who fought the LORD with all his heart. So the house of Ahaziah had no power to keep still the kingdom.

10 ¶ But when Athaliah the mother of

## C H A P. XXII.

*Ver. 2. Forty-and-two years old was Abaziah] Twenty-and-two years old. Houbigant; the Syriac and Arabic versions. See 2 Kings, viii. 26. Others say, that we should read, Abaziah was the son of the two-and-forty years; i. e. counting from the beginning of the reign of the house of Omri, from which he descended by the mother's side.*

*Ver. 9. And he sought Abaziah, &c.] And when he pursued Abaziah himself, they found him as he lay hid at Samaria. See 2 Kings, ix. 27. Houbigant.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Ahaziah, called Jehoahaz, the name being the same in signification, who alone had escaped the massacre of the Arabians, succeeded his father. The account that we have of him is bad, very bad. He was influenced by the worst of counsellors, an idolatrous mother, and his wicked relations of the house of Ahab; the consequence of which was, that, instead of taking warning by his father's miserable end, he continued, after his death, in the same evil ways, and followed the abominations of the house of Ahab, to the destruction

time was; slew all his sons but one, chap. xxi. 17. xxii. 1. and carried away his wives captive, except Athaliah, who escaped. [2.] A disease, painful as incurable, seized him, rendered him incapable of recovering his losses; and, robbed of every domestic comfort, without hope in God, and under his curse in body and soul, he lingered two long years, and then those bowels, which yearned not over his brethren, fell out, and he died. *Note;* The sick bed of a sinner is among the most miserable scenes on this side hell: the body tormented with pain, death standing with terrible aspect before him, horror of conscience increasing every pang, and a fearful looking for judgment, already waking up the gnawing worm which never dies.

3. He died unlamented, and was buried with disgrace. Glad to be rid of such a monster, they carried him to a common grave, as unworthy a place in the sepulchre of his ancestors; and, as his memory was odious, they burnt no sweet spices over him, leaving the loathsome corpse an emblem of the more loathsome soul. *Note;* Tyrants, when alive, though feared, will be hated; and, when dead, will be branded with infamy.

Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the seed royal of the house of Judah.

11 But Jehoshabeath, the daughter of the king, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him from among the king's sons that were slain, and put him and his nurse in a bed-chamber. So Jehoshabeath, the daughter of king Jehoram, the wife of Jehoiada the priest, (for she was the sister of Ahaziah,) hid him from Athaliah, so that she slew him not.

12 And he was with them hid in the house of God six years: and Athaliah reigned over the land.

### C H A P. XXIII.

*Jehoiada proclaims Joash king. Athaliah is slain. The altars of Baal are destroyed.*

[Before Christ 878.]

**A**ND in the seventh year Jehoiada strengthened himself, and took the captains of hundreds, Azariah the son of Jeroham, and Ishmael the son of Jehohanan, and Azariah the son of Obed, and Maaseiah the son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat the son of Zichri, into covenant with him.

2 And they went about in Judah, and gathered the Levites out of all the cities of Judah, and the chief of the fathers of Israel, and they came to Jerusalem.

3 And all the congregation made a covenant with the king in the house of God. And he said unto them, Behold, the king's son shall reign, as the LORD hath said of the sons of David.

4 This is the thing that ye shall do; A third part of you entering on the sabbath, of

the priests and of the Levites, shall be porters of the doors;

5 And a third part shall be at the king's house; and a third part at the gate of the foundation: and all the people shall be in the courts of the house of the LORD.

6 But let none come into the house of the LORD, save the priests, and they that minister of the Levites; they shall go in, for they are holy: but all the people shall keep the watch of the LORD.

7 And the Levites shall compass the king round about, every man with his weapons in his hand; and whosoever else cometh into the house, he shall be put to death: but he ye with the king when he cometh in, and when he goeth out.

8 So the Levites and all Judah did according to all things that Jehoiada the priest had commanded, and took every man his men that were to come in on the sabbath, with them that were to go out on the sabbath: for Jehoiada the priest dismissed not the courses.

9 Moreover Jehoiada the priest delivered to the captains of hundreds spears, and bucklers, and shields, that had been king David's, which were in the house of God.

10 And he set all the people, every man having his weapon in his hand, from the right side of the temple to the left side of the temple, along by the altar and the temple, by the king round about.

11 Then they brought out the king's son, and put upon him the crown, and gave him the testimony, and made him king. And Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and said, God save the king.

destruction both of body and soul. Forgetting the danger that Jehoshaphat had run in a former expedition against Ramoth-gilead, he consents to join with the king of Israel, in attacking it; where Joram being wounded, and returning to be cured at Jezreel, thither Ahaziah, appointed to destruction, went to visit him, and met his death with Joram from the sword of Jehu. Yet, from regard to his grandfather, they shewed his corpse respect, and gave leave for his honourable interment in the sepulchre of his fathers. See 2 Kings, ix. 28. *Note;* (1.) The most unhappy situation for a young man is, to be under the influence of wicked advisers. (2.) The companion of wicked men justly perishes with them.

2dly, Never was the promise made to David, to human view, more in danger of failing. The monster Athaliah, to usurp the throne, destroys all her grand-children, and the whole seed-royal of Judah: one babe only of a year old, as a brand from the burning, is snatched from the massacre by the care of his aunt, the wife of Jehoiada. *Note;* Vain is every attempt of earth or hell to defeat the word of truth; one jot or tittle of it shall never fail.

### C H A P. XXIII.

*Ver. 2. And the chief of the fathers of Israel] Judah is here called by the general name of Israel.*



12 ¶ Now when Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she came to the people into the house of the LORD:

13 And she looked, and, behold, the king stood at his pillar at the entering in, and the princes and the trumpets by the king: and all the people of the land rejoiced, and sounded with trumpets, also the singers with instruments of musick, and such as taught to sing praise. Then Athaliah rent her clothes, and said, Treason, Treason.

14 Then Jehoiada the priest brought out the captains of hundreds that were set over the host, and said unto them, Have her forth of the ranges: and whoso followeth her, let him be slain with the sword. For the priest said, Slay her not in the house of the LORD.

15 So they laid hands on her; and when she was come to the entering of the horse-gate by the king's house, they slew her there.

16 ¶ And Jehoiada made a covenant between him, and between all the people, and between the king, that they should be the LORD's people.

17 Then all the people went to the house of Baal, and brake it down, and brake his altars and his images in pieces, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars.

18 Also Jehoiada appointed the offices of the house of the LORD by the hand of the priests the Levites, whom David had distributed in the house of the LORD, to offer the burnt-offerings of the LORD, as *it is* written in the law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, as *it was ordained* by David.

19 And he set the porters at the gates of the house of the LORD, that none *which was*

unclean in any thing should enter in:

20 And he took the captains of hundreds, and the nobles, and the governors of the people, and all the people of the land, and brought down the king from the house of the LORD: and they came through the high gate into the king's house, and set the king upon the throne of the kingdom.

21 And all the people of the land rejoiced: and the city was quiet, after that they had slain Athaliah with the sword.

#### CHAP. XXIV.

*Joash reigns well all the days of Jehoiada; who being dead, he falls into idolatry, and is slain by his servants.*

[Before Christ 840.]

JOASH *was* seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also *was* Zibeah of Beer-sheba.

2 And Joash did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest.

3 And Jehoiada took for him two wives; and he begat sons and daughters.

4 ¶ And it came to pass after this, *that* Joash was minded to repair the house of the LORD.

5 And he gathered together the priests and the Levites, and said to them, Go out unto the cities of Judah, and gather of all Israel money to repair the house of your God from year to year, and see that ye hasten the matter. Howbeit the Levites hastened *it* not.

6 And the king called for Jehoiada the chief, and said unto him, Why hast thou not required of the Levites to bring in out of Judah and out of Jerusalem the collection, *according to the*

*Ver. 18. Of the priests the Levites] Of the priests, and of the Levites. Houbigant.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Six years the usurped dominion of Athaliah lasted; but, by the prudence and courage of Jehoiada, she is hurled from her bloody throne, and the rightful heir restored, 2 Kings, xi. 4.

2dly, Athaliah's impotent attempt hastens her ruin: the people were too tired of her government to afford her any assistance; she fell, therefore, a just sacrifice to the manes of her murdered family. Joy and gladness now spread through the land; the king and people, by Jehoiada

as mediator, renew their covenant with God and each other; and, as the first fruits of their zeal, Baal's hated worship is destroyed, and regularity and order restored to the house of God. Thus was this happy revolution effected so prosperously and speedily, and once more the seed of David possessed in peace the throne of their ancestors. *Note;* (1.) The throne of David shall never be vacant; one king for ever reigns upon it, whom none of his enemies can gain say or resist: happy they who are spiritually the subjects of his government. (2.) Let kings consider the maintenance of God's holy religion and virtue as the great stability of their crown.

*commandment* of Moses the servant of the LORD, and of the congregation of Israel, for the tabernacle of witness?

7 For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken up the house of God; and also all the dedicated things of the house of the LORD did they bestow upon Baalim.

8 And at the king's commandment they made a chest, and set it without at the gate of the house of the LORD.

9 And they made a proclamation through Judah and Jerusalem, to bring into the LORD the collection *that* Moses the servant of God *laid* upon Israel in the wilderness.

10 And all the princes and all the people rejoiced, and brought in, and cast into the chest, until they had made an end.

11 Now it came to pass, that at what time the chest was brought unto the king's office by the hand of the Levites, and when they saw that *there was* much money, the king's scribe and the high priest's officer came and emptied the chest, and took it, and carried it to his place again. Thus they did day by day, and gathered money in abundance.

12 And the king and Jehoiada gave it to such as did the work of the service of the house of the LORD, and hired masons and carpenters to repair the house of the LORD, and also such as wrought iron and brass to mend the house of the LORD.

13 So the workmen wrought, and the work was perfected by them, and they set the house of God in his state, and strengthened it.

14 And when they had finished *it*, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada, whereof were made vessels for the house of the LORD, *even* vessels to minister, and to offer *withal*, and spoons, and vessels of gold and silver. And they offered burnt-offerings in the house of the LORD continually all the days of Jehoiada.

15 ¶ But Jehoiada waxed old, and was full

of days when he died; an hundred and thirty years old *was he* when he died.

16 And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, both toward God, and toward his house.

17 ¶ Now after the death of Jehoiada came the princes of Judah, and made obeisance to the king. Then the king hearkened unto them.

18 And they left the house of the LORD God of their fathers, and served groves and idols: and wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their trespass.

19 Yet he sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the LORD; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear.

20 And the Spirit of God came upon Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, which stood above the people, and said unto them, Thus saith God, Why transgress ye the commandments of the LORD, that ye cannot prosper? because ye have forsaken the LORD, he hath also forsaken you.

21 And they conspired against him, and stoned him with stones at the commandment of the king in the court of the house of the LORD.

22 Thus Joash the king remembered not the kindness which Jehoiada his father had done to him, but slew his son. And when he died, he said, The LORD look upon *it*, and require *it*.

23 ¶ And it came to pass at the end of the year, *that* the host of Syria came up against him: and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people, and sent all the spoil of them unto the king of Damascus.

24 For the army of the Syrians came with a small company of men, and the LORD delivered a very great host into their hand, because they had forsaken the LORD God of

#### CHAP. XXIV.

*Ver. 7. For the sons of Athaliah, &c.] For Athaliah had enticed her sons to wickedness, and they had broken open the house of the Lord, and all, &c. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 22. The Lord look upon it, and require it.] The Lord*

*will look upon it, and require it. Houbigant. This prophetic sentence was no sooner pronounced than executed; for, before the year was expired, the Syrians came up against Jerusalem, and destroyed all the princes of the people, and Joash himself was murdered by his own servants.*

*Ver.*

their fathers. So they executed judgment against Joash.

25 And when they were departed from him, (for they left him in great diseases,) his own servants conspired against him for the

blood of the sons of Jehoiada the priest, and slew him on his bed, and he died: and they buried him in the city of David, but they buried him not in the sepulchres of the kings.

*Ver. 25. His own servants conspired against him*] These two murderers, whose fathers were Jews, but their mothers aliens, (see the next verse,) were perhaps of the king's bed-chamber, and, having constant access to him, might more easily accomplish their design. However, he was so weak and feeble that he could make no resistance, and had fallen into such contempt and disesteem that his guards cared not what became of him. He was not allowed to be *buried in the sepulchre of the kings*. Though the people could not punish wicked kings for their impieties while they lived, yet they fixed an odium upon their memory when dead; whereby they both preserved the sacredness of the supreme power, and kept kings in some measure under awe, for fear of what might befall them after death; as Grotius remarks, *De Jur. B. et P. lib. 1. cap. 3.*

*For the blood of the sons of Jehoiada*] *The blood of the son of Jehoiada.* See ver. 22. Houbigant.

**REFLECTIONS.**—1st, Under Jehoiada's influence, Joash continued to reign with credit and honour. See 2 Kings, xii. 1. We may add to what was there observed,

1. How great a mercy it is for young people, when they fall into good hands.

2. That to be advised and influenced by age and experience, shews the truest wisdom.

3. Many a fair profession has no root at the bottom. The religion which is put on through prejudice of education, or maintained purely by the influence of others, will, when these restraints are removed, be easily shaken off; or, if the form still continue, it can but more fatally deceive those who are destitute of the power of godliness.

4. Many a commendable action, as Joash's repairing the temple, has appeared in those, who, being still in the flesh, cannot please God; though their zeal is a just reproof of the backwardness of better men.

2dly, The sun, which rose so bright, sets eclipsed in darkness.

1. Jehoiada dies. Long had God spared his useful life, during six reigns before Joash. His character was exemplary, and his last works greater than his first. From respect to his memory, the people, sensible of their deep obligations to him, honoured him with a sepulchre among the kings of Judah; but while they thus respected his corpse, they quickly forgot his counsel. *Note.* (1.) A long life is a blessing, when thus employed in the cause of God. (2.) They who in life have been most useful, deserve after death the most honourable remembrance. (3.) The departure of a great good man is a national affliction. (4.) They who continue to reverence the memory of great and good reformers, often grievously degenerate from their practice and precepts.

2. The princes of Judah, never truly changed, though

conforming to the reformation, seize the present favourable opportunity; and, with obsequious flattery gaining the king's ear, easily prevail on him to restore idolatry, and to plant again those groves which he had destroyed. *Note.* (1.) Many conform to religion when it is fashionable, who are glad of the first opportunity to throw off the restraint. (2.) Flatterers about the throne are often the ruin of the prince.

3. God left not himself without witness. His prophets, commissioned from him, rebuked this shameful idolatry, and particularly Zechariah, the worthy son of the great Jehoiada, stood up, moved by the Holy Ghost, and plainly and seriously reminded them of the perverseness of their ways, and the danger thereby incurred. *Note.* (1.) Ministers must be faithful to men's souls. (2.) In times of great degeneracy, much zeal is needful to oppose the torrent of ungodliness. (3.) In the worst of days, God will not want some witnesses for him. (4.) They who hate to be reformed shall at least be left without excuse.

4. Vile indeed was the treatment that these holy men received. In general, the people despised their admonitions; and as Zechariah's reproof, though mild and gentle, particularly exasperated them, at the instigation of the princes, and by the command of the king, they raised a tumult, even in the Lord's house, and stoned him to death between the porch and the altar; neither restrained by the sacredness of the place or the person, daringly defying his warnings, and ungratefully forgetting the innumerable obligations which they owed to his pious father. *Note.* (1.) God's ministers, who are zealous for the truth, must expect to suffer for it. (2.) Ingratitude is among the greatest sins. (3.) They are ripe for ruin, who fill up the measure of their iniquities with the persecution of God's prophets.

5. The dying martyr foretels the vengeance of God, which was ready to overtake them; not desiring that it might come out of a spirit of revenge, but predicting its certainty from the spirit of prophecy. *Note.* (1.) God will avenge the blood of his saints. (2.) Though we must not wish to avenge ourselves, we may desire the manifestation of God's justice, and the vindication of his injured honour.

6. God soon arose to judgment. A small army of Syrians vanquished the more numerous hosts of Joash, plundered his capital, slew his princes, and left him lingering either under the wounds they had given him, or under some disease which had seized him; but what they left unfinished, his own servants accomplished; a conspiracy was formed, and they slew him on his bed: and, since he had degenerated so greatly from his ancestors, they judged him unworthy to sleep in their sepulchres. Thus justly did God require blood for blood, and laid on him the heavy burdens which his iniquities had provoked. *Note.* (1.)

Woe

26 And these are they that conspired against him; Zabad the son of Shimeath an Ammonitess, and Jehozabad the son of Shimrith a Moabitess.

27 ¶ Now concerning his sons, and the greatness of the burdens laid upon him, and the repairing of the house of God, behold, they are written in the story of the book of the kings. And Amaziah his son reigned in his stead.

### CHAP. XXV.

*Amaziah reigns twenty-nine years: he hires Israelitish soldiers whom he dismisses at the command of a prophet: he conquers the Edomites, and worships their gods. He is conquered by Joash, king of Israel, who spoils the temple. Amaziah is slain in a conspiracy.*

[Before Christ 827.]

**A**MAZIAH was twenty-and-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned twenty-and-nine years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Jehoaddan of Jerusalem.

2 And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, but not with a perfect heart.

3 ¶ Now it came to pass, when the kingdom was established to him, that he slew his servants that had killed the king his father.

4 But he slew not their children, but did as it is written in the law in the book of Moses, where the LORD commanded, saying, The fathers shall not die for the children, neither

shall the children die for the fathers, but every man shall die for his own sin.

5 ¶ Moreover Amaziah gathered Judah together, and made them captains over thousands, and captains over hundreds, according to the houses of their fathers, throughout all Judah and Benjamin: and he numbered them from twenty years old and above, and found them three hundred thousand choice men, able to go forth to war, that could handle spear and shield.

6 He hired also an hundred thousand mighty men of valour out of Israel for an hundred talents of silver.

7 But there came a man of God to him, saying, O king, let not the army of Israel go with thee; for the LORD is not with Israel, to wit, with all the children of Ephraim.

8 But if thou wilt go, do it, be strong for the battle: God shall make thee fall before the enemy: for God hath power to help, and to cast down.

9 And Amaziah said to the man of God, But what shall we do for the hundred talents which I have given to the army of Israel? And the man of God answered, The LORD is able to give thee much more than this.

10 Then Amaziah separated them, to wit, the army that was come to him out of Ephraim, to go home again: wherefore their anger was greatly kindled against Judah, and they returned home in great anger.

Woe unto any people, when God hath forsaken them; they cannot but fall an easy prey to every invader. (2.) Nothing but blood can satisfy for blood. (3.) They who lie down under the wrath of God, will feel the intolerable burden to eternity.

### CHAP. XXV.

*Ver. 8. But if thou wilt go, do it, &c.] But if thou wilt be more obstinate, and go to the war, the Lord shall cause thee to fall before the enemy. Houbigant; who renders the last clause of the preceding verse, the Lord is not with Israel, who are all the children of Ephraim.*

*Ver. 10. Then Amaziah separated them, to wit] Amaziah, therefore, gave them to the army which had come to him, &c. Houbigant.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Amaziah's reign we had before, 2 Kings, xiv. His lukewarm temper in religion, and his execution of his father's murders, were there recorded; his expedition against Edom is here more at large described.

1. He collected his own forces, which we find greatly diminished under the last three reigns. To strengthen them, therefore, he hired 100,000 auxiliaries out of Israel.

2. God, by a prophet, rebukes him for desiring Israel's assistance, whose forces, being under the divine displeasure, would weaken instead of strengthening his army. If he hopes to prosper, therefore, he is commanded to disband them immediately. God with fewer forces can cast down his foes before him; and these offensive auxiliaries, if retained, will but ensure his overthrow. *Note;* (1.) Multitudes profit nothing, when God is our foe. (2.) Connection with God's enemies, is the way to bring his curse on our enterprises.

3. Amaziah, with some reluctance, at last consents; unwilling at first to lose the hundred talents with which he had hired the Israelites, but encouraged by the promises of the prophet that he should be no loser by his compliance. *Note;* (1.) Worldly-mindedness is apt to raise many objections against the precepts of self-denial. (2.) They who are content to trust God, will never have cause  
to

11 ¶ And Amaziah strengthened himself, and led forth his people, and went to the valley of Salt, and smote of the children of Seir ten thousand.

12 And *other* ten thousand *left* alive did the children of Judah carry away captive, and brought them unto the top of the rock, and cast them down from the top of the rock, that they were broken all in pieces.

13 ¶ But the soldiers of the army which Amaziah sent back, that they should not go with him to battle, fell upon the cities of Judah, from Samaria even unto Beth-horon, and smote three thousand of them, and took much spoil.

14 ¶ Now it came to pass, after that Amaziah was come from the slaughter of the Edomites, that he brought the gods of the children of Seir, and set them up to be his gods, and bowed down himself before them, and burnt incense unto them.

15 Wherefore the anger of the LORD was kindled against Amaziah, and he sent unto him a prophet, which said unto him, Why hast thou sought after the gods of the people, which could not deliver their own people out of thine hand?

16 And it came to pass, as he talked with him, that *the king* said unto him, Art thou made of the king's council? forbear; why

shouldest thou be smitten? Then the prophet forbore, and said, I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened unto my counsel.

17 ¶ Then Amaziah king of Judah took advice, and sent to Joash the son of Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, Come, let us see one another in the face.

18 And Joash king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, The thistle that *was* in Lebanon sent to the cedar that *was* in Lebanon, saying, Give thy daughter to my son to wife: and there passed by a wild beast that *was* in Lebanon, and trode down the thistle.

19 Thou sayest, Lo, thou hast smitten the Edomites; and thine heart lifteth thee up to boast: abide now at home; why shouldest thou meddle to *thine* hurt, that thou shouldest fall, *even* thou, and Judah with thee?

20 But Amaziah would not hear; for it *came* of God, that he might deliver them into the hand of *their enemies*, because they sought after the gods of Edom.

21 So Joash the king of Israel went up; and they saw one another in the face, *both* he and Amaziah king of Judah, at Beth-shemesh, which *belongeth* to Judah.

22 And Judah was put to the worse before Israel, and they fled every man to his tent.

to regret it. He will more than repay whatever he requires us to part with for his sake.

4. When he had dismissed the Israelites, he advanced into Idumea, and, having obtained a complete victory, slew 10,000 on the spot, and executed with terrible severity 10,000 captives that fell into his hands. What induced him to exercise this severity, if not cruelty, is not recorded.

5. The disbanded army highly resented the affront put upon them. Ungodly as they were, they could not bear to be treated as such; and in their return they miserably ravaged a part of Judah, and slew three thousand men, in revenge for their disappointment of the spoil of Edom. *Note;* (1.) Those who have no concern about religion, feel their pride hurt at being treated as irreligious. (2.) Though we suffer for what is well done, we ought not to be discouraged.

2dly, We have Amaziah's idolatry. What insatiation, what sottish stupidity! To leave the service of the conquering Jehovah, for the idols of a vanquished foe. Here is,

1. The reproof given to the idolatrous king. Justly was God displeased, and sends his prophet to reason with him on his folly. *Note;* They who depart from God, act as unwisely as wickedly.

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2. With indignation he receives the mild rebuke; insolently rejects the prophet's warning as impertinent, bids him hold his peace, or threatens him with Zechariah's fate. *Note;* (1.) The soul that hateth reproof is brutish. (2.) Prophets must not wonder, if their kindest notices are thus insolently returned.

3. The prophet, perceiving his labour fruitless, retires; leaving behind him, however, a solemn notice of that approaching ruin which Amaziah's hardened obstinacy provoked. *Note;* They who comfort themselves in having removed their troublers, will quickly feel, by their punishments, how little cause they have to rejoice in their success.

2dly, Amaziah's pride and fall were before recorded 2 Kings, xiv. Urged on by evil counsellors instead of advising with God's prophet, and justly hurried to his ruin as the punishment of his apostacy from God, he first was enslaved by the king of Israel, and then slain by a conspiracy of his own servants, from whom he in vain attempted to flee; they pursued him to Lachish, and there murdered him. *Note;* (1.) They who reject the counsel of God are justly given up to be deluded and destroyed. (2.) However wicked the instruments may be that are employed, God is righteous in his judgments.

4 II

23 And Joash the king of Israel took Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Joash, the son of Jehoahaz, at Beth-shemesh, and brought him to Jerusalem, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem from the gate of Ephraim to the corner-gate, four hundred cubits.

24 And *he took* all the gold and the silver, and all the vessels that were found in the house of God with Obed-edom, and the treasures of the king's house, the hostages also, and returned to Samaria.

25 ¶ And Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah lived after the death of Joash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel fifteen years.

26 Now the rest of the acts of Amaziah, first and last, behold, *are* they not written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel?

27 ¶ Now after the time that Amaziah did turn away from following the LORD they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem; and he fled to Lachish: but they sent to Lachish after him, and slew him there.

28 And they brought him upon horses, and buried him with his fathers in the city of Judah.

## CHAP. XXVI.

*Uzziah reigns piously fifty-two years, while Zechariah lives. He fights successfully with his enemies; but, being inflated with prosperity, invades the priest's office, and is smitten with leprosy. He relinquishes the kingdom to his son Jotham.*

[Before Christ 765.]

**T**HEN all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who *was* sixteen years old, and made him king in the room of his father Amaziah.

2 He built Eloth, and restored it to Judah,

## CHAP. XXVI.

*Ver. 5. Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God] Who had instructed [him] in the fear of God. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 7. And the Mehunims] Houbigant, with the Vulgate, reads the Ammonites; and the next verse, as well as the fifth of the next chapter, gives us reason to believe that this reading is just.*

*Ver. 10. He built towers in the desert] William of Tyre describes a country not far from the Euphrates, as inhabited by Syrian and Armenian Christians, that fed great flocks and herds there, but were in subjection to the Turks; who, though few in number, yet living in strong places*

after that the king slept with his fathers.

3 Sixteen years old *was* Uzziah when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-and-two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also *was* Jecoliah of Jerusalem.

4 And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah did.

5 And he sought God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding in the visions of God: and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him to prosper.

6 And he went forth and warred against the Philistines, and brake down the wall of Gath, and the wall of Jabneh, and the wall of Ashdod, and built cities about Ashdod, and among the Philistines.

7 And God helped him against the Philistines, and against the Arabians that dwelt in Gur-baal, and the Mehunims.

8 And the Ammonites gave gifts to Uzziah: and his name spread abroad *even* to the entering-in of Egypt; for he strengthened *himself* exceedingly.

9 ¶ Moreover Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the corner-gate, and at the valley-gate, and at the turning *of the wall*, and fortified them.

10 Also he built towers in the desert, and digged many wells: for he had much cattle, both in the low country, and in the plains: husbandmen *also*, and vine-dressers in the mountains, and in Carmel: for he loved husbandry.

11 ¶ Moreover Uzziah had an host of fighting men, that went out to war by bands, according to the number of their account by

among them, kept them under, and received tribute from these poor peasants, who inhabited the villages, and employed themselves in rural business. I do not know whether this may not give a juster idea of the design of these towers which Uzziah built in the wilderness, than commentators have done; who have supposed that they were conveniencies made for sheltering the shepherds from bad weather, or for defending them from the incursions of enemies; for they might rather be designed to keep the nations that pastured there in awe, to prevent their disputing with his servants about wells, and to induce them quietly to pay that tribute to which the 7th and 8th verses seem to refer. *Observations*, p. 346.

*Ver.*

the hand of Jeiel the scribe and Maaseiah the ruler, under the hand of Hananiah, *one* of the king's captains.

12 The whole number of the chief of the fathers of the mighty men of valour *were* two thousand and six hundred.

13 And under their hand *was* an army, three hundred thousand and seven thousand and five hundred, that made war with mighty power, to help the king against the enemy.

14 And Uzziah prepared for them throughout all the host shields, and spears, and helmets, and habergeons, and bows, and slings *to cast* stones.

15 And he made in Jerusalem engines, invented by cunning men, to be on the towers and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones withal. And his name spread far abroad: for he was marvellously helped, till he was strong.

16 ¶ But when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to *his* destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the LORD to burn incense upon the altar of incense.

17 And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the

LORD, *that were* valiant men:

18 And they withstood Uzziah the king, and said unto him, *It appertaineth* not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary; for thou hast trespassed; neither *shall it be* for thine honour from the LORD God.

19 Then Uzziah was wroth, and *had* a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD, from beside the incense-altar.

20 And Azariah the chief priest, and all the priests, looked upon him, and, behold, he *was* leprous in his forehead, and they thrust him out from thence; yea, himself hastened also to go out, because the LORD had smitten him.

21 And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house, *being* a leper; for he was cut off from the house of the LORD: and Jotham his son *was* over the king's house, judging the people of the land.

*Ver. 15. He made in Jerusalem engines, &c.]* This is the first time that we read of any machine either for besieging or defending towns; which is plainly the reason why sieges were of so long a continuance before the invention of these. Homer, who is the most ancient Greek writer that we know of who treats of sieges, describes a kind of *entrenchment*, (though a poor one,) some lines of *circumvallation*, and a ditch with *palisades*; but we hear not a word of any machines, such as the *ballista*, and *catapulta*, which were used for the hurling of stones and throwing darts; and therefore we need less wonder that the famous siege of Troy continued so long. Sardanapalus, king of Assyria, maintained himself in Nineveh for seven years, because the besiegers (as Diodorus observes, lib. ii.) wanted such engines as were fit for demolishing and taking of cities, they being not then invented. Salmanezar lay *three* years before Samaria, 2 Kings, xvii. 5, 6., and as some say, Pflammiticus *twenty* before Azath. See Aristæas de LXX Interp. Now, of Uzziah it is said, *that he made in Jerusalem engines invented by cunning men, to be on the towers, and upon the bulwarks, to shoot arrows and great stones*; so that it must needs be a mistake to attribute the invention of the *ballista*, the *scorpio*, or the *onager*, (whereof Ammianus Marcellinus, lib. xxiii. cap. 2. has given us the descriptions,) to the Greeks or Romans, because we find them made use of in the east before the Greeks had brought the military

art to any great perfection. Uzziah was certainly the first inventor of them; and therefore it is said, *that for these and other warlike preparations his name was spread abroad*. From this time they began to be employed both in attacking and defending towns; and therefore we find the prophet Ezekiel describing the future sieges of Jerusalem and Tyre, where he makes mention of battering rams and engines of war, or, as it should be rendered, *machines of cords*, which, in all probability, were what later ages called their *ballista* and *catapulta*.

*Ver. 18. For thou hast trespassed, &c.]* *For it is not lawful for thee to assume that honour, contrary to the will of God.* Houbigant. What it was that tempted the king to this extravagant folly, is difficult to imagine; but the most likely conjecture is, that he had a vain ambition to imitate heathen princes, who in several countries joined the regal and sacerdotal offices together. But, however it may be in all other countries, the priesthood in Judea was confined to the house of Aaron only; and every one who pretended to usurp that office was, by the law of the land, to be put to death. See Numb. xviii. 7. Therefore God smote Uzziah with such a disease as was a kind of death, because it separated the person afflicted with it from the commerce and society of men, even as if he were departed this world. See Joseph. Bell. Jud. l. i. cap. 11. and Calmet.



22 ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah, first and last, did Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amos, write.

23 So Uzziah slept with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the field of the burial which *belonged* to the kings; for they said, He *is* a leper: and Jotham his son reigned in his stead.

### C H A P. XXVII.

*Jotham reigns well and prospereth for sixteen years: he is succeeded by his son Azaz.*

[Before Christ 753.]

**J**OTHAM *was* twenty-and-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned

sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name also *was* Jerushah, the daughter of Zadok.

2 And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Uzziah did: howbeit he entered not into the temple of the LORD. And the people did yet corruptly.

3 ¶ He built the high gate of the house of the LORD, and on the wall of Ophel he built much.

4 Moreover he built cities in the mountains of Judah, and in the forests he built castles and towers.

5 ¶ He fought also with the king of the Ammonites, and prevailed against them. And

*Ver. 22. Now the rest of the acts of Uzziah—did Isaiah—write*] It appears probable from this, that Isaiah composed an entire history of the reign of Uzziah, which has not reached our times. See 2 Kings, xiv. 25.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Uzziah followed the best ways of his father Amaziah; and under the influence of Zechariah, a man favoured with prophetic visions, or deeply conversant with the writings of the prophets before him, kept close to the worship of the true God, and prospered in all his undertakings.

1. He was victorious in all his battles. God enabled him to vanquish the Philistines and Arabians, and seize their country. The Ammonites, fearing his arms, sought humbly to obtain his favour with presents, and his spreading fame overawed the neighbouring nations. *Note*; As long as we cleave to God, he will help us against all our foes.

2. He repaired and fortified Jerusalem; the wall of which, in his father's time, had been broken down; and built cities or garrisons in the conquered countries, and places for the protection of his cattle in the wilderness; for he abounded in flocks and herds, and was a great lover of husbandry, an employment and amusement not unworthy of the greatest king.

3. He kept up a great army, ready for any emergency, parties of which were sent out against the neighbouring people, who made inroads on the borders; the rest served to garrison the cities. They were well armed, men of great courage, and provided with warlike engines, either for defending or assaulting besieged cities. Such forces and mighty preparations for war exceedingly strengthened his kingdom, and made him feared and respected.

2dly, Puffed up with the prosperity to which he was advanced, Uzziah blots his fair character by an act of daring intrusion into the priest's office: so busy a sin is pride, and so ready to creep into the hearts even of pious men!

1. He would offer incense upon the golden altar, and enter that holy place to which all access was forbidden, except to the priests alone; and, as his transgression was wilful and obstinate, his sin was great against the Lord.

2. Azariah the high-priest, with fourscore of his brethren, bravely opposed the profane attempt; not by violence, but by a serious remonstrance. They urge the king to an immediate departure from the place into which he had intruded; warn him of the transgression that he had already committed; remind him of the unlawfulness of the service that he intended; and threaten him with the danger to which he was exposed: far from contributing to his honour, it would end in his perpetual shame and disgrace. *Note*; (1.) God's institutions are sacred, and it is at our peril if we violate them. (2.) They who at all hazard will gratify their pride, often bring themselves to deserved shame.

3. Uzziah, far from submitting, was angry at the remonstrance, and refused to quit his center. *Note*; The wisest and most just rebuke often exasperates the wilful.

4. God therefore appeared to decide the controversy. The leprosy, foul and incurable, seized him, and the marks of it were visible in his forehead: emboldened hereby, the priests hurried him forth from the holy place; and, far from resisting, the stroke that he felt bowed his stubborn heart, and he hastened to be gone, lest worse evils should overtake him: and now he no more dares approach God's house; nay, he is excluded from his own palace while he lives, and from the sepulchre of his ancestors when he dies; a punishment admirably suited to his sin, and to deter others from imitating so bad an example. *Note*; (1.) They who will not submit to admonition rush on their ruin. (2.) When we feel God's displeasure, it is madness to persist: humiliation is the only door of escape that remains. (3.) Though our iniquity may be pardoned of God, some sins leave a disgrace among men which is indelible.

### C H A P. XXVII.

*Ver. 2. And the people did yet corruptly.*] *And the people yet worshipped corruptly.* See 2 Kings, xv. 35.

*Ver. 3. And on the wall of Ophel he built much.*] *And he repaired much in the walls of the ascent.* See Neh. iii. 26. Ifoubigant.

REFLEC-

the children of Ammon gave him the same year an hundred talents of silver, and ten thousand measures of wheat, and ten thousand of barley. So much did the children of Ammon pay unto him, both the second year, and the third.

6 So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his God.

7 ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all his wars, and his ways, lo, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

8 He was five-and-twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem.

9 And Jotham slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David: and Ahaz his son reigned in his stead.

CHAP. XXVIII.

*Ahaz reigns sixteen years. He worships idols. He is delivered into the hands of the kings of Syria and Israel. Tilgath-pilnezer, being called in by him against the Syrians, becomes a burthen to him. He worships the gods of Damascus. He dies, and is succeeded by his son Hezekiah.*

[Before Christ 741.]

**A**HAZ was twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem: but he did not *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, like David his father:

2 For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim.

3 Moreover he burnt incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burnt his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before

the children of Israel.

4 He sacrificed also and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.

5 Wherefore the LORD his God delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria; and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought *them* to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter.

6 For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah an hundred-and-twenty thousand in one day, *which were* all valiant men; because they had forsaken the LORD God of their fathers.

7 And Zichri, a mighty man of Ephraim, slew Maaseiah the king's son, and Azrikam the governor of the house, and Elkanah *that was* next to the king.

8 ¶ And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thousand, women, sons, and daughters, and took also away much spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria.

9 But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name *was* Oded: and he went out before the host that came to Samaria, and said unto them, Behold, because the LORD God of your fathers was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand, and ye have slain them in a rage *that* reacheth up unto heaven.

10 And now ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondmen and bondwomen unto you: *but are there* not with you, even with you, sins against the LORD your God?

REFLECTIONS.—The reign of Jotham was pious and prosperous.

1. He copied the best of his father's ways, and avoided his wickedness. His heart was right with God, and he endeavoured diligently to walk with, and please him: but the people followed not his good example; either he wanted zeal to restrain them, or they were too headstrong to be withheld. *Note:* They are inexcusable, who slight the advantages that they enjoy, and refuse to be reformed.

2. His prosperity went hand in hand with his piety; he fortified his dominions, built new cities, subdued the Ammonites, and brought them under tribute for three years;

and because he had chosen God's ways, he became mighty under his protection.

3. Too soon for his people he finished his happy reign, farther particulars of which were recorded in the annals of Judah, long since perished. The unworthy son who succeeded him made the loss of such a king more sensibly felt and lamented by every true Israelite.

CHAP. XXVIII.

*Ver. 1. Ahaz was twenty years old.] Twenty-five years old. Houbigant. See 2 Kings, xviii. 2.*

*Ver. 3. And burnt his children in the fire.] And caused his children to pass through the fire. See Lev. xviii. 21. and the versions.*

11 Now hear me therefore, and deliver the captives again, which ye have taken captive of your brethren: for the fierce wrath of the LORD is upon you.

12 Then certain of the heads of the children of Ephraim, Azariah the son of Johanan, Berechiah the son of Meshillemoth, and Jehizkiah the son of Shallum, and Amasa the son of Hadlai, stood up against them that came from the war,

13 And said unto them, Ye shall not bring in the captives hither: for whereas we have offended against the LORD *already*, ye intend to add *more* to our sins and to our trespasss: for our trespasss is great, and *there is* fierce wrath against Israel.

14 So the armed men left the captives and the spoil before the princes and all the congregation.

15 And the men which were expressed by name rose up, and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho, the city of palm-trees, to their brethren: then they returned to Samaria.

16 ¶ At that time did king Ahaz send

unto the kings of Assyria to help him.

17 For again the Edomites had come and smitten Judah, and carried away captives.

18 The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Beth-sheMesh, and Ajalon, and Gederoth, and Shocho with the villages thereof, and Timnah with the villages thereof, Gimzo also and the villages thereof: and they dwelt there.

19 For the LORD brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel; for he made Judah naked, and transgressed fore against the LORD.

20 And Tilgath-pilneser king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not.

21 For Ahaz took away a portion *out* of the house of the LORD, and *out* of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave *it* unto the king of Assyria: but he helped him not.

22 ¶ And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD: this *is that* king Ahaz.

23 For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus, which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, *therefore* will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him, and of all Israel.

*Ver. 16. Unto the kings of Assyria] Unto the king of Assyria.* cf Houbigant. See 2 Kings, xvi. 7. In the 19th verse, *king Israel*, should be read *king of Judah*; where הפריע *hiphriang* the making *Judah naked*, means the depriving them of the divine protection; robbing them of the help of the Lord, who was their shield and defence. See Exod. xxxii. 25.

*Ver. 20. Distressed him, but strengthened him not]* And yet in 2 Kings, xvi. 9. it is said that he *did help him*. How then can he be said to have *distressed him*? Very well: for as he came to his assistance against the king of Syria, so he took Damascus, carried the people captive, and delivered Ahaz from the power of the Syrians: but this did Ahaz little good; for he helped him not to recover the cities which the Philistines had taken from him. He lent him no forces, nor enabled him to recruit his own. On the contrary, he rather weakened him by exhausting his treasures, and destroying Samaria, which opened a way for the invasion of his country with more facility, as it happened in the next reign. For, it is no uncommon thing, even in later ages, to hear of kingdoms, which have called in the help of some foreign prince against their enemies, being over-run and conquered by those who came to their assistance.

*Ver. 23. Because the gods of the kings of Syria, &c.]* "O blind superstition!" exclaims Bishop Hall upon this folly of Ahaz. "How did the gods of Syria help their kings, when both those kings and their gods were vanquished and taken by the king of Assyria? Even this Damascus, and this altar, were the spoil of a foreign enemy. How then did the gods of Syria help their kings, otherwise than to their ruin? What dotage is this, to make choice of a foiled protection! But had the Syrians prospered, must their gods have the thanks? Are there no authors of good, but blocks or devils? or is an outward prosperity the only argument of truth, the only motive of devotion? O foolish Ahaz! it is the God thou hast forsaken that punishes thee, under whose only arm thou mightest have prevailed. His power beats those pagan stocks one against another; so that now this, now that seems victorious, and the other vanquished; and at last he confounds both, together with their proudest votaries. Thyself art certainly the most striking instance."

REFLECTIONS.—Ist, Ahaz, the degenerate son of a pious father, no sooner came to the crown, than he sunk into

24 And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of God, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of God, and shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem.

25 And in every several city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD God of his fathers.

26 ¶ Now the rest of his acts and of all his ways, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

27 And Ahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, even in Jerusalem:

but they brought him not into the sepulchres of the kings of Israel: and Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

## CHAP. XXIX.

*Hezekiah reigns twenty-nine years. He opens the doors of the temple, which he cleanses, and offers expiatory sacrifices; himself rejoicing greatly; and all the people.*

[Before Christ 726.]

**H**EZEKIAH began to reign when he was five-and-twenty years old, and he reigned nine-and-twenty years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah.

into every abomination, following the ways of wicked Israel, and serving Baalim as did the heathens around him. Swift vengeance overtook him. The hosts of Syria defeated his army, plundered his country, and made captive his people; and Israel seconded the blow with a very great slaughter. *Note;* They who sell themselves to work wickedness shall surely receive the wages of their sin in condign suffering.

2dly, Wicked instruments are often made the scourges of righteous vengeance.

1. Triumphant Israel tramples down the strength of treacherous Judah. One hundred and twenty thousand men fall by the sword, and double that number of women and children are led away captive. The king's son and his principal officers fall in the battle, and the country is ravaged and plundered. When God is departed, all our defence is gone.

2. The Lord sends a prophet to the people of Israel, to rebuke them for the severity with which they had stained their victory. He met them on their return to Samaria, and warned them from God. The victory which they had obtained was not the effect of their valour or goodness, but of God's wrath against Judah. Cruel was the slaughter they had made, which cried to God for vengeance against them; and hard the bondage which, as an iron yoke, they would lay on their brethren: but let them consider their own sins, be confounded, and justly fear a return of greater severity on themselves: to avert which, he enjoins them instantly to release their captives, or the fierce wrath of God would quickly overtake them. *Note;* (1.) Cruelty to an enemy is a great crime: even in a just war, much blood-guiltiness may lie at our door. (2.) They who are sensible of their own sins will be most compassionate to the sufferings of others. (3.) Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

3. The princes, struck with this divine admonition, immediately interposed with the men of war; insisted that the captives should be brought no farther; warned them of the anger of God against their cruelty; and, confessing how much sin already lay upon them, resolved not to add to the measure of it the enslaving of their brethren. Overcome by the remonstrance, the men of war nobly

yielded up both prisoners and spoil; and, with tender care and liberal provision, the princes took care safely to carry them to Jericho, that they might thence return to their own homes. *Note;* (1.) It is better to take warning late than never. (2.) The victory of self-denial is greater than the honour of treading on the necks of vanquished foes. (3.) They who are mighty should be merciful; it is their greatest honour.

3dly, When a state is weakened and sinking, the meanest foe spurns at it. Sin had left the land naked, exposed to every invader, and unable to resist. Edom and Philistia joined Syria and Israel in their ravages; the cities are taken, the inhabitants led captive, and Ahaz reduced to deep distress. We have here,

1. The unsuccessful attempt that he made to extricate himself from his difficulties. By impoverishing himself, and emptying his treasures, as well as robbing the house of God and fleecing the princes, he engaged the king of Assyria to make a diversion in his favour; but he received no benefit from him, for his auxiliaries distressed him as well as his enemies. *Note;* They who forsake God must needs be disappointed in every other confidence.

2. The aggravated wickedness of this infatuated king. Unmoved by all God's judgments, he hardened his heart in idolatry; grew worse under these reproofs; and, instead of repenting of his sins, added to his strange gods, shut up the temple, defaced and destroyed the vessels; and, in place of one, set up multitudes of altars in every corner of Jerusalem, to sacrifice to the idols of Syria; as if the success of the Syrians had been owing to their influence, and that he hoped to be helped by them: but, alas! he found to his cost, that he only hastened his own and his people's ruin. This is that Ahaz, a monster of iniquity, and branded in the book of God with everlasting infamy. *Note;* When judgments harden, instead of humbling, the case seems very desperate.

3. God was graciously pleased to rid the kingdom of this heavy plague, and in the midst of his days cut down this wicked king. Nor would the men of Judah suffer him to lie among his godly progenitors, but cast him into a common grave, an intimation of that awful and eternal

2 And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done.

3 ¶ He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them.

4 And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street.

5 And said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place.

6 For our fathers have trespassed, and done *that which was* evil in the eyes of the LORD our God, and have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD, and turned *their* backs.

7 Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt-offerings in the holy place unto the God of Israel.

8 Wherefore the wrath of the LORD was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes.

9 For, lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives *are* in captivity for this.

10 Now *it is* in mine heart to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us.

11 My sons, be not now negligent: for the LORD hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him, and that ye should minister unto him, and burn incense.

12 ¶ Then the Levites arose, Mahath the son of Amasai, and Joel the son of Azariah, of the sons of the Kohathites: and of the sons of Merari, Kish the son of Abdi, and Azariah the son of Jehalelel: and of the Gershonites; Joah the son of Zimmah, and Eden

the son of Joah:

13 And of the sons of Elizaphan; Shimri, and Jeiel: and of the sons of Asaph; Zechariah, and Mattaniah:

14 And of the sons of Heman; Jehiel, and Shimei: and of the sons of Jeduthun; She-maiah, and Uzziel.

15 And they gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, and came, according to the commandment of the king, by the words of the LORD, to cleanse the house of the LORD.

16 And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the LORD, to cleanse *it*, and brought out all the uncleanness that they found in the temple of the LORD into the court of the house of the LORD. And the Levites took *it*, to carry *it* out abroad into the brook Kidron.

17 Now they began on the first *day* of the first month to sanctify, and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of the LORD: so they sanctified the house of the LORD in eight days; and in the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end.

18 Then they went in to Hezekiah the king, and said, We have cleansed all the house of the LORD, and the altar of burnt-offering, with all the vessels thereof, and the shew-bread table, with all the vessels thereof.

19 Moreover all the vessels, which king Ahaz in his reign did cast away in his transgression, have we prepared and sanctified, and, behold, they *are* before the altar of the LORD.

20 ¶ Then Hezekiah the king rose early, and gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the LORD.

21 And they brought seven bullocks, and seven rams, and seven lambs, and seven he-goats, for a sin-offering for the kingdom, and for the sanctuary, and for Judah. And he commanded the priests the sons of Aaron to offer *them* on the altar of the LORD.

eternal separation which, after death, shall be made between the righteous and the wicked.

#### CHAP. XXIX.

Ver. 21. And seven he-goats] The word צִפִּיר *zapir*, which here signifies a he-goat, Bishop Patrick observes, was

never used by the Hebrews till after the Babylonish captivity; it is, therefore, an argument that this book was written by Ezra after the return of the Jews from that captivity, during which he had learned the Chaldæe language. The offering which the law prescribed for the transgression of the people was a young bullock, and for the offences

22 So they killed the bullocks, and the priest received the blood, and sprinkled *it* on the altar: likewise, when they had killed the rams, they sprinkled the blood upon the altar: they killed also the lambs, and they sprinkled the blood upon the altar.

23 And they brought forth the he-goats *for* the sin-offering before the king and the congregation; and they laid their hands upon them:

24 And the priests killed them, and they made reconciliation with their blood upon the altar, to make an atonement for all Israel: for the king commanded *that* the burnt-offering and the sin-offering *should be made* for all Israel.

25 And he set the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet: for *so was* the commandment of the LORD by his prophets.

26 And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets.

27 And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt-offering upon the altar. And when the burnt-offering began, the song of the LORD began *also* with the trumpets, and with the instruments *ordained* by David king of Israel.

28 And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: *and all this continued* until the burnt-

offering was finished.

29 And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all *that were* present with him bowed themselves, and worshipped.

30 Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the LORD with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped.

31 Then Hezekiah answered and said, Now ye have consecrated yourselves unto the LORD, come near and bring sacrifices and thank-offerings into the house of the LORD. And the congregation brought in sacrifices and thank-offerings; and as many as were of a free heart burnt-offerings.

32 And the number of the burnt-offerings, which the congregation brought, was threescore and ten bullocks, an hundred rams, *and* two hundred lambs: all these *were* for a burnt-offering to the LORD.

33 And the consecrated things *were* six hundred oxen, and three thousand sheep.

34 But the priests were too few, so that they could not slay all the burnt-offerings: wherefore their brethren the Levites did help them, till the work was ended, and until the *other* priests had sanctified themselves: for the Levites *were* more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests.

35 And also the burnt-offerings *were* in abundance, with the fat of the peace-offerings,

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offences of the prince a *goat*, Lev. iv. 23, &c. But Hezekiah, we find, was willing to do more than the law commanded. He was sensible that both prince and people had been guilty, not only of sins of ignorance, for which these sacrifices were instituted, but of wilful and presumptuous crimes, of gross idolatry, a profanation of the temple, and an utter extinction of the worship of God; and therefore he appointed *seven bullocks* for a burnt-offering, and as many *goats* for a sin-offering; upon the presumption that these numerous sacrifices were, if not necessary, at least highly fit and becoming, on account of the great and long neglect of divine service, and the multitude and long continuance of their other offences against God.

Ver. 25. *He set the Levites—with cymbals, &c.*] Moses, in the service of the tabernacle, did not appoint the use of any musical instruments; he only caused some trumpets to be made, which upon solemn occasions were to be sounded at the time when the burnt-offerings and peace-offerings were upon the altar, Numb. x. 10. But David, by the

advice of the prophets Gad and Nathan, introduced several kinds of music into the service of the temple, as a thing well calculated to inspire people with religious affections. And it is further observable from this place, that the institution of music in religious assemblies is not a matter of human invention, but was ordained by God, and has the sanction and authority of his prophets to confirm it; for *so was the commandment of the Lord by his prophets*. It is said in the 30th verse, that *they sung with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer*. As David was both a great poet and master of music, he might therefore modulate and compose his own hymns: but whether the music of them might not be altered or improved in after-ages (because the *words* only are here taken notice of) is a matter of uncertainty. The *Asaph* here mentioned was the person who lived in David's days, so famous for his skill in music, and for several devout pieces which we now find in the book of Psalms. See Patrick and Calmet.

and the drink-offerings for every burnt-offering. So the service of the house of the LORD was set in order.

36 And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was done suddenly.

*Ver. 36. And all the people, that God had prepared the people] And all the people, because that the Lord had raised their hearts. Houbigant.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, No sooner has the crown devolved to Hezekiah, than with unremitting zeal he sets himself to repair the late desolations of God's house, and recover the people from their dreadful apostacy. His heart was as right with God as David's, and religion his first and great concern. Happy the land that has such a king!

1. He opens and repairs the doors of God's house, wherein of late had neither been incense nor offering. Probably, though no public service had been maintained there, the sacred fire was still preserved.

2. He convokes the priests and Levites, who seem to have too much corresponded with the sad changes of the last reign, and to have testified little zeal for a reformation. In this august assembly, he laments the evils of their fathers, their neglect of God and his service; and justly ascribes thereto all the miseries that they had suffered, and under which they still groaned. He declares his own intention to join himself solemnly in covenant with God; and admonishes them heartily to assist him in the restoration of God's worship, and the reformation of the people. As priests and Levites, they were especially obliged to purify their own souls, and shew zeal and diligence for others; the honour that God had put on them, should quicken them in his service; and, as the father of his people, he addresses them as sons; by every endearing entreaty engaging them to that which was so evidently their duty. *Note;* (1.) They who neglect God's ordinances, declare thereby their apostacy from him. The persons, or family, who neglect the lamp of God's word, and offer no daily incense of prayer and praise, cannot but be in a terrible state of guilt. (2.) There is no way of averting God's fierce anger, but by a penitent return to him in his instituted way. (3.) When through grace our heart is desirous to return, then there is hope. (4.) It is vain to attempt reforming others, till we have first begun with our own souls. (5.) A negligent minister is a most criminal character.

2dly, The first service necessary was, the thorough cleansing of the house of the Lord, which had been so long neglected; and to this the principal Levites then addressed themselves with diligence and earnestness, according to the commandment of the king, and agreeably to God's will, assembling their brethren, and uniting in the same work: many hands, and zeal for the cause, made great dispatch. In eight days they had thoroughly purged the house, and brightened the vessels of service; and in eight more the courts were cleansed. Thus began the happy year; and Hezekiah with pleasure heard that all things were ready for renewing the interrupted worship of God. *Note;* (1.) Much may be done in a short time, when we are truly engaged in the work. (2.) When zealous ministers lead the way, they provoke their brethren to jealousy. (3.) If they were so careful to purge the

temple from filth, how much more so should we be, who are consecrated priests unto God, to cleanse the temple of our hearts from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, that God alone may be exalted there?

3dly, No sooner is the house ready, than Hezekiah is eager to be there. Early the next morning he arose, summoned the rulers to attend him, and went up to the courts of God's sanctuary.

1. He opened the service with sacrifices of atonement for the people in general; all ranks and degrees having been great offenders, and priests and people alike culpable. One goat only was appointed; but, with a consciousness of their great transgressions, and their long neglect of sacrifices, they offered seven, the king and people solemnly confessing their iniquities, and laying their hands on the heads of their sacrifices. *Note;* (1.) There is no returning to God without the atoning blood of Jesus; repentance, without that, could profit us nothing. (2.) They who by faith lay their hands on their Redeemer, shall find him a Saviour to the uttermost.

2. Burnt-offerings of thanksgiving accompanied the sacrifices of atonement. When God is reconciled, praise and thankfulness are our bounden duty.

3. While the offerings were burning, the Levites were, according to the disposition of David, praising God with instruments of music; and the king and people, now emboldened to draw near the throne of grace, repeatedly bowed the head and worshipped. *Note;* All our praises and prayers are then acceptable, when they ascend in the name of Jesus Christ, and in the virtue of his one oblation once offered.

4. As the ministrations were renewed, Hezekiah exhorts the people to supply God's altar liberally, and to draw near to him as his reconciled people: nor were they backward to receive the exhortation; but willingly, according to their abilities, they brought, the more generous, burnt-offerings which were wholly consumed, and others, peace-offerings in abundance, on part of which themselves feasted. *Note;* (1.) They who love God's altar will delight to support the service. (2.) Past neglect should quicken us to more abundant diligence.

5. The priests were not sufficient in number to offer the sacrifices; many of them had been defiled with idols, and might be suspended from their office; others wanted zeal for the service, and neglected to sanctify themselves. The Levites, in general, had been more upright, and many of them were now employed in helping to slay the sacrifices, for want of more priests to whom that office properly belonged: and this, though not according to the law, was, from the necessity of the case, dispensed with. *Note;* (1.) They who should be the first to encourage the revival of godliness are, to their shame, often the last. (2.) When the heart is upright and zealous for God, and they whose duty it is to labour in the ministry are negligent, God will not blame what men may call irregularity in the service.



## CHAP. XXX.

*Hezekiah invites all Israel to celebrate the passover. They come from the tribes of Asher, Manasseh, and Zebulun to Jerusalem, and, with Judah, celebrate the passover on the fourteenth day of the second month.*

[Before Christ 726.]

**A**ND Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel.

2 For the king had taken counsel, and his princes, and all the congregation in Jerusalem, to keep the passover in the second month.

3 For they could not keep it at that time, because the priests had not sanctified themselves sufficiently, neither had the people gathered themselves together to Jerusalem.

4 And the thing pleased the king and all the congregation.

5 So they established a decree to make proclamation throughout all Israel, from Beer-sheba even to Dan, that they should come to keep the passover unto the LORD God of Israel at Jerusalem: for they had not done it of a long time in such sort as it was written.

6 So the posts went with the letters from the king and his princes throughout all Israel and Judah, and according to the commandment of the king, saying, Ye children of Israel, turn again unto the LORD God of Abraham,

Isaac, and Israel, and he will return to the remnant of you, that are escaped out of the hands of the kings of Assyria.

7 And be not ye like your fathers, and like your brethren, which trespassed against the LORD God of their fathers, who therefore gave them up to desolation, as ye see.

8 Now be ye not stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves unto the LORD, and enter into his sanctuary, which he hath sanctified for ever: and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of his wrath may turn away from you.

9 For if ye turn again unto the LORD, your brethren and your children shall find compassion before them that lead them captive, so that they shall come again into this land: for the LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him.

10 So the posts passed from city to city through the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, even unto Zebulun: but they laughed them to scorn, and mocked them.

11 Nevertheless divers of Asher and Manasseh and of Zebulun humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem.

12 Also in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of the LORD.

6. It was matter of universal joy to see the blessed change. The king and people could not but observe the hand of God, preparing and disposing them so readily to join in the service: and the expedition and ease with which the work was done, was a farther manifestation of the divine blessing upon them. *Note;* They who set about God's work, though at first the difficulties seem arduous and insurmountable, will often find the mountain before Zerubbabel become a plain. God has men's hearts in his hand, and can bow the most stubborn to ready compliance.

## CHAP. XXX.

*Ver. 2. For the king had taken counsel, &c.]* The direction which the law gives is, that the passover should be celebrated on the fourteenth day of the first month: but, as it was found impossible to get all things in readiness against that time, it was judged adviseable to adjourn it to the 14th of the next month, rather than stay till the next year: and for this they had some encouragement; because the law allows, that in case any man shall be unclean by

reason of a dead body, or be on a journey afar off, he may eat the passover on the 14th day of the second month, Numb. ix. 10, 11. And what was an indulgence to particular persons, they thought might well be allowed to the whole congregation of Israel.

*Ver. 5. Make proclamation throughout all Israel]* Respecting Hezekiah's invitation to Hoshea's subjects, to repair to Jerusalem to the celebration of his passover, we may well presume that he had encouragement from Hoshea himself, who, as to the matter of religion, has a better character in Scripture than any of his predecessors from the time of the division of the two kingdoms. And the truth was, that both the golden calves which had caused the religious separation were now taken away: that of Dan, by Tiglath-pilezer, and that of Bethel by his son Shalmaneser; and therefore the apostate Jews, being thus deprived of their idols, began to return to the Lord, and to go up to Jerusalem to worship, some time before Hezekiah made them this invitation to his passover. Prideaux, Ann. 729

*For they had not done it, &c.]* Because it had not been celebrated universally, as it was commanded. Houbigant.

13 ¶ And there assembled at Jerusalem much people to keep the feast of unleavened bread in the second month, a very great congregation.

14 And they arose, and took away the altars that *were* in Jerusalem, and all the altars for incense took they away, and cast *them* into the brook Kidron.

15 Then they killed the passover on the fourteenth *day* of the second month: and the priests and the Levites were ashamed, and sanctified themselves, and brought in the burnt-offerings into the house of the LORD.

16 And they stood in their place after their manner, according to the law of Moses the man of God: the priests sprinkled the blood *which they received* of the hand of the Levites.

17 For *there were* many in the congregation that were not sanctified: therefore the Levites had the charge of the killing of the passovers for every one *that was* not clean, to sanctify *them* unto the LORD.

18 For a multitude of the people, *even*

many of Ephraim, and Manasseh, Issachar, and Zebulun, had not cleansed themselves, yet did they eat the passover otherwise than it was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, The good LORD pardon every one

19 *That* prepareth his heart to seek God, the LORD God of his fathers, though *he be* not *cleansed* according to the purification of the sanctuary.

20 And the LORD hearkened to Hezekiah, and healed the people.

21 And the children of Israel that were present at Jerusalem kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with great gladness: and the Levites and the priests praised the LORD day by day, *singing* with loud instruments unto the LORD.

22 And Hezekiah spake comfortably unto all the Levites that taught the good knowledge of the LORD: and they did eat throughout the feast seven days, offering peace-offerings, and making confession to the LORD God of their fathers.

23 And the whole assembly took counsel to

*Ver. 21. With loud instruments.] With instruments of praise. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 22. Hezekiah spake comfortably, &c.] For Hezekiah had with gentle discourse persuaded the Levites, who were intelligent in divine things, that they should celebrate the festival seven days, and offer peace-offerings and thanksgivings to the Lord God of their fathers. Houbigant.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Hezekiah sends messengers with circular letters, not only through Judah, but the cities of Israel. He wanted not the Israelites to return under his government, but to seek the favour of that God whom they had forsaken. He exhorts them to embrace the present opportunity, and, by an unfeigned surrender of themselves to God, continue no longer rebellious and stiff-necked as their fathers, lest their obstinacy should end in their ruin. Severe had been the corrections which they had endured for their apostacy; a small remnant of them only now remained. Their sufferings at least should make them wise, and engage them to seek the slighted sanctuary of God: and highly was it their interest, as well as duty; for, by no other means could they hope to avert the fierce wrath of God gone forth against them. But if now they humbled themselves, God would remember his covenant with their fathers, and shew himself gracious and merciful according to the promises, and not turn his face from them in anger, but lift up the light of his countenance to comfort them, and restore their brethren from captivity. *Note;* (1.) It is never too late for the sinner to return, while the calls

of grace found in his ears, and the promises afford a ground of hope. (2.) Nothing can so strongly prove the desperate stubbornness of the sinner's heart, as his insensibility to the gracious invitations of God. (3.) Impenitence persisted in, must necessarily be fatal. (4.) When we have done all that we can to beseech men by the mercies of God to return to him, if they obstinately refuse, their blood then is on their own heads; we are free.

2. The messengers meet with very different entertainment. The king of Israel gave them no obstruction in the execution of their commission; yet the people of Ephraim and Manasseh, and the rest in general, not only slighted the message, but derided the messengers. Some, however, felt the weighty contents of the letters, and with deep humiliation gladly embraced the opportunity of coming to Jerusalem to keep the passover. The men of Judah were happily more nearly unanimous; God bowed their hearts as the heart of one man, to come, according to God's word and the king's command, to the solemn festival. *Note;* (1.) It is no uncommon thing for the messengers of God to be mocked for their message's sake. (2.) Their disease seems very desperate, who thus impiously reject the only method of cure. (3.) When God brings a sinner to humiliation, then there is hope. (4.) If any man be inclined or enabled to return to God, this must be acknowledged as his gift.

2dly, A vast congregation being assembled,  
1. They prepared for the celebration of the passover, by removing every idol altar that was found in Jerusalem.

*Note;*

keep other seven days: and they kept *other* seven days with gladness.

24 For Hezekiah king of Judah did give to the congregation a thousand bullocks and seven thousand sheep; and the princes gave to the congregation a thousand bullocks and ten thousand sheep: and a great number of priests sanctified themselves.

25 And all the congregation of Judah, with the priests and the Levites, and all the congregation that came out of Israel, and the strangers that came out of the land of Israel, and that dwelt in Judah, rejoiced.

26 So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel *there was not the like* in Jerusalem.

27 ¶ Then the priests the Levites arose and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came *up* to his holy dwelling-place, *even* unto heaven.

*Note:* When we truly return to God, it will be our care to put away iniquity from us.

2. The zeal of the people shamed the priests and Levites, and stirred them up with earnestness to sanctify themselves, that they might be ready for their work; the Levites to bring, and the priests to sprinkle, the blood of the sacrifices. *Note:* (1.) The hope of the sinner is this blood of sprinkling. (2.) The zeal of others should provoke us to jealousy and emulation.

3. Because many masters of families were ceremonially unclean, the Levites killed the passover for them; yet were they admitted to eat it, though they were not prepared according to the divine prescription.

4. Hezekiah, who observed the irregularity, failed not to cry to God to pardon it. The shortness of the notice permitted not those who in sincerity desired to please God, to be cleansed according to the purification of the sanctuary; he, therefore, prays the good Lord that it might be forgiven. *Note:* If our souls are simply desirous to seek God, he will pity and pardon our infirmities.

5. In answer to Hezekiah's prayers, God healed the breach that their sin had made, and graciously embraced them in the arms of his pardoning mercy.

3dly, The seven days of unleavened bread followed the passover, and they were spent in sacrifices and holy joy before the Lord. Hezekiah nobly supplied the altar with a thousand bullocks, and seven thousand sheep, for peace-offerings, and the people with provision; and the princes, quickened by his zeal, emulated his example. The Levites, comforted and encouraged by the king, diligently instructed the people in the sacred word of God, and assisted them in their devotions; while they confessed their sins, and acknowledged the undeserved mercy which

## CHAP. XXXI.

*The children of Israel are forward in destroying idolatry. Hezekiah restores the courses of the priests and Levites; enjoins the payment of tithes, and acts with great sincerity in the reformation.*

[Before Christ 726.]

**N**OW when all this was finished, all Israel that were present went out to the cities of Judah, and brake the images in pieces, and cut down the groves, and threw down the high places and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, in Ephraim also and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned, every man to his possession into their own cities.

2 ¶ And Hezekiah appointed the courses of the priests and the Levites after their courses, every man according to his service, the priests and Levites for burnt-offerings, and for peace-offerings, to minister, and to give thanks, and to praise in the gates of the tents of the LORD.

they now experienced; and every day they praised God in psalms, and made melody in their hearts unto God. Great was the joy of all the assembly; and, happy in the service, they prolonged it seven days more, and then parted, after the priests had pronounced the benediction, and God from heaven had ratified the blessing. *Note:* (1.) They who are great are especially called to be generous. (2.) When we appear before God, it becomes us to rejoice in his mercy. (3.) A word of comfortable encouragement is the meed due to faithful labourers. (4.) In all our approaches to God, confession of sin ought never to be forgotten. (5.) They who truly love God's service will not think any time spent in it long. (6.) When God's ministers bless in his name, he will confirm their word, and bestow the benediction which they pronounce.

## CHAP. XXXI.

*Ver. 1. In Ephraim also, and Manasseh]* Though these tribes made part of Hoshea's dominions, yet Hezekiah might direct this abolition of idolatry in them, either in virtue of a law which bound Israel as well as Judah, and required the extirpation of these things in the whole land of Canaan; or by the special impulse and direction of God's spirit, which puts men upon heroic actions, though not to be drawn into imitation; or, out of a firm persuasion that his neighbour Hoshea, who had permitted his subjects to repair to the passover, would approve of, and consent to, what he did in this respect. See Poole's Annotations.

*Ver. 2. To praise in the gates of the tents of the Lord]* See 1 Chron. ix. 19.

*Ver.*

3 *He appointed* also the king's portion of his substance for the burnt-offerings, *to wit*, for the morning and evening burnt-offerings, and the burnt-offerings for the sabbaths, and for the new-moons, and for the set feasts, as *it is written* in the law of the LORD.

4 Moreover he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the LORD.

5 ¶ And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought in abundance the first-fruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the field; and the tithe of all *things* brought they in abundantly.

6 And *concerning* the children of Israel and Judah, that dwelt in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithe of oxen and sheep, and the tithe of holy things which were consecrated unto the LORD their God, and laid *them* by heaps.

7 In the third month they began to lay the foundation of the heaps, and finished *them* in the seventh month.

8 And when Hezekiah and the princes came and saw the heaps, they blessed the LORD, and his people Israel.

9 Then Hezekiah questioned with the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps.

10 And Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok answered him, and said, Since *the people* began to bring the offerings into the

house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty: for the LORD hath blessed his people; and that which is left *is* this great store.

11 ¶ Then Hezekiah commanded to prepare chambers in the house of the LORD; and they prepared *them*,

12 And brought in the offerings and the tithes and the dedicated *things* faithfully: over which Cononiah the Levite *was* ruler, and Shimei his brother *was* the next.

13 And Jehiel, and Azariah, and Nahath, and Afahel, and Jerimoth, and Jozabad, and Eliel, and Ismachiah, and Mahath, and Benaiah, *were* overseers under the hand of Cononiah and Shimei his brother at the commandment of Hezekiah the king, and Azariah the ruler of the house of God.

14 And Kore the son of Imnah the Levite, the porter toward the east, *was* over the free-will offerings of God, to distribute the oblations of the LORD, and the most holy things.

15 And next him *were* Eden, and Miniamin, and Jeshua, and Shemaiah, Amariah, and Shecaniah, in the cities of the priests, in *their* set office, to give to their brethren by courses, as well to the great as to the small:

16 Besides their genealogy of males, from three years old and upward, *even* unto every one that entereth into the house of the LORD, his daily portion for their service in their charges according to their courses;

17 Both to the genealogy of the priests by

*Ver. 12. The dedicated things faithfully*] *The dedicated things for a deposit.* Houbigant; who observes, that *Miniamin* in the 15th verse should be read *Benjamin*.

*Ver. 16. Besides their genealogy of males*] *With whom, moreover, were numbered their sons:* and so in the 17th and 18th verses. The last clause of the 18th verse Houbigant renders thus: *Because the sacred gifts were committed to their trust.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The gracious impression that God had made on the people's hearts ended not with the ordinance from whence they came; but they continued to make their profiting appear,

1. In the destruction of every idolatrous relick, not only in Judah, but also in Ephraim and Manasseh; out of those cities, at least, from whence the people came up to Jerusalem: and when this good work was done, they returned in peace every man to his own house. *Note;*

(1.) It is comfortable returning to our home when we carry along with us the blessing of God. (2.) They who truly cleave to God, have their hearts set against all sin, without one allowed reserve.

2. Hezekiah took care that the service which was begun should be regularly carried on. The priests, Levites, and singers, in their several courses, were appointed to minister before the Lord, and their maintenance was provided for. He himself set the example, by appropriating a part of his revenue for the stated offerings, morning and evening, on the new moons, sabbaths, and festivals; and he commanded his people to contribute to so good a work, for the encouragement of God's ministers in their labours. *Note;* (1.) They deserve to be encouraged who labour in the word and doctrine. (2.) God never intended that any drones should be fed in his hive. (3.) Whether we want or abound here, we know that if we are faithful we cannot at last lose our reward.

3. The

the house of their fathers, and the Levites from twenty years old and upward, in their charges by their courses;

18 And to the genealogy of all their little ones, their wives, and their sons, and their daughters, through all the congregation: for in their set office they sanctified themselves in holiness:

19 Also of the sons of Aaron the priests, *which were* in the fields of the suburbs of their cities, in every several city, the men that were expressed by name, to give portions to all the males among the priests, and to all that were reckoned by genealogies among the Levites.

20 ¶ And thus did Hezekiah throughout all Judah, and wrought *that which was* good and right and truth before the LORD his God.

21 And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did *it* with all his heart, and prospered.

3. The people very readily obeyed the king's command; their firstlings, tithes, and offerings were brought; and what was more than the priests and Levites could use, was laid on heaps, from the beginning to the end of harvest. The quantity attracted the king's inquiry; and the high-priest informed him of God's blessing on the people, and that these just dues afforded them a plentiful maintenance, with enough for winter's store. For such mercies the king and princes blessed the Lord, and commended the people for their readiness and faithful contribution. *Note;* (1.) None were ever losers by a conscientious rendering to God of the things which are God's. (2.) Whatever good appears, God must be acknowledged as the blessed author of it. (3.) They who do well deserve commendation. (4.) The soul that hath profited by God's ministers, will never grudge them a maintenance.

2dly, We have,  
1. The care which Hezekiah took of the tithes, and the equitable distribution of them. Keepers were appointed; chambers fitted up in the court of the temple, to lay up the stores; and while they who in course waited in the temple, with their sons from three years old and upwards, were entirely provided for, that they might wait on the Lord without their attention being diverted, they who lived in the cities or villages were not neglected; but every one received a proportionate supply, according to the largeness of their families. *Note;* (1.) Wise economy is the way to secure abiding plenty. (2.) They who wait upon the Lord with diligence, may confidently trust him for a provision. (3.) Minister's families, as well as themselves, should be considered, and taken care of. (4.) The

CHAP. XXXII.

*Sennacherib invades Judah. An angel destroys the army of the Assyrians. Hezekiah's sickness and recovery. He dies, and is succeeded by his son Manasseh.*

[Before Christ 710.]

**A**FTER these things, and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib king of Assyria came, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself.

2 And when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem,

3 He took counsel with his princes and his mighty men, to stop the waters of the fountains which *were* without the city: and they did help him.

4 So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come, and find much water?

unequal distribution of church-revenues is a great evil. How unjust it is, that one should loll in affluence and indolence, while a laborious brother scarcely eats bread from the altar at which he serves!

*Pudet hæc opprobria nobis,  
Et dici potuisse, et non potuisse refelli.*

2. Hezekiah's universally excellent character is remarked. All his people shared his pious regard: God had his heart; he was zealously affected in his blessed service, and went through with it without declension or weariness; and, as the effect of such perseverance, prosperity attended all his undertakings. *Note;* When our hearts are truly sincere in God's service, we shall see with comfort the fruit of our labours.

CHAP. XXXII.

*Ver. 4. The brook that ran through the midst of the land]* As a plentiful fountain was very necessary, in that country, at the places where they were wont to rendezvous; so the want of water must have been very terrible in any after-encampments, while they pursued the war; and especially when they had to stay any time in such a place. The thought, therefore, of Hezekiah, here proposed to his princes, of stopping all the fountains, and the brook which ran through the midst of the land, was at this critical juncture very natural. But it may be thought to be a proof of the great simplicity of antiquity to entertain such a design, and the more so if he was able to effect it. How could fountains and a brook be so stopped, as totally to be concealed? How easy was it for so mighty an army as the

5 Also he strengthened himself, and built up all the wall *that was* broken, and raised it up to the towers, and another wall without, and repaired Millo *in* the city of David, and made darts and shields in abundance.

6 And he set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him in the street of the gate of the city, and spake comfortably to them, saying,

7 Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that *is* with him: for *there be* more with us than with him:

8 With him *is* an arm of flesh; but with us *is* the LORD our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

9 ¶ After this did Sennacherib king of Assyria send his servants to Jerusalem, (but he

*himself laid siege* against Lachish, and all his power with him,) unto Hezekiah king of Judah, and unto all Judah that *were* at Jerusalem, saying,

10 Thus saith Sennacherib king of Assyria, Whereon do ye trust, that ye abide in the siege in Jerusalem?

11 Doth not Hezekiah persuade you to give over yourselves to die by famine and by thirst, saying, The LORD our God shall deliver us out of the hand of the king of Assyria?

12 Hath not the same Hezekiah taken away his high places and his altars, and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall worship before one altar, and burn incense upon it?

13 Know ye not what I and my fathers have done unto all the people of *other* lands? were the gods of the nations of those lands any ways able to deliver their lands out of mine hand?

the Assyrian to sink a multitude of wells? But, odd as this contrivance may seem, it was actually made use of at the same place many centuries after the time of Hezekiah, and greatly perplexed an European army, and that too assembled from various warlike countries. Previous to the siege of Jerusalem by the Croises in 1099, its inhabitants, having had advice of their coming, *stopped up* the mouths of their *fountains* and cisterns for five or six miles round the city, that, oppressed with thirst, they might be obliged to desist from their design of besieging it. This management, we are told, occasioned infinite trouble afterwards to the Christian army, the inhabitants in the meantime not only having plenty of rain water, but enjoying the benefit also of the springs without the town, their waters being conveyed by aqueducts into two very large basins within it. These precautions, indeed, did not hinder the Croises from succeeding at last; but then their army was distressed with thirst in the most terrible manner; though it had the assistance of some of the Christian inhabitants of Beth-lehem and Tekoa, who, being in the army, conducted the people to fountains four or five miles distant; for the nearer neighbourhood of Jerusalem was a very dry and unwatered soil, having scarcely any brooks, fountains, or pits of fresh water; and all those they filled up with dust, and by other means, as much as they could, and either broke down the cisterns of rain water, or *hid* them. All this shews the impracticability of an army's supplying itself with water by sinking of wells, springs being rare there, and the soil, on the contrary, extremely dry. It shews also, how easily such wells as have a supply of water may be concealed, which are what the term here מַנְיָנוֹת *manyanoth* rendered *fountains* frequently means, and what Hezekiah must mean, since there was no fountain to form any brook in the near neighbourhood of Jerusalem, except that of Siloam, which, I presume, is the brook that Jeremiah speaks of, and

which, in the time of the Croisades, was not, it should seem, attempted to be stopped up. What the cause of that was, we are not told; but it seems that the waters of some springs without the city were conveyed into Jerusalem at that time; and that Solomon, in his reign, had attempted to do the like, as to part of the water of the springs of Beth-lehem, and effected it. See Maundrell's Travels, p. 89. It was no wonder, then, that Hezekiah should think of introducing the waters of Siloam in like manner into the city, in order at once to deprive the besiegers of its waters, and to benefit the inhabitants of Jerusalem by them. Probably it was done in the same manner that Solomon brought the waters of Beth-lehem thither; namely, by collecting the water of the spring or springs into a subterraneous reservoir, and from thence, by a concealed aqueduct, conveying them into Jerusalem; with this difference, that Solomon took only part of the Beth-lehem water, leaving the rest to flow into those celebrated *pools* which remain to this day; whereas Hezekiah turned all the water of Siloam into the city, absolutely stopping up the outlet into the pool, and filling it up with earth, that no trace of it might be seen by the Assyrians: which seems, indeed, to be the meaning of the sacred writer in the 30th verse, where the original may as well be rendered, *Hezekiah stopped the upper going-out of the waters of Gihon, and directed them underneath to the west of the city of David*; and so Pagninus and Arius Montanus understand the passage. He *stopped up* the outlet of the waters of Gihon into the open air, by which they were wont to pass into the pool of Siloam, and became a *brook*; and by some subterraneous contrivance directed the waters to the west side of Jerusalem. See *Observations*, p. 337.

Ver. 5. *Raised it up to the towers*] And he also added towers to it. Houbigant.

Ver.

14 Who *was there* among all the gods of those nations that my fathers utterly destroyed, that could deliver his people out of mine hand, that your God should be able to deliver you out of mine hand?

15 Now therefore let not Hezekiah deceive you, nor persuade you on this manner, neither yet believe him: for no god of any nation or kingdom was able to deliver his people out of mine hand, and out of the hand of my fathers: how much less shall your God deliver you out of mine hand?

16 And his servants spake yet *more* against the LORD God, and against his servant Hezekiah.

17 He wrote also letters to rail on the LORD God of Israel, and to speak against him, saying, As the gods of the nations of *other* lands have not delivered their people out of mine hand, so shall not the God of Hezekiah deliver his people out of mine hand.

18 Then they cried with a loud voice in the Jews' speech unto the people of Jerusalem that *were* on the wall, to affright them, and to trouble them; that they might take the city.

19 And they spake against the God of Jerusalem, as against the gods of the people of the earth, *which were* the work of the hands of man.

20 ¶ And for this *cause* Hezekiah the king, and the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz, prayed and cried to heaven.

21 And the LORD sent an angel, which cut

off all the mighty men of valour, and the leaders and captains in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned with shame of face to his own land. And when he was come into the house of his god, they that came forth of his own bowels slew him there with the sword.

22 Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria, and from the hand of all *other*, and guided them on every side.

23 And many brought gifts unto the LORD to Jerusalem, and presents to Hezekiah king of Judah: so that he was magnified in the sight of all nations from thenceforth.

24 ¶ In those days Hezekiah was sick to the death, and prayed unto the LORD: and he spake unto him, and he gave him a sign.

25 But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit *done* unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem.

26 Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, *both* he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah.

27 ¶ And Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honour: and he made himself treasures for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels;

Ver. 24. And he spake unto him] And he was entreated of him. See the 13th verse of the next chapter.

Ver. 27. And for shields] Houbigant here reads *precious things*, instead of *shields*.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We might have expected that all would be peace and safety *after these good things* that Hezekiah had done; but behold a dreadful storm arises. We may be in the way of duty, and yet exposed to severe sufferings. It was happy that Hezekiah was not interrupted before he had well proceeded in his work; and now, having God's blessing, he is better prepared to meet his violent foe.

1. Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, invades his country with an army which threatened to swallow him up. His father had lately subdued Israel, and he hoped to find Judah as easy a prey.

2. Hezekiah, who perceived his design against Jeru-

salem, not having forces to meet him in the field, prepares wisely for the siege that he expected, by endeavouring to cut off all supplies of water from the besiegers, strengthening the city with new fortifications, and providing abundance of military weapons. *Note*; When danger threatens, it is prudent to prepare for it. We must trust God above all means, but never tempt him in the neglect of them.

3. The good king assembles the people, and, while he marshals them under proper officers, encourages their hearts, and comforts them, that they may not think of surrender, but bravely stand in the evil day. The danger was great, and required boldness and courage; yet they need not be dismayed at this mighty and numerous host. Angelic legions, if needful, more numerous, should protect them; and, above all, God was with them, in power almighty, in faithfulness unchangeable; and therefore they might confidently expect the victory over their enemies. *Note*; (1.) Strong faith silences fear. (2.) No



28 Storehouses also for the increase of corn, and wine, and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and cotes for flocks.

29 Moreover he provided him cities, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance: for God had given him substance very much.

30 This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper watercourse of Gihon, and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works.

31 ¶ Howbeit in *the business* of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, God left him, to try him, that he might know all *that was* in his heart.

32 ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and his goodness, behold, they *are* written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, and in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

33 And Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David: and all Judah

and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death. And Manasseh his son reigned in his stead.

## CHAP. XXXIII.

*Manasseh reigns fifty-five years, and is guilty of gross idolatry. He is carried captive to Babylon; but, upon true repentance, is restored to his kingdom. He is succeeded by his son Amon, who reigns two years, is slain by his servants, and succeeded by his son Josiah.*

[Before Christ 676.]

**M**ANASSEH was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty-and-five years in Jerusalem:

2 But did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.

3 For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.

4 Also he built altars in the house of the

foes can stand before him who is the captain of our salvation; who, having already vanquished for us sin, death, and hell, will make us more than conquerors over them.

2dly, The account of this siege we had before, more at large, 2 Kings, xviii. xix. The substance is here shortly summed up, of Sennacherib's blasphemy, Hezekiah's prayer, and God's gracious interposition to save him. It may teach us, (1.) The enmity of the natural heart against God and his people. (2.) The great enemy of souls especially labours to discourage us; knowing, that till our faith is shaken we cannot be moved. (3.) railing and abuse are poor arguments; and sinners will find, that shortly their own tongues shall fall upon themselves. (4.) Prayer, in every distress, is the way to the door of hope. (5.) God covers the proud with confusion, and turns against themselves the sword which they draw upon others.

3dly, Such a wonderful deliverance alarmed the neighbour-nations, and they with presents courted *his* favour who had God so evidently for his friend. God thus protected them from every enemy, and guided and guarded them as a shepherd does his flock. How happy, how honourable, how safe the soul, which dwells thus under the shadow of the Almighty!

4thly, Hezekiah's reign concludes gloriously, notwithstanding the fall which is here recorded.

1. Hezekiah's sickness and recovery, more largely treated of before, are here scarcely mentioned. But,

2. His sin and recovery have several particulars more than in 2 Kings, xx. [1.] The embassy of the king

of Babylon was intended not so much to congratulate him on his recovery or his victory, as to inquire into the wonder of the sun's going back at the prophet's word. [2.] He did not suitably improve his mercies; but, instead of being humbled before God, grew proud on the instances of his favour, and the honour and respect paid him by the neighbouring nations. *Note;* (1.) Though we can never repay the obligations that we owe to God, he expects at least the tribute of a grateful heart. (2.) Pride is the busy sin: even God's gifts and graces may afford a handle for self-complacency. We had need ever pray that God would clothe us with humility. [3.] His sin provoked the divine displeasure. Pride in God's people is especially offensive to him. [4.] His humiliation, in which the people joined him, prevented the immediate execution of the threatened judgments. *Note;* (1.) Heart-sins must be repented of, or they will destroy us. (2.) When God gives a spirit of humility, it is a proof of his reconciliation.

3. Hezekiah's days ended prosperously. His riches and treasures were greatly increased. The supply of the city with water from the stream of Gihon, is remarked among his noble works, many other of which, as well as a farther account of his goodness, are written in the books of Isaiah and Kings. Death at last removed him to a better crown; and the people, afflicted with the loss of so great and good a king, shewed him every distinguished honour, by laying him in the noblest sepulchre of his fathers, burning spices, and lamenting him with no feigned grief. *Note;* They who have lived revered and respected will in death be justly lamented.

LORD, whereof the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall my name be for ever.

5 And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.

6 And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and dealt with a familiar spirit, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

7 And he set a carved image, the idol which he had made, in the house of God, of which God had said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen before all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever:

8 Neither will I any more remove the foot of Israel from out of the land which I have appointed for your fathers; so that they will take heed to do all that I have commanded them, according to the whole law and the statutes and the ordinances by the hand of Moses.

9 So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel.

10 ¶ And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his people; but they would not hearken.

11 Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.

12 And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers,

13 And prayed unto him: and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God.

14 ¶ Now after this he built a wall without the city of David, on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entering-in at the fish-gate, and compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah.

15 And he took away the strange gods, and the idol out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city.

16 And he repaired the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed thereon peace-offerings and

### CHAP. XXXIII.

*Ver. 12. When he was in affliction, he besought the Lord &c.]* The Jews have a tradition, that while Manasseh was at Babylon, by the direction of his conqueror, he was put in a large brazen vessel, full of holes, and set near a great fire; that, in his extremity, he had recourse to all those false deities to whom he had offered so many sacrifices, but received no relief from them; that, remembering what he had heard his good father Hezekiah say, namely, "When thou art in tribulation, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee." Deut. iv. 30, 31. he was thereupon immediately delivered, and in a moment translated to his kingdom. This is no less a fiction than that miraculous flame, which the author of the imperfect comment upon St. Matthew speaks of, that encompassed Manasseh on a sudden as he was praying to God, and, having melted his chains asunder, set him at liberty. In all probability, it was Saos-duchin, the successor of Esar-haddon, who, some years after his captivity, released Manasseh out of prison. Bishop Hall remarks, from this verse, the truth of that saying of the prophet, *Affliction giveth understanding.* If the cross bear us not to

heaven, says he, nothing can. What use were there of the grain, but for the edge of the sickle wherewith it is cut down, the stroke of the flail wherewith it is threshed, the weight and attrition of the mill wherewith it is crushed, the fire of the oven wherewith it is baked? Say now, Manasseh, with that grandfather of thine, *It is good for me that I have been afflicted:* thine iron was more precious to thee than thy gold; thy jail was a more happy lodging to thee than thy palace; Babylon was a better school to thee than Jerusalem. How foolish are we, to frown upon our afflictions! These, how severe soever, are our best friends: they are not, indeed, for our pleasure, but for our profit; their issue makes them worthy of a welcome. What should we care how bitter that potion is that brings us health?

*Ver. 13. And prayed unto him.]* We have a prayer which, it is pretended, he made in prison. The church does not receive it as canonical; but it has a place among the apocryphal pieces, and in our collection stands before the book of Maccabees. The Greek church has received it into its book of prayers; and it is there sometimes used as a devout form, and as containing nothing deserving of censure.

thank-offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel.

17 Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still in the high places, yet unto the LORD their God only.

18 ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer unto his God, and the words of the seers that spake to him in the name of the LORD God of Israel, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel.

19 His prayer also, and how God was entreated of him, and all his sin, and his trespass, and the places wherein he built high places, and set up groves and graven images, before he was humbled: behold, they are written among the sayings of the seers.

20 ¶ So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house: and Amon his son reigned in his stead.

21 ¶ Amon was two-and-twenty years old

*Ver. 17. Nevertheless the people did sacrifice still, &c.]* Rabbi Kimchi observes very well here, that though Manasseh's repentance might have been sincere, yet it was attended with a melancholy circumstance that ought to sound in the ear of every one invested with power. His example and authority easily seduced his people to idolatry; but his royal mandate was unable to reclaim them.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Manasseh's wicked beginning was before observed, 2 Kings, xxi. He was idolatrous, profane, abandoned to every evil, and strove as if to root out the name of the Lord, that it should be no more had in remembrance: hardened against reproof, and not content to be vile himself, compelling his people to worse abominations than ever the heathen committed. *Note;* (1.) The work of reformation is with difficulty accomplished, the establishment of wickedness readily complied with. (2.) Could many good fathers return from their graves, their hearts would break to see the abominations of their ungodly children. (3.) God leaves not the worst without some checks of conscience, or reproofs from his word; but they rush determinedly on their ruin.

2dly, Though God bears long and is kind, he will make inquisition at last.

1. The king of Babylon, now the conqueror of Assyria, advances, and, having borne down all before him, drags forth the wicked Manasseh from a thicket of thorns, whither he had fled to hide himself, and, binding him in fetters, carries him captive to Babylon. Now Hezekiah's treasures were given for a prey, and the people received the just scourge of their faithless apostacy.

2. What all the former warnings could not effect, this heavy affliction brought about. In his misery, Manasseh thought upon God, and with deep humiliation cried for mercy. Happy prison! How infinitely better to him, than the defiled palaces of Zion. *Note;* (1.) Sanctified afflictions are among the greatest mercies. (2.) They who remember in trouble their own evil ways, will feel the bitterness of them, and groan being burdened. (3.) There is no case so desperate as to exclude hope, while there is access to the throne of grace.

3. God had compassion upon him, and inclined the heart of the king of Babylon to pity and restore him to his lost dignity. *Note;* (1.) The vilest of sinners need not despair when Manasseh is pardoned. (2.) When our misery drives us to God, he will not refuse to help us. (3.) The prayer of penitence never yet ascended without receiving the answer of peace.

4. Made wise by past experience, he now knew that the Lord alone was God, whose rod he had felt, and whose mercy he had tasted: therefore, with detestation of his former abominations, every idol is destroyed out of God's house; his ruined altar is repaired: his sacrifices and service are restored, and the people brought back from their idolatry. The high places, indeed, were not taken away; but though on them they still sacrificed, it was to the Lord Jehovah only. *Note;* (1.) Where the heart is truly converted, there will be a thorough change in the conduct. (2.) The worship of God is among the first concerns of the awakened soul. (3.) When we are brought to a sense of our sins, we shall zealously labour to recover those whom we have seduced, or emboldened to transgress, by our own ill examples.

5. In consequence of his unfeigned repentance, God strengthened him in his kingdom, Jerusalem was fortified, and the cities of Judah garrisoned. Without God, all defences are vain: if he be with us, his name is a strong tower; the righteous fleeeth unto it, and are safe.

6. Manasseh no more revolted from God. The sun, which rose so eclipsed, set with splendour. Accounts of his wickedness and repentance were preserved in the books of the kings of Israel, and the writings of the seers, who had spoken to him in the name of the Lord. He rejected their message indeed at first, but afterwards acknowledged his guilt and shame, and wished its memory to be perpetuated as a warning to others. He was buried privately, probably at his own desire as a mark of humiliation, and left his throne to his ungodly son and successor Amon. *Note;* (1.) Though God has forgiven our sin, to our last hour we had need remember, and be confounded at the review of it. (2.) They who are true penitents are most willing to take shame to themselves for their sins.

3dly, Amon copied the worst of his father's wicked ways. The images which Manasseh had cast out, and should have destroyed, he restored. More madly attached to his idols, than even his unhappy father had been, and incorrigible in his sin, he never, like him, repented. Short was his career of impiety: in two years he fell by a conspiracy of his own servants, and left the kingdom to the last good king of Judah. *Note;* (1.) Final impenitence seals up the soul under eternal ruin. (2.) That which is evil, is much easier copied than what is good. (3.) It is a mercy to a land when wicked magistrates are quickly cut off from it.

when he began to reign, and reigned two years in Jerusalem.

22 But he did *that which was* evil in the sight of the LORD, as did Manasseh his father: for Amon sacrificed unto all the carved images which Manasseh his father had made, and served them;

23 And humbled not himself before the LORD, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more.

24 And his servants conspired against him, and slew him in his own house.

25 ¶ But the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead.

#### CHAP. XXXIV.

*Josiah reigns thirty-one years. He destroys the idols, and purifies the temple. Hilkiah the priest finds the book of the law in the temple, concerning which Josiah consults Huldah the prophetess.*

[Before Christ 623.]

**J**OSIAH *was* eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned in Jerusalem one-and-thirty years.

2 And he did *that which was* right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined *neither* to the right hand, nor to the left.

3 ¶ For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images.

4 And they brake down the altars of Baalim in his presence; and the images, that *were* on high above them, he cut down: and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images, he brake in pieces, and made dust of them, and strewed it upon the graves of them that had sacrificed unto them.

5 And he burned the bones of the priests upon their altars, and cleansed Judah and Jerusalem.

6 And *so did he* in the cities of Manasseh, and Ephraim, and Simeon, even unto Naphtali, with their mattocks, round about.

7 And when he had broken down the altars and the groves, and had beaten the graven images into powder, and cut down all the idols throughout all the land of Israel, he returned to Jerusalem.

8 ¶ Now in the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land, and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the LORD his God.

9 And when they came to Hilkiah the high priest, they delivered the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites that kept the doors had gathered of the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel, and of all Judah and Benjamin; and they returned to Jerusalem.

10 And they put it in the hand of the workmen that had the oversight of the house of the LORD, and they gave it to the workmen that wrought in the house of the LORD, to repair and mend the house:

11 Even to the artificers and builders gave they it to buy hewn stone, and timber for couplings, and to floor the houses which the kings of Judah had destroyed.

12 And the men did the work faithfully: and the overseers of them *were* Jahath and Obadiah, the Levites, of the sons of Merari; and Zechariah and Meshullam, of the sons of the Kohathites, to set it forward; and *other of* the Levites, all that could skill of instruments of musick.

13 Also *they were* over the bearers of burdens, and *were* overseers of all that wrought the work in any manner of service: and of the Levites *there were* scribes, and officers, and porters.

14 ¶ And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiah the priest found a book of the law of the LORD, given by Moses.

#### CHAP. XXXIV.

*Ver. 4. Images that were on high] Or, solar statues. Or, temples dedicated to the fire.*

*Ver. 14. A book of the law—given by Moses] See note on 2 Kings, xxii. 8. The word given is not in the Hebrew. It is literally, A book of the law of Jehovah,*

15 And Hilkiab answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiab delivered the book to Shaphan.

16 And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and brought the king word back again, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they do it.

17 And they have gathered together the

money that was found in the house of the LORD, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and to the hand of the workmen.

18 Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiab the priest hath given me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king.

19 And it came to pass, when the king had heard the words of the law, that he rent his clothes.

*In the hand of Moses.* It is scarcely possible for words more naturally to describe a book written by Moses himself, or to vouch more fully that the manuscript of the law at this time found was in the hand-writing of Moses: and though there are fifteen places in the Old Testament (Josh. viii. 31, 32. 1 Kings, ii. 3. 2 Kings, xiv. 6. xxiii. 25. 2 Chron. xxiii. 18. xxv. 4. xxx. 16. xxxv. 12. Ezra, iii. 2. vi. 18. Neh. xiii. 1. Dan. ix. 11. 13. and Mal. iv. 4.) which contain the words, *law of Moses, and book of Moses*; yet this one place only mentions *the book of the law in the hand or by the hand of Moses*: the reason of which seems to be, that the other places speak of that law in general, but this place speaks of one particular manuscript, namely, the original. As to the point of age, this manuscript might certainly be the original, distance of time leaving it very possible; for the most extended chronology does not make the interval from the death of Moses to the death of Josiah, 950 years; an age exceeded by that of several manuscripts preserved at this day. Kennicott's Diff. vol. ii. p. 299.

*Ver. 19. The king—rent his clothes*] If there were several copies of the law in Judah taken from the venerable original of Moses, under the inspection of the high-priest or some prophet, how are we to account for the surprise expressed by Josiah and the people, at his reading the copy found by Hilkiab? To this I answer, that their ignorance of the law may fairly and fully be accounted for from the history of the preceding reigns; only from recollecting what a very idolatrous king Manasseh was for fifty-five years; and that he wanted neither power nor inclination to destroy the copies of the law, had they not been secreted by the servants of the true God. The law, after being so long concealed, would be unknown to almost all the Jews; and thus the solemn reading of it by good king Josiah (to whom it might be discovered safely) would awaken his own and the people's earnest attention. The copy produced was probably the original, written by Moses, which would excite still greater veneration: but if it were not, we cannot doubt that it had the proper marks of authenticity. And it must be added, that copies of the Pentateuch had providentially been long before this time in the hands of their enemies, the Israelites and Samaritans: which single circumstance shews the impracticability of what some had been pleased to intimate, that Hilkiab might introduce a spurious Pentateuch; so that, upon the whole, there might be many copies of the law extant in Judah, and the copy produced by Hilkiab may have been the autograph or hand-writing of Moses, notwithstanding this objection. Kennicott's Diff. vol. 2. p. 301.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Josiah began very young to reign, and, probably, during his minority things continued as his ungodly father had left them: but in his sixteenth year God was pleased graciously to work upon his heart; and, notwithstanding the bad education he may be supposed to have had, he then began to seek the Lord; and when, in the twelfth year of his reign, he took the government into his own hands, he resolutely set himself to purge out the abominations of his kingdom. Nor did he merely remove them, as Manasseh did, but utterly destroyed them; reduced the idols and groves to dust, and cast it on the graves of the dead; defiled the altars by burning the dead bones of their priests upon them, and then beat them in pieces; and this reformation he carried on, not only through Judah, but through the cities of Israel, going round himself to see the work accomplished. *Note*: (1.) Those whom God chooses for a great work, he generally calls in the days of their youth. (2.) The business which the master himself attends, will be well done.

2dly, When the house of God was thoroughly purged, and he had returned from his progress, (which he seems to have repeated, 2 Kings, xxiv. after the temple-service was re-established,) he gave orders for the repair of the house of the Lord, whom he had chosen for his God. By his command, money was collected, workmen of approved fidelity hired, and officers of the Levites appointed to see the work well done. *Note*: (1.) A ruinous church is a sad symptom of an irreligious people. (2.) An honest labourer is a worthy character.

3dly, Concerning the book of the law, we may further observe, (1.) That tenderness of heart in hearing God's word is a gracious symptom of a penitent or converted soul. (2.) God's providence in thus preserving his written word is, even to this hour, matter of thankfulness. (3.) When God gives us his book, let us not neglect to examine it. Wilful ignorance is wilful sin. (4.) To tremble at God's word, and, under conviction of our sins, to humble our souls before him, is the way to obtain mercy; while wrath certain and terrible awaits the hardened sinner.

4thly, Concerned not less for his people, than for himself, Josiah assembles them to hear the words of God's book, and, by his example and command, engages them to renew their covenant with God. And what he so faithfully began, he persevered in all his days; so that publicly, and in profession, the service of God was diligently maintained. But with many, indeed with far the greater part, the reformation, as appears by the prophets Jeremiah, Zepha-

20 And the king commanded Hilkiah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Afaiah a servant of the king's, saying,

21 Go, enquire of the LORD for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do after all that is written in this book.

22 And Hilkiah, and *they* that the king *had appointed*, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvath, the son of Hasrah, keeper of the wardrobe; (now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college :) and they spake to her to that *effect*.

23 ¶ And she answered them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell ye the man that sent you to me,

24 Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, *even* all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah:

25 Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands; therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched.

26 And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to enquire of the LORD, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel concerning the words which thou hast heard;

27 Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humbledst thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me; I have even heard *thee* also, saith the LORD.

28 Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers,

and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same. So they brought the king word again.

29 ¶ Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem.

30 And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites; and all the people, great and small: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the LORD.

31 And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book.

32 And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand *to it*. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers.

33 And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that *pertained* to the children of Israel, and made all *that were* present in Israel to serve, *even* to serve the LORD their God. And all his days they departed not from following the LORD, the God of their fathers.

## CHAP. XXXV.

*Josiah celebrates the passover. Pharaoh-necho, king of Egypt, passes with his army through Judah: Josiah fights with him at Megiddo, and is slain. Great lamentations are made for him.*

[Before Christ 610.]

**M**OREOVER Josiah kept a passover unto the LORD in Jerusalem: and they killed the passover on the fourteenth *day* of the first month.

2 And he set the priests in their charges,

Zephaniah, and Ezekiel, was hypocritical; and their sins were exceedingly aggravated, that with so good an example before them, and such means of grace, they chose their own delusions, and were unfaithful to their covenant. *Note*, The great concern of a good king will be, to make his subjects acquainted with God's word. (2.) We are

bound by every tie of duty to cleave to God; but, unless our hearts be bound with cords of grace, all other bonds, or vows, or covenants, will be ineffectual. (3.) They who resist the means of grace, and continue unchanged under a preached gospel, fill up most grievously the measure of their iniquities.

and encouraged them to the service of the house of the LORD,

3 And said unto the Levites that taught all Israel, which were holy unto the LORD, Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel did build; *it shall not be a burden upon your shoulders: serve now the LORD your God, and his people Israel.*

4 And prepare *yourselves* by the houses of your fathers, after your courses, according to the writing of David king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon his son.

5 And stand in the holy *place* according to the divisions of the families of the fathers of your brethren the people, and *after* the division of the families of the Levites.

6 So kill the passover, and sanctify yourselves, and prepare your brethren, that *they* may do according to the word of the LORD by the hand of Moses.

7 And Josiah gave to the people, of the flock, lambs and kids, all for the passover offerings, for all that were present, to the number of thirty thousand, and three thousand bullocks: these *were* of the king's substance.

8 And his princes gave willingly unto the people, to the priests, and to the Levites: Hilkiah and Zechariah and Jehiel, rulers of the house of God, gave unto the priests for the passover offerings two thousand and six hundred *small cattle*, and three hundred oxen.

9 Conaniah also, and Shemaiah, and Nathaneel, his brethren, and Hashabiah and Jeiel and Jozabad, chief of the Levites, gave unto the Levites for passover offerings five thousand *small cattle*, and five hundred oxen.

10 So the service was prepared, and the priests stood in their place, and the Levites in their courses, according to the king's commandment.

11 And they killed the passover, and the priests sprinkled *the blood* from their hands, and the Levites flayed *them*.

12 And they removed the burnt-offerings, that they might give according to the divisions of the families of the people, to offer unto the LORD, as *it is* written in the book of Moses. And so *did they* with the oxen.

13 And they roasted the passover with fire according to the ordinance: but the *other* holy offerings sod they in pots, and in caldrons, and in pans, and divided *them* speedily among all the people.

14 And afterward they made ready for themselves, and for the priests: because the priests the sons of Aaron *were busied* in offering of burnt-offerings and the fat until night; therefore the Levites prepared for themselves, and for the priests the sons of Aaron.

15 And the singers the sons of Asaph *were* in their place, according to the commandment of David, and Asaph, and Heman, and Jeduthun the king's seer; and the porters *waited* at every gate; they might not depart from their service; for their brethren the Levites prepared for them.

16 So all the service of the LORD was prepared the same day, to keep the passover, and to offer burnt-offerings upon the altar of the LORD, according to the commandment of king Josiah.

17 And the children of Israel that were present kept the passover at that time, and the feast of unleavened bread seven days.

18 And there was no passover like to that kept in Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet; neither did all the kings of Israel keep such a passover as Josiah kept, and the priests, and the Levites, and all Judah and Israel that were present, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

19 In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah was this passover kept.

20 ¶ After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Charchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him.

#### CHAP. XXXV.

*Ver. 3. The Levites that taught all Israel*] The Levites who taught all Israel how they should sanctify themselves before the Lord. Houbigant.

*Ver. 12. And they removed the burnt-offerings, &c.] From which they took that which belonged to the burnt-offering to be distributed to the people, divided according to their families, that they might offer it unto the Lord, &c. Houbigant.*



21 But he sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? *I come* not against thee this day, but against the house wherewith I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from *meddling with* God, who *is* with me, that he destroy thee not.

22 Nevertheless Jofiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself, that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo.

23 And the archers shot at king Jofiah;

and the king said to his servants, Have me away; for I am fore wounded.

24 His servants therefore took him out of that chariot, and put him in the second chariot that he had; and they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in *one of* the sepulchres of his fathers. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Jofiah.

25 ¶ And Jeremiah lamented for Jofiah: and all the singing men and the singing women spake of Jofiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel: and, behold, they *are* written in the lamentations.

*Ver. 22. But disguised himself] But encouraged himself.* Houbigant; who, in the 15th verse, instead of *the king's seer*, reads, *the king's seers*.

*Ver. 24. Put him in the second chariot]* It was the custom of war, in former times, for great officers to have their led horses, that if one failed they might mount another. The kings of Persia, Quintus Curtius informs us, had horses attending their chariots, to which, in case of any accident, they might fly; and, in like manner, we may presume, that when it became a fashion to fight in chariots, all great commanders had an empty one following them, to which they might betake themselves if any mischief befel the other. See Bochart Hieroz. Pars i. c. 2. Bishop Sherlock observes, that Jofiah has so good a character in scripture, that both Jews and Christians have been at a loss to account for his unfortunate end. The learned Dr. Prideaux has justified his conduct in opposing the passage of the king of Ægypt, because it was a service due to the king of Assyria, to whom Jofiah was a vassal. Be it so; yet his duty to the king of Israel could not dissolve his dependance on a higher master. He went to war, as the vassal of the king of Assyria, but did he ask counsel of God as king of Judah? Or was he attended to the war by such forces only as the king of Judah might lawfully use? That he had *chariots* and *horsemen* appears plainly from this account of his death; for he was wounded in *one chariot*, and removed into another to be carried off; and it is very probable, that there were many chariots and horsemen in his army, since there appears no scruple in him upon this head. That this was the true or only cause of his misfortune, I dare not affirm, for I have no express authority to support me in affirming it; but this I see, that he was found in the day of battle, not with the equipage of a king of Judah, but surrounded with forces which the law of his God had forbidden him to trust to, and which had often proved a strength fatal to his ancestors.

*Ver. 25. And Jeremiah lamented for Jofiah, &c.]* It was usual with the Jews to make lamentations, or mournful songs, upon the death of great men, princes, and heroes, who had distinguished themselves in arms, or by any civil arts had merited well of their country. From the expression, *Behold they are written in the Lamentations*, it may be

inferred, that they had certain collections of this kind of composition. The author of the book of Samuel has preserved those which David made upon the death of Saul and Jonathan, of Abner and Abalom. But this mournful piece, which the disconsolate prophet made upon the immature death of Jofiah, is nowhere extant; which is a loss the more to be deplored, because, in all probability, it was a master-piece in its kind, as there never was an author more deeply affected with his subject, or more capable of carrying it through all the tender sentiments of sorrow and compassion, than Jeremiah. See Calmet.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The passover being among the most solemn ordinances that God had instituted, Jofiah, having removed every known abomination, prepares to keep it with great devotion.

1. He set the priests in their courses, encouraged them to diligence and fidelity in their work; commanded the ark, which, during the repairs of the temple, had probably been removed, to be replaced; enjoined the Levites, who taught the people, to exercise with zeal their ministry, for the glory of God and the good of his Israel; and, in order thereto, he exhorts them to sanctify themselves, that they might be fitted for the work; and to prepare their brethren for the solemnity of the passover by their admonitions, instructions, and directions how to kill and order the lamb according to the law of Moses. *Note;* (1.) They who would prepare others for God's service, must first set the example of that holiness which they preach. (2.) Encouragement is very needful where ministers meet with so many difficulties.

2. The king and his princes, with the chief of the priests, liberally contributed on this occasion; the king giving 30,000 lambs for those poor families who came to keep the passover; and 3000 bullocks for sacrifices of peace-offerings, to feast upon during the seven days. The great officers of God's house also provided handsomely for their poorer brethren, that the feast might be kept with affluence and gladness. *Note;* (1.) They who are hearty in the service of men's souls grudge no expence. (2.) Though we must beware not to make men hypocrites for the sake of advantage, yet it becomes us to encourage those who are sincere. (3.) They who enjoy the largest

26 ¶ Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and his goodness, according to *that which was written in the law of the LORD,*

27 And his deeds, first and last, behold, they *are* written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

### CHAP. XXXVI.

*Jehoahaz reigns three months, and after him Jehoiakim eleven years, who is carried captive to Babylon. He is succeeded by Jehoiachin, who reigns three months and ten days, and is succeeded by Zedekiah, who rebels against Nebuchadnezzar. Jerusalem is taken; the temple plundered and burnt, and many captives carried to Babylon. The proclamation of Cyrus.*

[Before Christ 588.]

**T**HEN the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and made him king in his father's stead in Jerusalem.

2 Jehoahaz *was* twenty-and-three years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem.

3 And the king of Egypt put him down at Jerusalem, and condemned the land in an

hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold.

4 And the king of Egypt made Eliakim his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem, and turned his name to Jehoiakim. And Necho took Jehoahaz his brother, and carried him to Egypt.

5 ¶ Jehoiakim *was* twenty-and-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem: and he did *that which was evil* in the sight of the LORD his God.

6 Against him came up Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon.

7 Nebuchadnezzar also carried off the vessels of the house of the LORD to Babylon, and put them in his temple at Babylon.

8 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and his abominations which he did, and that which was found in him, behold, they *are* written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead.

revenues of the church, are especially called upon liberally to distribute them for the support of their poorer brethren.

3. The whole was conducted with great exactness and regularity. The priests and Levites discharged their office diligently, delivering out the paschal lambs to the several families, after sprinkling the blood on the altar. These were roasted whole, according to God's ordinance; and the peace-offerings, which belonged to the offerers, they boiled and divided among those to whom the king had given the oxen for sacrifice. And when they had served the people, the priests and Levites prepared the passover for themselves; some of their body being appointed for this service, while the rest were busied in their ministrations in the temple, or employed in praising God, or watching at the gates. Thus was this remarkable passover kept, like unto which there was none from the days of the judges; so exact was their observance, and so singular the liberality of the king and the priests. *Note;* (1.) Let not those who minister to others forget the great concern of their own souls. (2.) It is not the greatness of the gift, but the temper of the person who offers, that makes the service honourable and acceptable.

2dly, After all this, we might have expected to hear of the singular prosperity of Judah; but alas! in just displeasure for their hypocrisy and unprofitableness, God removes from them their good king, and with him dies all this appearance of godliness.

1. He imprudently went out to battle against Necho king of Ægypt, who was on his march against the king of Assyria. Fain would he, by his ambassadors, have per-

suaded him to desist, assuring him that he meant nothing hostile against Judah; that the expedition he had undertaken was at God's command; and therefore, if he perversely opposed him, he would suffer for it. Josiah, however, believed him not, and, neglecting to inquire of God, resolved to oppose him. The battle was fought near Megiddo; and though the king of Judah, for greater safety, had disguised himself, the archers wounded him, and he quickly died in his chariot. *Note;* (1.) In an unjust cause we must not hope to prosper. (2.) When we have fair warning, our death lies at our own door. (3.) If we neglect to inquire of God, no wonder that we involve ourselves in mischief.

2. His death exceedingly afflicted the nation, and the people in mournful poems annually commemorated his unhappy fall. Though they had not heartily joined him in his fidelity when alive, they felt their loss of him when dead, and strove to honour his memory. *Note;* (1.) When our blessings are removed, we are then often led to lament, too late, our folly and sin in not improving them. (2.) God's prophets, who see the approaching evils, cannot but mourn for the poor sinners who provoke them.

### CHAP. XXXVI.

*Ver. 3. And the king of Egypt put him down at Jerusalem] The king of Egypt removed him, that he might not reign in Jerusalem. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 7. In his temple] In his palace. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 8. And his abominations, &c.] And the images which he made, and his other performances. Houbigant.*

*Ver.*

9 ¶ Jehoiachin *was* eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem: and he did *that which was evil* in the sight of the LORD.

10 And when the year was expired, king Nebuchadnezzar sent, and brought him to Babylon, with the goodly vessels of the house of the LORD, and made Zedekiah his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem.

11 ¶ Zedekiah *was* one-and-twenty years old when he began to reign, and reigned eleven years in Jerusalem.

12 And he did *that which was evil* in the sight of the LORD his God, *and* humbled not himself before Jeremiah the prophet *speaking* from the mouth of the LORD.

13 And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God: but he stiffened his neck and hardened his heart, from turning unto the LORD God of Israel.

14 Moreover all the chief of the priests, and the people, transgressed very much, after all the abominations of the heathen; and polluted the house of the LORD which he had hallowed in Jerusalem.

15 And the LORD God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had com-

passion on his people, and on his dwelling-place:

16 But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till *there was* no remedy.

17 Therefore he brought upon them the king of the Chaldees, who slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man or him that stooped for age: he gave *them* all into his hand.

18 And all the vessels of the house of God, great and small, and the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king, and of his princes; all *these* he brought to Babylon.

19 And they burned the house of God, and brake down the wall of Jerusalem, and burned all the palaces thereof with fire, and destroyed all the goodly vessels thereof.

20 And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon; where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia:

21 To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths: *for* as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.

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*Ver. 9. Jehoiachin was eight years old*] Eighteen years old. Houbigant; after the Syriac and Arabic. See 2 Kings, xxiv. 8.

*Ver. 10. Zedekiah his brother*] Zedekiah his uncle. Houbigant. See 1 Chron. iii. 15.

*Ver. 20. Until the reign of the kingdom of Persia*] Until the reign of the king of Persia. Houbigant. Respecting the proclamation of Cyrus, see the beginning of the next book: Kennicott thinks that the two last verses of this book belong properly to the book of Ezra.

*Ver. 21. As long as she lay desolate, she kept sabbath, &c.*] God had commanded them to let their land rest every seventh year; and because the Jews had violated this, as well as other precepts, God gave their land a long sabbath or rest, for no less than ten times seven years, which Jeremiah threatened. If it be true that they had neglected this law for the space of 490 years, having ploughed their ground in the seventh, as well as in other years, then the judgment of God upon them was very remarkable, in causing their ground to rest, and be free from tillage, just as long as it should have been if they had observed his law. For in those 490 years, says Procopius Gazæus, when they were under the govern-

ment of kings, there were seventy years to be kept as sabbaths, which, that the land might enjoy its sabbath, were spent in the captivity of Babylon. Their punishment too was made the more remarkable in this particular, if it be true, as some have observed, that both the kingdom of Samaria and the kingdom of Judah were destroyed in a sabbatical year; and that, immediately after a jubilee, the city and temple were destroyed by Titus, according to Scaliger's computation. See Patrick and Calmet.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The short and evil reigns recorded in this chapter were the forerunners of the kingdom's ruin.

1. Jehoahaz, set up by the people, was quickly dethroned, and carried captive into Egypt, by Necho, provoked at his father's opposition. He reigned but three months, yet long enough to give a sufficient specimen of his evil conduct.

2. Jehoiakim, the tributary of the king of Egypt, continued eleven years governor of the impoverished country, yet more abundantly weakened by his wickedness, when he fell into the hands of the king of Babylon, and died in chains, after seeing Jerusalem and the temple plundered, and the sacred vessels taken away.

22 ¶ Now in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD *spoken* by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of

Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and *put it* also in writing, saying,

23 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, All

3. His son, who succeeded him, shewed, though young, the evil which was in his heart; and, after a short reign of three months and ten days, was deposed by the king of Babylon; and Zedekiah, the last of the kings of Judah, advanced to the throne. Thus did the nation hastily change her kings; and, not being admonished by the repeated warnings, vengeance came upon them to the uttermost.

2dly, Behold the desolations of Zion! the beautiful temple lies in ruins, the line of confusion is stretched over the palaces of Jerusalem: O sin, what a bitter and evil thing art thou! We have here,

1. Zedekiah's rebellion against the king of Babylon. Though he had solemnly sworn to serve him, he perfidiously violated his engagements, and obstinately refused submission, notwithstanding all Jeremiah's warnings and entreaties. *Note;* (1.) Oaths are sacred things; God will not suffer them to be broken with impunity. (2.) They who will not bow, must break.

2. He rebelled also against God, and neither paid regard to the admonitions of Jeremiah, nor humbled himself before the Lord. We need not mind who is our enemy, if God be our friend; but who ever hardened his heart against him and prospered?

3. The priests and people universally fell into idolatry; they who should have been the first to restrain others, were the ringleaders in the wickedness; and even in the temple their abominations were set up. In vain the compassionate Lord God of their fathers, unwilling that they should perish, sent them repeated warnings, and his prophets with diligence and zeal rose up early to testify against their sins; they mocked at his counsel, and despised his reproof; his prophets they treated with scorn and contempt; and the hand of the priests was chief in the transgression. *Note;* (1.) God abandons not the sinner, till all the methods of his grace have been ineffectual, and his wilful heart refuses to be reformed. (2.) God's true prophets are earnest and assiduous in their word; woe to those against whom they complain, *all day long have we stretched out our hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people.*

(3.) When God visits for sin, no charge will lie heavier than that of a slighted gospel. (4.) God's ministers, when employed in the kindest offices, are often grievously misused; but let them not be discouraged; they shall be glorious, though Israel be not gathered. (5.) Worldly and wicked priests in every age have been the most inveterate enemies of God's faithful prophets and preachers. (6.) They who ill-use the ministers of God, seeking to render their labours ineffectual, and their persons contemptible, know not what wrath they treasure up against their souls.

4. The consequence of this conduct was, utter ruin. After a terrible siege, see 2 Kings, xxv. the city was taken by storm, and sacked; no sanctuary protected young or old; even the temple was filled with the carcases of

the slain; the sacred house was stripped of all its ornaments, the palaces were plundered, the temple was burnt, the city razed to its foundations, the few that were left from the sword were enslaved and insulted, and dragged to Babylon to weep in vain over the mournful remembrance of their past and present miseries; their country was ravaged and desolate, and left to enjoy those sabbaths which *they* profanely refused to observe: and seventy years the iron bondage lasted, till the kingdom of Persia rose upon the ruins of their conquerors, and the daughter of Babylon, wasted with misery, drank of the cup of wrath which she had put into the hands of the nations. *Note;* (1.) The more we see of the miseries that sin produces, the more should we fear to provoke a holy God. (2.) When the rod has done its office, it will be broken or burned. God, though he afflicts his people, will not be wroth for ever.

Thus have we arrived at the end of the books of the Chronicles, which we would advise always to be read in harmony with the books of Kings; for then they will mutually throw light upon each other, and the difficulties found in either will be more easily removed. We conclude our observations with some general reflections on the moral causes of the Babylonish captivity, and the propriety of that dispensation, from Dr. Taylor's ingenious work, intitled, "The Scheme of Scripture Divinity."

The whole Jewish nation, both Judah and Israel, had all along a strong and strange propensity to idolatry; and their morals were as corrupt as their religion. What their peculiar temptations were, we know not; but all the endeavours of good kings, and all the preaching of holy prophets, sent by special commission from God, were ineffectual to produce a reformation. See 2 Chron. xxxvi. 14, &c. They were, therefore, carried away captive into Babylon. This dreadful calamity came upon them gradually; but gradual punishment effected no amendment of the religion or morals of the nation. Zedekiah, the last king, was as bad as his predecessor; therefore the whole land of Judea was reduced to an utter desolation for the sins thereof.

The propriety of this dispensation will appear, if we reflect: I. That the lenity of God appeared in bringing this terrible overthrow upon them so gradually, after a succession of judgments from less to greater, for the space of twenty-two years, which should have been a warning to them, and by experience have convinced them, that the threatenings denounced by the prophets would certainly be executed.

II. That it was a just punishment of their sins, particularly of their idolatry, whereby they forsook God, and therefore God justly forsook them, and delivered them into the hands of their enemies, as Moses had foretold, Lev. xxvi. 30—36.

III. This dreadful calamity was the most effectual means to work their reformation, which was the end proposed.

the kingdoms of the earth hath the LORD God in Judah. Who *is there* among you of all of heaven given me; and he hath charged me his people? the LORD his God *be* with him, to build him an house in Jerufalem, which *is* and let him go up.

propofed by the divine wifdom. Now in their captive, difconfolate ftate, they had time, and their calamities had a natural tendency to give them a difpofition, to reflect upon the long ferief of iniquity and perversenefs which had brought them under the heavieft of God's judgments. Now *their own wickednefs corrected them, and their backflidings reproved them; now they muft know and fee that it was an evil thing and bitter, that they had forfaken the Lord their God, and that his fear had not been in them.* Ifai. ii. 19. In the land of their captivity, the fermons of the prophets, declaiming with the higheft authority againft their profane and vicious praftices, would be ftill founding in their ears, and their abjeft, wretched condition, the confequence of fuch praftices, would fink them deep into their hearts, and furely give them an utter deteftation of what they very well knew was the caufe of all their grievous fufferings.

IV. The law of God, written by Mofes as the rule of their conduft in all affairs civil and religious, and the ground of their happinefs, they had fo far neglected, that once it was almoft unknown and loft among them, 2 Kings, xxii. 8—12. Againft this contempt of the divine law, the prophets had frequently and ftroingly protefted, Ifai. v. 24. xxx. 9. Jer. vi. 19. viii. 8. ix. 13. Hof. viii. 12. Amos, ii. 4. and in other places; and publicly declared that it would be their ruin: In their ruined ftate, this muft have been remembered as the primary reafon of all their fufferings; and they muft have been thoroughly fenfible, that a due regard to the law of God was the only way to recover his favour and their

own profterity, and accordingly muft have been difpofed to be attentive to it; which was really the cafe. Here was another good effect of this difpenfation; and it may juftly be given as one good reafon of their being fo ftroingly fixed againft idolatry ever after the Babylonifh captivity.

V. This difpenfation was alfo calculated to produce good effects among the nations whither they were carried into captivity. For, wherever they were difperfed in the eastern countries, they would bring with them the knowledge of the true God, now ferioufly impreffed upon their hearts. Divine Providence, by fuch fignal circumftances of his interpofition as were publifhed and known over all the vaft extent of the eastern empire, raifed fome of the captive Jews to the higheft pofts of dignity and power in the courts of Affyria and Perfia, Dan. i. 19, 20. infomuch that the moft haughty monarchs openly confeffed the living and true God, as the only and fupreme God, (Dan. ii. 47—49. iv. 34, &c.) and made decrees, which were publifhed throughout their fpacious dominions, in favour of the profefion and worfhip of him, Dan. iii. 29. vi. 25, &c. From all this it is clear, that the Jews, notwithstanding their depravity in their own country during the captivity of feventy years, muft have been a burning and fhining light all over the eastern countries. And thus, in this difpenfation alfo, God, the Father and Governor of mankind, was working for the reformation and improvement of the world, in that which is the true excellency of their nature, and the only foundation of their happinefs.

# E Z R A.

EZRA, or Efdras, was a person of high esteem among the Jews: he was of the sacerdotal family, and bore a principal part in the restoration from Babylon. Some have asserted, that he was chiefly concerned in revising and compiling most of the books of Scripture. Four, however, of those books go under his name; for, among the Hebrews, this and the book of Nehemiah being formerly reckoned but one, they are both inscribed in the Latin and Greek bibles by the name of Ezra. These two only are acknowledged by our church to be canonical; the two others are apocryphal. The first of these books is certainly the work of Efdras; the second is commonly attributed to Nehemiah. It must, however, be confessed, that some small matters have been added to it, (no doubt, by some other inspired writer,) which cannot belong to Nehemiah. This book is a continuation of the history of the Jews, from the time at which that of the Chronicles ends, to near the twentieth year of Artaxerxes Longimanus. It contains a history of eighty-two years, from the first year of the reign of Cyrus in Babylon, in the year of the world 3468, to the nineteenth year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, who sent Nehemiah to Jerusalem, A. M. 3550. The letter of Rehum and Shimshai, ch. iv. 8. to the king, and the king's answer, were written in the Chaldee language, as were the fifth and sixth chapters, and as far as the 27th verse of the seventh; and all the rest in Hebrew. See Calmet, Prideaux, and Le Clerc's "Sentimens de quelques Theologiens." We would by all means recommend the readers of this and the two following books, if they desire thoroughly to understand them, to consult the profane writers of this period, or at least such as have given a history of it; particularly Josephus, the Universal History, &c.

## CHAP. I.

*Cyrus, king of Persia, makes a proclamation, permitting the Jews to return into their country, and to build their temple; and restores the sacred vessels to them.*

[Before Christ 536.]

**N**OW in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by

the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

2 Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the

## CHAP. I.

*Ver. 1. Cyrus]* Concerning Cyrus, see Isai. xlv. 28. It is probable, that this decree of Cyrus in favour of the Jews was in a great measure owing to the good offices of Daniel. Cyrus, at his first coming to Babylon, found him there, an old minister of state, famed over all the east for his great wisdom; and accordingly we find, that he not only employed him as such; but, upon settling the government, made him first superintendant, or prime minister of state, over all the provinces of the empire. In this station of life, Daniel must have been a person of great authority at court, and highly in the esteem of his prince; and it is not improbable, that he might shew him the passages in Isaiah referring to him; for it is evident from the decree itself, that Cyrus had seen those prophecies.

*Ver. 2. The Lord God of heaven]* It is observable, that God, in the former books, is called *the Lord of hosts*; but in the last of Chronicles, in this, in Nehemiah, and Daniel, i. e. in the books written after the captivity, he is styled *the God of heaven*, and not *Lord of hosts*, though they are both used in the same sense.

REFLECTIONS.—The seventy years of captivity now drew to their period; and the drooping hope of God's captive people began to revive, on the conquest of their oppressors by Cyrus, so long before prophesied of by name to be their deliverer: nor did he disappoint their expectations; for, no sooner had he subdued the Babylonish empire, than he issued out an edict for the restoration of the Jewish people. He was convinced, as appears by the  
procla-

kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah.

3 Who *is there* among you of all his people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (*he is* the God,) which *is* in Jerusalem.

4 And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the free-will offering for the house of God that *is* in Jerusalem.

5 ¶ Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all *them* whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which *is* in Jerusalem.

6 And all they that *were* about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and

with precious things, besides all *that* was willingly offered.

7 ¶ Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods;

8 Even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah.

9 And this *is* the number of them: thirty chargers of gold, a thousand chargers of silver, nine-and-twenty knives.

10 Thirty basons of gold, silver basons of a second sort four hundred and ten, and other vessels a thousand.

11 All the vessels of gold and of silver *were* five thousand and four hundred. All *these* did Sheshbazzar bring up with *them* of the captivity that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.

proclamation, of the glory of Israel's God, attributed his great successes to his blessing, and diligently sought to correspond with his orders. The Lord stirred up his spirit; he looked upon himself as obliged to build his temple, according to the prophetic word; and therefore, while he gives a general leave to the Jews to return, he enjoins his subjects everywhere to assist them; that they who were poor might be furnished with necessaries for their journey, and a comfortable settlement when they came into their own land. And hereto especially the richer Jews, who chose to continue still in Babylon, were called to contribute; and, if they went not themselves, to help their brethren, and send their free-will offerings to Jerusalem. *Note*, (1.) Not one jot or tittle of God's word can fail; though the accomplishment of his promises seems long, it is sure at the appointed time. (2.) When the length of our sufferings is near making us despair of their termination, God causes light to rise up in the darkness, and there is hope in the end. (3.) The greatest kings are under the divine government; God has access to the spirits of men, and can incline them to serve his purposes. (4.) Whatever good desire is stirred up in our hearts, we must acknowledge it to be the gift of God. (5.) God is the disposer of the kingdoms of the world: they are truly wise and great who see his hand in their prosperity, and desire to advance his glory in the station to which he has exalted them. (6.) They who have a love for the temple, will gladly open their hand in liberal contribution for the furtherance of so good a work.

*Ver. 8. Sheshbazzar, the prince of Judah*] His name was originally Zerubbabel; but it was common for the great

men of Judah, at the time of the captivity, to have two names; one of their own country, which was domestic, and another of the Chaldeans, which was used at court. Zerubbabel was born at Babylon, and his name, זְרֻבָבֶל *zerubbabel*, which signifies an *exile*, or stranger in Babylon, implies the misery of the people of Israel at that time; but שֶׁשֶׁבַצַר *Sheshbazzar*, which is a compound of two words, signifying, *fine linen* and *gold*, seems to be a name of better omen, and to denote their future and more flourishing condition. So Bishop Patrick. Dr. Trapp, however, says, that *Sheshbazzar* signifies *joy in tribulation*. Some are of opinion, that, among the sacred things which Cyrus ordered to be restored, the ark of the covenant was one; but it nowhere appears that this ark was carried from Jerusalem to Babylon. They tell us, indeed, that in the second temple sacrifices were offered as in the first, and all solemn days observed, especially the great day of expiation, when the law ordained that the blood should be sprinkled before the mercy-seat; and the mercy-seat, say they, was part of the ark; but, besides that the ark without the Shechinah (which was then certainly withdrawn) would have been of no great significance, the Jews universally acknowledge, that the ark was one of the five things which were wanting in the second temple.

*Ver. 11. The vessels—were five thousand and four hundred*] The sum total of these vessels amounts only to two thousand four hundred and ninety-nine. Houbigant supposes the number to be this sum total, as all the versions pretty nearly agree in the separate sums. Kennicott, however, thinks that the error lies in the *four hundred and ten silver basons*. That thousands, says he, were expressed anciently by single letters with a dot over them, may be



## CHAP. II.

*An account of those who returned from Babylon; their number, substance, and oblations.*

[Before Christ 536.]

**N**OW these are the children of the province that went up out of the captivity,

of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city;

2 Which came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bil-

be presumed from this verse, where the silver basons are said to be (of a second sort, without mentioning any first) *four hundred and ten*; but in the parallel account, 1 Esdras, ii. 13. we find the same *silver basons* to have been *two thousand four hundred and ten*. Now if  $\beth$  *beth*, which stands for the number *two*, with a dot over it, stood for two thousand, the letter might very easily be copied without the dot. Afterwards, when, in consequence of the corruptions which had been found to arise from numeral letters, numbers were expressed, as they now are in the Hebrew copies, by words at length, the  $\beth$  being thus reduced to signify *two*, was of course written  $\text{שני}$  *shenaim*; but this word making nonsense with the following, i. e. *two four hundred and ten*, has been since changed into  $\text{משנים}$  *misbnim*; a word not very agreeable to the sense here, and a word which renders this account not only *repugnant* to the parallel chapter, but also *inconsistent* with itself, as leaving the sum total now specified in the Hebrew text very deficient, for want of the two thousand thus omitted. This conjecture is confirmed by a Latin MS. in Exeter College library, which reads *two thousand four hundred and ten*; and is supported not only by five other Latin manuscripts in the Bodleian, but likewise by two in the Archbishop of Canterbury's library at Lambeth. Kenn. Dissert. vol. ii. p. 213. 508. 564. A learned anonymous writer, however, is of opinion that there is no need of any alteration. "Ezra," says he, "might at one time make particular mention of such vessels only as were perhaps chiefly used, or were most remarkable, and might mean to include all the rest in the general round sum of five thousand four hundred; and yet might afterwards think proper to write a more circumstantial history, setting down the exact number of each kind of vessels, together with the particular amount or total of the whole. In Josephus, Antiq. xi. ch. 5. the  $\sigma\pi\omicron\delta\epsilon\alpha\ \chi\rho\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\alpha\ \lambda'$ , (30) and the  $\phi\iota\alpha\lambda\alpha\iota\ \chi\rho\upsilon\sigma\omicron\upsilon\alpha\iota\ \lambda'$  (30) correspond very well with the chargers of gold, and basons of gold, mentioned by Ezra. As to the other numbers, they all differ from the account in Ezra, as from that in Esdras, except the one thousand other vessels; and the addition of the whole amounts to no more than five thousand two hundred and ten; yet, as he has not himself given a total number, he cannot be said to contradict either of the others. Now, as not one of the articles in the Hebrew account of Ezra exceeds the numbers of those in Esdras, there can be no contradiction therein, because each number may be included in the corresponding number in Esdras. And further, if the number in each article in Ezra had been exactly the same with those in Esdras, the sum total, five thousand four hundred, would have appeared more like a mistake; but as

"they amount to no more than two thousand four hundred and ninety-nine, it is plain that the writer did not mean to enumerate every single vessel, because he afterwards gives a round sum total of even hundreds, viz. five thousand four hundred, which is more frequent in historians than exact and particular sums; therefore a person must be very little acquainted with history, who supposes that this is a contradiction to the sum total in Esdras, because the odd number *sixty-nine* is omitted."

REFLECTIONS.—In consequence of the proclamation, we have here a stirring among the dry bones; and the spirit of life breathing upon them, to arise and return to their own land.

1. Judah and Benjamin were the first to lead the way. The chief fathers of the families assembled; and the priests and Levites, zealous for the re-establishment of the service of God, readily embraced the permission given them. A thousand difficulties were, indeed, in their way; by their long abode in Babylon, many were now comfortably settled; they were utter strangers to the land whither they were going, and could expect to find there nothing but ruin and desolation; not so much as a house to cover their heads; yet all these things discouraged them not: God animated their hearts with desire for his temple's restoration at Jerusalem, and filled them with a noble love of liberty. Note; (1.) When God's service requires to be set forward, his ministers should be the first to promote it. (2.) The Lord must raise up our hearts, or else our earth-born souls will choose their rest in Babylon. (3.) The gospel, like this proclamation, calls forth the sinner from his bondage; and, though the way to the glorious land of life and liberty is difficult, those who dare trust their all with God, boldly go forth; while others, disheartened by the prospect of danger, refuse to follow the divine mandate, and live and die the servants of corruption.

2. The Chaldeans liberally assisted the returning Israelites; and they who stayed at Babylon willingly offered of their substance for the furtherance of the temple of God; while Cyrus, their great benefactor, nobly restores to them all the vessels which Nebuchadnezzar had carried to Babylon, and placed in the temple of his idol gods. Note; God can make the great men of the world contribute to the support of his cause, and assist in the furtherance of his service.

## CHAP. II.

Ver. 1. *The children of the province*] i. e. *Of Babylon*; for they are here spoken of, whom Nebuchadnezzar had brought captive to Babylon; and not those of the ten tribes

shan, Mizpar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah. The number of the men of the people of Israel:

3 The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy-and-two.

4 The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy-and-two.

5 The children of Arah, seven hundred seventy-and-five.

6 The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand eight hundred and twelve.

7 The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty-and-four.

8 The children of Zattu, nine hundred forty-and-five.

9 The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore.

10 The children of Bani, six hundred forty-and-two.

11 The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty-and-three.

12 The children of Azgad, a thousand two hundred twenty-and-two.

13 The children of Adonikam, six hundred sixty-and-six.

14 The children of Bigvai, two thousand fifty-and-six.

15 The children of Adin, four hundred fifty-and-four.

16 The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety-and-eight.

17 The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty-and-three.

18 The children of Jorah, an hundred and twelve.

19 The children of Hashum, two hundred twenty-and-three.

20 The children of Gibbar, ninety-and-five.

21 The children of Beth-lehem, an hundred twenty-and-three.

22 The men of Netophah, fifty-and-six.

23 The men of Anathoth, an hundred twenty-and-eight.

24 The children of Azmaveth, forty-and-two.

25 The children of Kirjath-arim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred and forty-and-three.

26 The children of Ramah and Gaba, six hundred twenty-and-one.

27 The men of Michmas, an hundred twenty-and-two.

28 The men of Beth-el and Ai, two hundred twenty-and-three.

29 The children of Nebo, fifty-and-two.

30 The children of Magbish, an hundred fifty-and-six.

31 The children of the other Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty-and-four.

32 The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty.

33 The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty-and-five.

34 The children of Jericho, three hundred forty-and-five.

35 The children of Senaah, three thousand and six hundred and thirty.

36 ¶ The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy-and-three.

37 The children of Immer, a thousand fifty-and-two.

38 The children of Pashur, a thousand two hundred forty-and-seven.

39 The children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen.

40 ¶ The Levites: the children of Jeshua and Kadmiel, of the children of Hodaviah, seventy-and-four.

41 The singers: the children of Asaph, an hundred twenty-and-eight.

42 The children of the porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita, the children of Shobai, in all an hundred thirty-and-nine.

tribes, who had been dispersed before by the kings of Assyria into various provinces, and who afterwards returned to Jerusalem in separate companies. Zerubbabel was in the province of Babylon; and to him those captives joined themselves who lived nearest in the same province. This is the reason why those of the tribes of Judah and Benja-

min returned first, though a liberty of returning was granted to all the tribes. Another reason is, because the rebuilding of the temple principally concerned them, as Jerusalem was within their dominion. Houbigant.

Ver. 31. *The children of the other Elam*] *The children of Elam-ar.* Houbigant.

43 ¶ The Nethinims: the children of Ziha, the children of Hafupba, the children of Tabbaoth,

44 The children of Keros, the children of Siaba, the children of Padon,

45 The children of Lebanah, the children of Hagabah, the children of Akkub,

46 The children of Hagab, the children of Shalmal, the children of Hanan,

47 The children of Giddel, the children of Gahar, the children of Reaiah,

48 The children of Rezin, the children of Nekodah, the children of Gazzam,

49 The children of Uzzah, the children of Paseah, the children of Besai,

50 The children of Asnah, the children of Mehunim, the children of Nephusim,

51 The children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur,

52 The children of Bazluth, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha,

53 The children of Barkos, the children of Sisera, the children of Thamah,

54 The children of Neziah, the children of Hatipha.

55 ¶ The children of Solomon's servants: the children of Sotai, the children of Sophe-reth, the children of Peruda,

56 The children of Jaalah, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel,

57 The children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of Ami.

58 All the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants, *were* three hundred ninety-and-two.

59 And these *were* they which went up from Tel-melah, Tel-harfa, Cherub, Addan, and Immer: but they could not shew their father's house, and their seed, whether they *were* of Israel:

60 The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred fifty-and-two.

61 ¶ And of the children of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai: which took a wife of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite, and was called after their name:

62 These sought their register *among* those that were reckoned by genealogy, but they were not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood.

63 And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood up a priest with Urim and with Thummim.

64 ¶ The whole congregation together *was* forty-and-two thousand three hundred and threescore.

*Ver. 55. The children of Solomon's servants]* i. e. Of the Nethinims. See 1 Chron. ix. 2. and Calmet on the place.

*Ver. 63. The Tirshatha]* *Tirshata*, or *Athirshata*, the same as *Nehemiah*. The word *תרשתא* *Tirshatha* is the name of his employment, and signifies the *king's cup-bearer*, says Calmet. Some however think, that Zerubbabel, rather, is meant here. See Neh. i. 11. The meaning of the words *till there stood up a priest*, &c. seems to be, till the Lord himself should decide, by means of the high-priest, whether they were the sons of Aaron or not.

*Ver. 64. The whole congregation—was forty-and-two thousand three hundred and threescore]* Dr. Lightfoot observes on this passage, "Here is a *summa totalis* [a sum total] of "forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty, who returned out of captivity upon the proclamation of Cyrus; "and there are here the numbers of several families "reckoned, as making up that sum; whereas, if the "total of these particulars be summed up, it reacheth not "by sixteen thousand, or thereabouts, to that number "of forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty. Where, "then, must we find those sixteen thousand, since they

"arise not in the number of the families here named?" "The families here named are of Judah and Benjamin; "and then certainly those sixteen thousand can hardly "be imagined any other than of the ten tribes. It "is apparent, that the returns of Judah and Benjamin "planted Judæa: whom then can we imagine, but some "of the ten tribes, to have planted Galilee, as that country "was inhabited by a good part of the ten tribes before the "captivity? It is very probable, that most of the twelve "apostles, and many of the rest of the disciples who were "of Christ's constant retinue, were of the progeny of "some of the ten tribes." This will account for the difference between the general and particular sums in Ezra, and why the particulars in Ezra differ from those in Neh. vii. Dr. Lightfoot also observes, that Nehemiah found the list and catalogue of those who came up in the first year of Cyrus as it was then taken, and that he called over the names of the families as they lay in order there: that he observed the order of the old list, in calling them over, and listing them; but took the real number of them as they were, when he numbered them: that some families were now more in number than they were

65 Besides their servants and their maids, of whom *there were* seven thousand three hundred thirty-and-seven; and *there were* among them two hundred singing men and singing women.

66 Their horses *were* seven hundred thirty-and-six; their mules, two hundred forty-and-five;

67 Their camels, four hundred thirty-and-five; *their asses*, six thousand seven hundred and twenty.

68 ¶ And *some* of the chief of the fathers, when they came to the house of the LORD which is at Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of God to set it up in his place.

69 They gave after their ability unto the treasure of the work threescore and one thousand drachms of gold, and five thousand pounds of silver, and one hundred priests' garments.

70 So the priests, and the Levites, and *some* of the people, and the singers, and the por-

were when the first list was made, and some fewer; and some that were in that list were not to be found now; for some had more of the same stock come up from Babylon since the first numbering; and others who had come up at first, and were then numbered, were now gone back again. See Lightfoot's Chronol. p. 146.

Ver. 69. *Threescore and one thousand drachms of gold, and five thousand pounds of silver*] About seventy-five thousand five hundred pounds of our money; for every drachm of gold is worth ten shillings of our money, and every mina, or pound of silver, nine pounds; for it contains sixty shekels, and every shekel of silver is worth three shillings of our money; whence it appears, that the Jews were not made such poor slaves in Babylon as wrought for their lords and masters; but had some of them very considerable offices at court, and all liberty to trade and get riches for themselves; and consequently that there may not be all the truth imaginable in that common saying among them, that they were only the *bran*, i. e. the dregs of the people, who returned to Jerusalem at the end of the captivity; and that all the *fine flour* stayed behind at Babylon.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have in this chapter an account of the people who returned from the captivity; a poor remnant, compared with the thousands of Israel in their former better days! yet it was a great mercy that any were left, and suffered to return. They are called children of the province; for to such was the kingdom of Judah now reduced. They are reckoned according to the towns where they formerly resided, and the ancestors from whom they sprung. Their leaders were Zerubbabel, and Jeshua the high-priest. Nehemiah and Mordecai, mentioned ver. 2. were different men from those whose names were afterwards so distinguished; unless we suppose that, after seeing the first colony settled, they returned again to Babylon. *Note*; (1.) It is a distinguishing mercy to be found among those who go up from the captivity of sin, under our prince and priest Jesus, the captain of our salvation. (2.) They who are eminent in their zeal for God's cause, deserve that their names should be recorded to their honour.

2dly, The priests, under four chief fathers, were near a tenth part of the whole. Their zeal for the service made them more ready to improve the present opportunity. The Levites, once so numerous, 1 Chron. xxiii. 3. were now but few. The Nethinims, assistants to the Levites,

supposed to be the descendants of the Gibeonites, whom Joshua appointed for the meaner offices of the tabernacle, to hew wood and draw water; and the children of Solomon's servants, who were the old inhabitants of Canaan, but, being proselyted, were employed by him in building the temple; these, to the number of three hundred and ninety-two, joined the returning colony: besides whom, many went up from some of the cities of Babylon, who, though Jews, had lost their genealogies; and many also who passed for children of the priests, but were rejected from ministering, by the Tirshatha, or governor, Zerubbabel, because they could not prove their lineal descent from Aaron. One of these, by a marriage into the family of the famed Barzillai, ambitious of having his children reckoned of that stock, neglected his priestly genealogy, and therefore was now excluded from the privileges and honour that he had despised. The exclusion, however, was not final; they hoped that some high-priest would arise, with Urim and Thummim, from whose illuminations these defects might be repaired. *Note*; (1.) They who count the ministry a disparagement, are unworthy of the office. (2.) The great high-priest with Urim and Thummim hath appeared, not to fix Jewish genealogies, but to consecrate to himself faithful priests among all the nations of the world.

3dly, Their retinue appears but mean, their servants few, and their beasts of burden scarcely more than would suffice for their baggage; so that they must have taken their tedious journey on foot. Among their servants two hundred singing men and women are reckoned, either kept for the recreation of the richer sort among them, or employed with mournful lamentations to awaken a sense of their desolations. When they were come to Jerusalem; they visited their beautiful house, though in ruins; and, grieving to see it in the dust, generously contributed, according to their abilities, toward its restoration. They were not rich now, as in David's days; but their deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality, and made the gift more acceptable. Part of them settled immediately at Jerusalem; the rest were distributed into the several cities where their forefathers had been seated. *Note*; (1.) God's house and service lie nearest the heart of a faithful Israelite. (2.) It is not the greatness of the gift, but the temper of the giver, that stamps a value on the donation. (3.) What is spent in God's blessed work, though spared out of our poverty, will return again, with abundant interest.

ters, and the Nethinims, dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities.

### CHAP. III.

*The altar of burnt-offerings is set up: the feast of tabernacles is celebrated: in the second year the foundations of the temple are laid, amid shouts of joy on one hand, and on the other much weeping of those who had seen the former temple.*

[Before Christ 536.]

**A**ND when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel *were* in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem.

2 Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt-offerings thereon, as *it is* written in the law of Moses the man of God.

3 And they set the altar upon his bases: for fear *was* upon them because of the people of those countries: and they offered burnt-offerings thereon unto the LORD, *even* burnt-offerings morning and evening.

4 ¶ They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as *it is* written, and *offered* the daily burnt-offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required;

5 And afterward *offered* the continual burnt-offering, both of the new moons, and of all the set feasts of the LORD *that were* consecrated, and of every one that willingly offered a free-will offering unto the LORD.

6 From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt-offerings unto the LORD. But the foundation of the temple of the LORD was not *yet* laid.

7 ¶ They gave money also unto the masons, and to the carpenters; and meat, and drink,

and oil, unto them of Zidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa, according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia.

8 ¶ Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the remnant of their brethren the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem; and appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upward, to set forward the work of the house of the LORD.

9 Then stood Jeshua *with* his sons and his brethren, Kadniel and his sons, the sons of Judah, together, to set forward the workmen in the house of God: the sons of Henadad, *with* their sons and their brethren the Levites.

10 And when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the LORD, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise the LORD, after the ordinance of David king of Israel.

11 And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD; because *he is* good, for his mercy *endureth* for ever towards Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid.

12 But many of the priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers, *who were* ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy:

### CHAP. III.

*Ver. 1. When the seventh month was come*] The seventh month, called *Tizri*, answers in part to our September and October. The first day of the month *Tizri* was the beginning of the Jewish civil year; and on it was the feast of trumpets, which lasted for two days, when all labour and business was suspended; and white sacrifices were in use, the Jews offered, in the name of the whole nation, a solemn holocaust of a calf, two rams, and seven lambs, all of the same year, together with the flour and wine which usually accompanied such sacrifices; but, instead of that,

they now go to the synagogue, where they repeat several prayers and benedictions; and, having very solemnly taken the Pentateuch out of the chest, and read to five persons the sacrifice which used to be performed on that day, they sound twenty times upon a horn, sometimes very low, sometimes very loud; and this, they say, makes them think of the judgments of God, to intimidate sinners, and put them upon repentance. See Calmet, and Levit. xxiii. 24.

*Ver. 3. For fear was upon them, &c.*] *Although they were afraid of the neighbouring people.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 12. But many—wept with a loud voice*] Not only because

13 So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

because this temple was likely to prove far inferior to that of Solomon as to its outward structure; but because it was also to want those extraordinary marks of the divine favour wherewith the other temple was honoured. Both the temples, without doubt, were of the same dimensions; but here was the sad difference which drew tears from the eyes of the *elders*, that to all appearance there were no hopes that the poor beginnings of the *latter* temple would ever be raised to the grandeur and magnificence of the former, since the *one* had been built by the wisest and richest king, and constantly adorned by some one or other of his posterity; the *other* was now begun by a small company of exiles, just returned from their captivity: the *one* in a time of profound peace and the greatest opulence; the *other* in a time of common calamity and distress: the *one* finished with the most costly stones and timber, wrought with exquisite art, and overlaid with vast quantities of gold; the *other* to be raised out of no better materials than what could be dug from the ruinous foundation of the old one. But the occasion of their grief was not only this, that the materials and ornaments of the second temple were even as nothing *in comparison with the first* (Haggai, ii. 3.); but that the ark of the covenant, and the mercy-seat which was upon it; the holy fire upon the altar; the Urim and Thummim; the spirit of prophecy; and the Shechinah, or Divine presence, the five great things for which the former temple was so renowned, were lost and gone, and never to be recovered to this other. This was a just matter of lamentation to those who had seen these singular tokens of the Divine favour in the former temple, and a discouragement of their proceeding with the building of the present; and therefore the prophet Haggai was sent to inform them, that all these wants and defects should be abundantly repaired by the coming of the *Messiah*, the true *Shechinah* of the Divine Majesty, in the time of the second temple: (ch. ii. 7, 9.) *I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory; the glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Scarcely were they settled in their several possessions, before,

1. They with one consent assembled at Jerusalem, at the approach of the seventh month, to consult together about carrying on the work of God, and beginning the service of the sanctuary. Amid all their other cares, many and perplexing as they must have been, God's glory was their chief concern. *Note;* All is likely to end well with us, when we are careful thus to begin with God.

2. The high-priest, his brethren, and the chief princes, hereupon set up the altar in the same place where it had stood; perhaps the old bases might remain: though they could not quickly rear the temple, they would not defer till then the service of the altar. *Note;* (1.) When we cannot enjoy all the ordinances that we desire, we should be the more diligent to improve those in our

power. Wherever we are, at least we need not want an altar for prayer and praise. (2.) Those who are distinguished in station should adorn it by the eminence of their zeal for God.

3. The reason given for their solicitude to begin God's worship was, the fear of their enemies, who hated them, and failed not to oppose their designs. *Note;* (1.) The best defence is, God's favourable presence. (2.) We must not be frightened out of our religion: man's threatenings should only quicken our prayers.

4. No sooner was the altar reared, than they began to offer their sacrifices on the first day of the seventh month, which was the feast of blowing of trumpets. From thenceforward, they continued the daily sacrifice, and kept the appointed feasts in their season, though the foundation of the temple was not laid. *Note;* (1.) We must make the best of what we enjoy, and do what we can when we cannot do all that we would. (2.) Every day we are required to offer the sacrifice of a grateful heart.

5. Beside the instituted sacrifices, they offered also free-will offerings. Though they could ill spare them from their little stock of cattle, yet they concluded that they should never be the poorer for what burned on God's altar.

6. They began to make preparations for building the temple, giving out the money that they had collected to the proper workmen, and engaging those of Tyre and Zidon to supply them with materials, according to the grant which Cyrus had made them. Thus a second time did they assist in rearing a temple for God. *Note;* Many help to build God's house, whose names, it is to be feared, will not be found in the book of life. They serve his interests only because they promote their own.

2dly, Though the work was great, their hearts were eager upon it, and therefore the preparations went on briskly.

1. In the second month of the second year the foundation was laid; seven months the materials were preparing, and then without delay they began to build. *Note;* (1.) If church-work be slow, it is because those who are engaged in it care not for the worship. (2.) What our hand findeth to do for God, we must do it with our might.

2. Zerubbabel and Jeshua, and their brethren the priests and Levites, forwarded with zeal the service: and of the Levites, officers were appointed to look over the workmen. *Note;* The eye that oversees is as necessary as the hand that builds.

3. When the foundation was laid, the priests with trumpets, and the Levites with cymbals, praised God in the Eucharistic hymn; the burden of which was, *for his mercy endureth for ever*; see Psal. cxxxvi. *Note;* The never-failing mercy of God is just matter of everlasting praise; and we can be in no circumstance, or condition, in which we are not bound to acknowledge this precious truth.

4. Very different emotions were on this occasion: awakened in the bosoms of the spectators. The younger part,

## C H A P. IV.

*The enemies of the Jews send letters to king Artaxerxes; he commands the Jews to desist from building the temple; the work ceases till the second year of Darius.*

[Before Christ 535.]

**N**OW when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple unto the LORD God of Israel;

2 Then they came to Zerubbabel, and to the chief of the fathers, and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto him since the days of Esar-haddon king of Assur, which brought us up hither.

3 But Zerubbabel, and Jeshua, and the rest of the chief of the fathers of Israel, said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD God of Israel, as king Cyrus the king of Persia hath commanded us.

4 Then the people of the land weakened the hands of the people of Judah, and troubled them in building,

5 And hired counsellors against them, to frustrate their purpose, all the days of Cyrus king of Persia, even until the reign of Darius king of Persia.

6 And in the reign of Ahasuerus, in the

part, who had never seen the former temple, beheld with delight the glorious fabric rising to their view, while the more aged fathers could not but look back to the magnificence of the ancient house, and weep to behold the change. It was now about fifty-four years, according to the most received computation, since Solomon's temple was destroyed; and many of those who were returned from the captivity might well remember it. The voice of weeping and shouting was thus blended together; but the shouting prevailed, and was heard at a distance; the mourning was only heard at home. *Note;* (1.) It is matter of joy to see revivals of religion, though they come not up to those in the days of our fathers. (2.) Even in our joys, some drops of sorrow will mingle: it will only be perfectly pure when we come to the better temple.

## C H A P. IV.

*Ver. 1. The adversaries of Judah*] That is, the Samaritans, who were planted in the several cities of Israel in the room of the Israelites, whom Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, had long before carried away captive.

*Ver. 3. Ye have nothing to do with us, &c.*] The Jews esteemed these people no better than idolaters; for, although from the time that they had been infested with lions, in the days of Esar-haddon, they had worshipped the God of Israel, yet it was only in conjunction with their other gods whom they worshipped before; and therefore, notwithstanding their worship of the true God, since they worshipped false gods also at the same time, they were in this respect idolaters; which was reason enough for the true worshippers of God to have no communion with them.

*Ver. 4. Weakened the hands*] See Neh. vi. 9. Jer. xxxviii. 4.

*Ver. 5. Until the reign of Darius*] The most probable opinion is, that the Darius here meant was Darius Hystaspes, whose second year was the eighteenth after the first of Cyrus, according to Huet. And it is plain that Ahasuerus, mentioned in the sixth verse, was Cambyses; and Artaxerxes, mentioned in the seventh, the false

Smerdis; because they were kings of Persia, who reigned between the time of Cyrus and the time of that Darius by whose decree the temple was finished. But, as that Darius was the son of Hystaspes, between whom and Cyrus there reigned none in Persia but Cambyses and Smerdis, it must hence follow, that none but these could be the Ahasuerus and Artaxerxes that are said in this chapter to have put a stop to the work. See Prideaux, Ann. 522. Houbigant renders this verse thus: *And because they had determined that they would prevent their undertaking, they hindered them all the days of Cyrus, &c.*

REFLECTIONS.—Whoever sets his heart zealously to serve God, must expect opposition. Christ's church is never built, but Satan rages. No sooner do Zerubbabel and the children of the captivity (for yet the scars of this yoke were not healed) begin to build, than the Samaritans throw obstacles in their way. *Note;* Pretenders to religion are generally the bitterest enemies to true godliness.

1. They first, under pretence of joining in the work, desired to be incorporated among them professing to serve the same God; but they were liars, and meant only to sow discord, or to mar the service by introducing their own mongrel worship. *Note;* We must not believe every spirit; the darkest designs often lurk under the fairest professions.

2. The chief of the fathers, with Zerubbabel and Jeshua, aware of their design, refused any connection with them, and resolved to keep united among themselves; and while the law of God enjoined them to separate themselves from the nations, the king's commission authorized them. *Note;* (1.) Nothing so dangerous as bad connections. (2.) It is prudent to make use of our privileges as men, when they serve as a barrier to guard our religion.

3. The failure of this plot discouraged not their restless foes: at home, they sought to discourage the building, by ridiculing the attempt, or threatening to fall upon them, or preventing the necessary supplies from Tyre; while by bribing the counsellors who were about the persons of the king



beginning of his reign, wrote they *unto him* an accusation against the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem.

7 ¶ And in the days of Artaxerxes wrote Bishlam, Mithredath, Tabeel, and the rest of their companions, unto Artaxerxes king of Persia; and the writing of the letter *was* written in the Syrian tongue, and interpreted in the Syrian tongue.

8 Rehum the chancellor and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter against Jerusalem to Artaxerxes the king in this sort :

xerxes the king in this sort :

9 Then *wrote* Rehum the chancellor, and Shimshai the scribe, and the rest of their companions; the Dinaites, the Apharathchites, the Tarpelites, the Apharsites, the Archevites, the Babylonians, the Sufanchites, the Dehavites, and the Elamites,

10 And the rest of the nations whom the great and noble Afnapper brought over, and set in the cities of Samaria, and the rest *that are* on this side the river, and at such a time.

king of Persia's governors, or the great men at his court, they sought to retard or stop the work; and this they continued till the reign of Darius. *Note;* (1.) The devil and his servants are restless in their attempts; the people of God must expect no truce. (2.) Many a wicked counsellor, for the sake of the fee, little cares how bad the cause is that he is engaged in.

*Ver. 10. The great and noble Afnapper]* Grotius supposes, that Afnapper is another name for Salmanafar, or Lzardaddon, who sent these colonies hither; but it is more probable, that he was some principal commander, who was intrusted by one or both of those kings to conduct them over the Euphrates, and see them settled in those countries. See Bishop Patrick. - Instead of *at such a time*, in this, the 11th, 12th, and 17th verses, Houbigant, after the Vulgate, reads, *dicunt salutem, send health, or greeting.*

*Ver. 12. The Jews]* After the return from the captivity, the people in general came to be called Jews, because, though there were many Israelites among them, yet they chiefly consisted of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin; and though the edict of Cyrus gave all permission to return when they pleased, yet the sacred writers take notice only of those who returned in a body.

*Ver. 13. Tell, tribute, and custom]* By the first of these, מנדב *mindab*, Grotius understands that which every head paid to the king, and which we call poll-money; by the second, בלו *beho*, the excise, as we now call it, which was levied upon commodities and merchandize; and by the last, הלך *halak*, the land-tax. But Witfius, in his Miscell. part 2. is of opinion, that the first word rather signifies that part which every man paid out of his estate, according as it was valued; the second, that which was paid for every head; and the third, that which was paid upon the highway by every traveller who went about the country with any kind of merchandize.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, No sooner was Cyrus, the professed friend of the Jewish people, asleep in the grave, and Ahafuerus advanced to the throne of Persia, than the enemies of God's people determined to improve the opportunity. Happy were it, if the church's friends were as watchful to serve her interests, as her enemies are to do her mischief.

1. The general design was, to render them odious to the government, by representing them as a turbulent seditious people; and the vouchers for the accusation

were, the Samaritan governors whom the king of Persia had appointed, backed and supported by all the colonies of different nations settled in Samaria. *Note;* (1.) Lying accusations are the lot of all God's people. (2.) When godliness is to be oppressed, subscriptions will not be wanting to support any charge, however malicious or unjust. (3.) The many join in the general cry, usually without knowing why or wherefore.

2. The particulars of the letter are here recited, and shew as much of the old serpent's cunning and malice as we might expect to find. [1.] To ingratiate themselves, and obtain the easier credit, they profess a high zeal for the king's honour, and deep gratitude for the maintenance or salaries which they received from him; and therefore they could not unconcerned see his government injured. *Note,* Pretended fears of danger to the state, are a common plea for the oppression of God's people. [2.] They brand the Jews as a people infamously disloyal; call Jerusalem the rebellious and bad city, which had in all times past been dangerous to kings and provinces; and, for the confirmation of their assertion, appeal to the records which contain Zedekiah's rebellion. *Note;* (1.) The enemies of God's people will not spare hard names; and the most are so easily influenced, that they conclude that a bad name must imply a bad thing. (2.) Dangerous designs are often imputed to God's people, when they of all others mean to be quiet in the land. (3.) If once an evil thing has been done by professors of religion an age ago, they are sure to have it laid at their door ever after, however much they disapprove and condemn it. (4.) When men desire occasion to stumble, the devil will not fail to supply them with it. [3.] They make a most lying report of the state of Jerusalem, and give a most malicious insinuation of the consequences: they declare that the walls of the city are set up, when it does not appear that a stone had been taken from the rubbish; that the temple alone engaged them; and that it was soon to be feared, there would be a general revolt of all the conquered provinces on this side the Euphrates, encouraged by the example of the Jews, to the dismembering of his kingdom, and the great loss of his revenue. *Note;* They who set their hearts against God's people hesitate not at lies; and, gross or improbable as they are, the world is always ready to swallow them.

2dly, God in wisdom sometimes permits innocence to be oppressed, and suffers the lying misrepresentations of the

11 ¶ This *is* the copy of the letter that they sent unto him, *even* unto Artaxerxes the king; Thy servants the men on this side the river, and at such a time.

12 Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerusalem, building the rebellious and the bad city, and have set up the walls *thereof*, and joined the foundations.

13 Be it known now unto the king, that, if this city be builded, and the walls set up *again*, *then* will they not pay toll, tribute, and custom, and *so* thou shalt endamage the revenue of the kings.

14 Now because we have maintenance from *the king's* palace, and it was not meet for us to see the king's dishonour, therefore have we sent and certified the king;

15 That search may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers: so shalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city *is* a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved sedition within the same of old time: for which cause was this city destroyed.

16 We certify the king that, if this city be builded *again*, and the walls thereof set up, by this means thou shalt have no portion on this side the river.

17 ¶ *Then* sent the king an answer unto Rehum the chancellor, and to Shimshai the scribe, and to the rest of their companions that dwell in Samaria, and *unto* the rest beyond the river, Peace, and at such a time.

18 The letter which ye sent unto us hath been plainly read before me.

19 And I commanded, and search hath been made, and it is found, that this city of old time hath made insurrection against kings, and *that* rebellion and sedition have been made therein.

20 There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, which have ruled over all *countries* beyond the river; and toll, tribute, and custom, was paid unto them.

21 Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded, until *another* commandment shall be given from me.

22 Take heed now that ye fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings?

23 ¶ Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter *was* read before Rehum, and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power.

24 Then ceased the work of the house of God which *is* at Jerusalem. So it ceased unto the second year of the reign of Darius king of Persia.

## CHAP. V.

*Zerubbabel and Jeshua, incited by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, set forward the building of the temple. The letter sent to Darius upon this occasion.*

[Before Christ 519.]

**T**HEN the prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, pro-

the enemies of his people to prevail. But the day is coming when the lying lips shall be put to silence; and they who have loved as well as they who made a lie shall lie down together in the pit.

1. The king, without sending persons to the spot to make inquiry, credits the representations which his counsellors, who had been probably bribed, strenuously reported (for in a court what will not gold do?); and having found in the records Zedekiah's and Jehoiakim's struggle for liberty, and that former kings of Jerusalem had extended their dominions to the river Euphrates, he readily concludes that the danger was imminent, orders an immediate stop to be put to the building of the city, and appoints his governors in Samaria to see his orders executed. *Note*; It is difficult for kings, beset with courtiers and flatterers, to know the truth.

2. With delight and eagerness their enemies run to

execute, yea to exceed their orders. They were only enjoined to cause the Jews to cease building the city, which was never begun; this, however, was easily construed to extend to the temple; and, having power on their side, there could be no resistance: thus the work continued at a stand, till the second year of Darius Hystaspes. *Note*; (1.) Nothing gives greater pleasure to a carnal world, than the suppression of God's cause and truth. (2.) Patient submission under unjust oppression, is a hard lesson. (3.) Though for a while God permits wicked men and oppressors to ride over our heads, their triumphing is but for a moment.

## CHAP. V.

*Vcr. 1. Haggai—and Zechariah*] Concerning these prophets, see the books which bear their names. They are both thought to have been born at Babylon during the captivity

phesied unto the Jews that *were* in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, *even* unto them.

2 Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and began to build the house of God which *is* at Jerusalem: and with them *were* the prophets of God helping them.

3 ¶ At the same time came to them Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shethar-boznai, and their companions, and said thus unto them, Who hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall?

4 Then said we unto them after this manner, What are the names of the men that

make this building?

5 But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease, till the matter came to Darius: and then they returned answer by letter concerning this *matter*.

6 ¶ The copy of the letter that Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shethar-boznai, and his companions the Apharsachites, which *were* on this side the river, sent unto Darius the king:

7 They sent a letter unto him, wherein was written thus; Unto Darius the king, all peace.

8 Be it known unto the king, that we went

captivity, and both with united zeal encouraged the people to go on with the work of the temple. Upon the accession of Darius to the throne, Haggai in particular, by reproaching the people with their indolence and insensibility; by telling them, that they were careful enough to lodge themselves very commodiously, while the house of the Lord lay buried in its ruins; and by putting them in mind, that the calamities of drought and famine, where-with God had afflicted them since their return, were owing to their neglect in building the temple, prevailed with them to set about the work in good earnest; so that, by virtue of these reproofs, as well as some encouragements which God occasionally authorized him to give them, they brought the whole to a conclusion in a short time.

*Ver. 5. But the eye of their God, &c.]* i. e. The peculiar favour, good providence, and protection of God. Houbigant renders the last clause of the preceding verse thus: *these are the names of the men who have undertaken this building.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, About fifteen years the building seems to have continued at a stand, till God by his prophets roused the people to the work.

1. They prophesied unto them, or against them; reproved them for their lukewarmness, and provoked them to renew the building. *Note;* (1.) Ministers must be faithful reprovers, and urge the sluggish builders to their work. (2.) When God raises up zealous preachers of his word, then there is hope that the wall will be built.

2. The effect of their prophecy was soon evident. Zerubbabel and Jeshua immediately set themselves to the work, and the prophets helped them; so that the people once more began with vigour to build. *Note;* (1.) They who are first in station, should be first to promote every good work. (2.) The help of the prophets is the most essential part towards the establishment of the spiritual church: though a good magistrate can do much, a good minister can do more.

2dly, No sooner began the work to revive, than the jealousy of their neighbours began to appear.

1. The governors of Samaria, who had succeeded the former in their office, probably at the beginning of the

new reign of Darius, immediately inquired into the authority on which the Jews proceeded. They were not, however, afraid or ashamed to produce their charter, and to give in the names of the principal authors of this good work; God encouraging them, and strengthening them to persevere, till the matter came before Darius, to whom they appealed. *Note;* (1.) If God's eye be upon us for good, we need not fear what man can do unto us. (2.) The comfortable presence of God should quicken and enliven us to greater diligence in his service.

2. The governors Tatnai and Shethar-boznai hereupon dispatched a letter to the king, informing him of what was doing, and desiring his directions; and herein they acted with much greater candour and honesty than their predecessors, representing the true state of the fact. After wishing the king prosperity and all earthly happiness, they inform him, that they had visited the province of Judea, and observed there a magnificent structure raising to the great God whom the Jews worshipped, which was carried on with assiduity and zeal; that, on inquiring into the authority on which they presumed thus to act, they received for answer, That this house, which a great king among them had formerly erected, and for their sins God had suffered Nebuchadnezzar to destroy. Cyrus had given them a commission to rebuild; and restored to them withal the vessels which had been carried to Babylon: in consequence of which, they had proceeded under the direction of Sheshbazzar, their prince; and that they had ever since been at work upon it, though, by reason of the interruptions they had met with, it was not yet finished. They beg therefore, if the king pleased, that search might be made in the records, respecting the truth of this decree in their favour; and that he would inform them of his pleasure in the matter. *Note;* (1.) We should ever reflect with shame on the sins that have provoked God's visitations. (2.) If the people of God can but obtain a fair hearing, they need not fear for their cause. (3.) Many an unjust sentence has gone forth against the faithful, not so much from malice in the magistrate, as from the misinformation of their enemies. (4.) Truth, though long suppressed, will usually at last prevail.

into the province of Judea, to the house of the great God, which is builded with great stones, and timber is laid in the walls, and this work goeth fast on, and prospereth in their hands.

9 Then asked we those elders, *and* said unto them thus, Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls?

10 We asked their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men that *were* the chief of them.

11 And thus they returned us answer, saying, We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and build the house that was builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded and set up.

12 But after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven unto wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house, and carried the people away into Babylon.

13 But in the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon, *the same* king Cyrus made a decree to build this house of God.

14 And the vessels also of gold and silver of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that *was* in Jerusalem, and brought them into the temple of Babylon, those did Cyrus the king take out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered unto *one*, whose name *was* Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor;

15 And said unto him, Take these vessels, go, carry them into the temple that *is* in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be builded in his place.

16 Then came the same Sheshbazzar, *and* laid the foundation of the house of God which *is* in Jerusalem: and since that time even until now hath it been in building, and *yet* it is not finished.

17 Now therefore, if *it seem* good to the king, let there be search made in the king's

treasure-house, which is there at Babylon, whether it be *so*, that a decree was made of Cyrus the king to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king send his pleasure to us concerning this matter.

### CHAP. VI.

*At the command of Darius, search is made after the edict of Cyrus; which edict Darius confirms. The temple is finished in the sixth year of Darius; the dedication of which is celebrated by the Jews.*

[Before Christ 519.]

**T**HEN Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the rolls, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon.

2 And there was found at Achmetha, in the palace that *is* in the province of the Medes, a roll, and therein *was* a record thus written:

3 In the first year of Cyrus the king *the same* Cyrus the king made a decree *concerning* the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, *and* the breadth thereof threescore cubits;

4 *With* three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber: and let the expences be given out of the king's house:

5 And also let the golden and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which *is* at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored, and brought again unto the temple which *is* at Jerusalem, *every one* to his place, and place *them* in the house of God.

6 Now *therefore*, Tatnai, governor beyond the river, Shethar-boznai, and your companions the Apharsachites, which *are* beyond the river, be ye far from thence:

7 Let the work of this house of God alone; let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place.

### CHAP. VI.

*Ver. 1. Darius the king]* As Darius, the better to fortify his title to the crown, had married two of the daughters of Cyrus, he thought himself bound to do every thing which

might tend to the honour of that great prince; and therefore more readily confirmed the decree which he had granted to the Jews. Instead of *were laid up in Babylon*, Houbigant reads, *had been laid up in Babylon.*

*Ver.*

8 Moreover I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews for the building of this house of God: that of the king's goods, *even* of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expences be given unto these men, that they be not hindered.

9 And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for the burnt-offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil: according to the appointment of the priests which *are* at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail:

10 That they may offer sacrifices of sweet favours unto the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons:

11 Also I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let timber be pulled down from his house, and being set up, let him be hanged thereon; and let his house be made a dunghill for this.

12 And the God that hath caused his name to dwell there destroy all kings and people, that shall put to their hand to alter *and* to destroy this house of God which *is* at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree; let it be done with speed.

13 ¶ Then Tatnai, governor on this side the river, Shethar-boznai, and their companions, according to that which Darius the king had sent, so they did speedily.

14 And the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished *it*, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus,

and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.

15 And this house was finished on the third day of the month Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

16 ¶ And the children of Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of God with joy,

17 And offered at the dedication of this house of God an hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin-offering for all Israel, twelve he-goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel.

18 And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of God, which *is* at Jerusalem; as it is written in the book of Moses.

19 And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth *day* of the first month.

20 For the priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them *were* pure, and killed the passover for all the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves.

21 And the children of Israel which were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the LORD God of Israel, did eat,

22 And kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the LORD had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

*Ver. 19. And pray for the life of the king, and of his sons]* Though the Jews were not allowed to desire the heathens to pray to their deities for their prosperity, because they were forbidden to acknowledge any other gods than one; yet the Heathens might, if they thought fit, worship their God; nor did the Jews deny them that privilege, or refuse the offerings which they brought for that purpose, till, in the time of their wars with the Romans, the faction of the zealots grew to be predominant: "For then," as Josephus tells us, "one Eleazar, the son of Ananias the high-priest, a desperate daring young man, and the military officer then in command, pressed some of his friends among the priests to receive no offering or sacrifice but from the Jews only; by which means it came to pass, that the very offerings of Cæsar, which were used con-

stantly to be made for the welfare of the Roman people, came to be rejected, and this proved the very ground and foundation of the war with that nation. The high-priest however, and the men of best quality, declared themselves extremely dissatisfied with the novelty of this prohibition; and with great importunities desired the continuance of so pious a custom as offering up prayers for princes and governors;" but all in vain: though this place in Ezra, one would think, sets the duty in a clear light.

*Ver. 14. And Artaxerxes king of Persia]* Houbigant omits the word *Artaxerxes* here.

*Ver. 22. The king of Assyria]* Darius is called the king of Assyria, as now reigning over all the kingdoms which were formerly under the power of the Assyrians. And

## C H A P. VII.

*In the seventh year of Artaxerxes, Ezra goes to Jerusalem. The king's edict, permitting Ezra to teach the law of God, and to appoint judges.*

[Before Christ 458.]

**N**OW after these things, in the reign of Artaxerxes king of Persia, Ezra the

son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah, the son of Hilkiah,

2 The son of Shallum the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub,

3 The son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son of Meraioth,

from hence Archbishop Usher infers, that Babylon, which in the beginning of his reign had revolted, must necessarily have been reduced by Darius before this time; otherwise he thinks he could not have been styled king of Assyria, whereof Babylon was the metropolis. Dr. Prideaux gives this character of Darius: "He was a prince of great wisdom, clemency, and justice; and has the honour to be recorded in holy writ for a favourer of God's people, a restorer of his temple at Jerusalem, and a promoter of his worship therein. For all this God was pleased to make him his instrument; and with respect to this, I doubt not, it was, that he blessed him with a numerous issue, a long reign, and great prosperity."

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have in this chapter,

1. Search made, in consequence of the application, after the original record in the house of the rolls; and it was found in Achmetha, thought to be Ecbatana, the summer residence of the kings of Babylon; and it contained not only a commission for building the house, but a command to the governors to furnish out of the revenue all necessary materials; which privilege, it seems, the Jews either generously waved, or the change of affairs at court prevented their receiving the benefit of this order. *Note;* (1.) Diligent inquiry after truth is necessary, in order to administer impartial justice. (2.) It is often prudent to decline making use of those offers which the generosity of our friends may put in our power.

2. Darius, hereupon perfectly satisfied, confirms the edict in its full extent. As, probably, the interruption the work had met with from the malice of the former governors now appeared, he charges them to give the Jews no hindrance or molestation; commands them to furnish all necessary materials for the building, and the sacrifices and offerings which they needed, out of the revenues; speaks with deep respect of Israel's God, and puts a high value on the prayers of this favoured people, low as they were now reduced. He enforces the decree with the penalty of death on any man who dared counteract it; "Let him be hanged on the beams of his own house, and let it be made a dunghill to perpetuate the infamy;" and, as highly zealous for the honour of that glorious God, whose presence had formerly so distinguished this house, and he supposes would again, he denounces a curse on the king or people who should ever after attempt to alter the worship, or destroy the temple. He concludes with commanding immediate execution of his orders. *Note;* (1.) The Lord can over-rule the malice of the church's enemies, and bring good out of their evil designs. (2.) They are, through God's good providence, often made instrumental in carrying on the work of God, who have themselves neither part nor lot in the matter.

(3.) While we are enabled to trust all our concerns with God, he has the hearts of the greatest in his power, and will over-rule them for the purposes of his own glory.

(4.) If kings knew the efficacy of the prayers of God's people, they would be careful to secure an interest in them. (5.) Those whom God has set in authority over us, we are bound to pray for, though heathens or oppressors; and how much more, when truly defenders of the faith, and really nursing fathers to the church! (6.) The curse denounced will surely fall on all the enemies of God's spiritual temple. They who fight against that, destroy their own souls.

2dly, When the obstacles were removed, and the encouragements to labour so many, the work went on briskly. We have here,

1. The finishing of the temple. The governors dared no longer obstruct the work; but, though it may be with reluctance, were immediately obliged to comply with the king's orders; while the prophets Haggai and Zechariah pleaded those mercies which they enjoyed as an argument of God's blessing, and an obligation diligently to improve them; so that in four years the temple was completely finished. *Note;* (1.) Every mercy that we enjoy should be improved, as an argument for increasing diligence in God's service. (2.) The grand means which God makes use of for the perfecting of the saints, is the ministry of the word.

2. The solemn dedication of it. The priests and Levites, being set in their several courses, according to the law of Moses, offered liberal sacrifices to God on the occasion. As there were many, not only of Benjamin and Judah, but of other tribes joined with them, a sin-offering of twelve he-goats was offered for the congregation; and now, having through the blood of atonement obtained reconciliation, though some marks of bondage still continued upon them, yet with great gladness they rejoiced to see the long discontinued temple-worship once more happily revived. *Note;* (1.) The great concern of the returning sinner is, to obtain remission of sin. (2.) When the atoning blood is sprinkled on the conscience, the soul is filled with peace and joy in believing. (3.) Revivals of God's blessed worship and service are the heart-felt rejoicing of every faithful Israelite.

3. The next month they kept the passover with great solemnity and exactness; as a memorial of their escape from Ægypt, and now of their repeated deliverance from Babylon, the second house of their bondage. The priests and Levites, unanimous to purify themselves, to a man were ready for their functions, and killed the passover for their brethren, as well as themselves. Not only the people who had returned from Babylon, but many proselytes from the heathen, who had renounced their idolatry, and were circum-

4 The son of Zerariah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki,

5 The son of Abishua, the son of Phineas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest:

6 This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he *was* a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him.

7 And there went up *some* of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king.

8 And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which *was* in the seventh year of the king.

9 For upon the first *day* of the first month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the

first *day* of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him.

10 For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do *it*, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

11 ¶ Now this *is* the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest, the scribe, *even* a scribe of the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of his statutes to Israel.

12 Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect *peace*, and at such a time.

13 I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and *of* his priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own free will to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee.

14 Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors, to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according

circumcised, joined with them; and seven days with universal gladness they kept the feast of unleavened bread; God comforting their hearts, and making them happy in the protection and encouragement which they received from the king. *Note;* (1.) All true converts to Christ fail not to feed upon him in the feast that he has instituted in memory of the deliverance wrought for them by his dying love. (2.) Purity in the ministers of God's ordinances is most conducive to the comfort and profiting of them: under such ministrations a blessing may be expected. (3.) When we draw near to God, we are called to put off all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness; to separate ourselves from the ways of a wicked world; to renounce our former company, and join ourselves to God's people. (4.) Those who wait upon God in his ways, he causes to rejoice. He is the well-spring of all spiritual comfort, and out of his fulness we shall receive. (5.) When God becomes our portion, he can make those whom we feared as enemies our fast friends.

#### C H A P. VII.

*Ver. 1. Ezra the son of Seraiah*] He calls himself here, according to the Hebrew idiom, *the son of Seraiah*, who was the high-priest that Nebuchadnezzar caused to be slain at the taking of Jerusalem, 2 Kings, xxv. 18, &c.; but had he been his real son, he must then have been at least one hundred and thirty-two years old, supposing him to have been an infant when his father died; and so wholly unfit for such a journey and employment: whereas we find him capable of reading the Scriptures to the people from morning till noon, one whole week; and of assisting Nehemiah in his office thirteen years after, when he must have been at least one hundred and forty-five years old; but since he there also calls Azariah the son of

Meraioth, though it appears from 1 Chron. vi. 7, &c. that there were six descendants between them, it becomes very probable that he may himself have been some descendent off *Seraiah*, though it does not appear how many.

*Ver. 6. A ready scribe*] The LXX, the Vulgate, and our translation, render the original words *a ready scribe*; as if to have a quick hand at writing out the law were any great perfection, or that an aged man, as Ezra was, should be renowned for it. It was not for writing, then, but for explaining the things of Scripture, that Ezra was so famous; for סופר *soper* denotes *one skilled and learned*, from ספר *soper*, *a book*; and, as no book was comparable to the book of the law, סופר *soper* became a name of great dignity, and signified one who taught God's law, and instructed the people out of it. In which sense we find the word γραμματεῖς, or *scribes*, used in the New Testament; for when our Saviour is said to have *taught the people as one having authority, and not as the scribes*, this plainly shews, that these scribes were not transcribers, but teachers and expounders of the law, though they did not do it with a proper authority. It can hardly be imagined but that some more than ordinary means were used to obtain so great a favour from Artaxerxes, as this commission was upon which Ezra went; and therefore we may suppose, that it was granted at the solicitation of Esther; for this Artaxerxes was the Ahasuerus of Esther. She was become the best-beloved of the king's concubines, though not yet advanced to the dignity of queen; for it being usual for the kings of Persia, on some particular days and occasions, to allow their women to ask what boons they pleased, it is not unlikely that, by the direction of Mordecai, upon some such occasion as this, Esther, though she had not discovered her kingdom and nation, might make this the matter of her request.

*Ver.*



to the law of thy God which *is* in thine hand ;

15 And to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation *is* in Jerusalem.

16 And all the silver and gold that thou canst find in all the province of Babylon, with the free-will offering of the people, and of the priests, offering willingly for the house of their God which *is* in Jerusalem.

17 That thou mayest buy speedily with this money bullocks, rams, lambs, with their meat-offerings and their drink-offerings, and offer them upon the altar of the house of your God which *is* in Jerusalem.

18 And whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and to thy brethren, to do with the rest of the silver and gold, that do after the will of your God.

19 The vessels also that are given thee for the service of the house of thy God, *those* deliver thou before the God of Jerusalem.

20 And whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of thy God, which thou shalt have occasion to bestow, bestow *it* out of the king's treasure-house.

21 And I, *even* I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which *are*

beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily.

22 Unto an hundred talents of silver, and to an hundred measures of wheat, and to an hundred baths of wine, and to an hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing *how much*.

23 Whatsoever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the God of heaven : for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons ?

24 Also we certify you, that touching any of the priests and Levites, singers, porters, Nethinims, or ministers of this house of God, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute, or custom, upon them.

25 And thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that *is* in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that *are* beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God ; and teach ye them that know *them* not.

26 And whosoever will not do the law of thy God, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether *it be* unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.

*Ver. 25. That is in thine hand*] *Which is in thee.* See Nold. 917.

*Ver. 26. The law of the king*] i. e. Says Bishop Patrick, this decree which was made in favour of the Jews, whereby they were authorized to use the laws of Moses : in any case where these were doubtful, they were to be directed by the king's ordinances.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Ezra seems, soon after the dedication of the temple, to have returned to court, either to give an account of their proceedings, or to complain of the backwardness of the governors to supply them according to the king's commission, or to invite more of his brethren to return, since their beginnings were now so prosperous.

1. His character answered his high birth. He was eminent for his learning, especially in the law of God ; and as eminent for his practice. His knowledge was not barren and unfruitful ; it engaged him to fidelity in doing the will of God, while he earnestly sought deeper discoveries of it ; and he was zealously communicative of his spiritual wisdom, in order to teach others how to walk and please God. *Note* ; (1.) Of all learning, scripture learning is most desirable : none beside can make us wise to salvation. (2.) They who would know God's truth, must search for it as for silver. Idleness and ignorance are

necessarily connected. (3.) That is truly profitable knowledge, which is employed in the instruction of others in the good ways of our God. (4.) They who practise what they teach can speak with greater confidence, and may expect success. Little can be hoped from the scribe who sits in Moses's seat, and faith, and doth not.

2. Having executed successfully his commission at the Persian court, he returned to Jerusalem, bringing with him a number of his brethren, who, hearing of the prosperity of Zion, were desirous to share in it. Though the journey was long, God's presence and providence comforted and strengthened them, and they arrived safe, after a four months' journey, at Jerusalem. *Note* ; God's merciful providence is continually to be acknowledged in all our goings out and comings in : every mercy that we enjoy comes from his good hand.

2dly, We have the honourable commission addressed to Ezra the scribe from the king of Babylon ; whose dominions were so extensive, that he assumed the title of King of kings.

1. He gives liberty to all the Jews in his dominions to return to their own land under the conduct of Ezra, who is constituted chief inquisitor into the affairs of the Jewish people, and authorized to take care that the law of God in all things might be observed among them.

2. He

27 ¶ Blessed be the LORD God of our fathers, which hath put *such a thing* as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem :

28 And hath extended mercy unto me before the king, and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes. And I was strengthened as the hand of the LORD my God was upon me, and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me.

C H A P. VIII.

*The families are enumerated which went with Esdras. He sends for Levites from Caspbia, to whom he intrusts the gold and silver which was to be brought to Jerusalem; and arriving there, he offers solemn sacrifices.*

[Before Christ 458.]

**T**HESSE are now the chief of their fathers, and *this is* the genealogy of them that went up with me from Babylon, in the reign of Artaxerxes the king.

2 Of the sons of Phinehas; Geršhom: of the sons of Ithamar; Dániel: of the sons of David; Hattush.

3 Of the sons of Shechaniah, of the sons

of P̄harosh; Zechariah: and with him were reckoned by genealogy of the males an hundred and fifty.

4 Of the sons of Pahath moab; Elihoenai the son of Zerachiah, and with him two hundred males.

5 Of the sons of Shechaniah; the son of Jahaziel, and with him three hundred males.

6 Of the sons also of Adin; Ebed the son of Jonathan, and with him fifty males.

7 And of the sons of Elam; Jeshaiah the son of Athaliah, and with him seventy males.

8 And of the sons of Shephatiah; Zebadiah the son of Michael, and with him fourscore males.

9 Of the sons of Joab; Obadiah the son of Jehiel, and with him two hundred and eighteen males.

10 And of the sons of Shelomith; the son of Josiphiah, and with him an hundred and threescore males.

11 And of the sons of Bebai; Zechariah the son of Bebai, and with him twenty and eight males.

12 And of the sons of Azgad; Johanan

2. He sends by him a noble present from himself and his princes, with vessels of silver and gold, to be employed in the service of the temple, as Ezra and his brethren saw most adviseable; and authorizes him to collect from the Jews, who continued to reside in Babylon, whatever free-will offerings they chose to send to the house of God at Jerusalem, to be laid out according to the will of God. *Note;* (1.) The revealed will of God must be the constant standard of our conduct. (2.) They who are employed in such trusts of public money need be men of tried integrity.

3. He gives him a large order upon his governors, for whatever more might be wanting for the service of God; to maintain which, he would spare no expence, knowing how much it was his interest to engage him as a friend; and how dangerous, by neglect, to provoke him as an enemy. *Note;* (1.) How will the solicitude of a heathen king to obtain God's favour rise up in judgment, to reprove the negligence and carelessness of professed christians! (2.) They who are zealous in the cause of God will have generous hearts and open hands.

4. He exempts all the ministers of the sanctuary, from the highest to the lowest, from tribute; as an honourable mark of distinction. However they may now be slighted, there was a time when even heathen kings thought that they ought to be had in honour.

5. Ezra is empowered to nominate magistrates skilled in God's law over his own people, that no heathen judge might have jurisdiction among them. They were to

administer justice, and instruct the ignorant; and all pains and penalties were put in their power to punish the disobedient, even to imprisonment or death. *Note;* (1.) Magistrates must not bear the sword in vain. (2.) Among the greatest temporal blessings, is an impartial administration of justice according to the law of God.

3dly, With grateful acknowledgement Ezra interrupts the history, to offer up a pious and thankful ejaculation to his merciful God.

1. For the gracious commission which the Lord had put it into the king's heart to give him. *Note;* (1.) In all our blessings, we must look above men and means to the great author of all grace. (2.) If there be a good desire put into the heart, we may be assured that it is from above.

2. For the support and strength with which he had been supplied in negotiating this service. *Note;* Whatever abilities or natural fortitude we possess, we must ascribe all our successes, not to ourselves, but to the support of God's good grace:

3. For the company that God gave him, inclining his brethren, and the chief of them, to go with him. *Note;* (1.) It is not our persuasions as ministers, but God's powerful operative grace upon the heart, that can engage any man to quit this Babylon of the world, to travel to Zion, the mount of God. (2.) It is matter of most unspeakable thankfulness to ministers, when their preaching is made effectual to the engaging of men's hearts to follow Christ and his gospel.

the son of Hakkatan, and with him an hundred and ten males.

13 And of the last sons of Adonikam, whose names *are* these, Eliphelet, Jeiel, and Shemaiah, and with them threescore males.

14 Of the sons also of Bigvai; Uthai, and Zabbud, and with them seventy males.

15 ¶ And I gathered them together to the river that runneth to Ahava; and there abode we in tents three days: and I viewed the people, and the priests, and found there none of the sons of Levi.

16 Then sent I for Eliezer, for Ariel, for Shemaiah, and for Elnathan, and for Jarib, and for Elnathan, and for Nathan, and for Zechariah, and for Meshullam, chief men: also for Joiarib, and for Elnathan, men of understanding.

17 And I sent them with commandment unto Iddo the chief at the place Casiphia, and I told them what they should say unto Iddo, *and* to his brethren the Nethinims, at the place Casiphia, that they should bring unto us ministers for the house of our God.

18 And by the good hand of our God upon us they brought us a man of understanding, of the sons of Mahli, the son of Levi, the son of Israel; and Sherebiah, with his sons and his brethren, eighteen:

19 And Hashabiah, and with him Jeshai

of the sons of Merari, his brethren and their sons, twenty;

20 Also of the Nethinims, whom David and the princes had appointed for the service of the Levites, two hundred and twenty Nethinims: all of them were expressed by name.

21 ¶ Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.

22 For I was ashamed to require of the king a band of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy in the way: because we had spoken unto the king, saying, The hand of our God *is* upon all them for good that seek him; but his power and his wrath *is* against all them that forsake him.

23 So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was intreated of us.

24 ¶ Then I separated twelve of the chief of the priests, Sherebiah, Hashabiah, and ten of their brethren with them.

25 And weighed unto them the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, *even* the offering of the house of our God, which the king, and his counsellors, and his lords, and all Israel *there* present, had offered:

26 I even weighed unto their hand six hundred and fifty talents of silver, and silver

#### C H A P. VIII.

*Ver. 15. Ahava*] This was a river of Assyria, and, very probably, that which ran along the *Adiabene*, where the river *Diava*, or *Adiava*, is known to be, and upon which Ptolemy places the city of *Abane*, or *Avano*. Here, as some imagine, was the country which, in the 2d book of Kings, xvii. 24. is called *Ava*, whence the king of Assyria translated the people called *Avites* into Palestine, and in their room settled some of the captive Israelites. It was a common thing for those who travelled from Babylon to Jerusalem, in order to avoid the scorching heat of the desert of Arabia, to shape their course northward at first, and then, turning westward, to pass through Syria into Palestine. But Ezra had a further reason for taking this route; for, as he intended to get together as many Israelites as he could, to carry along with him to Jerusalem, he took his course this way, and made a halt in the country of *Ava*, or *Ahava*, from which place he might send emissaries into the Caspian mountains, to invite such *Jews* as were there to come and join them. See Calmet.

*Ver. 17. Casiphia*] It is not easy to guess what place this was. The text calls it *Casiphia the place*. Some have

taken it for the Caspian mountains situate between Media and Hyrcania, in the mines of which these captive Nethinims are supposed to have been sent to work; if so, it is no wonder that they should be so ready to embrace the benefit of the king's decree. The LXX render it *a place of silver*; for *כסף* *keseph* signifies *silver*.

*Ver. 21. I proclaimed a fast*] They had the greater reason to do this, because they carried with them things of considerable value, were apprehensive of enemies who lay in wait for them, and were ashamed to ask any guard of the king, who, being not much instructed in these matters, might possibly think, that what they said of God's favour towards them, and the prophecies concerning their restoration, were but vain boasts, if they should seem to distrust the power and favour of that God of whom they had spoken so magnificently, by making application to the king for his protection and defence. Rather, therefore, than give any such umbrage, they were resolved to commit themselves entirely to God; but then it was necessary that they should beseech *that* of him, *which*, without giving offence, they could not request of the king. See Bishop Patrick.

vessels an hundred talents, and of gold an hundred talents :

27 Also twenty basons of gold, of a thou-

sand drams ; and two vessels of fine copper, precious as gold.

28 And I said unto them, Ye are holy

*Ver. 26, 27. Six hundred and fifty talents of silver, &c.]* The six hundred and fifty talents of silver, at three hundred and seventy-five pounds to the talent, make two hundred and forty-three thousand seven hundred and fifty pounds. The silver vessels weighed one hundred talents, which come to thirty-seven thousand five hundred pounds. The gold, in coin, was one hundred talents, which, at four thousand five hundred pounds per talent, make four hundred and fifty thousand pounds. And, besides all this, there were twenty basons of gold of one thousand drachms; and two vessels of fine copper as valuable as gold. Houbigant, however, reads, instead of *two vessels, &c.—and vessels of fine copper, polished, and precious as gold.* From this new reformation made by Ezra in the Jewish church and common-wealth, the learned Prideaux begins the computation of Daniel's weeks.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The proclamation of Artaxerxes having given the Jews full liberty to return to their own land, we have here the muster-roll of those who accepted the proffered liberty.

1. The volunteers in this service were 1496, and among them several of great name. Many of the former families also followed their brethren; and all the sons of Adonikam now left Babylon for Jerusalem. *Note;* If our relations have led the way towards the good land, let it provoke us to jealousy, and to cast in our lot with them. Pity it is, that houses should be divided, and any dear relations choose to stay behind rather than go with us to the heavenly Jerusalem.

2. At a general review on new-year's day, among all this company no Levite was found. Ezra could not but be grieved at such a defection, and, as they came not of their own accord, he sends eleven of the principal people to Iddo, who was chief over them at Casiphia, that he might provide ministers for the house of God. *Note;* They who are backward to discharge their duty, must be stirred up to it. If ministers are negligent, they are to be put in mind, that they take heed to their ministry.

3. The application succeeded: thirty-eight Levites, under three principal leaders, offered themselves for the service; and two hundred and twenty Nethinims accompanied them, whose names were honourably inserted in the register. This Ezra justly ascribes to God's gracious interposition, inclining and disposing the hearts of his ministers to undertake the service.

2dly, Dangerous and tedious was the journey that they were about to undertake; and they had to fear from their enemies, the Arabs and Samaritans. They proclaim a fast, therefore, to humble their souls for their sins, and entreat God to direct their way aright, and preserve them and theirs. They might, indeed, have procured a guard; but Ezra, jealous for the honour of God, in whom, before the king, he had expressed his firm confidence, as the protector of his people, and the destroyer of his enemies, would rather meet the danger, dependent on his care, than give the least occasion of offence by such an application.

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And their prayers procured a better guard than legions of armed men; for God was entreated of them, and covered them with the shadow of his wing. *Note;* (1.) It becomes us ever to be jealous for the honour of God, and rather to expose ourselves to difficulty, than give any occasion of stumbling to others. (2.) They who humbly seek God, dependent on his care, will find him a very present help in trouble.

3dly, Before they set forth on their journey, Ezra appointed twelve priests, and as many Levites, to take the charge of the treasures and vessels which were consecrated to God's service; with which they, as holy men employed also in the service of God, were the fittest to be entrusted, till they came to Jerusalem. *Note;* (1.) They who have the care of holy things, ought themselves to be holy men. (2.) They who are entrusted with the money of the public, or the contributions devoted to charitable uses, had need be exact in their accounts; that they may, without suspicion of dishonesty, minister the abundance confided to them. (3.) They who have the care of immortal souls, which are infinitely more precious than gold and silver, had need take heed, and incessantly watch over the flock of which the Holy Ghost hath made them pastors; that, when the chief Shepherd shall appear, they may with comfort and confidence give an account of their stewardship.

4thly, After a long journey of four months, we have,

1. Their safe arrival at Jerusalem, under the gracious conduct of a preserving God, notwithstanding all the wiles of their enemies. *Note;* (1.) Though the enemies of the children of God are mighty, many, and crafty, God will break through every snare, and make his people more than conquerors. (2.) Whenever we return in safety from a journey or a voyage, let us never forget the tribute of grateful acknowledgment for the mercy!

2. The faithful delivery of the dedicated treasures and vessels for the Lord's house into the hands of the chief priests and Levites appointed to receive them, in tale and weight exact as they were committed to Sherebiah and his brethren, and the receipt of them recorded to their honour. *Note;* It will be a happy day, when we give up our trust to Jesus, if we can hear him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

3. No sooner are they arrived, than their first care is to surround God's altar, and offer their sacrifices; a sin offering of atonement, to make peace with God; and burnt offerings of thanksgiving for all Israel, now once more united in the same happy service, and under the same leader. *Note;* When our persons are accepted through the atoning blood, our service becomes acceptable, a sacrifice of a sweet favour, well-pleasing to God.

4. Ezra delivered the commissions to the king's lieutenants in the neighbouring provinces; who, seeing the king's pleasure, contributed as they were required to the support of the people, and the house of God. Thus can God make his people's foes bow down at their feet, and know that he hath loved them.

4 O

unto the LORD; the vessels *are* holy also; and the silver and the gold *are* a free-will offering unto the LORD God of your fathers.

29 Watch ye, and keep *them*, until ye weigh *them* before the chief of the priests and the Levites, and chief of the fathers of Israel, at Jerusalem, in the chambers of the house of the LORD.

30 So took the priests and the Levites the weight of the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, to bring *them* to Jerusalem unto the house of our God.

31 ¶ Then we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth *day* of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way.

32 And we came to Jerusalem, and abode there three days.

33 ¶ Now on the fourth day was the silver and the gold and the vessels weighed in the house of our God by the hand of Meremoth the son of Uriah the priest; and with him *was* Eleazar the son of Phinehas; and with them *was* Jozabad the son of Jeshua, and Noadiah the son of Binnuj, Levites;

34 By number *and* by weight of every one: and all the weight was written at that time.

35 *Also* the children of those that had been carried away, which were come out of the captivity, offered burnt-offerings unto the God of Israel, twelve bullocks for all Israel, ninety and six rams, seventy and seven lambs, twelve he-goats *for* a sin-offering: all *this was* a burnt-offering unto the LORD.

36 ¶ And they delivered the king's commissions unto the king's lieutenants, and to the

governors on this side the river: and they furthered the people, and the house of God.

### C H A P. IX.

*The princes relate to Ezra, that many of the people, and of the priests, had intermarried with the idolatrous nations. Ezra, rending his garments, prays earnestly to God.*

[Before Christ 457.]

**N**OW when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, *doing* according to their abominations, *even* of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites.

2 For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of *those* lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass.

3 And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonied.

4 Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonied until the evening sacrifice.

5 ¶ And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God,

6 And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over *our* head,

### C H A P. IX.

*Ver. 1. The people of Israel and the priests, &c.]* See Deut. vii. 3. The manner in which Ezra is said to have expressed his concern for the people's unlawful marriages is, by *rending his garment and his mantle*, ver. 3. i. e. both his inner and upper garment, which was a token not only of great grief and sorrow, but of his apprehension likewise of the divine displeasure; and by *pulling off the hair of his head and beard*, which was still a higher sign of exceeding great grief among other nations as well as the Jews; and therefore we find in Homer, that when Ulysses and his

companions bewailed the death of Elpenor, "they sat in great grief, and plucked off their hair." See the conclusion of the xth Book of the *Odyssey*. Instead of *doing according to their abominations, &c.* Houbigant reads, *their wickedness is such as it was with the Canaanites, &c.*

*Ver. 6. And said, O my God, &c.]* Nothing can be more humble, devout, and pathetic than this address, in which Ezra acknowledges that he was confounded when he thought of the greatness of their sins, which were ready to overwhelm them; and of the boldness and insolence of them beyond measure, even though they had seen the divine

and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens.

7 Since the days of our fathers *have we been* in a great trespass unto this day; and for our iniquities have we, our kings, and our priests, been delivered into the hand of the kings of the lands, to the sword, to captivity, and to spoil, and to confusion of face, as *it is* this day.

8 And now for a little space grace hath been *shewed* from the LORD our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail in his holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage.

9 For we *were* bondmen; yet our God hath not forsaken us in our bondage, but hath extended mercy unto us in the sight of the kings of Persia, to give us a reviving, to set up the house of our God, and to repair the desolations thereof, and to give us a wall in Judah and in Jerusalem.

10 And now, O our God, what shall we say after this? for we have forsaken thy commandments,

11 Which thou hast commanded by thy servants the prophets, saying, The land, unto which ye go to possess it, is an unclean land, with the filthiness of the people of the lands, with their abominations, which have filled it from one end to another with their uncleanness.

12 Now therefore give not your daughters unto their sons, neither take their daughters unto your sons, nor seek their peace or their wealth for ever: that ye may be strong, and eat the good of the land, and leave *it* for an inheritance to your children for ever.

13 And after all that is come upon us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that thou our God hast punished us less than our iniquities *deserve*, and hast given us *such* deliverance as this;

divine vengeance upon their forefathers in so terrible a manner, that they had not yet worn off the marks of his displeasure. He had, indeed, begun to shew favour to some of them; but this so much the more aggravated their wickedness, in that so soon after their restoration and settlement in their native country they had returned to their old provocations, notwithstanding the many admonitions in the law and the prophets, to have nothing to do with the people of Canaan, except it were to expel and drive them out. What then can we expect, says he, but the utter destruction of the small remnant that is left of us, if, after all the punishment which God has inflicted upon us, and now that he is beginning to be gracious unto us, we relapse into the same offences for which we have so severely suffered? For while we remain monuments of his mercy, and yet appear before him in our abominations, we must be dumb, and have nothing to plead in excuse of our detestable ingratitude.

*Ver. 8. To give us a nail in his holy place]* To give us a seat, &c. Houbigant. See Pilkington, p. 200. The idea seems to be taken from the *nails or pins* with which the tabernacle was fastened to the ground.

*Ver. 13. Seeing that thou our God hast punished us, &c.] Shall it be, that when thou, our God, withholdest the rod from our iniquities, and leavest for us this remnant, ver. 14. Shall it be that we shall again break, &c.?* Houbigant.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, All things appeared very fair and promising; but there were concealed abominations, which some of the princes, zealous for the honour of God, discovered and complained of.

1. They informed Ezra, as the person set in authority over them, of the strange marriages which the people had contracted with the heathen; and that the priests and

Levites, who should have been the first to reprove such wickedness, were equally concerned, and the princes and rulers chief in this trespass; to the great dishonour of God's law, and of their nation, as well as thereby exposing themselves and their children to the peril of idolatry. *Note;* (1.) To be unequally yoked with unbelievers, is the readiest way to apostatize from God. (2.) When princes lead the way in evil, and priests, instead of remonstrating against it, comply with and copy after them, it can be no marvel that iniquity among the people reigns triumphant: surely these shall receive the greater damnation. (3.) They who are zealous for God's honour, cannot see sin committed without grief, and a desire to restrain it.

2. The information deeply affected the pious Ezra; in distress, he rent his clothes, plucked off his hair, and sat down astonished at the base ingratitude of the people, and trembling for the consequences. *Note;* (1.) Though careless sinners have no concern about their own souls; their zealous pastors mourn over and tremble for them. (2.) The sins of professors have especial aggravations; and, as they bring the greatest dishonour upon God, they awaken the deepest grief and indignation of the faithful.

3. Ezra's affecting grief soon drew to him at the temple, where he seems to have been, all those who, like him, reverentially trembled before God, and feared for the consequences of the people's sin. *Note;* (1.) The word of God is an awful thing to the true-hearted Israelite; he trembles before it for himself, lest he should offend; and for others, whom he sees offending. (2.) We are bound to strengthen the hands of those, and to join with them, who zealously desire to purge out every abomination from the congregation of the Lord.

2dly, Deep was Ezra's distress, and long it continued. Till the time of the evening-sacrifice he sat, astonished, on

14 Should we again break thy commandments, and join in affinity with the people of these abominations; wouldest not thou be angry with us till thou hadst consumed us, so that *there should be* no remnant nor escaping?

15 O LORD God of Israel, thou *art* righteous: for we remain yet escaped, as *it is* this day: behold, we *are* before thee in our trespasses: for we cannot stand before thee because of this.

### CHAP. X.

*Ezra, having demanded and received an oath from the chief persons, commands that those who had married strange wives should put them away. Rulers are chosen to inquire after those who were guilty. The names of such are enumerated.*

[Before Christ 457.]

**N**OW when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping, and casting

himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very fore.

2 And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, *one of* the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing.

3 Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law.

4 Arise; for *this matter belongeth* unto thee: we also *will be* with thee: be of good courage, and do *it*.

the ground: then, when the lamb went to the altar, he rose; and in the hope of this atoning blood, the only refuge of the miserable, with deep abasement of body and foul he poured out his penitent confessions and humbling acknowledgments before God.

1. He approaches God as his covenant God, and therefore encouraged, almost desperate as the case seemed, to draw near unto him. *Note;* (1.) There can be no true prayer where faith does not lead us to God as our reconciled God in Christ. (2.) Our repentance will ever be most deep and humbling when we have the surest confidence in the pardoning mercy of God.

2. With shame and confusion of face he appears before him, blushing to think of the baseness and disobedience of the people. *Note;* (1.) Holy shame will cover us in the view of our transgression. (2.) We shall blush for those who take no shame to themselves. (3.) Though we can say *my God*, we shall only the more loath ourselves for our ingratitude against him.

3. He confesses the greatness and aggravation of their sins. Though not personally concerned in the transgression, he looks on himself as involved in the national guilt. Like the stormy billows, their iniquities were ready to overwhelm them: heaped up as mountain on mountain, they reached to the clouds, and cried for vengeance; long continued, and like hereditary diseases more inveterate, transmitted from ungodly fathers to ungodly children. Neither the severe corrections which they had suffered had reclaimed them, nor the late attoning mercies, which he enlarges upon, constrained them to return to God. Their deliverance was recent, and the pure effect of God's mere grace; the favour great, that they were permitted to escape from the house of their prison; greater, that they should be fixed in God's holy place, Jerusalem; greatest of all, that they should see the temple raised, and the glorious worship of God restored, as light rising up in the

darkness to revive them after the long night of their captivity: and to prove ungrateful notwithstanding all these favours, what an aggravation of their transgressions! *Note;* (1.) True penitents go to the bottom, and bring forth the worst they can say of themselves; they desire not to hide, but to confess their iniquities. (2.) Every sin increases in malignity according to the means and mercies that we have ungratefully abused.

4. He appears at a loss what apology to make, or, rather, as almost ashamed to ask God for any farther forgiveness; the sin was so wilful against a precept so evident and clear.

5. He acknowledges all their past punishments to be less than their iniquities deserved; and expresses his just apprehensions, lest this repeated provocation should weary out God's patience, and bring upon them final and utter extirpation. *Note;* (1.) In every affliction, it becomes us to acknowledge God's mercy as well as justice, and to own, while we are out of hell, that we have less, unspeakably less, suffering than our sins deserve. (2.) It is justly to be feared, that they are near reprobacy whom neither corrections humble, nor mercies constrain.

6. In entire acquiescence with God's righteousness, however he should deal with them, he refers their miserable case to him, if yet there might be hope; renouncing every plea, justifying God if he should utterly consume them, and lying down as self-condemned before him, to hear their doom; deserving wrath to the uttermost, but, if yet spared, would stand monuments of the astonishing mercy, and transcendantly rich and infinite grace of God. *Note;* When we cast our souls, as desperate, upon God, justifying him in all his judgments against us, and glorifying his righteousness, he will not, cannot thrust us from him: his bowels yearn; his pity moves; and, magnifying his mercy upon us, "Where sin hath abounded, there," saith he, "shall grace much more abound."



5 Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they should do according to this word. And they swore.

6 ¶ Then Ezra rose up from before the house of God, and went into the chamber of Johanan the son of Eliashib: and *when* he came thither, he did eat no bread, nor drink water: for he mourned because of the transgression of them that had been carried away.

7 And they made proclamation throughout Judah and Jerusalem unto all the children of the captivity, that they should gather themselves together unto Jerusalem;

8 And that whosoever would not come within three days, according to the counsel of the princes and the elders, all his substance should be forfeited, and himself separated from the congregation of those that had been carried away.

9 ¶ Then all the men of Judah and Benjamin gathered themselves together unto Jerusalem within three days. It *was* the ninth month, and the twentieth *day* of the month; and all the people sat in the street of the house of God, trembling because of *this* matter, and for the great rain.

10 And Ezra the priest stood up, and said

### CHAP. X.

*Ver. 3. To put away all the wives, and such as are born of them*] It has been objected by some, that it seems an act of extreme severity, if not of injustice, upon the dissolution of these illegal marriages, to turn the children adrift, and cause them to suffer. Now let it be first observed, that the law, Deut. vii. 1, &c. was express, and enforced with weighty reasons against these pagan marriages; and therefore, since whatever is done contrary to law is *ipso facto* null and void, these marriages with idolatrous women, which were strictly forbidden by God, were, properly speaking, no marriages at all; and the children which proceeded from them were in no better condition than those whom we call bastards. No interposition of civil authority, therefore, was needful to dissolve these marriages; the infidelity of the party espoused was as much an interdiction as any the most proximate degree of consanguinity, which, by the laws of all civilized nations, is known to vacate the marriage. But, even supposing that the civil authority thought proper to interpose in this matter, yet wherein had the Jews any reason to complain, if, in just punishment of their wilful breach of a known and positive law, they were excluded from living with these illegal wives; those Jews, who, for every light and trivial cause, made no scruple to give even their lawful wives a bill of divorcement, and might therefore, with much less difficulty, be supposed willing to repudiate those whom the laws of their God, for fear of their catching the infection of idolatry, had forbidden them to live with? See Selden Uxor. Heb. l. iii. c. 18.

REFLECTIONS.—Great is the influence of one good man. No sooner was Ezra's deep concern noised abroad, than we find,

1. The congregation assembled before the house of God, men, women, and children; and while they beheld him thus weeping over their sins, their eye affected their heart, and they wept sore for themselves, brought to a deep conviction of the great evil which they had committed. *Note*: It is very affecting when ministers weep over their flocks; their tears are often more moving than their words.

2. When nothing but the sound of weeping is heard, as

if there were no hope, the voice of Shechaniah, like a good angel, revives the disconsolate hearts of Ezra and the people. He owns the guilt which was evidently upon them, and in which his own family was deeply involved; but he encourages them not to despair. The case, though bad, was not utterly desperate; a remedy might still be found for the inveterate disease, and God yet pardon their past transgression. He advises, therefore, that without delay they should solemnly engage to put away their strange wives, and the children begotten of them; and encourages them to believe, that if Ezra, with those who trembled at God's word, zealously prosecuted the matter, as he exhorted them, they would find enough to support them; and the affair, however difficult, would be found practicable. *Note*: (1.) In the deepest distresses, let us never despair. (2.) When our sin is seen and felt, however terrible and discouraging the view, there is then hope. (3.) It is a great mercy, in times of soul-dejection, to have one to support our fainting hearts. (4.) However dear to us our sins be, we must entirely part with them; otherwise there is, indeed, no hope. (5.) That which seems desperate to the dejected, the spirit of a courageous Israelite can bring about. To have a good heart in times of difficulty, is more than half to overcome them.

3. Ezra immediately consented to a proposal so agreeable to his desires, and disdained not to be encouraged by an inferior. On the spot he engaged the chief priests and Levites, and the assembled congregation, upon oath, to stand by him; and thereto they consented.

*Ver. 8. Separated*] Or, *excommunicated*, by which he was excluded from all society. After sixty days contumacy, the anathema or execration followed; which, however, was rescinded upon repentance: nevertheless, it was not allowable for any one to kill the person under such an anathema; but he might be supported in a tent or cottage entirely separated from all society.

*Ver. 9. It was the ninth month, &c.*] That is, some time in *December*, when the rains in the Holy Land are extremely cold. Dr. Ruffel, in his account of the weather at Aleppo, which very much resembles that in Judea, says, that "the natives reckon the severity of the winter to last  
" but

unto them, Ye have transgressed, and have taken strange wives, to increase the trespasses of Israel.

11 Now therefore make confession unto the LORD God of your fathers, and do his pleasure: and separate yourselves from the people of the land, and from the strange wives.

12 Then all the congregation answered and said with a loud voice, As thou hast said, so must we do.

13 But the people *are* many, and *it is* a time of much rain, and we are not able to stand without, neither *is this* a work of one day or two: for we are many that have transgressed in this thing.

14 Let now our rulers of all the congregation stand, and let all them which have taken strange wives in our cities come at appointed times, and with them the elders of every city, and the judges thereof, until the fierce wrath of our God for this matter be turned from us.

15 ¶ Only Jonathan the son of Asahel and Jahaziah the son of Tikvah were employed about this *matter*: and Meshullam and Shabbethai the Levite helped them.

16 And the children of the captivity did so. And Ezra the priest, *with* certain chief of the fathers, after the house of their fathers, and all of them by *their* names, were separated, and sat down in the first day of the tenth month to examine the matter.

17 And they made an end with all the men that had taken strange wives by the first day of the first month.

18 ¶ And among the sons of the priests there were found that had taken strange wives: *namely*, of the sons of Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren; Maaseiah, and Eliezer, and Jarib, and Gedaliah.

19 And they gave their hands that they would put away their wives; and *being* guilty,

*they offered* a ram of the flock for their trespasses.

20 And of the sons of Immer; Hanani, and Zebadiah.

21 And of the sons of Harim; Maaseiah, and Elijah, and Shemaiah, and Jehiel, and Uziah.

22 And of the sons of Pashur; Elioenai, Maaseiah, Ishmael, Nethaneel, Jozabad, and Elafah.

23 Also of the Levites; Jozabad, and Shimei, and Kelaiah, (the same *is* Kelita,) Pethahiah, Judah, and Eliezer.

24 Of the fingers also; Eliashib: and of the porters; Shallum, and Telem, and Uri.

25 Moreover of Israel, of the sons of Parosh; Ramiah, and Jeziah, and Malchiah, and Miamin, and Eleazar, and Malchijah, and Benaiah.

26 And of the sons of Elam; Mattaniah, Zechariah, and Jehiel, and Abdi, and Jeremoth, and Eliah.

27 And of the sons of Zattu; Elioenai, Eliashib, Mattaniah, and Jeremoth, and Zabad, and Aziza.

28 Of the sons also of Bebai; Jehohanan, Hananiah, Zabbai, and Athlai.

29 And of the sons of Bani; Meshullam, Malluch, and Adaiah, Jathub, and Sheal, and Ramoth.

30 And of the sons of Pahath-moab; Adna, and Chelal, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattaniah, Bezaleel, and Binnui, and Manasseh.

31 And of the sons of Harim; Eliezer, Ishijah, Malchiah, Shemaiah, Shimeon,

32 Benjamin, Malluch, and Shemariah.

33 Of the sons of Hathum; Mattenai, Mattathah; Zabad, Eliphelet, Jeremai, Manasseh, and Shimei.

34 Of the sons of Bani; Maadai, Amram, and Uel,

35 Benaiah, Bedeiah, Chelluh,

36 Vaniah, Meremoth, Eliashib,

“ but forty days, beginning from the twelfth of December and ending the twentieth of January; and that this computation comes in fact near the truth; that the air during this time is excessively piercing, even to those who are but just come from a cold climate;” &c. and it certainly must be much more so, when the season proves wet, as was the case at present. See *Observations*, p. 15.

The *street of the house of God*, in this verse, is rendered by Houbigant, more properly, *the court*; for it means that court where the people stood when they worshipped.

Ver. 19. *They gave their hands*] See 2 Kings, x. 15. Houbigant renders the last clause, *and who had offended, gave one ram of the flock for their offence.*

37 Mattaniah, Mattenai, and Jaafau,  
 38 And Bani, and Binnui, Shimei,  
 39 And Shelemiah, and Nathan, and  
 Adaiah,  
 40 Machnadebai, Shafhai, Sharai,  
 41 Azareel, and Shelemiah, Shemariah,

42 Shallum, Amariah, and Joseph.  
 43 Of the sons of Nebo; Jeiel, Mattithiah,  
 Zabad, Zebina, Jadau, and Joel, Benaiah.  
 44 All these had taken strange wives: and  
*some* of them had wives by whom they had  
 children.

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*Ver. 44. These had taken strange wives, &c.]* The number is not very great, if compared with all those who came out of captivity; but they seem to have been eminent persons, and their examples would, doubtless, have spread the contagion, if a speedy stop had not been put to the evil. Justin Martyr, in his Dialogue with Trypho, says, that this following speech of Ezra was in the ancient Hebrew copies of the Bible, but was expunged by the

Jews; viz. "And Ezra said to the people, this passover is our saviour and our refuge; and if you will be persuaded of it, and will let it enter into your hearts, that we are to humble him in a sign, and afterwards shall believe in him, this place shall not be destroyed for ever, saith the God of hosts; but if you believe not in him, neither hearken to his preaching, ye shall be a laughing-stock to the Gentiles."

THE  
Book of N E H E M I A H.

SEE the introductory note to the book of Ezra. Nehemiah, who, it is plain from this book, was a person of considerable eminence in the court of Persia, here takes up the history of the Jews from the period at which Ezra had discontinued it, and carries it down from the twentieth year of Artaxerxes, in the year of the world 3550, to the year 3580, which is supposed to be the year of his own death, and was in the reign of Darius Notbus. See the note on ch. xii. 22.

C H A P. I.

*Nehemiah, hearing that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down, and the gates burned, mourns with fasting and prayer.*

[Before Christ 445.]

**T**HE words of Nehemiah the son of Hachaliah. And it came to pass in the month Chisleu, in the twentieth year, as I was in Shushan the palace.

2 That Hanani, one of my brethren, came,

he and certain men of Judah; and I asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.

3 And they said unto me, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.

4 And it came to pass, when I heard these

C H A P. I.

*Ver. 1. Nehemiah*] It may be well questioned, whether this Nehemiah be the same with him mentioned in Ezra, ii. 1. and chap. vii. 7. of this book, as one who returned from the Babylonish captivity under Zerubbabel; since, from the first year of Cyrus to the twentieth of Artaxerxes Longimanus, there are no less than ninety-two years intervening; so that Nehemiah must at this time have been a very old man; upon the lowest computation above a hundred, and consequently incapable of being the king's cup-bearer, of taking a journey from Shushan to Jerusalem, and of behaving there with all that courage and activity which is recorded of him. Upon this presumption, therefore, we may conclude, that this was a different person, though of the same name. That *Tisbatba* denotes the title of his office, and, both in the Persian and Chaldean tongues, was the general name given to all the king's deputies and governors, see on Ezra, ii. 63. The text calls him barely *the son of Hachaliah*, without informing us of what tribe he was. Some, therefore, from 2 Maccabees, i. 18, 21. where he is said to have offered sacrifices, and from his being reckoned at the head of the priests who signed the new covenant with God (ch. x. 1.), have affirmed him to have been of the family of Aaron; but as there is nothing conclusive in all this, and it seems expressly contradicted by his saying, in another place,

that he was not a fit person to shelter himself in the temple, chap. vi. 2. the far greater part suppose him to have been of the royal family of Judah. And this is so much the more probable, because we find none but such promoted to those high stations about the king's person; and we never read of a priest that was so till a long time after, and upon a quite different account. The month *Chisleu* answers to part of our November and December, and the *twentieth year* is the twentieth of the reign of Artaxerxes. See Le Clerc and Houbigant.

*Ver. 3. The wall—also is broken down, &c.*] The commissions which had hitherto been granted to the Jews were supposed to extend no further than to the rebuilding of the temple, and their own private houses; and therefore the walls and gates of the city lay in the same ruinous condition in which the Chaldeans left them after that devastation.

REFLECTIONS.—Nehemiah, though nobly advanced at court, and honoured with a mansion in the palace of Shushan, still bore in his heart the welfare of Zion, and still preferred Jerusalem's prosperity before his chief joy. *Note*; God has sometimes his friends even in the palace; and, though a court is usually a soil too unfavourable to religious concerns, he had monuments of grace even in Nero's household.

words, that I sat down and wept, and mourned *certain* days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven,

5 ¶ And said, I beseech thee O LORD God of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe his commandments:

6 Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned.

7 We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandedst thy servant Moses.

8 Remember, I beseech thee, the word that

thou commandedst thy servant Moses, saying, *If* ye transgress, I will scatter you abroad among the nations;

9 But *if* ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them; though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, *yet* will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there.

10 Now these *are* thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand.

11 O LORD, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man. For I was the king's cup-bearer.

1. Nehemiah, on the visit of some of his brethren to Babylon, probably to solicit some favour in behalf of the Jews, earnestly inquires after Jerusalem, and the returned captives who dwelt in it; but receives an afflicting narrative of their wretched situation: the city lying in its desolations, and the people under distress, insulted, oppressed, and reproached by their more powerful neighbours. *Note;* (1.) We must not, in our advancement, forget ourselves, and grow strange to our brethren because they may be poor or afflicted. (2.) The persecution of God's people, which discourages the unfaithful, awakens the greater zeal and concern of such as are true-hearted.

2. The melancholy account affected the good Nehemiah: the tears ran down his cheeks; and, in affliction, four days he fasted and prayed before the God of heaven, that he would remember their misery, and return to them in mercy. *Note;* (1.) In seasons of public or private calamities, fasting and weeping should accompany our prayers. (2.) It is a relief to the oppression of our own spirit, when with tears we can pour our complaints into the bosom of a compassionate God. (3.) While we have a God in heaven to go to, our deepest distresses are not desperate.

*Ver. 11. And grant him mercy—For I, &c.]* Houbigant supposes, that Nehemiah repeated this prayer (which he had often before repeated) now again in silence, while he administered the cup to the king in his office; and therefore he renders the last clause, *but I then administered the cup to the king;* and this alone, he thinks, can account for the mode of expression, *this man*. The office of cup-bearer was a place of great honour and advantage in the Persian court, because of the privilege which it gave him who bare it, of being daily in the king's presence; and the opportunity which he thereby had of gaining his favour for the procuring of any petition that he should make to him. That it was a place of great pecuniary advantage,

seems evident by Nehemiah's gaining those immense riches which enabled him for so many years, (ch. v. 14. 19.) out of his own privy purse only, to live in his government with great splendour and expence, without burdening the people at all.

REFLECTIONS.—Nehemiah's prayer speaks the gracious temper of his soul.

1. He draws near to God with reverence and godly fear, yet mixed with filial confidence, as to the great God, terrible in judgments, yet faithful to his promises, and never failing those who trust him. *Note;* (1.) There is a reverential fear of God, which is perfectly consistent with the most enlarged love towards him. (2.) They, who experience the love of God in their souls, may comfortably conclude that he is their faithful friend.

2. He humbly prays that God would graciously hear the prayer which zeal for his glory dictated, and grant the desires of his heart which his grace excited. *Note;* When God pours out upon us the spirit of grace and supplication, we may assuredly conclude that he will hear and answer us.

3. He penitently confesses their sins, which justly had brought down these afflictions upon them; taking shame to himself, among the rest, for having added to the provocation.

4. He pleads for mercy and pardon; urging, as the ground of his hope, the divine promise that God had given by Moses, that whenever they returned to him, wherever dispersed, or however distressed, he would return to them: and such was now their earnest desire and prayer. *Note;* (1.) As we see the fulfilment of God's threatenings, we may conclude the fulfilment of his promises. (2.) The most reviving pleas in prayer are drawn from God's faithful word, wherein he has caused us to put our trust. (3.) Though we are not worthy

## C H A P. II.

*Artaxerxes, understanding the cause of Nehemiah's sadness, sendeth him with letters and commissions to Jerusalem.*

[Before Christ 445.]

**A**ND it came to pass in the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king, *that wine was before him*: and I took up the wine, and gave it unto the king. Now I had not been *before time* sad in his presence.

2 Wherefore the king said unto me, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? this is nothing *else* but sorrow of heart. Then I was very sore afraid,

3 And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance

be sad, when the city, the place of my father's sepulchres, *lieth waste*, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?

4 Then the king said unto me, For what dost thou make request? So I prayed to the God of heaven.

5 And I said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.

6 And the king said unto me, (the queen also sitting by him,) For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send me, and I set him a time.

to be called God's people; yet, when we return with penitential prayer, he will not disclaim the relation. (4.) The greatest kings are but dying men, and worms of earth; and their hearts are in God's hand, to turn them according to the good pleasure of his own will.

## C H A P. II.

*Ver. 1. In the month Nisan*] Which answers to part of our March and April. So that it was almost four months between his hearing of the disconsolate condition wherein Jerusalem lay, and his requesting leave of the king to go thither. Now, besides that it might not come to his own turn of waiting sooner, there might be these further reasons assigned for his long silence and delay: that he could not take so long and dangerous a journey in the winter; that he could not sooner meet with a seasonable opportunity of speaking with the king upon so critical an affair; or, as others will have it, that he retired all this intermediate while, and spent it in fasting and prayer. See Patrick and Poole.

*Ver. 3. Why should not my countenance be sad, &c.*] There is a piety due to one's own country, which cannot be extinguished by the pleasure or plenty of any other. It is no weakness to be deeply affected with the misfortunes or for the death of our nearest friends and relations, at what distance soever we are from them; nor can any prosperity in another country hinder or excuse a man from being grieved for a calamity which befalls his own. Nehemiah was in no mean station when he was cup-bearer to Artaxerxes; and we may very reasonably believe, by the grace and bounty which the king shewed him, that he might have had great preferment in that flourishing empire, if he had asked it; yet, when that great king discerned that there was sorrow of heart in his countenance, and demanded the reason of it, he made no other excuse than this: *the place of my fathers' sepulchres lieth waste*: and when the king so graciously invited him to ask some favour worthy of his royal bounty, he would require nothing else but, *Send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.* A generous

spirit can think of nothing but relieving his country, while it is under a general misery and calamity. *Note; (1.)* When we take in hand God's work, we cannot but be deeply concerned for the success. (2.) The afflictions of God's church and people draw forth the sympathetic tear from every friend of Zion. (3.) In our passage through this mortal vale, the best of men must expect to meet with trials. (4.) There is a king who minutes our sorrows, and will not suffer us to mourn long.

*Ver. 6. And I set him a time*] How long this was is not certain. It is said, indeed, that he was governor of the land of Judah for twelve years, chap. v. 14. xiii. 6. But, considering what haste he made for dispatching the building of the walls, which he finished in fifty-two days, the leave that he asked might be but for a year, or perhaps half so long; after which time, it is likely, he returned to Shushan according to his promise; but some time after was sent back again by the king (who found his presence there serviceable, or perhaps necessary for the better regulation of that province), to be his governor for twelve years.

REFLECTIONS.—1. The king, perceiving the meaning of Nehemiah's sorrows, and his fear to ask, kindly bids him make his request. *Note;* Christ our king has given us an unlimited promise; and shall we be backward to make our requests known to him?

2. Encouraged by this condescension, he lifts up his heart to God for power to speak aright, and a blessing on his request; a warm ejaculation fled to the throne of grace, and God strengthened and prospered him. He begs permission to rebuild his native city, a convoy to guard him safe, and an order upon the governors to supply him with necessaries for the work. *Note; (1.)* Whatever we set about, let prayer prepare the way. (2.) Frequent ejaculations tend to preserve the spirituality of our temper. (3.) Nothing is too much to ask when we come to Jesus, who will do for us exceeding abundantly above all we can ask or think.

3. The king consented that he should go; but, unwilling to part with him long, engages him to return within

7 Moreover, I said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah;

8 And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which *appertained* to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted me, according to the good hand of my God upon me.

9 ¶ Then I came to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent captains of the army and horsemen with me.

10 When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.

11 So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days.

12 ¶ And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I *any* man what my God had put in my heart to do at

Jerusalem: neither *was there any* beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon.

13 And I went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung-port, and viewed the walls, of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire.

14 Then I went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool: but *there was* no place for the beast *that was* under me to pass.

15 Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and *so* returned.

16 And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told *it* to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work.

17 ¶ Then said I unto them, Ye see the distress that we *are* in, how Jerusalem *lieth* waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.

within a stipulated time. The queen, who providentially was now present, probably stood his friend; and he had peculiar reason that day to acknowledge the good hand of God in his success. *Note;* (1.) The prayer of faith never ascends in vain. (2.) Providential help is often given when little expected; and friends unknown to us before are raised up of God in our difficulties. (3.) Whatever mercy we receive, let God's good hand be acknowledged with thankfulness.

*Ver. 7. River]* The river Euphrates.

*Ver. 8. Which appertained to the house]* Which appertained to the house of the Lord. Houbigant.

*Ver. 10. Sanballat the Horonite]* This person was probably a petty prince of Moab; for Horonaim was an eminent city in that country, *Isai. xv. 5.* This Sanballat was the person who afterwards instigated Alexander the Great to build the temple of Gerizim, in order to occasion a division among the Jews. See Grotius.

REFLECTIONS.—The king having permitted Nehemiah to go, and given him an order upon the governors, grants him withal an honourable escort to protect him. *Note;* Each child of God, whom the king of heaven delights to honour, is attended with mightier angelic guards. We have here,

1. The vexation of Tobiah and Sanballat, the enemies of the Jews, on hearing of Nehemiah's journey, and the design of it. *Note;* Every favour shown to the servants of God awakens the envy and provokes the rage of a wicked world.

2. The survey that Nehemiah took of the state of the walls. He rested on his arrival three days; and by night, with a few select persons for secrecy, that the design he was forming might not be known or counteracted, went round the walls to observe the breaches, and what repairs would be needful. *Note;* (1.) Secrecy and silence are very necessary when our enemies are so ready to take the alarm. The wisdom of the serpent is useful when joined to the innocence of the dove. (2.) A well-settled plan of procedure is the way to ensure success in every enterprize.

3. The discovery that he made to the rulers, of his commission. He assembled them, intimated the ruinous state of the city, and the reproach which their defenceless state brought on them from their wicked neighbours; then informed them of God's good providence in advancing him at court, and giving him favour with the king; and produced his commission for repairing their desolations; encouraging them thereupon to set about the work. Animated by such an exhortation, they eagerly seize the opportunity, and strengthen each other immediately to arise and build the wall. *Note;* (1.) A good minister, or magistrate, who is active and zealous, will find many ready to second his labours, who of themselves had not courage to lead. (2.) They who would work heartily for God must begin out of hand. Delays are dangerous.

4. The opposition which the work met with. Their old and sworn foes derided their attempts, and maligned their intentions; but Nehemiah, undismayed, and confident in God's blessing, despised their taunts, and persisted



18 Then I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for *this* good work.

19 But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard *it*, they laughed us to scorn, and despised us, and said, What *is* this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?

20 Then answered I them, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem.

### C H A P. III.

*The names of those who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, and an account of the particular parts assigned to each person.*

[Before Christ 445.]

**T**HEN Eliashib the high priest rose up with his brethren the priests, and they builded the sheep-gate; they sanctified it, and set up the doors of it; even unto the tower of

Meah they sanctified it, unto the tower of Hananeel.

2 And next unto him builded the men of Jericho. And next to them builded Zaccur the son of Imri.

3 But the fish-gate did the sons of Hassenaah build, who *also* laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof.

4 And next unto them repaired Meremoth the son of Urijah, the son of Koz. And next unto them repaired Meshullam the son of Berechiah, the son of Meshezabeel. And next unto them repaired Zadok the son of Baanah.

5 And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord.

6 Moreover, the old gate repaired Jehoiada the son of Paseah, and Meshullam the son of Besodeiah; they laid the beams thereof, and set up the doors thereof, and the locks thereof, and the bars thereof.

7 And next unto them repaired Melatiah the Gibeonite, and Jadon the Meronothite, the men of Gibeon, and of Mizpah, unto

in the work; nor would he suffer these Samaritans to have any portion or lot among them. *Note;* (1.) Every arrow of envenomed malice, derision, slander, and threatening, will be shot against God's saints; but they are clad in armour that is weapon-proof. (2.) Instead of being discouraged, we should be quickened by opposition: if God prosper us, we need not fear.

### C H A P. III.

*Ver. 1. Then Eliashib the high priest*] Eliashib was the grandson of Jeshua the high-priest; and he, with his brethren the priests, set a noble example, in being the first to rebuild the walls of the holy city, which the Babylonians had burned when they took it. The sheep-gate was on the south side of the city, in that part of the valley which looked toward mount Zion and the temple. It had its name from the sheep intended for sacrifice being brought through it to the temple. See John, v. 2.

REFLECTIONS.—The work being resolved upon, we have here the distribution of it. Holy emulation warmed their hearts, and zeal for the public welfare quickened their labour.

1. The high-priest, with his brethren, led the way; and when they had finished their portion, they sanctified it by prayer and thanksgiving for the assistance that God had given them. *Note;* (1.) Ministers of God should shew, among the foremost, zeal for his glory, and diligence in his service. (2.) Our common employments

should be sanctified by prayer and thanksgiving. (3.) They who look up to God for help will be enabled to finish the work that he has given them to do.

2. The rest zealously followed to good an example; and not the inhabitants of Jerusalem only, but those of the neighbouring cities and villages, cheerfully lent their hand to the work. Rulers, and people of all trades and occupations, assisted. None were so great as to think themselves debased by labouring; none so little, but they could contribute something to the general good. The nobles of Tekoa alone refused their assistance; and therefore a just brand of infamy stands for ever on their memory. *Note;* (1.) Unanimity in a good cause is the surest token of success. (2.) Every man has something to do for God, according to his station and abilities: none are so little as to be useless; none so great, as to be above the work of the Lord.

3. Shallum's daughters are honourably mentioned, as assisting in this good work. Though they could not themselves handle the trowel, they could hire assistance, and provide materials. Good women, in every age, have been great helpers in the cause of God.

4. One of the builders is noted for his zeal, ver. 20. another, though the sixth son, is remarked as more honourable than his brethren, who seem not to have, like him, engaged in the service. *Note;* (1.) When the work is God's, we cannot be too zealously affected. (2.) The blessing of God does not always follow the birth-right: the younger son is often the better man.

5. Some,

the throne of the governor on this side the river.

8 Next unto him repaired Uzziel the son of Harhaiah, of the goldsmiths. Next unto him also repaired Hananiah the son of *one of* the apothecaries, and they fortified Jerusalem unto the broad wall.

9 And next unto them repaired Rephaiah the son of Hur, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem.

10 And next unto them repaired Jedaiah the son of Harumaph, even over against his house. And next unto him repaired Hattush the son of Hahabniah.

11 Malchijah the son of Harim, and Hahub the son of Pahath-moab, repaired the other piece, and the tower of the furnaces.

12 And next unto him repaired Shallum the son of Halohehsh, the ruler of the half part of Jerusalem, he and his daughters.

13 The valley-gate repaired Hanun, and the inhabitants of Zanoah; they built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and a thousand cubits on the wall unto the dung-gate.

14 But the dung-gate repaired Malchiah the son of Rechab, the ruler of part of Beth-hacerem; he built it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof.

15 But the gate of the fountain repaired Shallum the son of Col-hozeh, the ruler of part of Mizpah; he built it, and covered it, and set up the doors thereof, the locks thereof, and the bars thereof, and the wall of the pool of Siloah by the king's garden, and unto the stairs that go down from the city of David.

16 After him repaired Nehemiah the son of Azbuk, the ruler of the half part of Beth-zur, unto *the place* over against the sepulchres of David, and to the pool *that was* made, and unto the house of the mighty.

17 After him repaired the Levites, Rehum the son of Bani. Next unto him repaired Hahabiah, the ruler of the half part of Keilah, in his part.

18 After him repaired their brethren, Bevai the son of Henadad, the ruler of the half part of Keilah.

19 And next to him repaired Ezer the son of Jeshua, the ruler of Mizpah, another piece over against the going up to the armoury at the turning *of the wall*.

20 After him Baruch the son of Zabbai earnestly repaired the other piece, from the turning *of the wall* unto the door of the house of Eliashib the high priest.

21 After him repaired Meremoth the son of Urijah the son of Koz another piece, from the door of the house of Eliashib even to the end of the house of Eliashib.

22 And after him repaired the priests, the men of the plain.

23 After him repaired Benjamin and Hahub over against their house. After him repaired Azariah the son of Maaseiah the son of Ananiah by his house.

24 After him repaired Binnui the son of Henadad another piece, from the house of Azariah unto the turning *of the wall*, even unto the corner.

25 Palal the son of Uzai, over against the turning *of the wall*, and the tower which lieth out from the king's high house, that *was* by the court of the prison. After him Pedaiah the son of Parosh.

26 Moreover the Nethinims dwelt in Ophel, unto *the place* over against the water-gate toward the east, and the tower that lieth out.

27 After them the Tekoites repaired another piece, over against the great tower that lieth out, even unto the wall of Ophel.

28 From above the horse-gate repaired the priests, every one over against his house.

29 After them repaired Zadok the son of Immer over against his house. After him repaired also Shemaiah the son of Shechaniah, the keeper of the east gate.

30 After him repaired Hananiah the son of Shelemiah, and Hanun the sixth son of Zalaph, another piece. After him repaired

5. Some, who had finished their first portion, having done sooner than their brethren, undertook a second. When we affect the service, we shall not merely consider

how much *we must* do to save our credit; but shall do all *we can*, because we love the cause.

Methullam the son of Berechiah over against his chamber.

31 After him repaired Malchiah the goldsmith's son unto the place of the Nethinims, and of the merchants, over against the gate Miphkad, and to the going up of the corner.

32 And between the going up of the corner unto the sheep-gate, repaired the goldsmiths and the merchants.

#### C H A P. IV.

*Half of the walls of Jerusalem are finished. Sanballat and Tobiah conspire together to hinder it: Nehemiah sets a watch near the wall.*

[Before Christ 445.]

**B**UT it came to pass, that when Sanballat heard that we builded the wall, he was wroth, and took great indignation, and mocked the Jews.

2 And he spake before his brethren and the army of Samaria, and said, What do these feeble Jews? will they fortify themselves? will they sacrifice? will they make an end in a

day? will they revive the stones out of the heaps of the rubbish which are burned?

3 Now Tobiah the Ammonite *was* by him, and he said, Even that which they build, if a fox go up, he shall even break down their stone wall.

4 Hear, O our God; for we are despised: and turn their reproach upon their own head, and give them for a prey in the land of captivity.

5 And cover not their iniquity, and let not their sin be blotted out from before thee: for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders.

6 So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.

7 ¶ But it came to pass, *that* when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites, heard that the walls of Jerusalem were made up, and that the breaches began to be stopped, then they were very wroth,

#### C H A P. IV.

*Ver. 2. What do these feeble Jews, &c.]* Mr. Peters observes, upon this passage, which is remarkable for its phraseology, that it seems to give no obscure intimation, that the doctrine of the resurrection was the popular belief of the Jews in these days. "*Reviving of stones,*" says he, "is a very easy metaphor to those who are acquainted with the doctrine of the resurrection; but, otherwise, not so easy or obvious." The word *הִרְיִין* *hayechaiiu, vivificabunt*, is the very same that is used for raising the dead. *Out of the heaps of rubbish*, is, in the Hebrew, *heaps of dust עֲרֻמוֹת אֶפְרַיִם* *areimoth apar*, another word often used when speaking of a resurrection; and what follows with an emphasis, *and, yet these same stones are burnt*, points out to us the method of funeral [by burning] used particularly among those who had no belief or expectation of a resurrection.

The Jews to this day charge the poor remnant of the sect of Samaritans with the disbelief of a *future resurrection*; though, on the other hand, they deny and disavow the charge. It is highly probable, that in our Saviour's time they believed it; for they worshipped the same God, and had the same expectation of a Messiah, as appears from the Samaritan woman's discourse with our Lord, John, iv. 25. But in the days of Nehemiah they seem to have been little better than heathens; a sort of mixed breed, out of the scum of many nations. Nehemiah tells them, ch. ii. 20. that *they had no right or portion in Jerusalem*, being of a different religion from the Jews; it is highly probable, therefore, that they disbelieved

a resurrection. Now if Sanballat, in that vein of mirth and buffoonery which he and his friend Tobiah appear at this time to be in, meant to ridicule this doctrine of the Jewish faith, as well as laugh at their attempt in building, we see a plain reason of that indignation which Nehemiah presently conceived at it, and which drew from him that solemn address to God, ver. 4. *Hear, O our God; for we, thy worshippers, are despised, &c.* Had there been no more in Sanballat's speech than in that of Tobiah which follows, (who with a scorn, perhaps, more affected than real, says, that a fox, if he were to jump upon it, might break down their stone walls,) so wise and good a man as Nehemiah, probably, would have treated it with silence and contempt: but we find, that he resents it in another manner; beseeches God to turn their reproach upon their own head; speaks of it as a sin or iniquity of the first magnitude; ver. 5. *for they have provoked thee to anger before the builders*; that is, in the most public manner, and in the face of God's people, had dared to utter their impieties, and ridicule that faith which they professed.

*Ver. 7, 8. When Sanballat and Tobiah, &c.]* The ingenious publisher of the Ruins of Balbeck tells us, that in Palestine he has often seen the husbandman sowing, accompanied by an armed friend, to prevent his being robbed of the seed by the Arabs. This robbing the husbandman of his seed seems to have been an ancient practice of theirs, and to have been referred to, Pf. cxvii. 5, 6. and made an image by the Psalmist of the happy issue of the first essays of the Jews to re-people their country. For surely it is much more natural to suppose that these verses referred to a violence of this sort, than to imagine,

8 And conspired all of them together to come *and* to fight against Jerusalem, and to hinder it.

9 Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them.

10 And Judah said, The strength of the bearers of burdens is decayed, and *there is* much rubbish; so that we are not able to build the wall.

11 And our adversaries said, They shall not know, neither see, till we come in the midst among them, and slay them, and cause the work to cease.

12 And it came to pass, that when the Jews which dwelt by them came, they said unto us ten times, From all places whence ye shall return unto us *they will be upon you*.

13 ¶ Therefore set I in the lower places behind the wall, *and* on the higher places, I even set the people after their families with their swords, their spears, and their bows.

14 And I looked, and rose up, and said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, Be not ye afraid of them: remember the LORD, *which is* great and terrible, and fight for your brethren, your sons, and your daughters, your wives, and your houses.

15 And it came to pass, when our enemies heard that it was known unto us, and God

had brought their counsel to nought, that we returned all of us to the wall, every one unto his work.

16 And it came to pass from that time forth, *that* the half of my servants wrought in the work, and the other half of them held both the spears, the shields, and the bows, and the habergeons; and the rulers *were* behind all the house of Judah.

17 They which builded on the wall, and they that bare burdens, with those that laded, *every one* with one of his hands wrought in the work, and with the other *hand* held a weapon.

18 For the builders, every one had his sword girded by his side, and *so* builded. And he that sounded the trumpet *was* by me.

19 And I said unto the nobles, and to the rulers, and to the rest of the people, The work *is* great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another.

20 In what place *therefore* ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us.

21 So we laboured in the work: and half of them held the spears from the rising of the morning till the stars appeared.

22 Likewise at the same time said I unto the people, Let every one with his servant lodge within Jerusalem, that in the night they may be a guard to us, and labour on the day.

imagine, with many interpreters who have treated upon this circumstance, that they allude to a countryman's anxiety, who sows his corn in a very *scarce time*, and is afraid of the failure of his next crop. The Israelites, who returned to Babylon upon the proclamation of Cyrus, were undoubtedly in similar circumstances to husbandmen sowing their corn amidst surrounding encampments of oppressive Arabs. Their rebuilding their towns and their temple resembled a time of sowing; for from these things they were willing to hope for a great increase of people; but they who continued in Babylon had reason to be jealous that the neighbouring nations would defeat these efforts, and destroy these rising settlements. The sacred historian, in this passage, expressly mentions such difficulties; nor was it difficult to foresee these oppositions: the Arabs had, undoubtedly, pastured their flocks and herds, and pitched their tents *all over* Judea, when left desolate; and perhaps others of the neighbouring nations had seized upon some of the dispeopled districts which lay most convenient for them: it was the interest then of the Arabs, and of such other nations, to discourage, as far as in them lay, the return of Israel in any numbers into the

country of their fathers. In opposition to this jealousy, the prophet *expresses*, perhaps *predicts*, his hope, that there would be a happy issue of these beginnings to re-people their country: "Make the people of our captivity to return, O Lord! into their country; and, like the streams of the south, to cause these deserts to flourish again. Let them be persuaded, that, though they lay these *foundations* of re-peopling their country with an *anxiety* like that of a *poor husbandman*, who goes forth weeping, for fear he should be *robbed of his seed*, they shall feel a joy hereafter, like his, when he brings back his sheaves with rejoicing, in the so thoroughly re-establishing Israel in Judea, as to have no cause to apprehend any thing from the surrounding nations." *Observations*, p. 52.

*Ver. 12. They said unto us ten times, &c.] They told us frequently from all places that which they designed against us.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 17. Every one with one of his hands, &c.] This is figurative, and means only that they were prepared either to build or to fight, it being impossible for them to have worked, if both hands had not been at liberty.*

*Ver.*

23- So neither I, nor my brethren, nor my servants, nor the men of the guard which followed me, none of us put off our clothes, *saving that every one put them off for washing.*

*Ver. 23. Saving that every one put them off for washing] Even for a whole month. Houbigant.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Never did the cause of God begin to prosper, but the enemies of God began to malign and resist it. Let us never be discouraged, if we see this old enmity revive.

1. Sanballat and Tobiah, the sworn enemies of the Jews, no sooner have intelligence of the design, than, vexed at the heart, they set themselves to oppose it. They treat the feeble Jews with scorn, and ridicule the attempt as impracticable. *Note;* (1.) Ridicule and contempt are some of the sharp arrows in the world's quiver, which they never fail to throw at God's faithful labourers. (2.) Though many pretend to mock and despise the work of God, at heart they are grieved, and fear whereunto this will grow. (3.) One wicked man encourages another; but, though scoffers make their bands strong, God will cover them shortly with confusion.

2. Nehemiah prays against the revilings of his enemies; and, if he can interest God's regard for him, little cares for their opposition, which he knows God will then turn to their own shame. *Note;* (1.) The way to answer the scorn of the world is, by carrying our case to the Lord our God: he heareth, and judgeth. (2.) They who would be Christ's servants must expect the world's ill word and abuse. (3.) They who discourage the hearts of God's faithful labourers, treasure up a peculiar measure of wrath against the day of wrath.

3. The people, more encouraged by Nehemiah's prayer than deterred by their enemies' abuse, raised the wall all round the city to half its height; for their hearts were in the work. *Note;* (1.) Much may be done in a little time when all are hearty in lending their assistance. (2.) We need not fear the revilings of men, when we are assured of the blessing of God upon our labours.

2dly, When secret reviling prevented not the progress of the building, they prepared by open force to resist it.

1. Sanballat and Tobiah engaged the Arabians, Ammonites, and Ashdodites, to assist them, and join their forces to attack the Jews, whose piety they as much hated, as they envied their growing prosperity. To crush them, therefore, in the bud, they in great wrath formed a league, secretly contriving to fall upon the builders before they were apprized of their danger, and there to massacre them, unarmed and unprepared; the consequence of which must needs be the interruption of the building. *Note;* (1.) The hatred of the wicked is a deadly hatred, which thirsteth for the precious life. Persecutors of God's people are ever cruel. (2.) When God's cause is to be oppressed, they who were ever so much at variance among themselves will cordially unite their forces against this hated object. (3.) Though craft and power be with the enemies of God's church, he that sitteth above the heavens mocks at their impotent attempts.

2. The faint-heartedness of some of the men of Judah was as great a discouragement as the threatenings of the Samaritans. Wearied with the service, disheartened at

the difficulties, and despairing of success, they are ready to discontinue their efforts, as if tired out, and unable longer to support the fatigue. *Note;* Unbelieving Israelites are a greater hindrance than infidel enemies.

3. Intelligence was brought of their enemies' designs. *Note;* Though the counsels of the wicked are ever so secret, God can detect and disappoint them.

4. Nehemiah bravely and prudently provided against the impending danger. To God he first committed their case, in fervent prayer for direction and support; then placed a proper guard, some behind the wall, where it was lowest, and others on the higher part, or towers, whence they could most incommode the enemy. And, as he perceived the people in consternation, he encourages them to trust in God, their almighty aid, whose arm could easily baffle their foes; and animates them to fight, from the consideration that their all was at stake, and that on their courage the safety of all depended. *Note;* (1.) In every distress, our first recourse should be to God. (2.) Every prudent human means must be diligently used in dependence on him. (3.) Nothing inspires the heart of a believer with such courage, as the view of almighty grace engaged for his support.

5. The enemy hearing that their design was discovered, and seeing the preparations made to receive them, desisted from their enterprize, and the work again happily went forward. *Note;* Experience of God's care over us should engage our increasing fidelity and zeal in his service.

3dly, Though the present storm was blown over, Nehemiah took care to be always prepared for any unforeseen attack. Security is dangerous: it becomes the soldier of Christ to be continually on his guard.

1. Half of Nehemiah's guards were at all times ready accoutred, while the other half worked on the wall; and they relieved each other. Every builder had his sword on his thigh, and his weapons at hand, that at a moment's warning he might be ready; and their rulers also stood behind them to encourage them. *Note;* (1.) They who labour for God have ever need of the sword of the Spirit, that they may be ready armed against every enemy. (2.) Union among christians is their great stability. (3.) They who are distinguished in station, gifts, or office, must be encouragers of others by their zeal and example.

2. To strengthen them against any surprize by night, Nehemiah caused all the country labourers to lodge in the city, that they might be at hand in case of attack. As for himself and his attendants, they never put off their clothes, except to change, or to wash for any ceremonial uncleanness. From the dawn of day to the twilight, they held their spears; and at night, while some kept guard, the rest were ready at a moment's call. *Note;* (1.) As we are ever in danger, we must continually watch: our spiritual enemies neither sleep nor slumber. (2.) Any hardship will the good soldier of Jesus Christ cheerfully endure, when called to it for the glory of God and the service of immortal souls.

## C H A P. V.

*Nehemiah, having heard the complaints of the poor against the rich, calls an assembly, upbraids the rich, and persuades them to assist their brethren, and release them from their debts. An account of Nehemiah's generosity and hospitality.*

[Before Christ 445.]

**A**ND there was a great cry of the people and of their wives against their brethren the Jews.

2 For there were that said, We, our sons, and our daughters, are many: therefore we take up corn for them, that we may eat, and live.

3 Some also there were that said, We have mortgaged our lands, vineyards, and houses, that we might buy corn, because of the dearth.

4 There were also that said, We have borrowed money for the king's tribute, and that upon our lands and vineyards.

5 Yet now our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children: and, lo, we bring into bondage our sons and our daughters to be servants, and some of our daughters are brought into bondage already: neither is it in our power to redeem them; for other men have our lands and vineyards.

6 ¶ And I was very angry when I heard their cry and these words.

7 Then I consulted with myself, and I rebuked the nobles, and the rulers, and said unto them, Ye exact usury, every one of his brother. And I set a great assembly against them.

8 And I said unto them, We after our ability have redeemed our brethren the Jews,

which were sold unto the heathen; and will ye even sell your brethren? or shall they be sold unto us? Then held they their peace, and found nothing to answer.

9 Also I said, It is not good that ye do: ought ye not to walk in the fear of our God because of the reproach of the heathen our enemies?

10 I likewise, and my brethren, and my servants, might exact of them money and corn: I pray you, let us leave off this usury.

11 Restore, I pray you, to them, even this day, their lands, their vineyards, their oliveyards, and their houses, also the hundredth part of the money, and of the corn, the wine, and the oil, that ye exact of them.

12 Then said they, We will restore them, and will require nothing of them; so will we do as thou sayest. Then I called the priests, and took an oath of them, that they should do according to this promise.

13 Also I shook my lap, and said, So God shake out every man from his house, and from his labour, that performeth not this promise, even thus be he shaken out, and emptied. And all the congregation said, Amen, and praised the LORD. And the people did according to this promise.

14 ¶ Moreover from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year even unto the two-and-thirtieth year of Artaxerxes the king, that is, twelve years, I and my brethren have not eaten the bread of the governor.

## C H A P. V.

*Ver. 3. Because of the dearth*] Not long before this, there had been a great scarcity for want of rain; which God thought proper to withhold, as a punishment for the people's taking more care to build their own houses than his, as we read, Haggai, i. 9, &c. At this time the rich had no compassion on their poor brethren, but forced them to part with all they had for bread; and now, which made them still more miserable, another dearth was come upon them, which might easily happen from the multitude of people employed in the repair of the wall; from the building-work, which hindered them from providing for their families some other way; and from the daily dread that they had of their enemies, which might keep them from going abroad for provision, and the country people from bringing it in. Houbigant renders the last part

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of the fourth verse thus: *for the king's tribute on our lands and vineyards.*

*Ver. 7. Ye exact usury, &c.*] This usury was the more grievous, because it was not only contrary to their law, and demanded at a time when they were hard at work, and their enemies threatening to destroy them all; but, as some have observed, the twentieth of Ahasuerus, wherein this was done, began about the end of a sabbatical year, after the law, which forbade every creature to exact any debt of his neighbour or his brother, Deut. xv. 2. had been so frequently read. This raised the cry of the poor to a greater height, having been forced to sell their children, and being deprived now of all power to redeem them, because their lands were mortgaged to these oppressors. See Bishop Patrick.

*Ver. 11. Also the hundredth part of the money*] And also a part of his money. Houbigant.

4 Q

Ver.

15 But the former governors that *had been* before me were chargeable unto the people, and had taken of them bread and wine, beside forty shekels of silver; yea, even their servants bare rule over the people: but so did not I, because of the fear of God.

16 Yea, also I continued in the work of this wall, neither bought we any land: and all my servants *were* gathered thither unto the work.

17 Moreover *there were* at my table an hundred and fifty of the Jews and rulers,

besides those that came unto us from among the heathen that *are* about us.

18 Now *that* which was prepared *for me* daily *was* one ox *and* six choice sheep; also fowls were prepared for me, and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine: yet for all this required not I the bread of the governor; because the bondage was heavy upon this people.

19 Think upon me, my God, for good, *according* to all that I have done for this people.

*Ver. 15. And had taken of them bread and wine, &c.] And had taken from each of them, for bread and wine, forty shekels of silver.* Houbigant. It is evident, from the great and daily expences of Nehemiah mentioned in the following verses, that either he had large remittances from the Persian court, beside his own estate, to answer them; or that he did not continue at Jerusalem the whole twelve years together; or that, if he did, he did not keep up this expensive way of living all the time, but only during the great and present exigencies of the Jews; which ceased in a good measure after the walls were built, the act against usury was passed, and the people were discharged to their ordinary course of maintaining themselves and families.

*Ver. 18. Now that which was prepared for me, &c.]* Bishop Poccocke, in his Travels, vol. i. p. 266, &c. has given us an account of the way in which the Bey of Tunis lived in 1733; not that his way of living differed from that of other Beys, it should seem; but merely as a curiosity for his readers. After describing some soups taken by him in the morning, he tells us, that he was wont to dine at eleven; that his grandees sat near him; that when they had eaten, others sat down, and the poor took away what was left. His provisions were twelve sheep every day, dressed in three different manners; with a rice pilaw,—with oranges and eggs,—and with onions and butter. Besides the mutton, there was wont to be *cuscusoe*, which they ate with the broth; and also boiled fish or fowls, with lemon or orange sauce. An hour before sun-set they ate as before. But this account, beside the curiosity of it, may serve to illustrate what is said here, and in other parts of the Scripture, of some eminent personages; and the comparing the one with the other gives a very sensible pleasure. The Bey of Tunis is not a great prince; he is, however, at the head of a very considerable people; and yet Nehemiah seems to have equalled him in his way of living. For more on the subject see the *Observations*, p. 184.

*Ver. 19. Think upon me, my God, for good.]* See the note on ch. xiii. 31.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We heard but lately the cry of fear, because of the enemy without; in this chapter we have the cry of the poor, because of the oppressor within. Two causes had contributed to their poverty and

distress; the dearth of their land, and the tribute still lying on them, which must be paid. To satisfy the cravings of hunger for themselves and families, as well as the relentless demands of the tax-gatherers, they were obliged, not only to mortgage their lands and vineyards, but to sell their children (though of the *same stock* and family as the richest), to relieve their wants, without the power of redemption, because of the growing debt from the usury exacted by their hard-hearted brethren.

*Note;* (1.) Among the most unhappy situations in life, we may justly reckon that of being in debt without power to pay. (2.) It is cruel to take advantage of our brethren's distress, and to make their yoke heavier by usurious exactions. (3.) When times are hard, the wants of the poor cry for relief: it becomes us to have our ears open to their application, and our hand ready to relieve their wants. (4.) Let those who grind the faces of the poor tremble at their cries, which enter into the ears of a compassionate God. (5.) The distress of his family is more grievous to a tender parent, than his own.

2dly, With tender sympathy for his brethren's distressed case, the good Nehemiah defers not to seek immediate redress. It was of more importance to secure the God of the poor for their friend, than to dwell in a city which had bars and gates.

1. He was angry: a holy indignation warmed his heart; yet, not hasty in his spirit, he bethought him how the grievance might best be redressed. *Note;* (1.) We may be angry without offending, when sin, and not the person of the sinner, is the object of our displeasure. (2.) Before we rebuke, we should deliberate; that we may speak, not the language of passion, but the word of meekness.

2. He openly rebuked the nobles, who had been the authors of the oppression; called an assembly to determine upon the case; or engaged the people in a body to bring in their complaints, that the offenders might be convicted, and the abuse reformed. *Note;* (1.) No man is so great as to be above the reproof of a faithful minister. (2.) Popular complaints, when just, demand speedy redress.

3. He remonstrates with them on the evil of their conduct; not merely to reform them by his authority, but to awaken their consciences to a sense of sin. They were their brethren, and therefore entitled to peculiar tenderness: many of them had been but lately redeemed from their



CHAP. VI.

*Nehemiah rejects the congress offered by Sanballat, and despises his threatening letters. He regards not the false prophets. The wall is finished in fifty-two days.*

[Before Christ 445.]

**N**OW it came to pass, when Sanballat, and Tobiah, and Geshem the Arabian, and the rest of our enemies, heard that I had builded the wall, and *that* there was no breach left therein; (though at that time I had not set up the doors upon the gates;)

2 That Sanballat and Geshem sent unto me, saying, Come, let us meet together in *some one* of the villages in the plain of Ono. But they thought to do me mischief.

3 And I sent messengers unto them, saying,

their heathen masters, to whom, at Babylon, and the countries around, they had been sold; and to bring them again into bondage would be very cruel. They who did such things must needs be destitute of the fear of God. Himself, and those who were with him, had shewn them a better example: besides, nothing would give the heathens around them greater cause for reproach. He therefore exhorts them to immediate restitution of the mortgaged lands and houses, and entreats that they will desist from their exorbitant usury. *Note;* (1.) The relation that we stand in to each other, as brethren, should engage our compassion. (2.) They who are once God's redeemed people, ought never more to return into bondage. (3.) They who have a zeal for God's cause will be tenderly careful to bring no reproach upon it. (4.) A worldly-minded and niggardly professor is the greatest scandal to religion. (5.) When we have done ill, it becomes us to labour to undo it. There can be no simplicity towards God, without restitution to the oppressed. (6.) They who themselves set a good example can speak with greater confidence. (7.) It is a wise man's maxim to entreat where he may command, and seek to engage a compliance rather than use compulsion.

4. As they could not answer his remonstrance, and professed their readiness to comply with his request, the priests are called to administer an oath to them, and with a solemn imprecation to bind them to be faithful thereto. Nor were they backward, but added their ready amen to the oath that he exacted, and praised the Lord; both those who were relieved, for the mercy they had received; and they who had yielded up the mortgaged lands, that God had given them such a heart; and their performance was as punctual as the oath was solemn. *Note;* (1.) It is a mercy when a wise rebuke finds an obedient ear. (2.) An oath is sacredly to be fulfilled: the perjured, God will judge.

CHAP. VI.

*Ver. 5. With an open letter in his hand*] Norden tells us, that when he and his company were at Esuaen, an express

I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?

4 Yet they sent unto me four times after this sort; and I answered them after the same manner.

5 ¶ Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand;

6 Wherein *was* written, It is reported among the heathen, and Gashmu saith *it*, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words.

7 And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying, *There is*

arrived there, dispatched by an Arab prince, who brought a letter directed to the reys, or master of their bark, enjoining him not to set out with his bark, or carry them any further; adding, that in a day's time he should be at Esuaen, and would there give his orders respecting them. "The letter, however, according to the usage of the "Turks," says this author, "was open; and, as the reys "was not on board, the pilot carried it to one of "our fathers to read it." Sanballat's sending his servant, therefore, with an open letter, as here specified, did not appear an odd thing, it should seem: but, if it was according to their usages, why is this circumstance complained of, as it visibly is? Why, indeed, is it mentioned at all?—Because, however the sending of letters open to common people may be customary in these countries, it is not according to their usages to send them so to people of distinction. So Bishop Pococke, in his account of that very country where Norden was when this letter was brought, gives us, among other things, in the 57th plate, the figure of a Turkish letter put into a satten bag, to be sent to a great man, with a paper tied to it, directed and sealed, and an ivory button tied on the wax. Indeed, according to D'Arvieux, the great emir of the Arabs was not wont to inclose his letters in these bags, any more than to have them adorned with flourishes; but then this is supposed to have been owing to the unpoliteness of the Arabs: and he tells us, that when he acted as secretary to the emir, he supplied these defects, and that his doing so was highly acceptable to the emir. Had this open letter then come from Geshem, who was an Arab, (ver. 1.) it might have passed unnoticed; but as it was from Sanballat, the inclosing it in a handsome bag was a ceremony that Nehemiah had reason to expect from him, since he was a person of distinction in the Persian court, and at that time governor of Judea: and the not doing it was a great insult; insinuating, that though Nehemiah was, according to him, preparing to assume the royal dignity, he should be so far from acknowledging him in that character, that he would not even pay him the compliment due to every person of distinction. See the *Observations*, p. 295.

a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together.

8 Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart.

9 For they all made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. Now therefore, *O God*, strengthen my hands.

10 ¶ Afterward I came unto the house of Shemaiah the son of Delaiah the son of Mehetabeel, who *was* shut up; and he said, Let us meet together in the house of God, within the temple, and let us shut the doors of the temple: for they will come to slay thee; yea, in the night will they come to slay thee.

11 And I said, Should such a man as I flee?

and who *is there*, that, *being as I am*, would go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in.

12 And, lo, I perceived that God had not sent him; but that he pronounced this prophecy against me: for Tobiah and Sanballat had hired him.

13 Therefore *was* he hired, that I should be afraid, and do so, and sin, and *that* they might have *matter* for an evil report, that they might reproach me.

14 My God, think thou upon Tobiah and Sanballat according to these their works, and on the prophets Noadiah, and the rest of the prophets, that would have put me in fear.

15 ¶ So the wall was finished in the twenty-and-fifth *day* of the month Elul, in fifty-and-two days.

*Ver. 10. In the house of God, within the temple*] Hereby is meant the *sanctuary*. Shemaiah had a good pretence to advise Nehemiah to retreat thither, because it was both a strong and a sacred place; being defended by a guard of Levites, and by its holiness privileged from all rude approaches: but his real design herein might be, not only to disgrace Nehemiah, and dishearten the people, when they saw their governor's cowardice, but to prepare the way likewise for the enemy's assaulting and taking the city, when there was no leader to oppose them; to give countenance to the calumny which had been spread abroad, of his affecting to be king, because he fled at the report of it; and perhaps, by the assistance of some other priests who were his confederates, either to destroy him, or to secure his person till the city was betrayed into the enemy's hand. See Bishop Patrick.

*Ver. 11. Should such a man as I flee? &c.*] There is something very significant, as well as magnanimous, in these words of Nehemiah. *Should such a man as I flee?* I, the chief governor; upon whose presence, counsel, and conduct, the very life and being of the whole city and nation, in a great measure, depend: I, who have professed such resolution, courage, and constancy in God: I, who have had such evident experience of God's gracious and powerful assistance; of his calling me to this employment, and carrying me through it, when the danger was greater than now; shall I dishonour God and religion, and betray the people and city of God by my pusillanimity? God forbid!

*Ver. 15. The wall was finished—in fifty-and-two days*] How long Nehemiah was in finishing the walls of Jerusalem, interpreters are not agreed; because some of them, supposing the space of two-and-fifty days, here mentioned, to be too short for the perfecting of the whole, have begun their computation from the time that Nehemiah returned his answer to Sanballat's first message; and others, from

the time that the stone wall was finished; and so allowing the whole fifty-two days for the perfecting of the rest. But if we look into the compass of time, from Nehemiah's being at Shushan, to the day of the month when these walls are said to have been finished, we shall find, that no more than fifty-two days could well be allowed for the perfecting of the whole. For it was in the first month (called *Nisan*, ch. ii. 1.) that Nehemiah was at Shushan, and obtained of the king leave to go to Jerusalem; and though we have no express account what time he spent in his journey, and when he came to Jerusalem; yet, if we may make a conjecture from the time that Ezra expended in the same journey, we can scarcely suppose that he arrived at Jerusalem before the end of the fourth month. Ezra set out on the first day of the first month. He made, indeed, a short stay at the river Ahava; but it was the first day of the fifth month before he reached Jerusalem. Nehemiah could not possibly set out so soon in the year, because his commission from the king, and instructions to the neighbouring governors, must have taken some time in passing through the several offices; and therefore we can hardly suppose that he reached Jerusalem sooner than the time specified; and from thence to the twenty-fifth day of the sixth month, including the three days of rest which he gave himself before he began, the space will be much about fifty-two days, wherein we suppose that the whole work was finished. And if Alexander the Great, as Arrian and Curtius relate, built the walls of Alexandria, which were seven miles in compass, in the space of twenty days, why should it be thought a thing incredible, that a great number, not of hired, but of voluntary men, full of zeal for the work themselves, animated by the example of their rulers, and ranged and distributed in a proper manner for dispatch, should, in almost thrice that space of time, be able to finish a work of less compass, when they had long summer days for it, plenty of stones and

16 And it came to pass, that when all our enemies heard *thereof*, and all the heathen that were about us saw *these things*, they were much cast down in their own eyes: for they perceived that this work was wrought of our God.

17 ¶ Moreover in those days the nobles of Judah sent many letters unto Tobiah, and the letters of Tobiah came unto them.

18 For *there were* many in Judah sworn unto him, because he was the son-in-law of Shechaniah the son of Arah; and his son Johanan had taken the daughter of Meshullam

the son of Berechiah.

19 Also they reported his good deeds before me, and uttered my words to him. And Tobiah sent letters to put me in fear.

CHAP. VII.

*Nehemiah places guards at the gates of the city, and within the city. A register of those who came first out of Babylon.*

[Before Christ 444.]

**N**OW it came to pass, when the wall was built, and I had set up the doors, and the porters and the singers and the Levites were appointed,

and other materials at hand, the foundation of the wall unraised, some parts of it standing entire, and here and there only breaches to be amended; and when their design in the whole was, not to study nicety but strength, and to provide themselves with such a fortification for the present as would secure them from any sudden invasion of their enemies? See Patrick and Poole.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The restless enemies of God's people could not bear to see the work so prosperous, without attempts to hinder and obstruct it; and therefore they lay a snare to take off Nehemiah, the great promoter of the work, by inviting him to a friendly conference in one of the villages of Benjamin. But, suspecting some plot, or having received some intelligence of their design, he refused to go, pleading the urgency of his work as his excuse for not meeting them. Four several times this proposal was made, and as often rejected with the same answer. *Note;* (1.) The proposals of known enemies should be weighed with jealous caution. (2.) When we have business that requires our attention, visits of compliment and civility must be postponed. (3.) Repeated solicitations to do what is evil or imprudent should meet with repeated denials.

2dly, When one design miscarries, Sanballat contrives another: since he cannot seduce Nehemiah from the work, he seeks to terrify him.

1. He sends a letter, intimating the information which Geshem, or Gashmu, had given, and desiring a conference thereupon; pretending friendship, as if, should the report spread, of his intention to rebel, and make himself king, the consequence might be dangerous. *Note;* (1.) Fair professions of friendship often cloak foul designs. (2.) It is an old trick of the enemies of God's people, to represent them as seditious, and make them noxious to the government.

2. Nehemiah easily saw that the design was to weaken his hands; and therefore, while he denies the accusation, and lays the invention at the door of his enemy, he looks to God to strengthen him, and then his foes may rage in vain. *Note;* (1.) No lies, or malevolent reports, should weaken our hand from the work of God. (2.) They who have almighty power engaged for them, may look up

to God and be comforted; he will uphold them. (3.) The more the enemy rages, the more shall God's strength be perfected in our weakness.

3dly, Despairing of success by his own contrivances, Sanballat, by bribes, engages some of the Jews to betray Nehemiah. The plot laid was, under pretence of zeal for his safety, to induce him to take refuge in the temple. But Nehemiah with scorn rejected the cowardly step to which he was advised, as highly unbecoming a man of his station and character. *Note;* (1.) The treachery of pretended friends is more to be feared, than the opposition of professed foes. (2.) Satan's ministers often wear the garb of God's prophets. We must not believe every spirit; but try the spirits, whether they be of God. (3.) When God's cause is at stake, our very life must not be dear to us. (4.) It is better to brave the greatest dangers than commit the least sin. (5.) The devil's design, in tempting us to sin, is, not only to wound our own souls, but to bring reproach upon our holy profession. (6.) The deepest-laid schemes for his people's hurt, God can disappoint, to his enemies' confusion. (7.) Woe to that sinner whose iniquity is marked before God, and whose judgment lingereth not.

4thly, If God bless us, then shall we be blessed in spite of every enemy. We have here,

1. The wall finished, to the great dismay and vexation of their neighbours, in fifty-two days. God's hand evidently appeared in the work, and therefore all opposition was impotent and vain. *Note;* (1.) When we are hearty in God's service, much may be done in a little time. (2.) The enemies of God's people shall be made to see and own his care over them. (3.) When God will work, none can hinder it.

2. The treacherous correspondence carried on between Tobiah and some of the nobles, with many of the people of Judah; so ungrateful were they to Nehemiah, and so false to the interests of their own country. *Note;* (1.) Nobility is no proof against baseness and bribery. The greatest men of a state are often the betrayers of it. (2.) Intimate familiarity and connection with the ungodly cannot but tend to corrupt our own souls. (3.) Though the enemy threaten never so violently, we need not fear while God is on our side.

2 That I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he *was* a faithful man, and feared God above many.

3 And I said unto them, Let not the gates of Jerusalem be opened until the sun be hot; and while they stand by, let them shut the doors, and bar *them*: and appoint watches of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, every one in his watch, and every one *to be* over against his house.

4 Now the city *was* large and great: but the people *were* few therein, and the houses *were* not builded.

5 ¶ And my God put into mine heart to gather together the nobles, and the rulers, and the people, that they might be reckoned by genealogy. And I found a register of the genealogy of them which came up at the first, and found written therein,

6 These *are* the children of the province, that went up out of the captivity, of those that had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away, and came again to Jerusalem and to Judah, every one unto his city;

7 Who came with Zerubbabel, Jeshua, Nehemiah, Azariah, Raamiah, Nahamani, Mordecai, Biltan, Mispereth, Bigvai, Nehum, Baanah. The number, *I say*, of the men of the people of Israel *was* *this*;

8 The children of Parosh, two thousand an hundred seventy-and-two.

9 The children of Shephatiah, three hundred seventy-and-two.

10 The children of Arah, six hundred fifty-and-two.

11 The children of Pahath-moab, of the children of Jeshua and Joab, two thousand and eight hundred *and* eighteen.

12 The children of Elam, a thousand two hundred fifty-and-four.

13 The children of Zattu, eight hundred forty-and-five.

14 The children of Zaccai, seven hundred and threescore.

15 The children of Binnui, six hundred forty-and-eight.

16 The children of Bebai, six hundred twenty-and-eight.

17 The children of Azgad, two thousand three hundred twenty-and-two.

18 The children of Adonikam, six hundred threescore-and-seven.

19 The children of Bigvai, two thousand threescore-and-seven.

20 The children of Adin, six hundred fifty-and-five.

21 The children of Ater of Hezekiah, ninety-and-eight.

22 The children of Hashum, three hundred twenty-and-eight.

#### CHAP. VII.

*Ver. 2. I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah, &c.]* Nehemiah was now, most likely, returning to Shushan, to give the king an account of the state of affairs in Judea; and, therefore, he took care to place such men in the city as he knew would faithfully secure it in his absence. Hanani is said to be his brother; but he chose his officers, not out of partial views to his own kindred, but because he knew that they would acquit themselves in their employment with a strict fidelity. Hanani had given proof of his zeal for God and his country, in taking a tedious journey from Jerusalem to Shushan, to inform Nehemiah of the sad estate of Jerusalem. See ch. i. 2. And the reason why Nehemiah put such trust and confidence in Hananiah was, because he was a man of conscience, and acted upon religious principles, which would keep him from those temptations to perfidy which he might probably meet with in his absence, and against which a man destitute of the fear of God could have no sufficient defence. See Calmet. Respecting the register in the following part

of this chapter, we refer to Ezra ii., Houbigant, Kennicott, and other writers who have considered the subject. The authors of the Universal History observe, that, though the genealogies had been once rectified soon after the return, there were still many families of priests, Levites, and people, who could not make out their claim to their tribes. It is likely, therefore, that some of them were afterwards enabled to do it, and were then inserted in this new register, together with those who came up with Nehemiah. Several of the old families which came up on the first edict might be by this time extinct; and these are the probable causes of the difference that we find in the genealogies of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. *Notes;* (1.) They who are eminent for the fear of God above many, are the fittest to be trusted with any public charge, because they will make a conscience of fulfilling it. (2.) They who would be always safe, must always be upon their guard. (3.) Every man's family is his great concern: he has need well to watch over them night and day, if he would preserve them from the destroyer.

23 The children of Bezai, three hundred twenty-and-four.

24 The children of Hariph, an hundred and twelve.

25 The children of Gibeon, ninety-and-five.

26 The men of Beth-lehem and Netophah, an hundred fourscore and eight.

27 The men of Anathoth, an hundred twenty-and-eight.

28 The men of Beth-azmaveth, forty-and-two.

29 The men of Kirjath-jearim, Chephirah, and Beeroth, seven hundred forty-and-three.

30 The men of Ramah and Gaba, six hundred twenty-and-one.

31 The men of Michmas, an hundred and twenty-and-two.

32 The men of Beth-el and Ai, an hundred twenty-and-three.

33 The men of the other Nebo, fifty-and-two.

34 The children of the other Elām, a thousand two hundred fifty-and-four.

35 The children of Harim, three hundred and twenty.

36 The children of Jericho, three hundred forty-and-five.

37 The children of Lod, Hadid, and Ono, seven hundred twenty-and-one.

38 The children of Senaah, three thousand nine hundred and thirty.

39 ¶ The priests: the children of Jedaiah, of the house of Jeshua, nine hundred seventy-and-three.

40 The children of Immer, a thousand fifty-and-two.

41 The children of Pashur, a thousand two hundred forty-and-seven.

42 The children of Harim, a thousand and seventeen.

43 ¶ The Levites: the children of Jeshua, of Kadmiel, and of the children of Hodevah, seventy-and-four.

44 The singers: the children of Afaph, an hundred forty-and-eight.

45 The porters: the children of Shallum, the children of Ater, the children of Talmon, the children of Akkub, the children of Hatita,

the children of Shobai, an hundred thirty-and-eight.

46 ¶ The Nethinims: the children of Ziha, the children of Hashupha, the children of Tabbaoth,

47 The children of Keros, the children of Sia, the children of Padon,

48 The children of Lebana, the children of Hagaba, the children of Shalmal,

49 The children of Hanan, the children of Giddel, the children of Gahar,

50 The children of Reaiah, the children of Rezin, the children of Nekoda,

51 The children of Gazzam, the children of Uzza, the children of Phaseah,

52 The children of Befai, the children of Meunim, the children of Nephithesim,

53 The children of Bakbuk, the children of Hakupha, the children of Harhur,

54 The children of Bazlith, the children of Mehida, the children of Harsha,

55 The children of Barkos, the children of Sifera, the children of Tamah,

56 The children of Neziah, the children of Hatipha.

57 ¶ The children of Solomon's servants: the children of Sotai, the children of Sophe-reth, the children of Perida,

58 The children of Jaala, the children of Darkon, the children of Giddel,

59 The children of Shephatiah, the children of Hattil, the children of Pochereth of Zebaim, the children of Amon.

60 All the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants, *were* three hundred ninety-and-two.

61 And these *were* they which went up *also* from Tel-melah, Tel-haresha, Cherub, Ad-don, and Immer: but they could not shew their father's house, nor their seed, whether they *were* of Israel.

62 The children of Delaiah, the children of Tobiah, the children of Nekoda, six hundred forty-and-two.

63 ¶ And of the priests: the children of Habaiah, the children of Koz, the children of Barzillai, which took *one* of the daughters of Barzillai the Gileadite to wife, and was called after their name.

64 These

64 These sought their register *among* those that were reckoned by genealogy, but it was not found: therefore were they, as polluted, put from the priesthood.

65 And the Tirshatha said unto them, that they should not eat of the most holy things, till there stood *up* a priest with Urim and Thummim.

66 ¶ The whole congregation together *was* forty-and-two thousand three hundred and threescore.

67 Beside their man servants and their maid servants, of whom *there were* seven thousand three hundred thirty-and-seven: and they had two hundred forty-and-five singing-men and singing-women.

68 Their horses, seven hundred thirty-and-six: their mules; two hundred forty-and-five:

69 *Their* camels, four hundred thirty-and-five: six thousand seven hundred and twenty asses.

70 ¶ And some of the chief of the fathers gave unto the work. The Tirshatha gave to the treasure a thousand drams of gold, fifty basons, five hundred and thirty priests' garments.

71 And *some* of the chief of the fathers gave to the treasure of the work twenty thousand drams of gold, and two thousand and two hundred pound of silver.

72 And *that* which the rest of the people gave *was* twenty thousand drams of gold, and two thousand pound of silver, and threescore and seven priests' garments.

73 So the priests, and the Levites, and the porters, and the singers, and *some* of the people,

and the Nethinims, and all Israel, dwelt in their cities; and when the seventh month came, the children of Israel *were* in their cities.

### C H A P. VIII.

*The religious manner of reading and hearing the law. The feast of tabernacles is celebrated.*

[Before Christ 444.]

**A**ND all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that *was* before the water-gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel.

2 And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.

3 And he read therein before the street that *was* before the water-gate from the morning until mid-day, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people *were attentive* unto the book of the law.

4 And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose; and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Misael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam.

5 And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up:

### C H A P. VIII.

*Ver. 2. Ezra the priest, &c.]* This Ezra, without all controversy, was the same who came from Babylon in the seventh year of Artaxerxes. After the death of Zerubbabel, the whole administration devolved upon him; but as his commission lasted but twelve years, upon its expiration, Nehemiah succeeded to the government; and we hear no more of Ezra, until he is here called upon to read and expound the law to the people. Whether, as some think, he returned to Babylon, to give the people an account of the affairs of the province of Judea, or whether in this intermediate time he employed himself in some retirement upon the great work of preparing a new and

correct edition of the Holy Scriptures, which we are generally supposed to owe to his care, is not certain. The pulpit upon which he was raised, *ver. 4.* must have been large, sufficient to contain fourteen people at once, and from this eminence they read and explained the *law*, *ver. 8.* For the people, having for some time been accustomed to the Chaldee language, had partly lost the knowledge of the Hebrew; so that there was a necessity for having the law explained to them in the Chaldee tongue. And this was the origin of the institution of the Targums or Chaldee paraphrases, as it is also supposed to have been of the synagogue worship. See Univ. Hist. vol. x. b. 2. p. 220.

6 And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with *their* faces to the ground.

7 Also Jeshua, and Bani, and Sherebiah, Jamin, Akkub, Shabbethai, Hodijah, Maaseiah, Kelita, Azariah, Jozabad, Hanan, Pelaiah, and the Levites, caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place.

8 So they read in the book, in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused *them* to understand the reading.

9 ¶ And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.

10 Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for *this* day is holy unto our LORD: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

11 So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy; neither be ye grieved.

12 And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

13 ¶ And on the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests, and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law.

14 And they found written in the law which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths in the feast of the seventh month:

15 And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive-branches, and pine-branches, and myrtle-branches, and palm-branches, and branches of thick trees, to make booths, as *it is* written.

16 ¶ So the people went forth, and brought *them*, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water-gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim.

17 And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the booths: for since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun, unto that day, had not the children of Israel done so. And there was very great gladness.

18 Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day *was* a solemn assembly, according unto the manner.

*Ver. 15. And that they should publish and proclaim] Which when they heard, they sent preachers into all the cities, and into Jerusalem, saying, Go forth, &c. Houbigant.*

*Fetch olive-branches, &c.] See Scheuchzer's Physique Sacrée, tom. vi. p. 6.*

*Ver. 17. Since the days of Jeshua the son of Nun, &c.] It can hardly be thought that this festival had never been observed since Jeshua's time, because we read in the book of Ezra, that it was kept at their return from Babylon; but the meaning is, that the joy since that time had never been so great as it was upon this occasion; for which the Jews themselves assign this reason, that in the days of Jeshua they rejoiced, because they had gotten possession of the land of Canaan; and now they equally rejoiced, because they were restored and quietly settled in it, after they had been long cast out of it.*

*Ver. 18. A solemn assembly, according unto the manner] It is supposed to have been at this solemnity that the notable discovery happened of the sacred fire, related 2 Macc. i. 28, &c. The Jews affirm, that Jeremiah, or some other*

prophet, had caused it to be hidden in a dry well, a little before the taking of Jerusalem; and that the memory of it having been still preserved to that time, Nehemiah caused it to be brought out for the divine service. In memory of this wonderful discovery, the Jews instituted a feast, which they called "the feast of the new fire." See Univ. Hist.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, It was not the restoration of the temple-service, nor the rebuilding of the ruined wall, that was their great protection. Obedience was better than sacrifice, and fidelity to God a stronger barrier than the loftiest towers. The people here seem to be sensible of this.

1. A great congregation assembled at the feast of trumpets, on the first day of the seventh month, when the new year began, the day they had set up and dedicated the altar at their return from captivity. Men, women, and children, who were arrived at years of understanding, came: the place of assembly, for convenience, was the large street which led to the water-gate; and there Ezra, with his assistants, at their desire, ascending a pulpit, or wooden turret, that he might be better heard,

4 R

brought



## C H A P. IX.

*A solemn fast and repentance of the people. The Levites confess God's goodness and their iniquity.*

[Before Christ 444.]

**N**OW in the twenty-and-fourth day of this month the children of Israel were

assembled with fasting, and with sackcloths, and earth upon them.

2 And the seed of Israel separated themselves from all strangers, and stood and confessed their sins, and the iniquities of their fathers.

3 And they stood up in their place, and

brought forth the law of God, to be read and expounded to the congregation. *Note;* (1.) We have reason to be thankful for commodious places for our religious assemblies; not but that the prayer of faith, and the preaching of the gospel, are acceptable services in every place. (2.) They who serve God themselves, cannot but be solicitous that their families should serve him too. (3.) Nothing is so needful in the education of our children, as early to acquaint them with the word of God. (4.) It is a pleasure to preach the word to those who desire to hear, and who hunger and thirst after it.

2. With great solemnity Ezra opened the awful book, while the eyes of the people were fixed upon him. He began with a devout benediction, adoring the great God for the distinguishing mercy that they enjoyed in these oracles of divine truth; to which the people joined their hearty *amen*; worshipping with reverential humiliation this glorious Lord. He then proceeded, with his assistants, the priests and Levites, by turns to read and expound the most useful parts of the law, from morning till noon; either commenting upon it, to enforce and explain it; or translating it into the Chaldee tongue, as that was become by their captivity more familiar to them than the Hebrew. *Note;* (1.) When we address ourselves to prayer on the word, the frame of our minds had need be solemn and reverential, considering *that God* with whom we have to do. (2.) The reading of the word of God ought never to be omitted in the assembly of God's saints. (3.) When we carry our Bibles into the pulpit, it contains an admonition to us, that we speak according thereunto; and an appeal to the people, as desiring to be judged thereby. (4.) Preaching the word is among the greatest means of grace; and they who zealously seek the salvation of men's souls will not tire of the work. A short sermon is often a mark of a cold heart. (5.) Among all the abominations of the church of Rome, none is more diabolical than the withholding of the Scriptures from the people. (6.) They who are appointed to teach the knowledge of the Scripture, should study rather to speak distinctly and plainly, that they may be understood, than elegantly, to be admired. (7.) Exposition of the Scripture is highly useful, not only to render perspicuous what is abstruse, but to enforce on the conscience what is plain and evident.

3. The people with fixed attention stood up to hear; and, unwearied by the length of the time, hung upon the preacher's lips. *Note;* (1.) The sermon is likely to be effectual, when the audience is thus solemnly attentive. (2.) They who relish the word of God will never think the time long that is spent in hearing it.

2dly, The word of God is quick and powerful, and sharp as a two-edged sword. We see here,

1. The deep impression that it made upon the hearers' hearts. Conscious of manifold breaches, and trembling before a holy God, they all wept. Their hearts were tender, and they could not but tremble at his awful word, which denounced eternal death on every transgression. *Note;* The law brings so terrible a message to the conscience, that, if the gospel were not to afford us relief, we should lie down in everlasting mournings.

2. Nehemiah and Ezra observed the deep effect the word had taken; and though, no doubt, they were glad to see them mourn for their sins; yet, it being a day of rejoicing before the Lord, they endeavour to stay the people's sorrows with kind encouragement. They must not grieve inordinately. They enjoin them, therefore, to refrain from tears, and keep a holy feast to the Lord, with liberal and charitable distributions to the poor, and joy in God as their strength; joy which enlivens and encourages the heart to every good word and work, and raises up the soul above fear and despondency. *Note;* (1.) It is a pleasing part of a minister's duty to comfort those that mourn. (2.) They who sow in tears fail not to reap in joy. (3.) While the Lord is pleased to cover our tables with affluence, let us never forget to draw out our soul to the hungry; the greatest comfort of abundance is to do good with it. (4.) Holy joy will quicken us for every duty, and strengthen us for every conflict.

3. The people hereupon dried up their tears; and, understanding the great and precious promises that were made to repentant Israel, rejoiced in hope of finding favour with their justly-offended God. *Note;* (1.) Though the Scriptures pierce like a sword the heart of a sinner, they contain that balm which can cure the wound. (2.) A clear knowledge of God's word is the way to sound and abiding consolation.

3dly, The word, which the preceding day had so much engaged their attention and affected their hearts, is again applied to. The chief of the elders, priests, and Levites, especially solicitous to understand the law, assembled before Ezra, that he might explain what was obscure or difficult. *Note;* (1.) They who are appointed to instruct others had need use double diligence to understand the mind of God themselves. (2.) converse with the oracles of God affords a daily delightful entertainment to faithful souls. The consequence of this renewed attendance upon God's word was,

1. A discovery of a long-neglected ordinance, the feast of tabernacles. As the time approached, Ezra probably selected that portion of Scripture to remind them of it, and to direct them in the observance of it. *Note;* (1.) How good is a word spoken in season! (2.) The careful reading of God's word will convince us of many negligences and ignorances.

read in the book of the law of the LORD their God *one* fourth part of the day; and *another* fourth part they confessed, and worshipped the LORD their God.

4 ¶ Then stood up upon the stairs, of the Levites, Jeshua, and Bani, Kadmiel, Shebaniah, Bunni, Sherebiah, Bani, *and* Chenani, and cried with a loud voice unto the LORD their God.

5 Then the Levites, Jeshua, and Kadmiel, Bani, Hashabniah, Sherebiah, Hodijah, Shebaniah, *and* Pethahiah, said, Stand up *and* bless the LORD your God for ever and ever: and blessed be thy glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.

6 Thou, *even* thou, *art* LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all *things* that *are* therein, the seas, and all that *is* therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.

7 Thou *art* the LORD the God, who didst chuse Abram, and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees, and gavest him the name of Abraham;

8 And foundest his heart faithful before thee, and madest a covenant with him to give the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Girgashites, to give *it*, *I say*, to his seed, and hast performed thy words; for thou *art* righteous:

9 And didst see the affliction of our fathers in Egypt, and heardest their cry by the Red Sea;

10 And shewedst signs and wonders upon Pharaoh, and on all his servants, and on all the people of his land: for thou knewest that they dealt proudly against them. So didst

thou get thee a name, as *it is* this day.

11 And thou didst divide the sea before them, so that they went through the midst of the sea on the dry land; and their persecutors thou threwest into the deeps, as a stone into the mighty waters.

12 Moreover thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar; and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go.

13 Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right judgments, and true laws, good statutes and commandments:

14 And madest known unto them thy holy sabbath, and commandedst them precepts, statutes, and laws, by the hand of Moses thy servant:

15 And gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger, and broughtest forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst, and promisedst them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hadst sworn to give them.

16 But they and our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to thy commandments,

17 And refused to obey, neither were mindful of thy wonders that thou didst among them; but hardened their necks, and in their rebellion appointed a captain to return to their bondage: but thou *art* a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and forsookest them not.

18 Yea, when they had made them a molten calf, and said, This *is* thy God that brought thee up out of Egypt, and had wrought great provocations;

2. A proclamation is made for the observance of it, both at Jerusalem and at the other cities.

3. The solemnity is most religiously observed. Never since the days of Joshua had such a feast been kept with such exactness, holy joy, and daily, diligent, and serious attendance on the word of God. *Note*; (1.) They who have their hearts right with God, will be diligent and serious observers of all his institutions. (2.) Our leisure hours will be ever most comfortably and profitably employed in the oracles of truth. (3.) When we are waiting on God in the way of his ordinances, he will meet us in them, and fill our hearts with joy and gladness.

## C H A P. IX.

*Ver. 1.* In the twenty-and-fourth day of this month] The feast of tabernacles being ended, a day was appointed for a solemn fast; when they assembled; confessed their sins; deprecated the judgments due to the iniquity of their fathers; acknowledged the omnipotence of God in creating and preserving all things; disclaimed all dependance upon that *host of heaven* which they confessed to be the creatures of God, *ver. 6.*; and enumerated his gracious mercies in their manifold deliverances from their enemies and persecutors.

19 Yet thou in thy manifold mercies forsookest them not in the wilderness: the pillar of the cloud departed not from them by day, to lead them in the way; neither the pillar of fire by night, to shew them light, and the way wherein they should go.

20 Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them, and withheldest not thy manna from their mouth, and gavest them water for their thirst.

21 Yea, forty years didst thou sustain them in the wilderness, *so that* they lacked nothing; their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not.

22 Moreover thou gavest them kingdoms and nations, and didst divide them into corners: so they possessed the land of Sihon, and the land of the king of Heshbon, and the land of Og king of Bashan.

23 Their children also multipliedst thou as the stars of heaven, and broughtest them into the land, concerning which thou hadst promised to their fathers, that they should go in to possess *it*.

24 So the children went in and possessed the land, and thou subduedst before them the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites, and gavest them into their hands, with their kings, and the people of the land, that they might do with them as they would.

25 And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and olive-yards, and fruit-trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in thy great goodness.

26 Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee,

and they wrought great provocations.

27 Therefore thou deliveredst them into the hand of their enemies, who vexed them: and in the time of their trouble, when they cried unto thee, thou heardest *them* from heaven; and according to thy manifold mercies thou gavest them saviours, who saved them out of the hand of their enemies.

28 But after they had rest, they did evil again before thee: therefore ledest thou them in the hand of their enemies, so that they had the dominion over them: yet when they returned, and cried unto thee, thou heardest *them* from heaven; and many times didst thou deliver them according to thy mercies;

29 And testifiedst against them, that thou mightest bring them again unto thy law: yet they dealt proudly, and hearkened not unto thy commandments, but sinned against thy judgments, (which if a man do, he shall live in them;) and withdrew the shoulder, and hardened their neck, and would not hear.

30 Yet many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit in thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the people of the lands.

31 Nevertheless for thy great mercies' sake thou didst not utterly consume them, nor forsake them; for thou *art* a gracious and merciful God.

32 Now therefore, our God, the great, the mighty, and the terrible God, who keepest covenant and mercy, let not all the trouble seem little before thee, that hath come upon us, on our kings, on our princes, and on our priests, and on our prophets, and on our fathers, and on all thy people, since the time of the kings of Assyria unto this day.

33 Howbeit thou *art* just in all that is

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*Ver. 20. Thou gavest also thy good spirit*] This whole chapter, says Mr. Peters, contains a beautiful epitome of the history of the Jews; raised and animated by a spirit of devotion, which appears in all that moving eloquence so well suited to the great occasion; and at the same time, with all that chasteness and correctness of thought and expression, which so eminently distinguishes the sacred writings from the wild raptures of enthusiasm. In recapitulating the miracles of divine goodness vouch-

safed to their fathers in the wilderness, the sacred writer adds this, as none of the least memorable of God's mercies to them there: *Thou gavest also thy good spirit to instruct them.* See Peters on Job, p. 312.

*Ver. 22. Moreover thou gavest them, &c.] Thou gavest them the kingdoms of the people, which thou didst divide to each of them.* Houbigant. The author of the *Observations* gives a different explanation of the passage, which the reader will find in our note on Amos, iii. 12.

*Ver.*

brought upon us; for thou hast done right, but we have done wickedly.

34 Neither have our kings, our princes, our priests, nor our fathers, kept thy law, nor hearkened unto thy commandments and thy testimonies, wherewith thou didst testify against them.

35 For they have not served thee in their kingdom, and in thy great goodness that thou gavest them, and in the large and fat land which thou gavest before them, neither turned they from their wicked works.

36 Behold, we *are* servants this day, and for the land that thou gavest unto our fathers to eat the fruit thereof and the good thereof, behold, we *are* servants in it:

37 And it yieldeth much increase unto the kings whom thou hast set over us because of our sins: also they have dominion over our bodies, and over our cattle, at their pleasure, and we *are* in great distress.

38 And because of all this we make a sure *covenant*, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it.

*Ver. 38. We make a sure covenant, and write it*] It was but of little consequence what such a refractory people promised; for, what regard would they have to their own hand-writing, who would not regard the ten commandments written on tables of stone by the finger of God? It was, however, very useful that there should be a public instrument to convince them of their impiety, that, if they proved perfidious deserters, they might be publicly confounded by being shewn, under their own hands, their engagements to future fidelity. See Bishop Patrick.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Their feast of gladness is succeeded by a day of solemn humiliation. While we are rejoicing in the confidence of God's reconciliation, we still need to remember our own evil ways, and abhor ourselves.

1. Every outward expression of sorrow bespoke the inward affliction of their souls for sin, while they appeared in the courts of the temple as penitents before God. *Note*; There are seasons, when, without ostentation, we may appear unto men to fast.

2. They put away their strange wives, in token of the sincerity of their humiliation. Some had kept them probably in secret, notwithstanding the former reformation, or had since relapsed into the same evil. *Note*; As long as acknowledged sin is harboured, communion with God is impossible, and the appearance of repentance is but hypocrisy.

3. They spent the whole day in religious exercises. Three hours they spent in hearing God's law, and as many in prayer and confession; and this, probably, both morning and afternoon. *Note*; The more we are conversant in God's word, the more deeply shall we see cause to lament over the evil of our fallen hearts.

2dly, The congregation being assembled, we have the names of the chief persons employed to lead the devotions of the people, and to be engaged in the word of God; together with the prayer which, probably, was composed by Ezra on the occasion; and, as so great a number of people could be scarcely supposed capable of hearing in one congregation, they might be divided into several, each with a Levite at their head; and yet thus uniting in the same humbling confession and supplication, with one voice, as well as one heart, glorifying God.

1. They open their prayer with solemn adoration to

the self-existent Jehovah, the great creator and preserver of all, the only worthy object of worship in heaven and earth; and whose transcendent excellencies and unutterable glories infinitely exceed all the praises which men or angels can offer.

2. They recite, with deep gratitude, the manifold mercies that this great and gracious God had bestowed on them from the days of old; particularly the call of Abraham their great progenitor, and the performance of the covenant established with him and his seed. Abraham was by grace enabled to be faithful, and God had rewarded that fidelity in the accomplishment of all his promises to him and his posterity. Out of Ægypt had God also wondrously delivered them, to the confusion and destruction of their enemies: through the wilderness had he led them safe from danger; never forsook them amid their multiplied provocations; provided them liberal supplies for all their wants; and, by daily miracles, fed and guided them in the way to the promised land. On Sinai he descended to promulge his law, so holy; just, and good; and to institute his gracious ordinances, particularly the sabbath, the distinguishing token of his separation of them to himself. Before them the Canaanites, though so mighty and numerous, had been expelled, and their rich land, where every earthly blessing abounded, given them to possess. There they forsook God, and provoked him with their iniquities; yet his patience endured: he sent them warnings; he received them whenever they turned to him; he multiplied his pardons; he raised them up judges to deliver them from their enemies, and recover them from their backslidings. All these instances of the divine goodness, while they deserved the most thankful acknowledgment, aggravated the evil of their sins; yet the past experience afforded them present hope, if they should, as now, fly to the God who is ever ready to pardon, merciful, and gracious. *Note*; (1.) The goodness of God is the great argument to lead us to repentance. (2.) In the midst of our deepest humiliations, we should never forget to mention the mercies for which we are indebted. (3.) Without some views of God's rich grace, the sense of our sins would be likely to sink us into despair.

3. Amid their thankful acknowledgments, they intersperse their abasing confessions, as every mercy that they had received aggravated the guilt of their sins. From the beginning, the proud hearts of their fathers were

## C H A P. X.

*The names of those who sealed the covenant, in which they engaged not to marry strange wives; to observe the sabbath; to pay their annual tribute, their tythes, and first-fruits.*

[Before Christ 444.]

**N**OW those that sealed *were*, Nehemiah, the Tirshatha, the son of Hachaliah, and Zidkijah,

2 Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah,

3 Pashur, Amariah, Malchijah,

4 Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch,

5 Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah,

6 Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch,

7 Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin,

8 Maaziah, Bilgai, Shemaiah: these *were* the priests.

9 And the Levites: both Jeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel;

10 And their brethren, Shebaniah, Hodijah, Kelita, Pelaiiah, Hanan,

11 Micha, Rehob, Hashabiah,

12 Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah,

13 Hodijah, Bani, Beninu.

14 The chief of the people; Parosh, Pahathmoab, Elam, Zattu, Bani,

15 Bunni, Azgad, Bebai,

16 Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin,

17 Ater, Hizkijah, Azzur,

18 Hodijah, Hashum, Bezai,

19 Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai,

20 Magpiash, Meshullam, Hezir,

21 Melhezabeel, Zadok, Jaddua,

22 Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah,

23 Hoshea, Hananiah, Hashub,

24 Halloheh, Pileha, Shobek,

25 Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah,

26 And Ahijah, Hanan, Anan,

27 Malluch, Harim, Baanah.

28 ¶ And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinims, and all they that had separated themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one having knowledge, and having understanding;

29 They clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our God, and his judgments and his statutes;

were too stubborn to bow in humble obedience: ingratitude, distrust, discontent, rebellion, idolatry, impudent opposition to God's prophets, contempt, persecution, murder, and repeated relapses into the like abominations after repeated vows and repeated deliverances: all these things had marked the black catalogue of their fathers' crimes; nor were they less culpable. We have done wickedly, and joined in the like provocations, the effects of which they were now suffering, just returned from the house of their prison, and still bearing the galling yoke of servitude upon their necks. *Note;* (1.) True penitents search out the aggravations of their sins, and seek not to exculpate themselves, but to justify God. (2.) Pride is at the root of all our sins. (3.) When we follow our fathers' sins, it is just in God to visit their iniquities upon us. (4.) As the service of God is perfect freedom, a revolt from it will bring the soul into the most abject slavery.

4. They put up a word of petition, so short, as if they were afraid to ask for mercy who were conscious how little they deserved it; acknowledging the righteousness of God in all that they had suffered; only they presume to beg, that he would look upon their affliction, and say at last, it is enough. God, as the great and terrible God, might justly destroy them; but as the merciful covenant-keeping God, there was yet hope, and they were emboldened to pray. *Note;* (1.) The deepest

and most dejecting views of our sins must not drive us from God in despondence, but to him in humble prayer. (2.) Remember me in mercy, is all that a sinner can say for himself. (3.) The covenant established in the glorious head of the church, Christ Jesus, affords hope to the penitent, when every thing else within and without him preaches despair.

5. As the conclusion of their prayer, they profess their solemn return to God; in writing renew their engagements to be faithful; and the princes, priests, and Levites subscribe the bond, as a testimony against themselves; and promise to their utmost to see it observed by the people. *Note;* True penitents not only confess their sins, but, through God's grace, purpose, and are enabled, to renounce them.

## C H A P. X.

*Ver. 1. Those that sealed were, Nehemiah, &c.]* It appears from this, that the government of the Jews was an aristocracy, or a government in which the nobles were the rulers. This mode of administration continued till the time of the Asmodean princes; and thence, by a natural transition, passed into an absolute monarchy, or rather a tyranny.

*Ver. 29. And entered into a curse, and into an oath] i. e. An oath under a conditional execration. Houbigant renders it, ut jus jurandum juremus, that we may take*

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30 And that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons :

31 And *if* the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath-day to sell, *that* we would not buy it of them on the sabbath, or on the holy-day: and *that* we would leave the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt.

32 Also we made ordinances for us, to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God;

33 For the shew-bread, and for the continual meat-offering, and for the continual burnt-offering, of the sabbaths, of the new-moons, for the set feasts, and for the holy things, and for the sin-offerings, to make an atonement for Israel, and *for* all the work of the house of our God.

34 And we cast the lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for the wood

offering, to bring *it* into the house of our God, after the houses of our fathers, at times appointed year by year, to burn upon the altar of the LORD our God, as *it is* written in the law :

35 And to bring the first-fruits of our ground, and the first-fruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, unto the house of the LORD :

36 Also the firstborn of our sons, and of our cattle, as *it is* written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our God.

37 And *that* we should bring the first-fruits of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage.

38 And the priest the son of Aaron shall be

*an oath.* He supposes this verse to be connected with the preceding one, and accordingly renders it thus: *Their nobles promising for their brethren, we come to enter into an oath, that we will walk, &c.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, As in prayer they had engaged to join themselves anew to God, we have here the persons who subscribed, and the particulars of their engagement.

1. The persons who subscribed were, the chief of the fathers, with Nehemiah the governor, and the chief of the priests and Levites; the persons who by duty and office were most especially obliged to set the good example, and to use their influence to engage the people to the service of their covenant-God; and to this deed of their rulers, the people expressed their solemn consent; Jews and profelytes, women and children, all who were come to years of understanding, binding their souls under an awful imprecation to abide by the engagements they had entered into. *Note;* (1.) In every good work they who are highest in dignity should be the first to lead. (2.) They who teach others what is right, must commend by their practice the word that they preach, and shew themselves examples of all that is praise-worthy. (3.) When we give up ourselves to God, it becomes us to take heed to the simplicity and sincerity of our hearts before him, lest rash engagements involve our souls in guilt.

2. The covenant they entered into was, generally, a careful observance of all God's commands and institutions, which was before their bounden duty, and now declared to be their hearty choice; and particularly a separation of themselves from all forbidden intercourse with the heathen nations, a door at which most of their abominations had crept in; the strict observance of the sabbath-

day, the great token of their peculiarity as a people set apart for God's service; the observance of the sabbatical year, when the ground was to rest; and the free discharge of their debtors at that time, according to Deut. xv. 2. *Note;* (1.) A faithful heart will have respect to all God's commandments. (2.) Peculiar guard had need be placed over those temptations which we have seen to be the occasion of the fall of others, and proved most dangerous to ourselves. (3.) A careful observance of God's sabbaths is a chief means to preserve us in a constant course of fidelity in his service.

2dly, As the diligent and exact observance of the temple-worship would most effectually engage them to continue faithful to God, according to their vows, we have,

1. A general contribution agreed upon, of the third part of a shekel, about ten-pence annually, to be employed in purchasing the necessary provision for God's table and altar. *Note;* Few or none are so poor, but, if they have a love of God's service, they will be able and willing to contribute their mite for the maintenance of a gospel-ministry.

2. They agreed, by lot, in turn to provide the wood for God's altar as it was needed, that there might be a regular and constant supply.

3. They engaged, according to the law, for the exact payment of their first-fruits, tithes, and redemption-money, and whatsoever was appointed for the maintenance of those who ministered at the altar. *Note;* They who have lying upon them the great care of men's souls, ought not to be exposed to any anxiety about a worldly provision.

with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes : and the Levites shall bring up the tithes of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure-house.

39 For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oil, unto the chambers, where *are* the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers : and we will not forsake the house of our God.

### C H A P. XI.

*Lots are cast, that a tenth part of the people may dwell at Jerusalem, and the other nine parts in the other cities and villages. The families that dwell in Judah and Benjamin are enumerated.*

[Before Christ 444.]

**A**ND the rulers of the people dwelt at Jerusalem : the rest of the people also cast lots, to bring one of ten to dwell in Jerusalem the holy city, and nine parts *to dwell in other cities.*

2 And the people blessed all the men that willingly offered themselves to dwell at Jerusalem.

3 ¶ Now these *are* the chief of the province that dwelt in Jerusalem : but in the cities of Judah dwelt every one in his possession in their cities, *to wit*, Israel, the priests, and the Levites, and the Nethinims, and the children of Solomon's servants.

4 And at Jerusalem dwelt *certain* of the children of Judah, and of the children of Benjamin. Of the children of Judah ; Athaiah the son of Uzziyah, the son of Zechariah, the

son of Amariah, the son of Shephatiah, the son of Mahalaleel, of the children of Perez ;

5 And Maaseiah the son of Baruch, the son of Col-hozeh, the son of Hazaiah, the son of Adaiah, the son of Joiarib, the son of Zechariah, the son of Shiloni.

6 All the sons of Perez that dwelt at Jerusalem *were* four hundred threescore and eight valiant men.

7 And these *are* the sons of Benjamin ; Sallu the son of Meshullam, the son of Joed, the son of Pedaiah, the son of Kolaiah, the son of Maaseiah, the son of Ithiel, the son of Jesaiah.

8 And after him Gabbai, Sallai, nine hundred twenty-and-eight.

9 And Joel the son of Zichri *was* their overseer : and Judah the son of Senuah *was* second over the city.

10 Of the priests : Jedaiah the son of Joiarib, Jachin.

11 Seraiah the son of Hilkiah, the son of Meshullam, the son of Zadok, the son of Meraioth, the son of Ahitub, *was* the ruler of the house of God.

12 And their brethren that did the work of the house *were* eight hundred twenty-and-two : and Adaiah the son of Jeroham, the son of Pelaliah, the son of Amzi, the son of Zechariah, the son of Pashur, the son of Malchiah,

13 And his brethren, chief of the fathers, two hundred forty-and-two : and Amashai the son of Azareel, the son of Abasai, the son of Meshillemoth, the son of Immer,

### C H A P. XI.

*Ver. 1. The rulers of the people dwell at Jerusalem]* Observing that the number of the inhabitants of Jerusalem was too few, Nehemiah had ordered that the principal men of the nation should, by way of example, fix their habitations there ; causing at the same time the rest to cast lots, whereby a tenth part of the whole people of Judah and Benjamin became obliged to dwell at Jerusalem, though those who came voluntarily were better received. One reason why the bulk of the Jews, who were generally shepherds, and lovers of agriculture, might rather choose to live in the country than at Jerusalem, was, because it was more suited to their genius and manner of life ; but at this time their enemies were so enraged to see the walls built again, and so restless in their designs to keep the city from rising to its former splendor, that it

terrified many from coming to dwell there, thinking themselves more safe in the country, where their enemies had no pretence to disturb them. Though the casting of lots is certainly forbidden where the thing is done out of a spirit of superstition, or with a design to tempt God ; yet on some occasions it is enjoined by God himself ; and the most holy persons both in the Old and New Testament have practised it in particular cases. The wise man acknowledges the usefulness of this custom when he tells us, that *the lot causeth contention to cease, and parteth between the mighty*, Prov. xviii. 18. ; and therefore it was no bad policy, as things now stood, to take this method of division ; since the lot, which all allowed was under the divine direction, falling upon such a person rather than another, would be a great mean, no doubt, of making him remove more contentedly into the city. See Le Clerc and Calmet.



14 And their brethren, mighty men of valour, an hundred twenty-and-eight: and their overseer *was* Zabdiel, the son of *one of* the great men.

15 Also of the Levites: Shemaiah the son of Hasub, the son of Azrikam, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Bunni;

16 And Shabbethai and Jozabad, of the chief of the Levites, *had* the oversight of the outward business of the house of God.

17 And Mattaniah the son of Micha, the son of Zabdi, the son of Asaph; *was* the principal to begin the thanksgiving in prayer: and Bakbukiah the second among his brethren, and Abda the son of Shammua, the son of Galal, the son of Jeduthun.

18 All the Levites in the holy city *were* two hundred fourscore and four.

19 Moreover the porters, Akkub, Talmon, and their brethren that kept the gates, *were* an hundred seventy-and-two.

20 ¶ And the residue of Israel, of the priests, *and* the Levites, *were* in all the cities of Judah, every one in his inheritance.

21 But the Nethinims dwelt in Ophel: and Ziha and Gispa *were* over the Nethinims.

22 The overseer also of the Levites at Jerusalem *was* Uzzi the son of Bani, the son of Hashabiah, the son of Mattaniah, the son of Micha. Of the sons of Asaph, the singers *were* over the business of the house of God.

23 For *it was* the king's commandment concerning them, that a certain portion should be for the singers, due for every day.

24 And Pethahiah the son of Meshezabeel, of the children of Zerah the son of Judah,

*was* at the king's hand in all matters concerning the people.

25 And for the villages, with their fields, *some* of the children of Judah dwelt at Kirjatharba, and *in* the villages thereof, and at Dibon, and *in* the villages thereof, and at Jekabzeel, and *in* the villages thereof,

26 And at Jeshua, and at Moladah, and at Beth-pheret,

27 And at Hazar-shual, and at Beer-sheba, and *in* the villages thereof,

28 And at Ziklag, and at Mekonah, and in the villages thereof,

29 And at En-rimmon, and at Zareah, and at Jarmuth,

30 Zanoah, Adullam, and *in* their villages, at Lachish, and the fields thereof, at Azekah, and *in* the villages thereof. And they dwelt from Beer-sheba unto the valley of Hinnom.

31 The children also of Benjamin from Geba *dwelt* at Michmash, and Aiija, and Beth-el, and *in* their villages,

32 *And* at Anathoth, Nob, Ananiah,

33 Hazor, Ramah, Gittaim,

34 Hadid, Zeboim, Neballat,

35 Lod, and Ono, the valley of craftsmen.

36 And of the Levites *were* divisions in Judah, *and* in Benjamin:

## C H A P: XII.

*An account of the priests and Levites who came up with Zerubbabel. The chief priests from Jeshua to Jedaiah. The Levites from Jeshua to Ezra. The dedication of the walls.*

[Before Christ 444.]

**N**OW these *are* the priests and the Levites that went up with Zerubbabel the son.

*Ver. 17. Was the principal to begin the thanksgiving in prayer.] Presided over the hymns and praises in prayer. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 23. It was the king's commandment, &c.] i. e. As it is generally thought, the commandment of the king of Persia, who, out of his great munificence, gave it for their better support; it being common in all countries to have a particular regard for those who sung hymns in praise of their gods. Houbigant renders the words, was at the king's hand, in the next verse, was the king's minister.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Jerusalem, the holy city, though now walled, and the temple service carried on, was but thinly inhabited. *Note;* (1.) The fear of man deters many from dwelling in the holy city. (2.) Selfish ends and private advantages are generally more powerful in-

ducements than God's glory, and the interests of his church and people. To remedy this evil, we have the steps taken to replenish it with inhabitants.

1. The rulers of the people, with their families and attendants, fixed there, as the duty of their office required, and as an encouragement to others to follow their example. *Note;* (1.) They whom God distinguishes with honour should distinguish themselves by zeal for his cause. (2.) A great and good example is very prevalent.

2. Many voluntarily offered themselves, and received the deserved commendations of their brethren, who could not but praise that generous self-denial which they cared not to imitate. *Note;* (1.) Many more will commend what is excellent than copy it. (2.) They who, for God's glory, forego their own advantage, shall never lose their reward.

of Shealtiel, and Jeshua: Seraiah, Jeremiah, Ezra,

2 Amariah, Malluch, Hattush,

3 Shechaniah, Rehum, Meremoth,

4 Iddo, Ginnetho, Abijah,

5 Miamin, Maadiah, Bilgah,

6 Shemaiah, and Joiarib, Jedaiah,

7 Sallu, Amok, Hilkiah, Jedaiah. These were the chief of the priests and of their brethren in the days of Jeshua.

8 Moreover the Levites: Jeshua, Binnui, Kadmiel, Sherebiah, Judah, and Mattaniah, which was over the thanksgiving, he and his brethren.

9 Also Bakbukiah and Unni, their brethren, were over against them in the watches.

10 ¶ And Jeshua begat Joiakim, Joiakim also begat Eliashib, and Eliashib begat Joiada.

11 And Joiada begat Jonathan, and Jonathan begat Jaddua.

12 And in the days of Joiakim were priests, the chief of the fathers: of Seraiah, Meraiah; of Jeremiah, Hananiah;

13 Of Ezra, Meshullam; of Amariah, Jehohanan;

14 Of Melicu, Jonathan; of Shebaniah, Joseph;

15 Of Harim, Adna; of Meraioth, Helkai;

16 Of Iddo, Zechariah; of Ginnethon, Meshullam;

17 Of Abijah, Zichri; of Miniamin; of Moadiah, Piltai;

18 Of Bilgah, Shammua; of Shemaiah, Jehonathan;

19 And of Joiarib, Mattenai; of Jedaiah, Uzzi;

20 Of Sallai, Kallai; of Amok, Eber;

21 Of Hilkiah, Hashabiah; of Jedaiah, Nethaneel.

22 ¶ The Levites in the days of Eliashib, Joiada, and Johanan, and Jaddua, were recorded chief of the fathers: also the priests, to the reign of Darius the Persian.

23 The sons of Levi, the chief of the fathers, were written in the book of the chronicles, even until the days of Johanan the son of Eliashib.

24 And the chief of the Levites: Hashabiah, Sherebiah, and Jeshua the son of Kadmiel, with their brethren over against them, to praise and to give thanks, according to the commandment of David the man of God, ward over against ward.

25 Mattaniah, and Bakbukiah, Obadiah, Meshullam, Talmon, Akkub, were porters keeping the ward at the thresholds of the gates.

26 These were in the days of Joiakim the son of Jeshua, the son of Jozadak, and in the days of Nehemiah the governor, and of Ezra the priest, the scribe.

27 ¶ And at the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem they sought the Levites out of all their places, to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness, both with thanksgivings, and with singing, with cymbals, psalteries, and with harps.

28 And the sons of the fingers gathered

## CHAP. XII.

*Ver. 11. Jaddua*] This was the person who went in his pontifical habit to meet Alexander the Great, as he was advancing towards Jerusalem, after the conquest of Tyre and Gaza. See the note on Exod. xxviii. 2.

*Ver. 22. Also the priests, to the reign of Darius the Persian*] This verse, wherein mention is made of Darius Codomanus, and the high-priest Jaddua, affords us a proof, says Mr. Le Clerc, that Nehemiah did not put the finishing hand to this book. For Nehemiah, to be able to speak of Darius, must have lived, according to Huet, at least one hundred and thirty-one years, and at that age have written or enlarged his book; which is not probable. We may therefore conclude, that the book of Nehemiah could not have been published such as it is, till the reign of Darius Codomanus at least; and since one chapter of the

book of Nehemiah has been put into that of Ezra, we may very probably suppose, that it did not appear in its present form till about the same time. So that these two books have been collected from the memoirs of three different authors; to which have been added several things for the illustration of the history. See Le Clerc's "Sentimens de quelques Theologiens," &c. and Houbigant's note on the place.

*Ver. 27. And at the dedication of the wall*] Dedication was a religious ceremony, whereby a temple, altar, or vessel thereunto belonging, was, by the pronouncement of a certain form of blessing, consecrated to the service of God; and this dedication extended not only to things sacred, but to cities and their walls, and sometimes to private houses, Deut. xx. 5. As, therefore, Moses in the wilderness dedicated the tabernacle, and Solomon the temple, when he had finished it; so Nehemiah, having put things in good order,

themselves together, both out of the plain country round about Jerusalem, and from the villages of Netophathi;

29 Also from the house of Gilgal, and out of the fields of Geba and Azmaveth: for the fingers had builded them villages round about Jerusalem.

30 And the priests and the Levites purified themselves, and purified the people, and the gates, and the wall.

31 Then I brought up the princes of Judah upon the wall, and appointed two great *companies of them that gave thanks, whereof one* went on the right hand upon the wall toward the dung-gate:

32 And after them went Hoshaiah, and half of the princes of Judah,

33 And Azariah, Ezra, and Meshullam,

34 Judah, and Benjamin, and Shemaiah, and Jeremiah,

35 And *certain* of the priests' sons with trumpets; *namely*, Zechariah the son of Jonathan, the son of Shemaiah, the son of Mataniah, the son of Michaiah, the son of Zaccur, the son of Asaph:

36 And his brethren, Shemaiah, and Azareel, Milalai, Gilalai, Maai, Nethaneel, and Judah, Hanani, with the musical instruments

of David the man of God, and Ezra the scribe before them.

37 And at the fountain-gate, which was over against them, they went up by the stairs of the city of David, at the going-up of the wall, above the house of David, even unto the water-gate eastward.

38 And the other *company of them that gave thanks* went over against *them*; and I after them, and the half of the people upon the wall, from beyond the tower of the furnaces even unto the broad wall;

39 And from above the gate of Ephraim, and above the old-gate, and above the fish-gate, and the tower of Hananeel, and the tower of Meah, even unto the sheep-gate: and they stood still in the prison-gate.

40 So stood the two *companies of them that gave thanks* in the house of God, and I, and the half of the rulers with me:

41 And the priests; Eliakim, Maaseiah, Minianim, Michaiah, Elioenai, Zechariah, and Hananiah, with trumpets;

42 And Maaseiah, and Shemaiah, and Eleazar, and Uzzi, and Jehohanan, and Malchijah, and Elam, and Ezer. And the fingers sang loud, with Jezrahiah *their* overseer.

43 Also that day they offered great sacrifices,

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order, having built the walls, and set up the gates, thought proper to dedicate the city as a place which God himself had chosen and sanctified by his favour and gracious presence, and by this dedication to restore it to him again, after it had lain waste and been profaned by the heathen.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The wall being finished, and the gates set up, notwithstanding all the malice of their foes, we have the solemn dedication of the whole to God. Sensible that their security was not walls and bulwarks, but the favour of the Lord of hosts, they would commend all to his protection, and devote to his glory the work of their hands; while with grateful thanksgivings they acknowledge the support that he had afforded in the conclusion of the work, undertaken in humble dependance on his blessing. For this purpose,

1. The Levites from the country were summoned to attend; and, with their brethren the priests, having purified themselves by the necessary ablutions, or sprinkling the water of purification, Numb. viii. 6—21. they purified the people, the walls, and gates; probably with the same ceremony, as typical of that blood of sprinkling which purges our consciences from dead works, and, having cleansed our souls from sin, restores us to the holy use and enjoyment of all God's creatures.

2. They made a solemn procession in two companies; who, separating, surrounded the whole city, and met at the temple, singing and praising God as they went, with instruments of music.

3. They there offered great sacrifices, and rejoiced before God; all the people, even the women and children, uniting their voices in loud shouts of praise; so that the sound was heard afar off. *Note*; (1.) The mouths of babes and sucklings should be taught to lisp God's praises; for this is the sweetest music in his ears. (2.) They who have received great mercies from God are bound to rejoice before him with great joy; to his glory, as well as their own comfort.

2dly, The good effects of this holy joy appear in the gracious dispositions here mentioned. The priests and Levites, in their several functions, with diligence and zeal discharged their ministrations: the people appeared highly satisfied in them, and blessed God for them; and, as a fresh testimony of their respect, especial care was taken for their liberal maintenance. *Note*; When ministers labour in the word and doctrine, they will be cheerfully and liberally supported; but no wonder if men grudge that idlers should fatten on the spoil of flocks that they never fed.

and rejoiced: for God had made them rejoice with great joy: the wives also and the children rejoiced: so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard even afar off.

44 ¶ And at that time were some appointed over the chambers for the treasures, for the offerings, for the first-fruits, and for the tithes, to gather into them out of the fields of the cities the portions of the law for the priests and Levites: for Judah rejoiced for the priests and for the Levites that waited.

45 And both the singers and the porters kept the ward of their God, and the ward of the purification, according to the commandment of David, and of Solomon his son.

46 For in the days of David and Asaph of old *there were* chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God.

47 And all Israel in the days of Zerubbabel, and in the days of Nehemiah, gave the portions of the singers and the porters, every day his portion: and they sanctified *holy things* unto the Levites; and the Levites sanctified *them* unto the children of Aaron.

### C H A P. XIII.

*Upon the reading of the law, separation is made from the mixed multitude. Tobiah is cast out of his chamber in the house of God. The portions of the Levites are restored to them. The profanation of the sabbath-day prevented. Strange wives are put away.*

[Before Christ 433.]

**O**N that day they read in the book of Moses in the audience of the people;

### C H A P. XIII.

*Ver. 1. On that day they read, &c.] At that time the law of Moses was read in the audience of the people. Houbigant. The phrase of not entering into the congregation of the Lord, in this verse, does not signify an ejection from the public assemblies for divine worship; but must be understood to mean no more than a prohibition of marriage; for this, according to the rabbis, was the case of such prohibitions. None of the house of Israel, either sex were to enter into marriage with any Gentile of what nation soever, unless they were first converted to their religion; and, even in that case, some were debarred from it for ever; others only in part; and others again only for a limited time. Of the first sort, were all of the seven nations of the Canaanites. Of the second sort, were the Moabites and the Ammonites, whose males were now excluded for ever, but not their females; and of the third sort were the Edomites and Egyptians, with whom the*

and therein was found written, that the Ammonite and the Moabite should not come into the congregation of God for ever.

2 Because they met not the children of Israel with bread and with water, but hired Balaam against them, that he should curse them: howbeit our God turned the curse into a blessing.

3 Now it came to pass, when they had heard the law, that they separated from Israel all the mixed multitude.

4 ¶ And before this, Eliashib the priest, having the oversight of the chamber of the house of our God, *was* allied unto Tobiah:

5 And he had prepared for him a great chamber, where aforetime they laid the meat-offerings, the frankincense, and the vessels, and the tithes of the corn, the new wine, and the oil, which was commanded *to be given* to the Levites, and the singers, and the porters; and the offerings of the priests.

6 But in all this *time* was not I at Jerusalem: for in the two-and-thirtieth year of Artaxerxes king of Babylon came I unto the king, and after certain days obtained I leave of the king:

7 And I came to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib did for Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber in the courts of the house of God.

8 And it grieved me sore: therefore I cast forth all the household-stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber.

9 Then I commanded, and they cleansed

Jews might not marry till the third generation. But with all others, who were not of these three excepted sorts, they might freely make intermarriages whenever they became thorough profelytes to their religion. At present however, because, through the confusions which have since happened in all nations, it is not to be known who is an Ammonite, an Edomite, a Moabite, or an Egyptian, they hold this prohibition to have been long out of date; and that now, any Gentile, as soon as profelyted to their religion, may immediately be admitted to make intermarriages with them. See Prideaux.

*Ver. 4. Eliashib the priest, &c.] Some are apt to imagine, that this Eliashib was no more than a common priest, because he is said to have had the oversight of the chambers in the house of God; which was an office, they think, too mean for the high-priest. But we cannot see why the oversight of the chambers of the house of God may not import the whole government of the temple, which certainly*

the chambers: and thither brought I again the vessels of the house of God, with the meat-offering and the frankincense.

10 ¶ And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given *them*: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field.

11 Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is the house of God forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place.

12 Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn, and the new wine, and the oil, unto the treasuries.

13 And I made treasurers over the treasuries, Shelemiah the priest, and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Pedaiah: and next to them *was* Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah: for they were counted faithful, and their office *was* to distribute unto their brethren.

14 Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my good deeds that I have done for the house of my God, and for the offices thereof.

15 ¶ In those days saw I in Judah *some*

treading wine-presses on the sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and lading asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all *manner of* burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the sabbath-day: and I testified *against them* in the day wherein they sold victuals.

16 There dwelt men of Tyre also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the sabbath unto the children of Judah, and in Jerusalem.

17 Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the sabbath-day?

18 Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the sabbath.

19 And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the sabbath: and *some* of my servants set I at the gates, *that* there should no burden be brought in on the sabbath-day.

20 So the merchants and sellers of all kind

certainly belonged to the high-priest only; nor can we conceive how any one, who was less than absolute governor of the temple, could make so great an innovation in it. He was assistant, indeed, in the reparation of the walls of the city; but, except in this one act, where do we read of his doing any thing worthy of memory towards the reforming what was amiss either in church or state, in the times either of Ezra or Nehemiah? And yet we cannot but presume, that, had he joined with them in so good a work, some mention would have been made of it in the books written by them. Since therefore, instead of this, we find it recorded in Ezra, ch. x. 18. that the pontifical house was in his time grown very corrupt, and, not improbably by his connivance, began to marry into heathen families, see ver. 28. it seems most likely, that it was Eliashib the high-priest who was the author of this great profanation of the house of God; but, as he might die before Nehemiah returned from Babylon, for this reason we hear nothing of the governor's apprehending him for it.

Ver. 7. For Tobiah, in preparing him a chamber] Tobiah had insinuated himself into the good opinion of most of the people, and especially those of note, by his making two alliances with families of this sort: for Johanan his son had married the daughter of Meshullam, the son of Barachiah, (ch. vi. 18. iii. 4.) who was one of the chief managers of the building of the wall of Jerusalem under

the direction of the governor; and he himself had married the daughter of Shecaniah, the son of Arah, another great man among the Jews; by which means he had formed an interest; though, being an Ammonite, he bore a national hatred to all that were of the race of Israel.

Ver. 9. And they cleansed the chambers] See Numb. xix. and Lev. xiii.

Ver. 19. Some of my servants set I at the gates] It seems as if matters were come to such a pass, that Nehemiah could not trust the common porters of the gates, and therefore appointed some of his own domestics, who he knew would neither be careless nor corrupted, to see that the gates were kept shut, and all traffic prohibited. He, however, appointed the Levites afterwards to this office, ver. 22. because he not only thought that by virtue of their character they would meet with more deference and respect than his domestic servants; but also because he resolved, when he and his servants were gone from Jerusalem, to have the watch continued, till the vile custom of admitting dealers into the city on the sabbath-day should be quite abolished. See Bishop Patrick.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Nehemiah's back was scarcely turned, before great abominations crept in, which called for his speedy return, and required all his zeal and authority to redress.

1. The people had joined in affinity with strangers, Ammonites and Moabites, in direct opposition to the divine

of ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice.

21 Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the wall? if ye do so again, I will lay hands on you. From that time forth came they no more on the sabbath.

22 And I commanded the Levites that they

should cleanse themselves, and *that* they should come and keep the gates, to sanctify the sabbath-day. Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the greatness of thy mercy.

23 ¶ In those days also saw I Jews *that* had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab:

divine injunctions, Deut. xxiii. 3—5. This portion, therefore, of God's law he caused to be read to them; and, convinced of their sin and duty, they separated themselves from these sinful connections. *Note;* (1.) The people of God must keep from evil company, if they would avoid the ways of wickedness. (2.) When God's word convinces us of sin, we cannot be too eager to get rid of the serpent from our bosom.

2. The high-priest himself had led the way to the evil, and been the chief in the transgression, having contracted affinity with Tobiah, an avowed enemy of God's people, and in direct opposition to the express command. Not content with this, he had received him into the temple; fitted up for him a noble apartment, by casting down the partitions of the store-chambers; and he, who ought not to be admitted into the congregation, has his abode in the midst of the very sanctuary. But no sooner did Nehemiah, at his return, gain a knowledge of this vile transaction, than, with holy indignation, he set himself to dispossess the usurper, and restore these hallowed chambers to their proper use; grieved that a priest, a high-priest too, should bring such dishonour upon his high vocation. Tobiah is instantly ejected; his goods, as polluted, cast out of the temple; the chambers cleansed from the pollution which they had contracted from such profane intrusion, by the water of purification; and the vessels and stones, which had been removed, again deposited in their appointed places. *Note;* (1.) The higher a man's station, and the holier his office, the more scandalous are his sins. (2.) No dignity must plead exemption from rebuke. They who sin before all, should be put to shame before all. (3.) When we would cleanse the temple of our hearts, the world's stuff and the most precious iniquities must be cast out with abhorrence. (4.) Unless our hearts be sprinkled with atoning blood, they never can be prepared for the reception of the sacred treasures of divine grace.

2dly, One corruption generally makes way for another; and the high-priest's ill example could not but have the worst influence on the people.

1. The tithes had not been given to the Levites: either they were embezzled, or the people neglected to bring them in; the consequence of which was, that the Levites were forced to seek a maintenance from their farms, instead of the temple; or, perhaps, their attention to their worldly concerns, and neglect of their divinely-appointed service, occasioned the evil. The people might well judge that they deserved not to eat what they refused to earn.

2. Nehemiah expostulates with the magistrates hereupon, for suffering such abuse, whose care it should have

been to see the service observed, and the due provision made for the ministers of the sanctuary. He, therefore, summons the Levites to return to their post; engages the people to pay their just dues; and appoints faithful men to make an equitable distribution of them, that so there might be no want nor interruption in the sacred service. *Note;* (1.) Negligent pastors should be admonished to take heed to their ministry. (2.) When the workman shews himself worthy of his hire, his maintenance will be no longer counted burdensome.

3. He looks up to God for that reward which he did not expect from man; not claiming it, indeed, as a matter of merit, but begging God's favourable acceptance of his well-meant duty; and God is not unrighteous, to forget our works of faith and labours of love; they shall be remembered to the everlasting comfort of God's people.

3dly, Another grievous offence is here remarked and remedied.

1. The sabbath had been greatly polluted, in opposition to the most express commands. They trod their wine-presses, gathered in their corn, worked their beasts of burden, trafficked in the markets, bought and sold, and turned the Lord's day into a day of merchandize; the consequence of which conduct could not but be fatal to the manners of the people, and beget a total neglect of God and religion. *Note;* Irreligious neglect of the Lord's day is the proof of an abandoned temper, and the way to perdition of body and soul.

2. Nehemiah zealously set himself to reform so gross a profanation. He severely rebuked the people who committed the evil, and remonstrated against the rulers who connived at it; admonishing them of the dire effects of such a conduct in their fathers, and warning them of the aggravated guilt that they incurred, and the wrath that they provoked. *Note;* (1.) Public sins deserve sharp rebukes. (2.) Connivance at sin in others makes us partakers with them in guilt. (3.) The kindest office we can do to our neighbour is, to endeavour to convince him of his danger, and pluck him as a brand from the burning.

3. While he used the arguments of persuasion as a good man, he employed the power with which he was invested as a magistrate, to restrain the open transgression of God's law. On the approach of the sabbath, at evening, he commanded the city gates to be shut, and guarded by his own servants till the next evening, when the sabbath ended; and during this time no burdens might enter, and only those be admitted who came to worship. *Note;* (1.) Magistrates must not bear the sword in vain. (2.) If the laws

24 And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews' language, but according to the language of each people.

25 And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves.

26 Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? yet among many nations was there no king like him, who was beloved of his God, and God made him king over all Israel: nevertheless even him did outlandish women cause to sin.

27 Shall we then hearken unto you to do all this great evil, to transgress against our God in marrying strange wives?

28 And one of the sons of Joiada, the son of Eliahib the high priest, was son-in-law to Sanballat the Horonite: therefore I chased him from me.

29 Remember them, O my God, because they have defiled the priesthood, and the covenant of the priesthood, and of the Levites.

30 Thus cleansed I them from all strangers, and appointed the wards of the priests and the Levites, every one in his business;

31 And for the wood-offering, at times appointed, and for the first-fruits. Remember me, O my God, for good.

laws were faithfully put in execution, though it could not convert men's hearts, yet open vice must hide its head. (3.) When faithful ministers co-operate with active magistrates, much may be hoped from their united labours.

4. He cries to God for a gracious remembrance in this thing, and for that mercy without which his duty would destroy him. Though we may rejoice in our services, as evidences of our fidelity, we must renounce all self-dependance, casting our souls as sinners on God's free mercy to us in Christ Jesus.

*Ver. 24. And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, &c.]* What the natural language of the Jews at this time was, whether Hebrew or Chaldee, is matter of some inquiry among the learned. Those who suppose that it was Hebrew, produce the books of Nehemiah, Ezra, and Esther, beside the prophecies of Daniel, which for the most part were written in Hebrew, and which they suppose the authors of them would not have done, if Hebrew had not been at that time the vulgar language. But to this it is replied, that these Jewish authors might make use of the Hebrew language in what they wrote, not only because the things which they recorded concerned the Jewish nation only, among whom there were learned men enough to explain them; but, chiefly, because they were inclined to conceal what they wrote from the Chaldeans, who at that time were their lords and masters, and, considering all circumstances, might not perhaps have been so well pleased with them, had they understood the contents of their writings. Since it appears then, say they, by several words recurring in the books of Maccabees, the New Testament, and Josephus, that the language which the Jews then spoke was Chaldee, that this language they learned in their captivity, and after their return never assumed their ancient Hebrew tongue so as to speak it vulgarly; it must hence follow, that what is here called *the language of the Jews* was at that time no other than the Chaldee; for the ancient Hebrew was only preserved among the learned. See Le Clerc.

*Ver. 25. And I contended with them, &c.]* These words, it must be acknowledged, as proceeding from Nehemiah's own mouth, sound somewhat harshly in our translation; but the meaning of them is no more than this, "I contended with them, i. e. I expostulated the matter with them; I cursed them, i. e. excommunicated them; in the doing of which I denounced God's judgments against them; I smote certain of them, i. e. ordered the officers to beat some of the most notorious offenders either with rods or scourges, according to Deut. xxv. 2. and I plucked off their hair, i. e. I commanded them to be shaved, thereby to put them to shame, and to make them look like vile slaves; for, as the hair was esteemed a great ornament among the eastern nations, so baldness was accounted a great disgrace. And Nehemiah had a sufficient provocation to inflict these several punishments upon them, because in their marrying with heathen nations, they had acted contrary not only to the express law of God, but to their own late solemn covenant and promise, Ezra, x. 19." See Poole, and the note on Ezra, x. 3.

*Ver. 28. Therefore I chased him from me]* Ordered him immediately to depart the country, as he refused to quit his wife. Josephus relates the matter as if this expulsion had been effected by the power of the great Sanhedrin; but, whether the Sanhedrin was at this time in being or not, as we have no clear footsteps of it till the time of Judas Maccabeus, there was no occasion for their interposing, since Nehemiah, no doubt, as governor of the province, had authority enough to banish him out of Judæa. See Bertram, de Repub. Jud. ch. 13.

*Ver. 31. Remember me, O my God, for good]* It has appeared extraordinary to some, that Nehemiah should be so lavish of his own praise, so ostentatious of his good works, as frequently to call upon God to remember him for good, and not to wipe out his good deeds which he had done, &c. See ver. 14. 22. of this chapter, and ch. v. 19. Now to this may be replied, that, as Nehemiah appears in the character of the writer of his own administration over Judæa,



Judea, in which it cannot misbecome him to give the world a narrative how himself behaved in that high station; in doing of this he could not avoid the saying of something in his own commendation, unless he had been disposed, out of his excessive modesty, to conceal from posterity (which it had been invidious to do) an excellent example of his extraordinary virtue and love for his country. Compare ch. v. 18. with 2 Cor. xi. 7, &c. He who made us, and set the springs in our nature, knows very well that we are principally actuated by hopes and fears; and, for this reason, has proposed rewards and punishments to us; nor do we ever find it accounted a defect in the characters of the worthies of old, or an indication of their mercenary spirit, that, in all their good works or sufferings, *they had a respect to the recompence of the reward, which God the righteous judge hath promised to give unto his faithful servants.* See Balguy's first

Letter to a Deist. How long Nehemiah lived after he had made the reformations mentioned in this chapter; whether he continued in his place of governor, and whether he died in Judea or in Persia, neither the text nor Josephus inform us; only the latter says, that he died in an advanced age; and, indeed, even at the time where his book ends, he must have been at least seventy years of age. It is most probable, however, that he continued in his government till the time of his death, supporting his character by the most exemplary zeal for religion, justice, and the good of his nation, and the dignity of his office by a magnificent hospitality. We just add, that Dean Prideaux concludes the seven first weeks of the seventy of Daniel's prophecy with this last reformation of Nehemiah; which was finished, according to him, in the fifteenth year of Darius Nothus. See also Univ. Hist.

THE  
Book of ESTHER.

*It is uncertain who was the author of this book. Some ascribe it to Ezra; others to Mordecai; (see on ch. ix. 20. 23.) and others, again, to the joint labours of the great synagogue; who, from the time of Ezra to Simon the Just, superintended the edition and canon of Scripture. That the book is genuine, whoever was the author, appears from the institution and continued observation of the annual festival of פורים Purim; (see ch. ix.) since it is not to be conceived, that a wise nation should at first appoint and afterwards continue the celebration of this solemn time of feasting and rejoicing every year, merely because a certain man among them had once the good fortune to write an agreeable romance; much less can we conceive from what motive a whole assembly of learned doctors should receive a writing of no better character into the canon of their scriptures; or, to make it of more universal use, should honour it with a Greek translation. The book contains the history of Esther, a Jewish captive; who, for her remarkable beauty, was espoused to Ahasuerus, and raised to the throne of Persia. By her extraordinary interest with the king, she rescued the Jewish nation from a general massacre, to which they were devoted by Haman, one of the king's favourites; in memory of which the feast of Purim was appointed. In the course of our remarks, we shall obviate such objections as have been made against the authenticity of this book. See Huet. Demonstr. prop. iv. and Calmet.*

C H A P. I.

*Ahasuerus makes a feast for all the principal persons of his kingdom: he sends for the queen to the banquet, who refuses to come: the king, being angry, puts her away, and makes a decree that all wives shall obey their husbands.*

[Before Christ 483.]

**N**OW it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned,

from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces:)

2 That in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace,

3 In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles

C H A P. I.

*Ver. 1. In the days of Ahasuerus] Archbishop Usher is of opinion, that Darius Hystaspes was the king Ahasuerus who married Esther, that Atossa was the Vashti, and Artystona the Esther, of the Holy Scriptures; but Herodotus positively tells us, that Artystona was the daughter of Cyrus, and therefore could not be Esther; and that Atossa had four sons by Darius, besides daughters, all born to him after he was king; and therefore she could not be that queen Vashti who was divorced from the king her husband in the third year of his reign, (ver. 3.) nor he the Ahasuerus who divorced her. Joseph Scaliger is of opinion, that Xerxes is the Ahasuerus, and Hamestris, his queen, the Esther of the Holy Scriptures; but, whatever seeming similitude there may be in the names, (and*  
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this is the whole foundation of his conjecture,) it is plain, from Herodotus, that Xerxes had a son by Hamestris, who was marriageable in the seventh year of his reign; and therefore it is impossible that he should have been Esther's son, because Esther was not married to Ahasuerus till the seventh year of his reign, chap. ii. 16. And, considering that the choice of virgins was made for him in the fourth of his reign, and a whole year employed in their purifications, the soonest that he could have a son by him must be in the sixth; and therefore we may conclude with Josephus, the Septuagint, and the apocryphal additions to the book of Esther, that the Ahasuerus of Scripture was Artaxerxes Longimanus, and Esther a Hebrew virgin, as she is all along represented. See Prideaux and Calmet.

*Ver. 2. When the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne] That is, enjoying peace and tranquillity through his large dominions;*

and princes of the provinces, *being* before him :

4 When he shewed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, *even* an hundred and fourscore days.

5 And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people *that were* present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days, in the court of the

garden of the king's palace ;

6 *Where were* white, green, and blue, *bangings*, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble : the beds *were of* gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black, marble.

7 And they gave *them* drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another,) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king.

nions ; for the history of his accession to the throne is this : Xexres, his father, was privately murdered by Artabanes, captain of his guard. He coming to him, who was then but the third son, made him believe that Darius, his eldest brother, had done it to make his way to the throne, and that he had a design likewise to cut him off to make himself secure in it. Ahasuerus, believing this, went immediately to his brother's apartment, and with the assistance of Artabanes and his guards slew him, thinking all the while that he acted but in his own defence. The drift of Artabanes was, to seize on the throne himself ; but for the present he took Ahasuerus and placed him thereon, with a design to pull him down as soon as matters were ripe for his own ascent ; but when Ahasuerus understood this from Megabyfus, who had married one of his sisters, he took care to counter-plot Artabanes, and to cut off him and his whole party before his treason came to maturity ; and for this, very probably, and some other successes against his brother Hystaspes, which settled him in an agreeable possession of the whole Persian empire, it was, that a festival season of above one hundred and fourscore days' continuance was appointed, which even to the present time, according to some travellers, is no uncommon thing in those parts of the world. This feast was held at Shushan, which, after the conquest of the Medes, was made by Cyrus and the rest of the Persian kings the royal seat, that they might not be too far from Babylon. It stood upon the river *Ulai*, and was a place of such renown, that Strabo calls it " a city most worthy to be praised," informing us, that the whole country about it was amazingly fruitful, producing a hundred, and sometimes two hundred fold. Darius Hystaspes enlarged and beautified it with a most magnificent palace ; which Aristotle calls " a wonderful royal palace, shining with gold, " amber, and ivory." It will not be altogether foreign to our purpose, just to remark from Dr. Lightfoot, that the outer gate of the eastern wall of the temple was called *the gate of Shushan*, and had the figure of that city carved on it, in honour of the decree which Darius granted at that place for the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

*Ver. 6. Where were white, green, and blue hangings*] See Exod. xxiv. 10. Dr. Shaw, after having said that the floors in the Levant are laid with painted tiles or plaster of terras, informs us in a note, that a pavement like this is mentioned in Esther, *a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black marble*. But this is not the happiest of the

Doctor's illustrations, since floors of different-coloured marble are common now in the east. Dr. Russel tells us, that they pave their courts at Aleppo with marble, and often with a mixture of yellow and white, red and black, by way of ornament ; this of Ahasuerus is generally supposed to have been of that kind ; since there is a great difference in point of magnificence between a pavement of marble, and one of painted tiles ; and consequently the palace of so mighty a monarch as Ahasuerus is rather to be supposed paved with marble ; besides, the historian is giving an account of the pavement of a court-yard, not of a room. See 1 Kings, vii. 7. Dr. Shaw refers to this passage in the same page on another account. He says, the eastern *chambers*, in houses of better fashion, are covered and adorned from the middle of the wall downwards, " with velvet or damask hangings, of *white, blue, red, green*, or other colours, (Esther, i. 6.) suspended " upon hooks, or taken down at pleasure." Here again this ingenious author seems to have been less exact, and should rather, I imagine, have referred to the present passage, when he told us, that " the courts or quadrangles " of their houses, when a large company is to be received " into them, are commonly sheltered from the heat and " inclemency of the weather, by a *velum, umbrella, or veil*, " which, being expanded upon ropes from one side of the " *parapet-wall* to the other, may be folded or unfolded at " pleasure." See Travels, p. 209. Though there are some things in this passage which cannot be determined without difficulty, yet it is extremely plain that the company were entertained in a *court* of the palace of Ahasuerus ; which agrees with Dr. Shaw's account, that when much company is to be admitted to a feast the court is the place of their reception. Now, though their *chambers* are hung with velvet or damask hangings, it does not appear that on such occasions their *courts* are thus adorned ; but there is a *veil* stretched out over-head to shelter them from the inclemency of the weather ; and, indeed, to something of this sort it is commonly supposed these words refer, though no one has given a better illustration of this piece of ancient history than Dr. Shaw has undesignedly done in his account of their receiving company, when the number is large, in these courts, and covering them with veils expanded on ropes. See *Observations*, p. 102. and Scheuchzer, tom. vi. p. 12.

*Ver. 7. Royal wine in abundance*] See on Joel, ii. 5.

*Ver.*

8 And the drinking *was* according to the law; none did compel: for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man's pleasure.

9 Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women *in* the royal house which *belonged* to king Ahafuerus.

10 ¶ On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahafuerus the king,

11 To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she *was* fair to look on.

12 But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by *his* chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him.

13 ¶ Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, (for so *was* the king's manner towards all that knew law and judgment:

14 And the next unto him *was* Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the king's face, *and* which sat the first in the kingdom;)

15 What shall we do unto the queen Vashti

according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahafuerus by the chamberlains?

16 And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that *are* in all the provinces of the king Ahafuerus.

17 For *this* deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahafuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not.

18 *Likewise* shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king's princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus *shall there arise* too much contempt and wrath.

19 If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, That Vashti come no more before king Ahafuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she.

20 And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small.

*Ver. 9. Vashti the queen made a feast, &c.]* Dr. Shaw observes, that, as in former ages, so at present, it is the custom in the eastern countries, at all their festivals and entertainments, for the men to be treated in separate apartments from the women, not the least intercourse or communication being ever allowed between the sexes. See Travels, p. 232.

*Ver. 12. Therefore was the king very wroth.]* His anger was the more immoderate because his blood was heated with wine, which made his passion too strong for his reason; otherwise he would not have thought it decent for the queen to have her beauty, which was very great, exposed in this unusual manner. See Bishop Patrick.

*Ver. 13. The wise men, which knew the times.]* Some have inferred from hence, that, as the Persian kings did nothing without their magi or wise men, who were great pretenders to astrology, men of this sort were called to know whether it was a proper time to set about the thing which the king had in his mind; for, such was the superstition of the eastern people, that, as the satirist remarks,

— *Quicquid*  
*Dixerit astrologus, credent a fonte relatum*  
*Ammonis.*

JUVENAL, Sat. vi.

Such credit to astrologers is given,  
What they foretel is deem'd a voice from heaven.

DRYDEN.

The explication, however, which Vitringa gives of the original is far from being improbable; namely, that these were men well versed in ancient histories, and in the laws and customs of their country, and were therefore able to give the king counsel in all extraordinary and perplexed cases. Houbigant renders the passage thus: *then the king, speaking to the wise men, who knew the law and judgment (for the royal decrees were then established, when they were laid before those who knew the law and judgment; ver. 13, and for that reason he had by his side seven princes of Persia, Carshena, &c.) said, ver. 15. What shall we do, &c.* See Le Clerc, and 1 Chron. xii. 32.

21 And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan:

22 For he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and that *it* should be published according to the language of every people.

## CHAP. II.

*Esther becomes the wife of Ahasuerus. Mordecai, sitting at the king's gate, discovers a conspiracy against the person of the king.*

[Before Christ 481.]

**A**FTER these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her.

2 Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king:

3 And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hege the king's chamberlain, keeper of the women; and let their things for purification be given *them*:

4 And let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so.

5 ¶ *Now* in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name *was* Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite:

6 Who had been carried away from Jeru-

salem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.

7 And he brought up Hadassah, that *is*, Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid *was* fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter.

8 ¶ So it came to pass, when the king's commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king's house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women.

9 And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, *which were* meet to be given her, out of the king's house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best *place* of the house of the women.

10 Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew *it*.

11 And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women's house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her.

12 ¶ Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, *to wit*, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months

## CHAP. II.

*Ver. 5. Whose name was Mordecai*] Mordecai, from his attendance at the king's gate, ver. 19. is thought to have been one of the porters at the royal palace; but, probably, he was an officer of higher rank; for it was an order instituted by Cyrus, as Xenophon informs us, Cyropæd. lib. viii. that all persons whatever, who had any employment at court, should attend at the palace-gate (where there was, doubtless, a proper waiting-place for their reception), that they might be in readiness whenever they were wanted or called for; and that this custom was afterwards continued, we may learn from Herodotus, lib. iii. cap. 120. See Le Clerc.

*Ver. 7. He brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther*] As she was born in Babylon, in analogy to the language of that place they gave her the name of הַדַּסָּה *Hadassah*, which in the Chaldee signifies a *myrtle*; but her Persian name was *Esther*, which some, a little incongruously, derive from *astar*, a *star*, and others from *satar*, which signifies *bidden*, because she was concealed in Mordecai's house; or rather, because her nation was concealed, and she not known, till Mordecai's merit and services to the crown came to be rewarded. It seems most probable, however, that *Esther* is only the interpretation of, and consequently bears the same meaning with, *Hadassah*.

with sweet odours, and with *other* things for the purifying of the women;)

13 Then thus came *every* maiden unto the king; whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king's house.

14 In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name.

15 ¶ Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her.

16 So Esther was taken unto king Ahafuerus into his house-royal in the tenth month,

which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

17 And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.

18 Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, *even* Esther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king.

19 And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king's gate.

20 Esther had not yet shewed her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him.

21 ¶ In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahafuerus.

*Ver. 13. Whatsoever she desired was given her] Whofoever she desired, &c. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 17. So that he set the royal crown upon her head] According to this account, this Persian monarch seems to have had but one wife, at least but one in chief favour and esteem with him, though it is evident that he had a vast number of secondary wives or concubines. But in behalf of Esther it may be said, that the word וַתִּלָּקַח *vattilacach*, ver. 8. which we render *she was brought*, may equally signify *she was taken away*, i. e. by violence; and thus the Targum upon the passage relates the matter: "Mordecai, hearing of the king's edict for the collection of all the beautiful virgins in his dominions, hid his cousin in a private place, where the officers could not find her; but when Esther, whom all the neighbourhood knew to be a great beauty, was missing, an order from the king to Mordecai was procured, which, upon pain of death, obliged him to produce her."*

*Ver. 18. He made a release to the provinces, &c.] The manner of the Persian kings was, to give their queens, at their marriages, such a city to buy them clothes, another for their hair, another for their necklaces, and so on for the rest of their expences; and as it was customary for them, according to the testimony of Herodotus, upon their accession to the throne, to remit the tribute which was then due to them from all the cities; so Ahafuerus, upon this occasion, out of his abundant joy, might make a release to the provinces, and forgive them some of the duties and imposts which they were wont to pay him.*

*Ver. 21. Two of the king's chamberlains] These were two great men, who perhaps kept the door of the king's*

chamber; and, being either incensed at the divorce of Vashti, whose creatures they might be, or at the advancement of Esther, who they thought would in all probability raise her kinsman Mordecai above them, took disgust thereat, and so resolved to avenge themselves on the king. See Prideaux, and chap. vi. 2, 3.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The advancement of Esther is here recorded, with the various steps of Divine Providence that led to this wonderful event.

1. The king soon repented of the rashness which in his wine he had committed, and with deep regret parted with his beautiful queen, whom, by an unalterable law, he must see no more. *Note;* What is done hastily in anger, often gives cause to long and bitter remorse.

2. The courtiers, to divert the king's melancholy, and by some new object to obliterate the remembrance of Vashti, propose to him the collecting of the most beautiful damsels in his dominions, that out of them he might select the most agreeable, to reign in the stead of the divorced queen. *Note;* In king's courts, there are men enow who watch the monarch's eye, and appear ready ministers to all his pleasures.

3. The king approved the proposal, and Hegai, the king's chamberlain, was appointed to take charge of them; and after a year for purification, that their native beauty might be heightened by the charms of art, they were then in turn to be brought to the king; and, if they pleased him not, they returned to be shut up in the seraglio while the favoured virgin was to be chosen queen.

4. Among

22 And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told *it* unto Esther the queen; and Esther certified the king *thereof* in Mordecai's name.

23 And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out; therefore they were both hanged on a tree: and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king.

### C H A P. III.

*Haman, being advanced by the king, and despised by Mordecai, meditates the destruction of all the Jews.*

[Before Christ 474.]

**A**FTER these things did king Ahafuerus promote Haman the son of Hamme-

4. Among those who were collected at Shushan was a Jewess, named Esther; an orphan, brought up under the care of her cousin-german Mordecai, a Benjamite, whose ancestor had been carried away from Jerusalem at the captivity of Jeconiah. As he, in tenderness, had shewn himself a father to her, and with daily solicitude inquired after her welfare, she, in obedience, behaved as a dutiful child, observant of his directions. He had bid her conceal her parentage, as it might be an objection to her advancement; and, as she was born in Shushan, no questions, probably, were asked of her country, and she passed for one of Persian extraction. *Note;* (1.) They who show to orphans parental tenderness, should meet with the grateful return of filial duty and affection. (2.) Though we must never tell a lie, we are not always obliged to speak all that we know.

5. The manners as well as the beauty of this damsel exceedingly ingratiated her to the keeper of the women, and he shewed her especial regard and kindness. When her turn came to be introduced to the king, she required no ornaments; her native beauty was sufficient distinction. She no sooner appeared, than all who saw admired her; and the king, charmed with her person, determined to fix on her head the imperial diadem. Behold a captive, a Jew, an orphan, now exalted to the royal throne of Persia! Thus God can work, and raise the poor from the dust to set them among princes.

6. At the coronation of Esther a royal feast is made, which she graced with her presence, though Vashti had refused. To heighten the general joy, a release of taxes was published through the provinces, and royal gifts bestowed; and Mordecai was now advanced to some honourable post at court, probably through Esther's influence, who retained the same respect and deference for his advice, and changed not her manners with her station, though she had still continued to conceal, as Mordecai directed, her kindred and people. *Note;* (1.) No change of station should make us forget our benefactors. (2.) Younger persons shew their wisdom in being guided by the counsel of their more aged and experienced friends.

2dly, We have,

1. A plot formed against the king's life by two of

datha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that *were* with him.

2 And all the king's servants, that *were* in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did *him* reverence.

3 Then the king's servants, which *were* in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgresseth thou the king's commandment?

4 Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman, to see whether

his servants, whom he had disgusted. Monarchs stand on a dangerous eminence: how many of them have gone down murdered to the grave! Let them learn justice, and to rule with equity, that they may engage the affections as well as the submission of their subjects.

2. The plot was discovered by Mordecai (for treasons usually transpire); and, as a loyal subject, he communicates his intelligence, through Esther, to the king. Inquisition is made, the traitors convicted and hanged, and a record entered of the faithful service that he had performed. *Note;* (1.) God has strange ways of bringing to light treasons and bloody designs. (2.) Concealment of any plot against the sovereign or state, is highly criminal. (3.) May every traitor meet a like reward! (4.) Good services done to us deserve to be recorded, that they may be remembered long and recompensed.

### C H A P. III.

*Ver. 1. Haman—the Agagite]* This man was descended in a direct line from Agag, whom Samuel hewed in pieces in Gilgal. Calmet.

*Ver. 2. Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence]* Josephus tells us, that Haman, taking notice of this singularity in Mordecai, asked him what countryman he was; and, finding him to be a Jew, broke out into a violent exclamation at his insolence; and in his rage formed the desperate resolution, not only to be revenged of Mordecai, but to destroy the whole race of the Jews; well remembering, that his ancestors the Amalekites had been formerly driven out of their country, and almost exterminated, by the Jews. That Mordecai should refuse to pay such obedience as all others paid to Haman at this time, will appear the less strange, if we consider that, Haman being of that nation against which God pronounced a curse, Exod. xvii. 14. Mordecai might think himself on this account not obliged to pay him the reverence which he expected; and if the rest of the Jews had the like notion of him, this might be a reason sufficient for his extending his resentment against the whole nation. But there seems to be, in the reverence which the people were commanded to pay him, something more than what proceeds from mere

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civil



Mordecai's matters would stand: for he had told them that he *was* a Jew.

5 And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath.

6 And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that *were* throughout the whole kingdom of Ahafuerus, *even* the people of Mordecai.

7 ¶ In the first month, that *is*, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahafuerus, they cast Pur, that *is*, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth *month*, that *is*, the month Adar.

8 ¶ And Haman said unto king Ahafuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws *are* diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it *is* not for the king's profit to suffer them.

9 If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring *it* into the king's treasuries.

10 And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy.

11 And the king said unto Haman, The

civil respect: the king of Persia, we know, required a kind of divine adoration from all who approached his presence; and, as the kings of Persia arrogated this to themselves, so they sometimes imparted it to their chief friends and favourites, which seems to have been the case with Haman at this time; for we can hardly conceive why the king should give a particular command that all his servants should reverence him, if by this reverence no more was intended than that they should show him a respect suitable to his station: but if we suppose that the homage expected from them was such as came near to idolatry, we need not wonder that a righteous Jew should deny that honour, or the outward expressions of it, to any man; since the wise and sober Grecians positively refused to give it to their very kings themselves; the people of Athens once passing sentence of death upon a citizen of theirs for prostrating himself before Darius, though he was then one of the greatest monarchs upon earth. The author of the apocryphal additions to the book of Esther seems to intimate that this was the case with Mordecai, whom he introduces praying thus, chap. xiii. 12, &c. "Thou knowest, O Lord, that it is not in contempt or pride, nor for any desire of glory, that I did not bow down to proud Haman; for I would willingly kiss his feet for the salvation of Israel; but I did this, that I might not prefer the glory of man to the glory of God, nor adore any one but thee my Lord alone." See Valer. Max. lib. vi. cap. 3. and Pool.

Ver. 7. *They cast Pur, that is, the lot*] Haman, being determined to destroy Mordecai and the Jews, called together his diviners, to find out what day would be most lucky for his putting this design in execution. The way of divination then in use among the eastern people was, by casting *lots*; and therefore, having tried in this manner, first each month, and then each day in every month, they came to a determination at last, that the 13th day of the 12th month would be most fortunate for the bloody execution. It was in the first month of the year when Haman began to cast lots, and the time for the execution of the Jews was by these lots delayed till the last month in

the year; which plainly shews, that, though *the lot be cast into the lap, yet the whole disposing thereof is from the Lord*; Prov. xvi. 33. for hereby almost a whole year intervened between the design and its execution, which gave time for Mordecai to acquaint queen Esther with it, and for her to intercede with the king for the revoking or suspending of the decree, and thereby preventing the conspiracy. The reader will find this decree in Joseph. Antiq. lib. xi. cap. 6. Houbigant renders this verse, *The lot, which is called Pur, was drawn before Haman from day to day, from month to month, for the twelfth month.*

Ver. 9. *And I will pay ten thousand talents of silver*] The sum which Haman here offers the king in lieu of the damage that his revenues might sustain by the destruction of so many of his subjects, is prodigious for any private man, and shows how outrageously he was bent against the Jews. We read, however, of several private persons in history, who in ancient times were possessors of much greater sums. Pithius the Lydian, for instance, when Xerxes passed into Greece, was possessed of two thousand talents of silver, and four millions of daricks in gold, which together amounted to near five millions and a half of our sterling money. Though this may seem strange to us at present, our wonder will cease, if we consider, that from the time of David and Solomon, and for one thousand five hundred years afterwards, the riches of this kind were in much greater plenty than they are now. The prodigious quantities of gold and silver that Alexander found in the treasuries of Darius; the vast loads of them which were often carried before the Roman generals when they returned from conquered provinces; and the excessive sums which certain of their emperors expended in donations, feasts, shows, and other instances of luxury and prodigality, are sufficient instances of this. But at length the mines of the ancient Ophir, which furnished all this plenty, being exhausted, and by the burning of cities and devastation of countries upon the irruption of barbarous nations both of the west and east, a great part of the gold and silver wherewith the world then abounded, being wasted and destroyed, the great scarcity of both which afterwards

silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee.

12 Then were the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors that *were* over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language; in the name of king Ahafuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring.

13 And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and

to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, *even* upon the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey.

14 The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, that they should be ready against that day.

15 The posts went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed.

afterwards ensued was thus occasioned; nor have the mines of Mexico and Peru been as yet able fully to repair it.

*Ver. 13. Letters were sent by posts*] The first institution of posts is generally ascribed to the Persians; for the kings of Persia, as Diodorus Siculus observes, lib. xix. in order that they might have intelligence of what passed in all the provinces of their vast dominions, placed centinels on *eminences*, at convenient distances, where towers were built; and these centinels gave notice of public occurrences to each other, with a very loud and shrill voice; by which method news was transmitted from one extremity of the kingdom to the other with great expedition. But, as this could be practised only in the case of general news, which might be communicated to the whole nation, Cyrus, as Xenophon relates, *Cyropæd.* lib. viii. set up couriers, places for post-horses on all high roads, and officers where they might deliver their packets to each other. The like is said by Herodotus, lib. viii.; and he acquaints us further, that Xerxes, in his famous expedition against Greece, planted posts from the *Ægean* sea to *Shushan*, at certain distances as far as a horse could ride with speed; that thereby he might send notice to his capital city of whatever should happen in his army. The Greeks borrowed the use of posts from the Persians: and, in imitation of them, called them *αγγαροι*. Among the Romans, Augustus was the person that set up public posts, who at first were running footmen, but were afterwards changed for post-chariots and horses. For the greater expedition, Adrian improved upon this; and, having reduced the posts to great regularity, discharged the people from the obligation they were under before of furnishing horses and chariots. With the empire the use of posts declined. About the year 807, Charlemagne endeavoured to restore them; but his design was not prosecuted by his successors. In France, Lewis XI. set up posts at two leagues distance through the kingdom. In Germany, Count Taxis set them up, and had for his recompence, in 1616, a grant of the office of post-master-general to himself and his heirs for ever. About eight hundred years ago couriers were set up in the Ottoman empire; and at this time there are some among

the Chinese; but their appointment is only to carry orders from the king and the governors of provinces, and, in a word, for public affairs, and those of the greatest consequence.

*Ver. 15. But the city Shushan was perplexed*] Not only the Jews, but a great many others in Shushan, might be concerned at this horrid decree, either because they were engaged with them in worldly concerns, or perhaps out of mere humanity and compassion to such a number of innocent people, now appointed as sheep to the slaughter. They might apprehend likewise, that, upon the execution of the decree, some sedition or tumult might ensue; that in so great a slaughter it was hard to tell who would escape being killed or plundered, because those who were employed in this bloody work would be more mindful to enrich themselves than to observe their orders. See Patrick and Le Clerc.

REFLECTIONS.—The people of God must not long expect the sunshine of prosperity. Though they had a queen on the throne, and a friend at court, a storm arises which threatens to swallow them up with universal destruction.

1. Haman the Agagite, an hereditary enemy of the Jews, is advanced to the first post of honour, becomes the king's favourite, and receives, at his command, such adoration and reverence as approached idolatry.

2. The rising sun is universally worshipped by the fawning courtiers; and, as preferment could be hoped for only through the favourite's interest, all men bowed down before him. Mordecai alone could not conform to the extravagant honours paid him; not envious of his advancement, nor proudly disrespectful, but conscientiously withheld from such impious adoration. In vain his fellow-servants advise compliance, or remonstrate on the danger of refusal: he chooses rather to lose his office, or life itself, than wound his conscience. *Note*: No consideration must sway or influence us to comply with what is evil. Better incur the wrath of princes, than offend the King of kings; better hazard life, than lose body and soul in hell.

3. Haman was soon informed of this obstinate disrespect, and that this Jew pleaded religion as the reason for

## C H A P. IV.

*Mordecai and the Jews mourn: he applies to Esther, who appoints a fast before she goes in to the king.*

[Before Christ 474.]

**W**HEN Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry;

2 And came even before the king's gate: for none *might* enter into the king's gate clothed with sackcloth.

3 And in every province, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, *there was* great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

4 ¶ So Esther's maids and her chamberlains came and told *it* her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him: but he received *it* not.

5 Then called Esther for Hatach, *one* of the king's chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her, and gave him a commandment to Mordecai, to know what *it was*, and why *it was*.

6 So Hatach went forth to Mordecai unto the street of the city, which *was* before the

king's gate.

7 And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and of the sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them.

8 Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to shew *it* unto Esther, and to declare *it* unto her, and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for her people.

9 And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

10 ¶ Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him commandment unto Mordecai;

11 All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, *there is* one law of his to put *him* to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.

12 And they told to Mordecai Esther's words.

13 Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt

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for refusing this adoration to a mortal man. His pride fired at the intelligence, and he resolved to wreak his vengeance, not only on him, but on all his nation. *Note.* (1.) The resentment of favourites has been often fatal to the worthiest subjects; but, in the end, they are generally made to drink of the cup which they had mixed for others. (2.) Insolent pride begets unrelenting cruelty.

## C H A P. IV.

*Ver. 1. Mordecai rent his clothes, &c.]* The latter Targum, upon the book of Esther, gives us the following account of Mordecai's behaviour upon this sad occasion: "He made his complaint in the midst of the streets, saying, What a heavy decree is this, which the king and Haman have passed, not against a part of us, but against us all, to root us out of the earth! Whereupon all the Jews flocked about him, and, having caused the book of the law to be brought to the gate of Shushan, he, being covered with sackcloth, read the words of Deuteronomy, iv. 30, 31. and then exhorted them to fasting, humiliation, and repentance, after the example of the Ninevites."

VOL. II.

*Ver. 11. Whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king]* Ever since the reign of Dejoces king of Media, Herodotus informs us, for the preservation of royal majesty, it was enacted, that no one should be admitted into the king's presence; but that if he had any business with him, he should transact it through the medium of his ministers. The custom passed from the Medes to the Persians; and therefore we find in the same historian, lib. iii. that after the seven princes had killed the magician who had usurped the throne, they came to this agreement, that whoever should be elected king should allow the others to have at all times a ready access to his presence (which is an implication that they had it not before), except only when he was in company with any of his wives. This, therefore, was the ancient law of the country, and not procured by Haman, as some imagine: though it cannot be denied that the reason at first might be, not only the preservation of the king's person, but a contrivance likewise of the great officers of state, that they might engross the king to themselves, by allowing admittance to none but whom they should think proper to introduce. See Le Clerc.

4 U

*Ver.*

escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.

14 For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, *then* shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for *such* a time as this?

15 ¶ Then Esther bade *them* return Mordecai *this answer*;

16 Go, gather together all the Jews *that are* present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.

17 So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

## CHAP. V.

*Esther presents herself before the king, whom she invites with Haman to a banquet. Haman, indignant that Mordecai refuses him respect, commands a gallows to be erected for him.*

[Before Christ 474.]

**N**OW it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on *her* royal apparel,

and stood in the inner court of the king's house, over against the king's house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house.

2 And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, *that* she obtained favour in his sight: and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that *was* in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre.

3 Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what *is* thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.

4 And Esther answered, If *it seem* good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him.

5 Then the king said, Cause Haman to make haste, that he may do as Esther hath said. So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

6 ¶ And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine, What *is* thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: and what *is* thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed.

7 Then answered Esther, and said, My petition and my request *is*;

*Ver. 14. And who knoweth, &c.] Who knoweth whether thou art not raised to the royal dignity, that thou mightest be a succour in these times? Houbigant.*

REFLECTIONS.—As yet Esther seems to have had but an imperfect knowledge of the cause of Mordecai's affliction; and as it was impossible, by the custom of Persia, to have a personal conference with him, she sends Hatach, a trusty eunuch, to inquire and report the particulars. Hereupon,

1. Mordecai relates the whole of the matter; transmits, by the eunuch, a copy of the decree, and charges her by all means to use her utmost influence to get it reversed, by undeceiving the king with regard to the misrepresentations of Haman. *Note*; Could truth but find its way to the royal ear, much of the people's miseries would be relieved.

2. Esther returns, by the same messenger, an answer to Mordecai's request. To appear in the royal presence uncalled, was death by the Persian law, except the king stretched out the golden sceptre; nor were the queens excepted from it: and, for some time past, the king seems to have neglected her, which would make the essay more dangerous; and therefore she rather wishes him to seek some

other advocate, than expose her to the imminent peril of death. *Note*; (1.) The King of kings is not thus inaccessible; whosoever will, may come unto him boldly with every request, and are sure never to be denied. (2.) God in his providence permits the most discouraging circumstances, in order to exercise the faith and brighten the crown of the redeemed.

3. Mordecai lessens not his importunity for the danger which Esther suggested to him. He let her know, that if her kindred fell, she must not hope to escape; that he fully believed God would stand by them, and she would lose the honour of being their deliverer if she declined this service; nay, that God would visit upon her and her father's house such a cowardly refusal; and, while the rest escaped, they would be left to perish. He concludes with suggesting, that her advancement was ordered for this great purpose, and that she was therefore bound to correspond with the designs of God herein. *Note*; (1.) If we have faith to trust God, he will never fail us. (2.) They who, through unbelieving fear, decline the path of duty, are justly given up to the danger which they thus sinfully seek to shun. (3.) It is good to observe the leadings of providence, and correspond with what appears to be

8 If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do to-morrow as the king hath said.

9 ¶ Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai.

10 Nevertheless Haman refrained himself: and when he came home, he sent and called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife.

11 And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all *the things* wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him

above the princes and servants of the king.

12 Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and to-morrow am I invited unto her also with the king.

13 Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king's gate.

14 ¶ Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him, Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and to-morrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon: then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman; and he caused the gallows to be made.

be the design of God in placing us in such a station or circumstance.

4. Determined at last, Esther resolved at all hazards to make the essay: but first she enjoined Mordecai, and all the Jews in Shushan, to spend three days in prayer and fasting, while she did the same in the palace, to humble their souls for the sins which provoked these threatened judgments, and to seek the favour and blessing of God on her attempt, who alone could incline the king's heart to grant her suit. Putting her life in her hand, she then resolved to go to the king: she could but perish. *Note;* (1.) In all our distresses there is a throne of grace open, and a God who heareth prayer. (2.) When we are truly humbled under our sins, we may hope that God will deliver us from our afflictions. (3.) While we are desiring the prayers of others, let us not forget to be importunate for ourselves. (4.) When we can trust God with all, then all is safe.

CHAP. V.

*Ver. 2. The king held out to Esther the golden sceptre]* A sceptre was the ensign of the highest and most absolute authority; therefore some have observed, that when Mordecai was advanced to the greatest dignity, next the king, having the royal robes on, and other ensigns of regal dignity, no mention is made of any sceptre, for that was proper and peculiar to the king; and the queen's touching, or, as some say, killing it, was a token of her subjection and thankfulness for his favour. Josephus has mightily improved upon this story, as the reader will see by referring to his Antiquities, lib. xi. cap. 6.

*Ver. 8. Let the king and Haman come to the banquet, &c.]* Esther's intention, in desiring to entertain the king twice at her banquet before she made known her petition, was, that thereby she might the more endear herself to him, and the better dispose him to grant her request; for which reason she thought it a piece of no bad policy to invite his first favourite to come with him. But in the whole matter the singular providence of God is not a little con-

spicuous; which so disposed her mind, that the high honour which the king bestowed upon Mordecai the next day might fall out in the mean time, and so make way for her petition, which would come in very seasonably at the banquet of wine. For, as it was then most likely for the king to be in a pleasant humour, so also it was most usual for the Persians to enter upon business of state when they began to drink. See *Prid. Connect. An. 453.*

*Ver. 12. Haman said moreover, yea, Esther, &c.]* Athenæus mentions it as a peculiar honour, which no Grecian ever had before or after, that Artaxerxes vouchsafed to invite Timagoras the Cretan to dine even at the table where his relations ate, and to send sometimes a part of what was served up at his own; which some Persians looked upon as a diminution of his majesty, and a prostitution of their nation's honour. Plutarch, in his Life of Artaxerxes, tells us, that none but the king's mother and his real wife were permitted to sit at his table; and therefore he mentions it as a condescension in that prince that he sometimes invited his brothers; so that this particular favour was a matter which Haman had some reason to value himself upon.

*Ver. 14. The thing pleased Haman, and he caused the gallows to be made]* This gallows was to be fifty feet high, that men might at a greater distance see the object of Haman's indignation, to the increase of Mordecai's disgrace no doubt, as Haman and his friends thought, and that, struck with greater terror by the spectacle, none might dare for the future to despise or offend him. It may seem strange, that so proud a man as Haman was should not be prompted immediately to revenge himself on Mordecai for his contemptuous usage of him; since, doubtless, he must have had people enough about him, who, upon the least intimation of his pleasure, would have done it; and since he, who had interest enough with his prince to procure a decree for the destruction of a whole nation, might have easily obtained a pardon for having killed one obscure member of it. But herein did the

## CHAP. VI.

*Alasuerus, reading in the chronicles of his kingdom, finds that Mordecai had not been rewarded for discovering the conspiracy of his chamberlains. He enquires of Haman, what should be done to the man whom the king desired to honour; and, upon his answering, commands him to give Mordecai those honours which Haman thought designed for himself.*

[Before Christ 474.]

**O**N that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king.

2 And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Alasuerus.

3 And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king's servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him.

4 ¶ And the king said, Who is in the court? Now Haman was come into the outward court of the king's house, to speak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.

5 And the king's servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in.

6 So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?

7 And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour,

8 Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head:

9 And let this apparel and horse be deli-

the wife and powerful providence of God appear, in that he disposed Haman's heart, contrary to his own inclination and interest, to put fetters as it were upon his own hands, instead of employing his power against his enemy. There cannot be a more striking instance of the vanity of all human greatness, and its utter incapacity to procure a depraved mind repose, than this of Haman. Those who are in the most exalted stations are not always so happy as they seem, or as those beneath them are ready to suppose: they have generally some latent trouble which gnaws and devours them; indeed, a very little matter is sufficient to embitter all their prosperity: this is more particularly the case with the proud and ambitious. Their pride is their punishment; and the mortification of seeing themselves not honoured as they expect plunges them into the bitterness of malice and revenge. But let such consider, that when they seem to be most firmly rooted, and oppress good men without controul, their ruin may be nearest at hand; and they may fall, by the over-ruling direction of Providence, into the very mischiefs which they had prepared for others. They who would see this subject amply enlarged upon may consult Balguy's Sermons, vol. i. and Whatton's, vol. ii.

## CHAP. VI.

*Ver. 1. The book of records of the chronicles]* In these diaries, which we now call journals, wherein was set down what passed every day, the manner of the Persians was, to record the names of those who had done the king any signal services. Accordingly, Josephus informs us, that, upon the secretary's reading these journals, he took notice of such a person who had great honours and possessions given him as a reward for a glorious and remarkable action, and of such another who made his fortune by the

bounties of his prince for his fidelity; but that, when he came to the particular history of the conspiracy of the two eunuchs against the person of the king, and of the discovery of this treason by Mordecai, the secretary read it over, and was passing forward to the next; when the king stopped him, and asked whether that person had any reward given him for his service: which shews, indeed, a singular providence of God, that the secretary should read in that very part of the book wherein the service of Mordecai was recorded. Why Mordecai was not rewarded before, it is in vain to enquire. We see daily, even among us, that great men are frequently unmindful of the highest services which are done them, and take no care to reward them, especially if the person be in himself obscure, and not supported by a proper recommendation; and therefore we are not to wonder, if a prince who buried himself in indolence, and made it a part of his grandeur to live unacquainted and unconcerned with what passed in his dominions, (which was the custom of most eastern kings,) should overlook the service that Mordecai had done him; or, that if he ordered him a reward, yet by the artifice of those at court, who were no well-wishers to the Jews, Mordecai might be disappointed of it. There seems, however, to have been a particular direction of Providence in having his reward delayed till this time, when he and all his nation were appointed to destruction, when the remembrance of his services might be a means to recommend them to the king's mercy, and the honours conferred on him be a poignant mortification to his proud adversary.

*Ver. 8. Let the royal apparel be brought, &c.]* To form a notion of that height of pride and arrogance at which Haman (who thought that all the honours he specified were designed for himself) was arrived, we may observe, that

vered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man *witbal* whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.

10 Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, *and* take the apparel and the horse, as

thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken.

11 Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour.

that for any one to put on the royal robe, without the privy and consent of the king, was among the Persians accounted a capital crime. To this purpose Plutarch, in his Life of Artaxerxes, tells us, that one day when, in hunting, the king happened to tear his garment, and Tiribazus told him of it, the king asked him what he should do? "Put on another," said Tiribazus, "and give that to me;"—"That I will," replied the king, "but then I enjoin you not to wear it." Tiribazus, however, who was rather a weak man, ventured to put it on with all its splendid ornaments; and when some of the nobles began to resent it as a thing not lawful for any subject, "I allow him," said the king, laughing at the figure he made, "to wear the fine trinkets as a woman, and the robe as a madman." There was a custom among the Hebrews, not unlike that of placing the Persian designed to be honoured on the king's horse, as appears from the history of Solomon, 1 Kings, i. 33. the person declared to be successor to the crown being mounted on the king's horse on the day of his inauguration. Some have thought that the crown, כתר *keter*, denotes not the king's crown, nor the royal turban, which it was death for any one to put on without the king's order, but the ornament that the king's horse upon which he rode wore upon his head. It must be acknowledged, that this application of the thing agrees best with the signification and order of the Hebrew words with the following verses, wherein no mention is made of the כתר *keter*, but only of the robe and the horse to which this crown belonged; and with the custom of the Persians, who used to put a certain ornament, in Italian called *fiocco*, upon the head of that horse whereon the king was mounted. See Patrick, Le Clerc, and Houbigant.

*Ver. 11. Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, &c.]* When I read Pitt's account of the cavalcade at Algiers upon a person's turning Mahomedan, and which is apparently designed to do him, as well as their law, honour, I cannot forbear thinking of the manner in which Haman proposed to do a person honour, and which Mordecai actually received. I will not repeat the passage, as the following extract from Pitt will bring it sufficiently to mind: "The apostate is to get on horseback on a stately steed, with a rich saddle and fine trappings: he is also richly habited, and hath a turban on his head; but *nothing of this is to be called his own*; only there is given to him about two or three yards of broad cloth, which is laid before him on the saddle. The horse, with him on his back, is led all around the city, which is several hours in doing. The apostate is attended with drums

"and other music, and twenty or thirty *vekil* harges, or stewards, who are under the Otho, Bashees, or serjeants. These march in order on each side of the horse, with naked swords in their hands. The *cryer* goes before with a loud voice, giving thanks to God for the profelyte that is made," &c. Strange as the method may appear to us, of honouring a person by putting vestments upon him above his degree, and which it is not designed he should keep, together with the carrying him thus equipped about a large town on horseback, attended by a cryer; yet Africans, we find, concur with Asiatics in it. It is no wonder then to find Haman propose a thing of or fort, or that Ahasuerus easily assented to it. See *Observations*, p. 283.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, How vain are all human contrivances! How easily can God disappoint the devices of his enemies, to their confusion! He has access to the spirits of men; and by means unseen, but irresistible, can accomplish all his pleasure. Mordecai as little dreamt of the honour which was designed him, as of the destruction threatened him; and Haman as little suspected that his morning-visit to court would be attended with such consequences. We have here,

1. The king, restless on his bed; his sleep was fled; for he who seals up the eye-lids had forbidden his to close.

2. To amuse the tedious hour, and perhaps to try an expedient to lull his wakeful eyes to lost repose, he calls for the book of records; and God so ordained, that the portion fixed upon was the detection of that dangerous conspiracy to which Mordecai had been so instrumental. *Note*; The minutest circumstances may be pregnant with the greatest events; the opening at a particular leaf of this book conducted eminently to the preservation of the Jewish people, and, in them, of God's whole church in all future ages.

2dly, Probably, when the design of God's providence was answered, the king slept in peace; but no sooner awaked in the morning, than he is solicitous to honour the neglected Mordecai.

1. He makes inquiry who was in the court; and who should be there but Haman, early attending on the king, big with impatience to see Mordecai on the gallows, and not doubting to succeed easily in his petition: him the king commands to be introduced, little suspecting the design of his master, and probably counting it a happy circumstance that he was called for.

2. No sooner is Haman introduced, than the king proposes a question to him, which self-love strongly interpreted in his own favour; and therefore he lavishly advises to heap



12 ¶ And Mordecai came again to the king's gate. But Haman hastened to his house mourning, and having his head covered.

13 And Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends every *thing* that had befallen him. Then said his wife men and Zeresh his wife unto him, If Mordecai *be* of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him.

14 And while they *were* yet talking with him, came the king's chamberlains, and hastened to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared.

### CHAP. VII.

*Esther petitions for her own life, and that of her people, whose destruction Haman had designed. The king, enraged, orders him to be hanged on the gallows which he had prepared for Mordecai.*

[Before Christ 474.]

**S**O the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen.

2 And the king said again unto Esther on

the second day at the banquet of wine, What *is* thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what *is* thy request? and it shall be performed, *even* to the half of the kingdom.

3 Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request:

4 For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage.

5 ¶ Then the king Ahafuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?

6 And Esther said, The adversary and enemy *is* this wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid before the king and the queen.

heap the most signal distinctions on the man whom the king delighted to honour. *Note;* (1.) Pride and ambition are never satisfied with the most accumulated honours. (2.) Self-conceit, and a high opinion of ourselves, is a most dangerous rock, against which we cannot too carefully guard. (3.) It should be the delight of kings, and of all in authority, to bestow honour on the deserving, and to encourage those who do well.

3. The king expressed his approbation of the advice, and Haman expected with rapture the issue; but how astonished was he to hear the name of Mordecai as the honoured person, and himself fixed on to lead his horse, and proclaim his high deserts.

4. The mandate must be obeyed; and Haman, however stung with envy and grief, is obliged to comply. Mordecai is apparelled, his horse ready, and Haman the herald of his honour. If such be the dignity of him whom man will have exalted, what shall be their portion whom the eternal king delights to honour?

*Ver. 13. Then said his wife men, &c.]* As Mordecai had declared himself a Jew, to satisfy the people at court that he could not with a good conscience comply with the king's command relating to the reverence which was to be paid to Haman; and as the interposition of Providence in behalf of the Jewish nation, even during their captivity, had been very conspicuous; the wise men about Haman might from experience form a conjecture, that if their God was become their friend, as seemed to be the case by this strange turn of affairs in favour of Mordecai, no weapon forged against them would prosper; because they had seen so many plots, which would have crushed any other nation,

turn to their advancement as well as to their enemies' destruction. See Judith, v. 20, 21. Considering, then, that Mordecai was of the seed of the Jews, a people whom God had wonderfully raised from great oppressions, and that at this time there was a desperate design, by Haman's management, carrying on against them; his wife men might easily and without the spirit of prophecy divine, that as Mordecai, whom they knew to be a man of great courage and wisdom, was got into the king's favour, it would not be long before he would find an opportunity of applying to him for a revocation of Haman's bloody decree, and consequently his ruin in the king's good graces. The known instability of court favour, and the little quarter there given to rivals or enemies, made it no hard matter, from Mordecai's advancement, to read Haman's destiny. See Patrick and Poole.

REFLECTIONS.—With very different sensations these two returned; the one to his place at court, the other to his house in the city. Mordecai, thankful and comforted, receiving the favour done him as a token for good, that God would blast the designs of his inveterate enemy: Haman, covered with confusion, stung with envy, and mourning as under the bitterest affliction. Thus will God render tribulation to those who trouble his people; but, to us who are troubled, rest with him.

1. Haman unbosoms his griefs to his wife and friends. The communicating of our afflictions is usually a relief; here it tended to aggravate their burden. For,

2. They prove miserable comforters, and read his doom instead of soothing his complaints. They foresee the disappointment of all his schemes: Mordecai is of the seed

7 ¶ And the king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath, *went* into the palace-garden; and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen; for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king.

8 Then the king returned out of the palace-garden into the place of the banquet of wine; and Haman was fallen upon the bed whercon Esther *was*. Then said the king, Will he force the queen also before me in the house? As the

word went out of the king's mouth, they covered Haman's face.

9 And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon.

10 So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified.

of the Jews, and no weapon formed against them can prosper; they predict his own fall in the struggle, and heighten his distress into despair: what had happened was but the earnest of what would ensue. *Note:* (1.) It is vain fighting against those whom God protects. (2.) Falling favourites descend rapidly. (3.) Sad presages of approaching ruin often seize the sinner before destruction comes upon him to the uttermost.

3. Haman's grief probably made him dilatory, and he foreboded now no good from the banquet in which he had so lately gloried. The eunuchs are sent to hasten him, and he goes; where we shall find him, in the next chapter, receiving the judgment that he had so well deserved.

C H A P. VII.

*Ver. 4. But if we had been sold for bond-men, &c.] Would to God we had been sold for bond-men and bond-women! then I would have held my peace: although our enemy is not of so much worth that damage should be brought on the king.* Houbigant. Either means, that Haman was not a man of such consequence as to countervail the infamy which would fall on the king, and the loss which his kingdom would sustain, by the sacrifice of a whole nation to his resentment.

*Ver. 7. The king—went into the palace-garden]* Partly as disdain the company of so infamous a person as Haman; partly to cool and allay his spirit, boiling and struggling with a variety of passions; and partly to consider within himself the heinousness of Haman's crime, the mischief which himself had nearly done by his own rashness, and what punishment was fit to be inflicted on so vile a miscreant.

*Ver. 8. Haman was fallen upon the bed whereon Esther was]* It was a custom among the Persians, as well as other nations, to sit, or rather lie, upon beds when they ate or drank; and therefore, when Haman fell down as a suppliant at the feet of Esther, and, as the manner was among the Greeks and Romans, and not improbably among the Persians, embraced her knees, the king might pretend that he was offering violence to the queen's chastity; not that he believed that this was his intention; but in his furious passion he turned every thing to the worst sense, and made use of it to aggravate his crime. The king's design was evident enough from his words; and therefore *they* immediately covered Haman's face. As the dignity of a prince made the being arrayed in his clothes a mighty honour, so it should seem it did not allow of a malefactor's setting eyes upon him. The majesty, at least, of the kings of

Persia did not allow of this, as appears in the case of Haman, whose face was covered as soon as the courtiers perceived Ahafuerus looked upon him in that light. Some curious correspondent examples have been produced from antiquity, and may be met with in Poole's Synopsis; but, perhaps, it may be amusing to find that this custom still continues; as well as useful to ascertain more clearly the meaning of *covering the face*, which has been differently understood by learned men. I shall therefore set down, from Bishop Pococke's Travels, the account that he gives of an artifice by which an Egyptian bey was taken off. It was this: a man, being brought before him like a malefactor just taken, with his hands behind as if tied, and a napkin put over his head, as malefactors commonly have, when he was brought before the bey, suddenly shot him dead. The covering of Haman's face, then, was the placing him before Ahafuerus as a malefactor to hear his doom, who had just before been considered as the king's confidant. See *Observations*, p. 282. and *Explication des Textes Difficiles*, p. 261.

*Ver. 10. So they hanged Haman, &c.]* I cannot pass over the wonderful harmony of Providence, says Josephus, *Antiq. l. xi. c. 6.* without a remark upon the Almighty power and admirable justice of the wisdom of God, not only in bringing Haman to his deserved punishment, but in entrapping him in the very snare which he had laid for another, and turning a malicious invention upon the head of the inventor. Well says the heathen poet,

—*Nec lex est justior ulla  
Quam necis artifices arte perire sua.*

No law is more just, than that the workers of wickedness should perish by the means of their own subtilty.

Bishop Patrick observes on this wonderful deliverance of the Jewish nation, that though in the whole there was no extraordinary manifestation of God's power, no particular cause or agent which was in its working advanced above the ordinary pitch of nature, yet the contrivance and suiting of these ordinary agents appointed by God, is in itself more admirable than if the same end had been effected by means which were truly miraculous. That a king should not sleep, is no unusual thing; nor that he should solace his waking thoughts by hearing the annals of his own kingdom, or the journals of his own reign, read to him: but that he should lie awake at that time, especially when Haman was watching to destroy the Jews; that

## C H A P. VIII.

*Esther requesting that the letters devised by Haman might be reversed, the king informs her, that no man may reverse what is sealed with the king's seal; but he gives leave for other letters to be signed with the royal signet, permitting the Jews to defend themselves, and destroy their enemies.*

[Before Christ 474.]

**O**N that day did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman the Jews' enemy unto Esther the queen. And Mordecai came before the king; for Esther had told what he *was* unto her.

2 And the king took off his ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

3 And Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews.

4 Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood before the king,

5 And said, If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing *seem* right before the king, and I *be* pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which *are* in all the king's provinces.

6 For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?

7 ¶ Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews.

8 Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal *it* with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse.

9 Then were the king's scribes called at that time in the third month, that *is*, the month Sivan, on the three-and-twentieth *day* thereof; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces which *are* from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty-and-seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language.

10 And he wrote in the king Ahasuerus' name, and sealed *it* with the king's ring, and sent letters by posts on horseback, *and* riders on mules, camels, *and* young dromedaries:

11 Wherein the king granted the Jews

that in the chronicles of the kingdom they should light on that place where Mordecai's unrewarded services were recorded; that the king should forthwith resolve thereupon to do him honour; that Haman should come in at the very moment when he was so disposed; should ignorantly determine what honour should be done him, and be himself appointed to that ungrateful office: all this, no doubt, was from the *keeper of Israel*, who *neither slumbereth nor sleepeth*, and was truly marvellous in his *pop.e's* eyes.

## C H A P. VIII.

*Ver. 2. The king took off his ring—and gave it unto Mordecai*] That is, he made him the keeper of the royal signet, in the same manner as Haman had been before him.

*Ver. 10. And he wrote in the king Ahasuerus' name, &c.*] Josephus has given us a true copy, as he says, of this decree, or, as he terms it, of the letters which Artaxerxes sent to all the nations which lie between India and Ethiopia; wherein he represents the abuse which favourites are wont to make of their power and credit with their prince, by

insulting their inferiors, slyly in the face of those who raised them, and, to gratify their resentments, calumniating the innocent, and putting honest men in danger of their lives, &c.—It is observable, that this decree allows the Jews to *defend themselves*, and therefore may, in some measure, account for the slaughter which they made of their enemies, as related in the next chapter; and, no doubt, the great sum which Haman had offered to gratify his revenge against the Jewish nation, was an additional provocation to them to slay every one who came to annoy them. But it should be remembered, that in this they acted by virtue of a royal edict, which authorized them to stand upon their own defence; that they were not the first aggressors, but only opposed those who openly assaulted them, and were for putting in execution an unjust and cruel decree against them; and as the Amalekites, who might be dispersed throughout the Persian dominions, were the known and inveterate enemies of the Jews, and, following now the fortune of Haman, might be forward enough to execute the decree which he had procured against them, it is reasonably presumed that most of those

which *were* in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, *both* little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey:

12 Upon one day in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, *namely*, upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which *is* the month Adar.

13 The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province *was* published unto all people, and that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.

14 *So* the posts that rode upon mules *and* camels went out, being hastened and pressed

on by the king's commandment. And the decree was given at Shushan the palace.

15 ¶ And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad.

16 The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour.

17 And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

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whom the Jews destroyed in their necessary defence, both at Shushan and in the provinces, were of that devoted nation, and that by this their slaughter the prophecies against Amalek were remarkably accomplished. See Bishop Patrick.

*Ver. 15. And with a great crown of gold*] The word *royal* is not added here, as in the 8th verse of the sixth chapter; nor is the horse mentioned, as there, because no extraordinary honours are here spoken of, but only that honour and that habit which immediately belonged to the keeper of the royal signet. Houbigant.

REFLECTIONS.—Just execution having been performed on the person of the wicked Haman, we have here,

1. The disposal of his estate, which, as forfeited, the king bestows on the queen. The ten thousand talents which were offered as the price of blood, become the property of those whose lives were marked out for a prey.

2. Mordecai is highly advanced. Though the queen had before concealed her kindred, she thinks it a proper season now to own her relation and obligations to Mordecai, whose good services had already so highly recommended him to the king; but this more especially engaged the royal favour to him. He is immediately introduced; and, as a token of the warmest regard, the king presents him with the ring from his finger, and thus he becomes, in the king's favour and in dignity, the worthy successor of the wicked Haman. To his trust also the queen commits the management of the forfeited estate: thus completely were the tables changed; the wickedness of the wicked was upon him, and the wealth of the sinner laid up for the just. *Note*; (1.) This world is a changing scene, kings' favours are precarious, and riches make themselves wings and fly away. Let it admonish us to secure *his* favour whose regards are unchangeable to the good, and *those* riches which are abiding, even eternal in the heavens. (2.) God's providence often in this world displays the justice of his government.

VOL. II.

3. Esther again appears before the king; though uncalled, yet confident of his regards, the golden sceptre bids her be comforted, and she humbly presents her petition. With tears she pleads the danger of her kindred and people, and the insupportable grief of seeing them massacred; with deep submission represents the case to the king, and hopes that the bloody edict may be reversed, which Haman, by misrepresentations, had obtained. *Note*; (1.) Though we have justice on our side, yet as inferiors it becomes us to use entreaty. (2.) Some men's mischief survives them: they murder even after death, by the pernicious writings and sentiments that they have propagated. (3.) Our advancement must never make us forget our poor relations, or be unconcerned for their distresses.

4. The king kindly receives her request, and instantly prepares to counteract the mischief of the former decree. *Note*; When we have done wrong, we cannot too soon endeavour to prevent, to the utmost of our power, the mischievous consequences that might ensue.

5. When the Lord pleases to work, how soon can he give beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garments of praise for the spirit of heaviness! We have,

(1.) Mordecai in royal apparel, robed in purple and fine linen, with a coronet of gold upon his head: a great distinction this; but poor, compared with the brighter robes with which the King of glory shall array his redeemed when he shall put on their heads a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

(2.) On his advancement a general joy was diffused around: the city promised themselves prosperity under his wife and just administration: the Jews with gladness heard the unexpected tidings of deliverance; and whilst with exultation they rejoiced, the people around them, now perceiving the court-favour towards them, paid them all honour and respect. *Note*; [1.] A happy change of administration, from bad men and bad measures, is a truly national joy. [2.] The anguish and sorrow that a christian

## CHAP. IX.

*In the thirteenth day of the month Adar, the Jews destroy their enemies: the ten sons of Haman are hanged. The feast of Purim, or lots, is instituted, in memory of this event.*

[Before Christ 473.]

**N**OW in the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them;)

2 The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities, throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as fought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell upon all people.

3 And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king, helped the Jews; because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them.

4 For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater.

5 Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them.

6 And in Shushan the palace the Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men.

7 And Parshandatha, and Dalphon, and

and Aspatha,

8 And Poratha, and Adalia, and Aridatha, 9 And Parmashta, and Arifai, and Aridai, and Vajezatha,

10 The ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, slew they; but on the spoil laid they not their hand.

11 On that day the number of those that were slain in Shushan the palace was brought before the king.

12 ¶ And the king said unto Esther the queen, The Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the palace, and the ten sons of Haman; what have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? now what is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: or what is thy request further? and it shall be done.

13 Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan to do to-morrow also according unto this day's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows.

14 And the king commanded it so to be done: and the decree was given at Shushan; and they hanged Haman's ten sons.

15 For the Jews that were in Shushan gathered themselves together on the fourteenth day also of the month Adar, and slew three hundred men at Shushan; but on the prey they laid not their hand.

16 But the other Jews that were in the king's provinces gathered themselves together, and stood for their lives, and had rest from their ene-

sometimes feels, only serves to heighten his joy when the Lord turns and refreshes him, and brings him from the depths of the earth again.

(3.) A great accession of converts was made to the Jewish church on this occasion. The evident finger of God seen in their deliverance, their present happy and prosperous estate, and the fear of the power with which they were invested, wrought upon multitudes, who, to avoid their resentment, or to obtain court-favour, or perhaps from better motives of divine conviction, became profelytes. *Note;* When the church is in prosperity professors are numerous, but the faithful are proved in adversity.

## CHAP. IX.

*Ver. 13. Let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows]* It is not unlikely that many might be enraged at Haman's death, and his sons in particular might set themselves at the head of those who were bold enough to attempt the

destruction of the Jews at Shushan, being resolved to revenge their father's death, though in so doing they were sure to meet their own. This seems to suggest one reason why Esther was so solicitous to have their dead bodies hung on the gallows, because they had shewn more malice and indignation against the Jews, and, on the day when the cruel edict came to take place, had made more desperate attacks upon them, than any others; though the reason of state, in this severity, might be, to expose the family to greater infamy, and to deter other counsellors at any time from abusing the king with false representations: for though the Jews suffered none to hang on the tree, as they called the gallows, longer than till the evening of the day whereon they were executed, yet other nations let them hang till they were consumed, (as appears from the history of the Gibeonites, 2 Sam. xxi. 9.) or devoured by crows, vultures, or other ravenous creatures. See Patrick and Poole.

*Ver.*

mies, and slew of their foes seventy-and-five thousand, but they laid not their hands on the prey.

17 On the thirteenth day of the month Adar, and on the fourteenth day of the same rested they, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

18 But the Jews that *were* at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth *day* thereof, and on the fourteenth thereof; and on the fifteenth *day* of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

19 Therefore the Jews of the villages, that dwelt in the unwalled towns, made the fourteenth day of the month Adar *a day of* gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions one to another.

20 ¶ And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that *were* in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, *both* nigh and far,

21 To stablish *this* among them, that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly,

22 As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day; that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor.

23 And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them;

*Ver. 20—32. And Mordecai wrote these things, &c.]* See the introductory note to this book. It is from the 20th verse that some have supposed Mordecai to have been the author of it: but it is very evident, that these words relate not to the book itself, but to the circular letters which Mordecai sent to the Jews in all the provinces of the Persian empire; signifying what a mighty deliverance God had vouchsafed them, and appointing in commemoration thereof an annual festival to be observed for ever. This festival was called פורים *Purim*, (ver. 26.) or *the feast of lots*; *Pur* in the Persian language signifying *a lot*, from the event mentioned ver. 24. and chap. iii. 7. and it is to this very day celebrated by the Jews with some peculiar ceremonies; but most of them reducible to these three things, reading, resting, and feasting. Before the reading, which is performed in the synagogue, and begins in the evening as soon as the stars appear, they make use of three forms of prayer; in the first of these, they praise God for counting them worthy to attend this divine service; in the second, they thank him for the miraculous preservation of their ancestors; and in the third, they bless his holy name for having continued their lives for the celebration of another festival in commemoration of it. Then they read over the whole history of Haman from the beginning to the end; not out of any printed book, for that is not lawful, but out of a Hebrew manuscript written on parchment. There are five places in the text wherein the reader raises his voice with all his might: when he comes to the place that mentions the names of the ten sons of Haman, he repeats them very quick, to shew that they were all destroyed in a moment; and every time that the name of Haman is pronounced, the children with great fury strike against the benches of the synagogue with mallets brought for that purpose. After the reading is finished, they return home and have a supper, not of flesh, but of spoon-meat. Next morning they arise early, and return to the synagogue, where, after they have read that passage in Exodus which mentions the war of Amalek, they begin again to read the book of Esther, with the same

ceremonies as before, and so conclude the services of the day with curses against Haman and his wife, with blessings upon Mordecai and Esther, and with praises to God for having preserved his people. Their *resting* on this day is observed so religiously, that they will not so much as set or sow any thing in their gardens, being fully persuaded that it would not come up if they did; and therefore they either play at chess or similar games, or spend their time in music or dancing, till it be proper to begin their *feasting*, wherein they indulge themselves to such an immoderate degree, that their feast of *Purim* has with great justice been called *the bacchanals of the Jews*. They allow themselves to drink wine to excess, nay even to such a pitch as not to be able to distinguish between the blessing of Mordecai and the curse of Haman, as they themselves speak. Among the other sports and diversions of the day, they used formerly to erect a gibbet, and burn upon it a man of straw, whom they called *Haman*; but it being surmised that they might have a design herein to insult the christians, Theodosius the second forbid them to use this ceremony under the penalty of forfeiting all their privileges. See Calmet. The most laudable particular in the feast of *Purim* is, the abundant alms, in money and food, which the rich bestow upon the poor, in order to put them in a capacity to celebrate the festival. *Note*; (1.) Past interpositions of God's providence in behalf of his people, should be an encouragement to them in every present distress. (2.) A holy feast must be kept in a holy manner. It is the scandal and reproach of every religion, to see excess consecrated as devotion: and what a shame to the name of christian, to have the birth of the holy Jesus, the sufferings of the immaculate Lamb of God, and the descent of the Holy Ghost, celebrated by bacchanalian entertainments; and those sacred seasons, when most peculiarly we are called to thankful adoration and holy joy, most peculiarly marked with lawless revelry, thoughtless dissipation, gaming, drunkenness, lewdness, and every abomination. Is this the feast which God hath chosen? *pulet hæc opprobria.*

24 Because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that is, the lot, to consume them, and to destroy them;

25 But when *Esther* came before the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked device, which he devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.

26 Wherefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur. Therefore for all the words of this letter, and of *that* which they had seen concerning this matter, and which had come unto them,

27 The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their writing, and according to their *appointed* time every year;

28 And that these days *should be* remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and that these days of Purim should not fail

from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed.

29 Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with all authority, to confirm this second letter of Purim.

30 And he sent the letters unto all the Jews, to the hundred twenty-and-seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, *with* words of peace and truth,

31 To confirm these days of Purim in their times *appointed*, according as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen had enjoined them, and as they had decreed for themselves and for their seed, the matters of the fastings and their cry.

32 And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim; and it was written in the book.

#### C H A P. X.

*Ahasuerus lays a tribute upon his dominions. Mordecai's advancement under him.*

[Before Christ 468.]

**A**ND the king Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea.

#### C H A P. X.

*Ver. 1. Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land, &c.]* i. e. He laid a tax upon every part of his dominions, both on the continent and in the islands over which his power extended. By the *isles* here mentioned, are meant those in the *Ægean* sea conquered by Darius Hystaspes. See Usher's Chron. and Calmet, who here goes on to comment on the remaining chapters of Esther, which may be found in the Apocrypha; but the Hebrew text concludes as in our Bibles. He observes, after Paul Lucas, that the tombs of Mordecai and Esther are still to be seen at Amadam, in the synagogue of the Jews, who are much more numerous in that place than in any other town in Persia.

REFLECTIONS.—We are here informed,

1. That Ahasuerus laid a general tribute on all his dominions. Either the tribute he had remitted, chap. ii. 18. or if, as is supposed, this was Xerxes, his expensive expeditions made it necessary to replenish his treasury. In arbitrary governments, the king's will is law. Blessed be God for the secure enjoyment of liberty and property!

2. The greatness of this mighty monarch was at large recorded in the chronicles or records of his kingdom, where Mordecai's name also bore a distinguished place, and reflected honour upon the master to whom he owed his advancement.

3. Mordecai, good as he was great, endeared himself by every act of kindness and favour to his countrymen. His honours had not changed his manners; he was courteous and kind to all his brethren, and his desire to serve them seemed but to increase with his ability. Universally respected and beloved, his greatness caused no envy; while the multitude of his brethren were deeply sensible that for all their happiness and prosperity they were indebted to his kindness and protection under God. *Note:* He is truly great, whose power and dignity are employed for the public good.

We have now finished our comment on the historical books of the Old Testament. Of the period of history from the return of the Jews out of Babylon to the birth of our Saviour, having no inspired writings, the reader must endeavour to gain a knowledge from such apocryphal and profane historians as are extant. See 2 Chron. xxxvi. In some measure however to supply the deficiency, we here subjoin, from Dr. Taylor's Scripture Divinity, a brief account of the state of the Jews and of other nations from this period to the time when our Lord came into the world.

“After the Babylonish captivity,” says he, “the Jews no more lapsed into idolatry, but remained steady in the acknowledgment and worship of the one living and true God. Even then they fell into new ways of perverting religion,



2 And all the acts of his power, and of his might, and the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai, whereunto the king advanced him,

are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia?

3 For Mordecai the Jew *was* next unto king

“ religion, and the wise and holy intentions of the divine  
 “ law. I. By laying all the stress on the external and less  
 “ momentous parts of it, while they neglected the weighty  
 “ and substantial, true holiness of heart and life. Man-  
 “ kind are too easily drawn into this error. While they  
 “ retain a sense of religion, they are too apt to listen to any  
 “ methods by which it may be reduced to a consistency  
 “ with the gratification of their passions, pride, and avarice.  
 “ Thus, by placing religion in mere profession, or in the  
 “ zealous observance of rites and ceremonies, instead of  
 “ real piety, truth, purity, and goodness, they learn to be  
 “ religious without virtue. II. By speculating and com-  
 “ menting upon the divine commands and institutions, till  
 “ their force is quite enervated, and they are refined into  
 “ a sense that will commodiously allow a slight regard in-  
 “ stead of sincere obedience. III. By confirming and  
 “ establishing the two former methods of corrupting reli-  
 “ gion, by tradition and the authority of learned rabbis;  
 “ pretending, that there was a system of religious rules  
 “ delivered by word of mouth from Moses, explanatory of  
 “ the written law, known only to those rabbis; to whose  
 “ judgment, therefore, and decision, all the people were to  
 “ submit.

“ This, in time, the space of 219 years, became  
 “ the general state of religion among the Jews, after they  
 “ had discarded idolatry. And this spirit prevailed among  
 “ them for some ages, (240 years) before the coming of  
 “ the Messiah. But, however, it did not interfere with the  
 “ main system of Providence, or the introducing the know-  
 “ ledge of God among the nations, as they still continued  
 “ steadfast in the worship of the true God, without dan-  
 “ ger of deviating from it. Besides, they were now,  
 “ much more than formerly, exercised in reading, think-  
 “ ing, and reasoning, and were more capable, of them-  
 “ selves, of judging what was right, Luke, xii. 57. And  
 “ several of them did so judge. Some of them were truly  
 “ religious and virtuous; and all of them had strong  
 “ expectation of the Messiah about the time of his appear-  
 “ ance; and were sufficiently qualified to judge of reli-  
 “ gious matters, and of the evidences of his mission. Thus  
 “ the Jews were prepared by the preceding dispensation  
 “ for the reception of the Messiah, and the just notions of  
 “ religion which he was sent to inculcate; insomuch that  
 “ their guilt must be highly aggravated, if they rejected  
 “ him and his instructions. It could not be for want  
 “ of capacity, but of integrity, and must be assigned  
 “ to wilful blindness and obduracy. Out of regard to  
 “ temporal power, grandeur, and enjoyments, they loved  
 “ darkness rather than light.

“ In the mean time, the pagan nations had made great  
 “ openings in wisdom and virtue. Those arts that began  
 “ in Greece, had travelled into other lands; learning had  
 “ got footing among the illiterate; and humanity and  
 “ social affections among the barbarous; and many good  
 “ and useful books, useful even to this day among Chris-  
 “ tians, were written in ethics for the right conduct

“ of life. The light of nature was carried high; or  
 “ rather, the darkness of it was much enlightened. Such  
 “ was, at length, the state of the Gentiles, God having  
 “ still been pleased, from time to time, to raise up among  
 “ them persons uncommonly endowed, for their in-  
 “ struction, and to fit them for the day when he should  
 “ more explicitly reveal himself and his sacred will to  
 “ them.

“ For many ages the Jews had been well known in the  
 “ eastern empires, among the Assyrians, Chaldeans, Medes,  
 “ and Persians; but, till the time of Alexander the Great,  
 “ they had no communication with the Grecians. About  
 “ the year before Christ 332, Alexander built Alexandria  
 “ in Egypt; and, to people his new city, removed thither  
 “ many of the Jews, allowing them the use of their own  
 “ laws and religion, and the same liberties with the Mace-  
 “ donians themselves. The Macedonians, who spake the  
 “ Greek language, and other Greeks, were the principal  
 “ inhabitants of Alexandria. From them the Jews learned  
 “ to speak Greek, which was the common language of the  
 “ city, and which soon became the native language of the  
 “ Jews that lived there; who, on that account, were called  
 “ Hellenists, or Greek-Jews, mentioned Acts, vi. 1—9.  
 “ xi. 20. These Greek-Jews had synagogues in Alex-  
 “ andria; and for their benefit, the five books of Moses,  
 “ which alone, at first, were publicly read, were translated  
 “ into Greek, (by whom is uncertain) and read in their  
 “ synagogues every sabbath-day. And in the time of  
 “ Antiochus Epiphanes, about 168 years before Christ,  
 “ when the prophets also began to be read in the  
 “ synagogues of Judea, the prophets also were translated  
 “ into Greek for the use of the Alexandrian Jews. This  
 “ translation contributed much to the spreading of the  
 “ knowledge of true religion among the nations in the  
 “ western parts of the world.

“ For the Jews, their synagogues and worship were,  
 “ after Alexander's death, dispersed almost every where  
 “ among the nations. Ptolemy, one of Alexander's suc-  
 “ cessors, having reduced Jerusalem and all Judea, about  
 “ 320 years before Christ, carried 100,000 Jews into  
 “ Egypt, and there raised considerable numbers of them  
 “ to places of trust and power; and several of them  
 “ he placed in Cyrene and Lybia. Seleucus, another  
 “ of Alexander's successors, about 300 years before Christ,  
 “ built Antioch in Cilicia, and many other cities, in all  
 “ thirty-five, and some of them capital cities in the greater  
 “ and lesser Asia; in all which he planted the Jews,  
 “ giving them equal privileges and immunities with the  
 “ Greeks and Macedonians; especially at Antioch in  
 “ Syria, where they settled in great numbers, and became  
 “ almost as considerable a part of that city, as they were  
 “ at Alexandria. See Dr. Prideaux's Con. Anno 293.  
 “ Ptolemy Soter 12. On that memorable day of Pen-  
 “ tecost, Acts, ii. 5, 9, 11, 12. were assembled in Jerusa-  
 “ lem, *Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven;*  
 “ namely, Parthians, Medes, and Persians, of the province

“ of

Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.

“ of Elymais, inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Ægypt, Cyrene in Lybia, and Rome, Cretes, and Arabs, who were all either natural Jews, or devout men, i. e. professes to the Jewish religion. And in every city of the Roman empire, where Paul preached, he found a body of his countrymen, the Jews; except in Athens, which was at that time, I suppose, a town of no considerable trade: which shews that the Jews and their synagogues, at the time of our Lord’s appearance, were providentially scattered over all the Roman empire; and had in every place introduced, more or less, among the nations, the knowledge and worship of God; and so had prepared great numbers for the reception of the gospel.

“ About the time that Alexander built Alexandria in Ægypt, the use of the Papyrus, for writing, was first found out in that country. Dr. Prideaux’s Con. Anno 332. Darius, iv. p. 706. vol. ii. This invention was so favourable to literature, that Ptolemy Soter, one of Alexander’s successors, was thereby enabled to erect a museum, or library; which by his son and successor Philadelphus, who died 247 years before Christ, was augmented to 100,000 volumes; and by succeeding Ptolemies to 700,000. Part of this library, which was placed in a separate building from the other part, happened to be burnt when Julius Cæsar laid siege to Alexandria; but after that loss, it was again much augmented, and soon grew up to be larger, and of more eminent note, than the former; and so it continued for many ages to be of great fame and use in those parts, till at length it was burnt and finally destroyed by the Saracens, in the year of our Lord 642. Dr. Prideaux’s Con. vol. iii. p. 21, &c. anno 284. This plainly proves how much the invention of turning the Papyrus into paper, contributed to the increase of books, and the advancement of learning, for some ages before the coming

“ of our Lord. For doubtless, by this means, private hands would also more easily be supplied with books than before.

“ Add to all this, that the world, after many changes and revolutions, was, by God’s all-ruling wisdom, thrown into that form of civil affairs which best suited with the great intended alteration. The many petty states and tyrannies, whose passions and bigotry might have run counter to the schemes of Providence, were all swallowed up in one great power, the Romans; to which all appeals lay; the seat of which, Rome, lay at a great distance from Jerusaleem, the spring from whence the gospel was to arise, and flow to all nations. And therefore, as no material obstruction to the gospel could arise, but from that one quarter, none could suddenly arise from thence, but only in process of time, when the gospel was sufficiently spread and established, as it did not in the least interfere with the Roman polity or government. The gospel was first published in a time of general peace and tranquility throughout the whole world, which gave the preachers of it an opportunity of passing freely from one country to another, and the minds of men the advantage of attending calmly to it. Many savage nations were civilized by the Romans, and acquainted with the arts and virtues of their conquerors.

“ Thus the darkest countries had their thoughts awakened, and were growing to a capacity of receiving, at the stated time, the knowledge of true religion. So that all things and circumstances conspired now with the views of heaven, and made this apparently *the fulness of time*, (Gal. iv. 4.) or the fittest juncture for God to reveal himself to the Gentiles, and to put an end to idolatry throughout the earth. Now the minds of men were generally ripe for a purer and brighter dispensation, and the circumstances of the world were such as favoured the success and progress of it.”

THE  
B O O K of J O B.

*THERE is, perhaps, no book of Scripture, that has so much divided interpreters, and afforded such a field of controversy, as the book of JOB: some supposing it of the remotest antiquity, written by Moses or Job himself; others bringing it down to a very low date; supposing it written by Ezra, at the time of the return from the Babylonish captivity. I shall not trouble my reader with a discussion of these various opinions: but, having given the matter the most impartial and mature consideration that I am able, shall lay before him the result of my inquiry, respecting the author, the time of writing, and the subject matter of this book. First, with respect to the author, I cannot help subscribing to their opinion, who believe him and his performance to be of the remotest antiquity, before Moses, and of the patriarchal age. That Job was a real person, and that his sufferings were real, I think, is universally agreed: but whether he himself, Elibu, or some other of his friends, were the relators of his sufferings, appears to me impossible to determine. Many learned men believe that Job himself was the writer: I am rather induced to think that it was some other person of his own age or time. That the book, secondly, is of the remotest antiquity, there appear, as I apprehend, many indisputable testimonies, which will occur in the course of our observations. Thirdly, concerning the subject of this book in general, we agree with the learned Bishop Lowth, who determines it to contain the third and last trial of Job, which was made upon him by his three friends; the principal design whereof is, to teach men, that, considering the corruption, ignorance, and weakness of human nature, on the one hand; and the infinite wisdom and immense greatness of God on the other; they should renounce their own will, put their full trust in God, and submit themselves to him in all things with the deepest humility and reverence. This is the general end or argument of the poem: but the whole history, taken together, properly contains a high example of consummate and rewarded patience. We have called the book a poem; and such it is, of the dramatic kind, though by no means a complete drama. The interlocutory parts of the work are in metre. Respecting the place or scene of action, see the note on the first verse. Possibly we shall be thought not just to the argument, if we omit to mention, that Bishop Warburton has strongly endeavoured to prove this book a dramatic allegory, composed by Ezra for the consolation of the Jews returning from Babylon; wherein, under the characters of Job and his friends, are figured those Jews and their three great enemies, Sanballat, Tobiab, and Geshem. Attracted by the lure of this allegory, another writer has carried it so far as to allegorize those parts which the bishop wisely omitted to touch upon, and by his friendly efforts has done more, perhaps, to confute the bishop's system than any of his direct opposers. But on this head we refer our readers to the ingenious Mr. Peters's Critical Dissertation on the book of Job, and to Bishop Lowth's excellent 32d and following Lectures.*

C H A P. I.

*Job, a just and a wealthy man, is accused by Satan before God, as if he worshipped God for reward. God delivers all the fortune of Job into the power of Satan; which being taken from him at once, he blesses God, with the most perfect submission.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**T**HERE was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man

was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil.

2 And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters.

3 His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she-asses, and a very great household; so that this man

man was the greatest of all the men of the east.

4 And his sons went and feasted in *their* houses, every one his day; and sent and called

for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them.

5 And it was so, when the days of *their* feasting were gone about, that Job sent and

### C H A P. I.

*Ver. 1. In the land of Uz*] Uz is Edom, as plainly appears from Lam. iv. 21. Uz was the grandson of Seir the Horite, Gen. xxxvi. 20. 28. 1 Chron. i. 38. 42. Seir inhabited the mountainous country called after him, before the time of Abraham; but, his posterity being driven out, the Edomites seized that country, Gen. xiv. 6. Deut. ii. 12. Two other persons are mentioned, of the same name of Uz; the one descended from Shem, the other the son of Nahor, the brother of Abraham; but it does not appear whether any country was named from either of these. Edom is part of Arabia Petraea, bordering upon the tribe of Judah to the south: Numb. xxxiv. 3. Josh. xv. 1. 21. and therefore the land of Uz is properly placed between Egypt and the Philistines in Jer. xxv. 20. where the order of places in enumerating the people, from Egypt even to Babylon, seems to be observed very accurately. The same people are placed in nearly the same order. Jer. xlvi.—1. See Bishop Lowth.

*Whose name was Job*] The name of Job, in the Chaldaee, Syriac, and Arabic, may, with the greatest probability, be derived from a root that signifies to *love* or *desire*; and might be rendered, the *beloved* or *desired one*. As to the stock from whence he sprung, it is most likely that he was descended from Uz, the eldest son of Nahor, brother to Abraham; but how far removed can only be conjectured from the age of his friends; the eldest of whom, Eliphaz the Temanite, could not be nearer than great-grand-son to Esau; for Esau begat Eliphaz, and the son of Eliphaz was Teman: so that, supposing this Eliphaz to be the son of Teman, (and higher it will be impossible to place him,) he will then be five generations from Abraham; but as Eliphaz was very much older than Job, nay older than his father, as appears from chap. xv. 10. and considering that Abraham was very old before he had a son by Sarah, and that Rebecca, grand-daughter to Nahor by Bethuel, perhaps his youngest son, was of an age proper to be wife to Isaac; we shall, probably, not be wide of the mark, if we allow Job to be at least six, if not seven, generations removed from Nahor. The age, therefore, in which he lived, must have coincided with the latter years of the life of Jacob, with those of Joseph, and the descent into and sojourning in Egypt; his afflictions must have happened during the sojourning, about ten years before the death of Joseph; and his life must have been prolonged to within fourteen years before the departure of the Israelites from Egypt; that is, the year of the world 2499. The number of the years of the life of Job will be, according to this calculation, about 200; which, for that age of the world, and especially considering that Job was blessed with a remarkably long life as a reward for his suffering and integrity, will not appear very extraordinary; for Jacob lived 147 years; Levi, his son, 137; Kohath, his grandson, 133; and Amram, his great-grandson, and father of Moses, 137; Moses also lived 120 years. All these were his cotemporaries, some older, some younger than Job; so

that this seems to agree extremely well with that circumstance of his history. Heath.

*Ver. 3. The greatest of all the men of the east*] Grotius and others observe, that Job's being here called, *the greatest of all the men of the east*, is an argument that the book must have been written by some Israelite, or inhabitant of the land of Canaan; Job's country lying eastward from thence, and it being usual with the Hebrews to call Arabia *the east*. But if it was usual with any other people beside the Hebrews to call Arabia the east, then this can be no argument that the writer of the book was a Hebrew; and here, therefore, I must borrow a conjecture from Mr. Mede, that the Israelites learned this language while they sojourned among the Egyptians. It appears probable from this circumstance, that Arabia lay due east from Egypt, but not from Canaan; moreover, it was hither chiefly that the commerce of the eastern countries flowed. The spices of Arabia, in particular, were carried in great quantities to Egypt, and that as anciently as Jacob's days, as we learn from Gen. xxxvii. 25. Now an intercourse of commerce, carried on from Arabia to Egypt, that is, from east to west, might make it as customary for the Arabians to call themselves, with respect to these western parts, *the east*, as for the Egyptians, or any other people, to call Arabia so: I think we have a plain example of this, Matt. ii. 2. where the wise men, supposed by Grotius himself to be inhabitants of Arabia, call their own country the east; *Where is he that is born king of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east*; which cannot be meant of the place or site of the star, for that, probably, stood west from them, but of the country from whence they came. If an Arabian, therefore, in our Saviour's time, might call his country *the east*, why not an Arabian in Job's time? See Peters. Bishop Lowth observes, that all those different nations, and mingled people, as they are called Jer. xxv. 20. who dwelt between Egypt and the Euphrates, bordering upon Judea to the south and east, particularly the Edomites, Amalekites, Midianites, Moabites, and Ammonites, were styled *easterns*, (see Judg. vi. 3. and Isai. xi. 14.) and of these, certainly, the Edomites and Amalekites were situated to the south of Judea. See Numb. xxxiv. 3. xiii. 29. 1 Sam. xxvii. 8. 10. The case seems to be this: the whole country between Egypt and the Euphrates was called the east, first with respect to Egypt, and then absolutely, without any reference to the situation of the speaker. See 1 Kings, iv. 30.

*Ver. 4. Every one his day*] Schultens has shewn, that the word יָמָיו *immo*, imports *his birth-day*. So ch. iii. 1. Job is said to have *curst his day*; i. e. the day of his birth. The verse might be rendered, *And his sons had a constant custom to make a family-feast, every one on his birth-day; and they sent and invited their three sisters, &c.* Herodotus informs us, that the Orientals in general, and the Persians in particular, were remarkable for celebrating their birth-days with great festivity and luxury.

*Ver. 5. When the days of their feasting were gone about*]

sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt-offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually.

6 ¶ Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them.

7 And the LORD said unto Satan, Whence comest thou? Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth,

and from walking up and down in it.

8 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that *there is* none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?

9 Then Satan answered the LORD, and said, Doth Job fear God for nought?

10 Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work

*As the days of their feasting went about.* By sanctifying them is meant, his preparing them, by lustrations and other ritual ceremonies, to perform divine service with him, and to render God propitious to them; see Exod. xix. 10. and 1 Sam. xvi. 5. where to sanctify, or cleanse, is used for the care of approaching to sacred rites, washed and clean. The Hebrew word בָּרַךְ *barek*, signifies, to bless; (but it here implies, to renounce, or bid adieu to, because we bid adieu to, or take our leave of, those things which we abandon or renounce.) It is therefore used with great elegance in this sense, to signify, they renounced God; and this signification is still softened, and rendered more elegant, by the addition of the words *in their hearts.* Thus *did Job continually*, means *every year*; that is, on every annual return of each of his sons' birth-days. See Schultens.

*Ver. 6. Now there was a day.] It came to pass on the day when, &c.* Heath. Thus denoting some determinate time, when the *sons of God*, i. e. the angels, (called the sons of God, because they were like unto God, in being immortal, see Luke, xx. 36.) came to present themselves. The verb להתיצב *lehithibat*, rendered *present themselves*, expresses the attendance and assiduity of ministers appearing before their king to receive his commands. This account of the angels and Satan's appearing before God, must be understood as a prophetic representation, similar to that in 1 Kings, xxii. 19. The scripture speaks of God after the manner of men; for there is a necessity of condescending to our capacities, and of suiting the revelation to our apprehensions. As kings, therefore, transact their most important affairs in a solemn council or assembly, so God is pleased to represent himself as having his council likewise, and as passing the decrees of his providence in an assembly of his holy angels. We have here, in the case of Job, the same grand assembly held, as was before in that of Ahab, 1 Kings, xxii. the same host of heaven, called here the *sons of God*, presenting themselves before Jehovah; as in the vision of Micaiah, they are said to stand on his right hand, and on his left. A wicked spirit appeared among them, here called שָׂטָן *Satan*, or the adversary, and there a lying spirit; bent on mischief both, and ready to do all the hurt that they were able, or as far as God would give them leave; but, nevertheless, both under the control of his power, and suffered to go thus far and no farther, as might best serve the wise ends of his justice and his providence. The imagery, in short, is just the same; *similis diavolus*, as Grotius observes: and the only difference is in the manner of the relation. Micaiah, as a prophet, and in the

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actual exercise of his prophetic office, delivers it as he received it, that is, as in vision. *I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, &c.* The other, as an historian, interweaves it with the history, and tells us, in the same plain narrative style, *There was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord*, as he does, *There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job.* The things delivered to us by these two sacred writers are in substance the same, equally high, and above the reach of mere human sight and knowledge: but the manner of delivering them is different; by each as suited best their several purposes, and both, no doubt, by inspiration and direction of Almighty God. This, then, is the prophetic way of representing things, as to the manner of doing them; which, whether done exactly in the same manner or not, concerns not us to know, but which are really done; and God would have them described as done in this manner, to make the more lively and more lasting impression on us. At the same time it must not be forgotten, that representations of this kind are founded in a well-known and established truth, I mean the doctrine of angels good and bad: a point revealed, no doubt, from the beginning; and without a previous knowledge whereof, the visions of the prophets could scarcely be intelligible: see Gen. xxviii. We would just observe, that from the prophetic style being used by the writer of this book, we have reason to conclude, that he must have been a prophet, i. e. an inspired person; for, otherwise, a man of that sense and piety which the book shews him to be, would never presume to counterfeit the prophetic style, or usurp a privilege or character which did not belong to him. See Peters, p. 121. who, in his 89th and following pages, has largely endeavoured to disprove what Bishop Warburton observes respecting the word *Satan*. See 1 Kings, xxii. 21. and the note on the next chapter of this book, ver. 7.

*Ver. 8. Hast thou considered my servant Job, &c.?)* The Hebrew, השבת לבך *hasamta libbeka*, literally signifies, *hast thou put thy heart, &c.* The words *going to and fro, &c.* in the preceding verse, imply roving about with an evil intention, and with a determined resolution of doing mischief; in allusion to which, Satan is now questioned by the Deity, whether he had viewed Job with his natural malignity, and with an intention to involve him in misery. Schultens.

*Ver. 10. Hast not thou made an hedge about him, &c.])* i. e. Hast thou not protected him with a thorny and inaccessible defence? The word rendered *increased*, is a metaphor, taken from waters which have burst their bounds, and

spread

of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land.

11 But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face.

12 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. So Satan went forth from the presence of the LORD.

13 ¶ And there was a day when his sons and his daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house:

14 And there came a messenger unto Job, and said, The oxen were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them:

15 And the Sabeans fell upon them; and took them away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

16 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The fire of God is

fallen from heaven, and hath burned up the sheep, and the servants, and consumed them; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

17 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, The Chaldeans made out three bands, and fell upon the camels, and have carried them away, yea, and slain the servants with the edge of the sword; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

18 While he was yet speaking, there came also another, and said, Thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking wine in their eldest brother's house:

19 And, behold, there came a great wind from the wilderness, and smote the four corners of the house, and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; and I only am escaped alone to tell thee.

20 Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped,

spread themselves on all sides round; so Job's substance had largely increased, and spread itself like a flowing torrent over the adjacent land. Schultens.

Ver. 11. *He will curse thee to thy face*] *He will blaspheme thee, &c.* He will, with the highest degree of insolence and contumacy, intirely renounce thee and religion, says Schultens. See the note on chap. ii. 9.

Ver. 14. *Feeding beside them*] *Feeding near them.* *Hou-*  
*bigant. Feeding as usual.* Heath and Schultens.

Ver. 15. *The Sabeans fell upon them*] Hebrew, שָׁבִי. *Sheba* fell upon them; Sheba was the general name of the nation; so the two kingdoms of the posterity of Jacob were called *Judah* and *Israel*. These spoilers seem to have been Job's near neighbours; for the Sabeans lay at the north-west of his country. The Chaldee says, he was plundered by Lilit, queen of Zamargad and Barthinnon; this last is undoubtedly the Barathena of Ptolemy, and Zamargad was probably the name of the city of the Sabeans, called by Ptolemy *צוב*. The name *Lilit* is supposed to be a name of dignity, as Pharaoh was among the Egyptians. The Sabeans were the descendants of Abraham by Keturah, whose son Jokshan begat Sheba. The sons of Keturah were by Abraham sent into the east, Gen. xxv. 6. inhabited Arabia the desert, and were notorious plunderers, as the Arabs are to this day. The Chaldeans, mentioned in the 17th verse, lay on the east and south-east of the Regio Auzitis, and were descended from Chesed, another son of Nahor; whence they are called *Chesdim*. Heath.

*The fire of God*] i. e. *The lightning.* It has been thought scarcely reconcilable with the truth of history, that lightning should have destroyed seven thousand sheep at once: but let it be remembered, that we do not pretend to account for this or the other particulars here mentioned in

a natural and ordinary way. It is evident from the history, that there was something supernatural in it. It was the prince of the power of the air who raised this storm of thunder, and caused perhaps an extraordinary hail-shower with it; such as that recorded Exod. ix. which destroyed both man and beast that were left without shelter in the field; or that which destroyed the army of the confederate kings, Josh. x. 11. or who shall say how far the power of this evil spirit may extend, when he is suffered to exert it? Peters.

Ver. 19. *From the wilderness*] *From the further part, or across;* whence it appears that Job's situation was on the northerly side of the Arabian desert; the stormy winds in those countries blowing from the southerly quarters. Heath. It has been urged by some, that it is very unlikely that so many misfortunes should fall at once upon this good man, as that the messenger of one bad piece of news had no sooner done speaking, than another and another comes. But it should be observed, that the unlikelihood of a thing, or its very rarely happening, is no argument against the truth or credibility of it; especially in a case so extraordinary as this, where the great adversary of mankind, who delights in doing mischief, had so large a scope permitted him. But, suppose we should here claim an allowance for the poetical way of describing things in expressions somewhat figurative and hyperbolic. It is very usual in common speech to say, when a man's misfortunes succeed each other very quick, that they followed close upon the heels of each other. Job's messengers here perhaps do the same; and the poet, as I take it, may have the privilege of drawing out a figure of speech to its full length. Further, as to the remarkable circumstance of only one servant escaping with the news of each calamity, it may be exactly according to the fact, for

any

21 And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the LORD gave, and the LORD hath

taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD.  
22 In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.

any thing that appears to the contrary. Besides, it is not told us by the historian, but by each messenger who brought the bad news, and who probably might think so in the hurry of his fears, though there were others saved beside himself; for, when people are dispersed in a fright, and run different ways, one who finds himself alone after a long flight, may easily conclude himself the only person that escaped. Peters.

*Ver. 21. Naked shall I return thither*] That is, *into my mother's womb*; used figuratively, for the bowels of the earth, the common mother of us all.

*Ver. 22. Nor charged God foolishly*] *Nor spoke any thing inconsiderately against God.* Houbigant. *Any thing unreasonable or absurd against God.* Heath.

REFLECTIONS.—We have here, 1st, the character and greatness of that venerable patriarch Job.

1. His piety was remarkable and eminent; and the more so, probably, because of the generally abounding wickedness. He was a *perfect man*, not in an absolute sense; but accepted in the Saviour, and holy and sanctified in heart before him. No allowed guile was entertained within, or known evil indulged in his conversation: *one that feared God*, continually influenced by a regard to his holy will, and diligently engaged in the exercises of his worship; and *eschewed evil*, or *departed from evil*, as abominable in the sight of God, and carefully abstained not only from the open acts, but from the appearances of evil.

2. His prosperity was as singular as his piety. His children were numerous, his household large, and his substance vast in flocks and herds, wherein at that time the riches of men consisted; so that in all the east there was none so great as Job. *Note*; (1.) Though it is not common, it is not impossible, to be very great and very good; abounding in the riches of the world, yet more with riches of grace from heaven. (2.) Worldly possessions are then valuable blessings, when in their hands who study to make them subservient to the interests of God, and the good of mankind.

2dly, Of his children. Though children are generally coveted among the first blessings, yet it is their conduct and behaviour that stamp them with real value; else they are troubles instead of comforts. Job had not only a pleasing number of both sexes, but,

1. He saw all his sons happily settled in the world; and, though each had his separate family, yet they lived together in that harmony which is so desirable among brethren. At stated times they visited each other in turn, and invited their sisters to join in their entertainment. *Note*; (1.) There is no evil in entertaining our friends, while in the fear and love of God we eat our bread with a cheerful heart. (2.) Brethren and near relations are especially bound to cultivate mutual love.

2. He continued to watch over them with pious care and holy jealousy, and they continued to pay him all

dutiful respect and submission, and readily joined with him in his solemn exercises of devotion. When, therefore, the days of their feasting were ended, fearing lest in the midst of youthful mirth *they had sinned*, and some irregularity might have been committed; or *curfed God in their hearts*, that is, had entertained some unbecoming apprehension of God or of his providence, or been guilty of some neglect in their religious services; he sends to *sanctify them*, enjoins them to prepare for the sacrifice he was about to offer in their behalf; to examine themselves, and, seriously reflecting on the past days, to bring their humble confessions before the God of mercy, and lay their sins on the head of the beast, the type and figure of that one great sacrifice which should be offered for the sins of the world. Accordingly, *early in the morning he arose*, and offered for each a sacrifice of atonement; while they attended, and joined in the holy worship, expecting remission of sin through the atoning blood: and *thus did Job continually, or every year*, after every close of their annual circuit of entertainment: a remarkable instance of his paternal care and sincere godliness, and an evidence also of the true seriousness of his children, who so readily joined in the sacred service. *Note*; (1.) In the midst of feasting we are in danger of forgetting God and godliness, and need a double guard over our hearts. (2.) Job's example should be every parent's pattern; not rigidly severe, yet watchfully jealous over their children for good. (3.) They who serve God truly, serve him continually. (4.) We see from the beginning, that one grand point of true religion consisted in the vicarious substitution of the beast for the sinner, as pointing to the great atonement. The gospel thus was preached to them, even as unto us, according to their dispensation.

3dly, We have seen Job great and good, and, to appearance, most firmly established; but this is a changing world, and nothing is certain to us beneath the sun. His piety and prosperity could not but provoke the envy of the devil, who waited impatiently for an occasion to gratify his malice upon this holy man. We have here,

1. *Satan appearing among the sons of God.* Some think that this is to be understood of God's people at their solemn seasons of devotion; for, even in their assemblies, the devil, who is yet permitted to range about the earth, finds a place, and watches, seeking whom he may devour: but my judgment on this point is different, as I have shown before in the critical annotations.

2. God's inquiry, *whence he came*: not as unacquainted with his walks or designs, but as resenting his bold intrusion; or to lead him to what he saw was his malicious purpose concerning Job.

3. Satan's answer; which may be construed as the boast of pride, as though the earth were his own, and he stalked over the vast circumference, as a king in progress through his dominions; or it may refer to his restless misery, which suffers him nowhere to find ease; or to his indefatigable diligence in his hellish work of tempting and destroying the sons of men. *Note*; There is one who ever



## C H A P. II.

*Satan again calumniates Job before God, whose body God permits him to afflict, but not so as to take away his life. Job is smitten by Satan with sore boils. He reproves his wife. His three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, come to mourn with him.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**A** GAIN there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves

wakes and watches, and no time or place is secure from his snares: how wakeful then and watchful should we be, that we enter not into temptation!

4. God questions him concerning Job. *Haft thou considered my servant Job*, observed his piety, or *set thine heart upon him*, to do him some mischief? I know thou hast. God calls him *my servant*, the most honourable of all titles, and expressive of his high approbation of Job's fidelity in his service: *that there is none like him in the earth*; not only in the land of Uz, but probably among the sons of men, his fellow was not found for true piety; *a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God and escheweth evil*. Such a character could not but awaken Satan's malice, and God knew what was his present design upon him. *Note*; (1.) God knows all the devices of the wicked one, and is able to disappoint them. (2.) They who approve themselves faithful servants to him, will find him a faithful God to them, to preserve them from the snares of the devil.

5. Satan's base insinuation and proposal. He had nothing whereof to accuse him; his character was allowedly sincere and upright; but, by a sly interrogation, *Doth Job fear God for nought?* he would insinuate, that his views were mercenary, and his service at bottom hypocritical. He enumerates, with a kind of envious grief, the many and singular mercies that he enjoyed; and therefore would infer, that if Job did serve God, he was well paid for it; but let God strip him of his worldly comforts, and he would soon see an alteration: *He will curse thee to thy face*. Such a severe trial Satan hoped would shake his fidelity; at least, his own malice would be gratified in Job's misery. *Note*; (1.) The commendations of others in the ears of envy grate harsh discord. (2.) Worldly ends and mercenary motives are still made, by Satan's instruments, the accusations against those whose conduct admits no evil thing justly to be said of them. They cannot prove them vile like themselves, therefore they will call them hypocrites. (3.) A sly question often conveys the vilest insinuation. (4.) They who use imprecations and oaths in common, shew with what master they have been, though even the devil here speaks with more reserve than many profane swearers, who openly blaspheme God, and invoke horrid vengeance on their souls.

6. God permits the trial that he suggested; *all that he hath is in thy power*. And this he does, not to gratify Satan's malice, or as doubting of Job's integrity; but to confound the devil, to make Job's graces appear more eminent, and to glorify the greatness of his own power and

before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD.

2 And the LORD said unto Satan, From whence comest thou? And Satan answered the LORD, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.

3 And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that *there is none like him in the earth*, a perfect and an upright

love in his support and salvation. *Only upon himself put not forth thine hand*. The devil's power is limited: He who permits his wickedness saith to him, Thitherto mayest thou go, but no farther; and this should ever encourage the children of God against despair.

7. Satan immediately proceeds to put in force the permission that he had received; eager to do mischief, and hoping, it may be, to prevail against this holy man, who sat secure, and little apprehended the impending storm. *Note*; Every moment we are in jeopardy, nor can foresee what is plotting against us by the prince of the power of the air.

4thly, We have,

1. The deceitful calm which preceded the terrible storm. The days of feasting were begun, the tillage going forward, the cattle grazing in fat pastures, and peace and prosperity seemed to reign in all Job's house. *Note*; In our happiest estate we had need ever rejoice with trembling.

2. The sudden storm arises, and successive messengers bring the most doleful tidings, each on the other's heels pursuing, till the last completes the wretched tale, and adds to the universal destruction of his substance, the utter desolations of his family. His cattle and servants at plough are attacked by a roving band of Sabeans; the men slain, the oxen and asses taken; his sheep, with the shepherds, burnt up with lightning; his camels seized, and his servants slaughtered by the Chaldeans; and last, and worst of all, his children buried together under the ruins of their elder brother's house, struck by the resistless whirlwind: afflictions so many, great, and aggravated, in which not only the hand of man appeared, but the fire of God was employed, that they seemed to bespeak his displeasure, and the vanity of all that integrity and uprightness which Job had so carefully maintained. *Note*; (1.) The children of God must not count it strange if evil upon evil pursue them; it is not to destroy, but to prove them. (2.) There are great depths in God's providential dealings, which now we cannot fathom. (3.) If the devil had but permission, he could soon arm his instruments for our destruction; but he is bound. (4.) The loss of a child is a bitter trial, his sudden death still more afflictive; but to lose many, all at once, in the midst of gaiety, and after every other earthly comfort was gone, this, to nature, would seem quite insupportable; but what cannot divine grace enable us to bear? Are any thus afflicted? let them remember the patience of Job.

5thly, Now behold the awful change which one short day has made; the greatest man of the east stripped of every comfort, naked and destitute. Well may we say

of

man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause.

4 And Satan answered the LORD, and said, Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life.

5 But put forth thine hand now, and touch

his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face.

6 And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life.

7 ¶ So went Satan forth from the presence of the LORD, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown.

8 And he took him a potsherd to scrape

of all this world, *Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.* Yet hath not Satan gained the least advantage; the darker the scene, the brighter shine the graces of the holy sufferer.

1. He felt with deepest sensibility the afflicting tidings, and with the most expressive signs of bitter anguish *rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground.* His grief was great; and was there not a cause? yet no indecent rage, no rash extravagance appears: he felt as a man, he mourned as a believer. *Note;* (1.) Religion never requires stoical apathy, but patient submission. (2.) Mourning for the dead is the tribute that we owe to humanity; only let us not sorrow as those who have no hope.

2. His resignation and piety appear most distinguished. *He worshipped:* far from being driven to curse God, as Satan vaunted he would, he blesses the hand which smote him, and humbly submits to the divine disposal. He said, *Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and brought nothing into this world, and naked shall I return thither,* to the dust from whence I came, and can carry nothing out of the world: if God, therefore, please to strip him of all, he is but as he was born, and as he must be when he dies. He acknowledges God's sovereign right to all that he possessed; *The Lord gave,* out of his undeserved bounty, and, when he pleases, may resume his gifts: *the Lord hath taken away,* nor have we any cause to complain: they were his own; and that he hath lent them to us so long, deserves our thankful acknowledgment; *blessed be the name of the Lord.* *Note;* (1.) No afflictions must indispose us for God's worship; the more we feel, the more need have we of his grace to support us. (2.) The consideration of the near approach of death, when we must be stripped of all, should wean our affections from a perishing world. (3.) Every blessing is God's gift, and every suffering from his hand, or by his permission, whatever instrument is employed. This, therefore, should make us acknowledge him in all, bless the gracious giver for the loan, and restore it, without murmuring, whenever he demands it. (4.) Whatever we lose, enough is left to deserve our thankfulness, and to engage our praise. (5.) Where God bestows a spirit of meekness and patient submission, he leaves a greater blessing behind than any outward thing of which his providence deprives us.

3. God bears testimony to Job's gracious disposition. *In all this Job sinned not:* his grief was not excessive, his patience was exemplary, and his faith unshaken: *nor charged God foolishly;* did not blaspheme as Satan hoped, nor arraign the wisdom, mercy, or goodness of God in this afflictive dispensation. *Note;* In great trials,

God gives his believing people great grace, and then we can do all things through Christ strengthening us.

## CHAP. II.

*Ver. 1. Again there was a day]* *Again it was the day.* Heath.

*Ver. 3. To destroy him without cause]* The most that can be meant by this expression is, *without his desert,* (according to the usual way of speaking, for, strictly speaking, we all deserve hell;) or without any signal guilt to draw upon him so signal a calamity: not but that there might be other very weighty causes for it; for the divine wisdom, we may be sure, neither does nor suffers any thing without cause, i. e. without a sufficient reason. That good men are sometimes extremely afflicted, and that not only in their outward estate, but in their persons, as Job was, is a fact too obvious to be denied; (see John, ix. 3.) and whether God permits wicked spirits or wicked men, or any thing else, to be the immediate instrument of a good man's sufferings, it makes no alteration in the thing itself. To all this it may be added, that the words will bear a different construction. They are translated by Junius and Tremellius, *Hast thou considered my servant Job, that he still retains his integrity? and in vain hast thou excited me to destroy him:* and by Houbigant. *He still retains his integrity, after thou hast excited me against him, that I might trouble him in vain.* See Peters.

*Ver. 4. Skin for skin]* A proverbial expression, to denote the great value in which life is held; inasmuch that a man, to preserve it, would suffer even his skin to be torn off. It may signify also, that a man, in order to save his life, would willingly suffer himself to be stripped of all his fortunes. The words *נפש בעד נאפסו*, rendered *for his life*, might be more properly rendered, *for his person.* The question here was not about his life; Satan had not the impudence to desire his life; but only to smite him in *his bone*, and in *his flesh*; and accordingly, the permission given him in the 6th verse implies this restriction, *beware thou touch not his life.* The rendering the word *נפש* *nepeš*, by *person*, is not unusual, as may be seen by any one who will consult the Concordances. See Heath and Schultens.

*Ver. 5. He will curse thee]* *Blaspheme thee.*

*Ver. 7. So went Satan forth]* It has been objected, I. That it does not seem likely that Satan should appear in such good company as the sons of God; nor, II. That God should permit him to afflict Job in this manner, only to satisfy the wicked sycophant that Job was a man of integrity. As to the first objection, we grant that such company is too good for him: but he who can sometimes transform himself into an angel of light, may affect also to appear

himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes.

9 ¶ Then said his wife unto him, Dost

thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.

10 But he said unto her, Thou speakest as

appear in company with angels of light, and may impudently intrude himself with them. If good angels are sent forth to mankind, in order to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation, and if Satan also walketh about among men, seeking whom he may devour; it is neither impossible nor improbable that the latter may sometimes present himself in company with the former before the Lord. As to the second objection, we must own that it would be of force if there were any truth in it: but, since the text affords no sufficient grounds for the poor suggestion, and God might have higher ends to answer in that affair than this suggestion hints, the pretended difficulty is easily got over, and so the literal construction of the text may still be the true one: nevertheless, I prefer the figurative construction in the present instance; not condemning those who prefer the literal, nor commending such as are dogmatical and positive in either. I am of opinion with those who think that the structure of the book of Job is of the dramatic kind; relating true history, but curiously embellished with many very lively decorations, such as are not to be interpreted up to the strictness of the letter, but serve to convey an excellent meaning or moral to the pious reader. The prophetic style is generally full of lofty thoughts and bold figures or emblems, and abounds with parables; and Job himself, who perhaps was author of the principal part of the book, has been deservedly reckoned by learned men in the number of prophets. See Waterland's Script. Vind. part iii. p. 14.

Ver. 8. *And he took him a potsberd, &c.*] It is plain that the disease of Job was cuticular, says Dr. Mede; and it is as certain that the bodies of the Hebrews were (in those hot countries) very liable to ulcers of the skin; upon which account, learned men think it was, that they were forbidden the eating of swine's flesh; which, as it affords a gross nourishment, and not easily perspirable, is very improper food in such constitutions; as by how much hotter the countries were which they inhabited (such as the Desarts of Arabia), the more severely these disorders raged. There is another much worse disease, so frequent in Egypt that it is said to be *endemic* there, though it may also be engendered in this hot country; I mean the *elephantiasis*. Perhaps it was this, which is nearly of the same nature with the leprosy, that had afflicted the body of our righteous man. The doctor remarks further, that it is not Job himself, nor his friends, but the author of the book, who attributes his calamities to Satan; for this writer's intention seems to be, to shew, by a striking example, that the world is governed by the providence of Almighty God; and as the holy angels, whose ministry God makes use of in distributing his bountiful gifts, punctually execute all his commands; so Satan himself, with his agents, are under the power of God, and cannot inflict any evils on mankind without the divine permission. Possibly it may be agreeable to our readers to hear something further of this learned writer's opinion of the book

of Job in general; which, says he, may justly be esteemed the most ancient of all books whereof we have any certain account: for some are of opinion, that it was written in the time of the Patriarchs; many others, that it was composed about the days of Moses, and even by Moses himself; and there are but few who think it posterior to him. For my part, I embrace the learned Lightfoot's opinion, that it was composed by Elihu, one of Job's companions, chiefly because he therein speaks of himself as a writer; and if so, it will appear to be older than the days of Moses. I take it to be a dramatic poem, composed upon a true history, and perhaps with this design, that, from the example of this illustrious and upright, yet afflicted and most miserable man, the people of Israel might learn to bear with patience all those evils and hardships which they were daily suffering in their Egyptian captivity; nor can there be found, in my opinion, in this kind of writing, any thing more admirable, and better adapted to move the passions, than this piece; whether we regard the sublimity and elegance of its style, its natural descriptions, or the propriety of the characters ascribed to all the persons concerned in it. See his *Medica Sacra*, cap. i. and Scheuchzer, tom. vi. p. 15.; see also the Reflections on this chapter.

Ver. 9, 10. *Dost thou still retain thine integrity? &c.*] The word *תָּמָא* *tam*, is the same in chap. xxvii. 5. and there rendered *integrity*. *God forbid that I should justify you*, says Job, in answer to the uncharitable suspicions of his friends; till I die I will not remove my integrity from me: which, it is evident, cannot be meant of his religion (as a learned writer on this book supposes); for Job's friends never said any thing to him to tempt him to renounce his religion; but, to make him disclaim or renounce his integrity, they said a great deal. It was, indeed, the chief design of their harangues to bring him to confess himself guilty of some secret crimes, for which they supposed the hand of God was so severe upon him. Job's refusing to do this, is what he there calls *holding fast his integrity*; and so bishop Patrick; *Till I die, &c.* "I will sooner die than confess the guilt you charge me withal." Why, then, may we not understand the very same expression in the same sense in this speech of Job's wife? For she upbraids him in just the same strain that the friends did; *dost thou still retain thine integrity?*—BLESS [not curse] God, and die; i. e. "Dost thou still persist in the maintaining that thou art innocent? Bless God, by a confession of those secret sins for which he thus afflicts thee, and so yield thyself up to death?" for I suppose she thought his case remediable. *Bless God*, in this place, may be used in the same sense as, *give glory to God*, in the speech of Joshua to Achan; see Josh. vii. 19. Bishop Warburton himself acknowledges, that *בָּרַךְ* *barek*, &c. is, literally, *Bless God*; but he would have it spoken ironically; which is very unlikely, considering the calamitous estate they were both in; for the wife must feel her share, if she had any feeling at all; and therefore the speech, we have reason to suppose,

one of the foolish women speaketh. What shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.

11 ¶ Now when Job's three friends heard of all this evil that was come upon him, they came every one from his own place; Eliphaz the Temanite, and Bildad the Shuhite, and Zophar the Naamathite: for they had made an appointment together to come to mourn

with him and to comfort him.

12 And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven.

13 So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great.

pose, was serious. If the foregoing explication be allowed, there appear to be these two errors in her address; first, her unjust suspicions of his being guilty of some secret sins; and secondly, her rashly advising him to despair and die; to starve himself, or by some way or other put an end to his wretched life; to which Job replies, that she spoke like a weak and inconsiderate woman; [נָבָל *nabal*, one like Nabal, of a rash and unthinking, a hasty and passionate temper; see 1 Sam. xxv. 25.] that patience and an absolute resignation to the will of God was much better; for, *shall we receive good*, says he, &c.? This account of the woman's speech, we see, agrees very well with Job's reply to it; and if the words will bear a softer sense than that usually put upon them, such an equitable construction may, for any thing I know, be a piece of justice yet due to Job's wife, though she has been dead three thousand years. What may further incline us to admit a favourable sense of the words is, that the verb בָּרַךְ *barek*, properly signifies to *accolt* or *salute* a person. Thus when Elisha sent his servant *Gebazi* on a message in great haste, he bids him, *If thou meet any man, salute him not*; and, *if any man salute thee*, (the same word, בָּרַךְ *barek*, repeated) *answer him not again*, 2 Kings, iv. 29. So chap. x. 15. Jehu meets Jonadab, וַיְבָרֶכְהוּ *wayebarkehu*, and *salutes* or *accolts* him thus, *Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?* &c. This signification of the verb is confirmed by that of the nouns derived from it. As bowing the knee was used in salutation, בָּרַךְ *berek* signifies a *knee*; and as presents very often accompanied their salutations, בְּרָכָה *berakah* signifies a *gift* or *present*; so that they who take this way of investigating the proper meaning of a Hebrew word, viz. from the affinity of the root with its several branches, will easily acquiesce in this sense of the word. And it was, no doubt, the sense which the LXX had in view when they turned the woman's speech thus, εἰπὼν τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ, *say something to God*, or *address thyself to him*. Mr. Heath renders the beginning of the 10th verse more emphatically thus, *Wilt thou, even thou, speak as one of the foolish women speaketh?* expressing his surprize at hearing such advice from a wife who had so many opportunities to know better.

Ver. 11. *Eliphaz the Temanite*, &c.] Eliphaz was the son of Esau, and Teman of Eliphaz; Gen. xxxvi. 10, 11. This Eliphaz, no doubt, was of this family. Teman certainly was a city of Edom, Jer. xlix. 7. 20. Ezek. xxv. 13. Amos, i. 11, 12. *Bildad the Shuhite*; Shuah was the son of Abraham by Keturah, whose posterity is reckoned among the easterns. Perhaps he is to be placed with his brother Midian, and his brother's sons Sheba and Dedan;

see Gen. xxv. 2, 3. Dedan is a city of Edom, Jer. xlix. 7, 8. and seems to have been situated in its southern boundary, as Teman was in its western; Ezek. xxv. 13. *Zophar, the Naamathite*: among the cities which fell by lot to the tribe of Judah, bordering upon the Edomites to the south, *Naamah* is mentioned; Josh. xv. 21. 41. nor does any other occur of this name. Zophar most likely came from thence. Concerning *Elibu*, see the note on chap. xxxii. 2. From all these particulars it appears, as clearly as can be expected in a matter of this kind, that Job dwelt in Edom, and that all his friends dwelt in Arabia Petræa, or in the countries immediately adjacent. It may be proper just to observe, that the Edomites, particularly the Temanites, were remarkably celebrated for their wisdom; see Jer. xlix. 7. and Baruch, iii. 22, 23. Bishop Lowth: who observes, that, as all the speakers in this poem were Edomites or neighbouring Arabs, sprung most probably from the family of Abraham, the language of it is pure Hebrew, though the author, as it seems, was an Edomite; for it is most probable that all the posterity of Abraham, Israelites, Edomites, and Arabs, as well as Keturites as Ishmaelites, made use of the common language of their father for a very long time.

Ver. 13. *So they sat down with him upon the ground* The circumstance of Job's lying in the ashes, and his three friends with him, for seven days and seven nights together, without speaking, though it has the same poetical aspect with some other circumstances in the history, yet might be literally true, and agreeable to the manners of those ancient times, for any thing we know to the contrary, though we should understand it of an absolute silence. A long silence is a very natural effect of an extraordinary grief, which overwhelms the mind, and creates a sort of stupor and astonishment: moreover, the rules of decorum are very different in different ages and countries. Sitting on the ground is an oriental phrase, to express their passing the time in the deepest mourning. This; according to the eastern manner, was for seven days; so Joseph made a mourning for his father seven days, Gen. l. 10. We find the prophet Ezekiel (ch. iii. 15.) sitting with his brethren of the captivity by the river *Chebar*, for seven days, *and silent among them*, as the Chaldee renders it; struck dumb, as it were, at the apprehension of their present miseries, and the still greater desolation coming on his country. Ezekiel, no doubt, was very conversant with the book of Job, and by his own behaviour on this occasion takes off all suspicion of impropriety from the other. The ancient poet Æschylus represents Niobe as sitting three

## C H A P. III.

*Job detests the day of his birth; wishes that he had never been born, and complains that the thing which he feared is come upon him.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**A**FTER this opened Job his mouth, and cursed his day.

three days together on the tomb of her children, covered with a vail, and observing a profound silence. But further, from the reason here given for the silence of these three friends, namely, because *they saw that Job's grief was very great*, too great, perhaps, to admit of any long or formal consolatory discourses; we may collect that they were only silent as to this point for the first seven days; and, considering the nature of the discourse that they afterwards had with him, they would not have been at all too grave or modest, if they had been silent seven days longer. This they might have been, perhaps, had not their afflicted friend, by bursting forth into that bitter complaint in the next chapter, opened a way for them to interpose with their advice. See Peters.

**REFLECTIONS.**—1st, Restless is our hellish foe, and disappointment but sharpens his rage, and makes him return more furious to the attack. Though proved a liar, he persists in his accusations, and pretends that another trial will yet prove Job a hypocrite. They who hate God's people will submit to no evidence, but lie on in spite of conviction. We have,

1. Another solemn assembly of the sons of God, and Satan with hardened impudence appearing among them, filled with the same inveterate malice against the faithful sufferer. The same inquiries and the same answer introduce the great point in dispute, the integrity of Job; and now it might be expected, that on the issue of his own proposal he would own God's character of Job just, and take shame for his infamous insinuation concerning his hypocrisy; seeing, saith God, *he still holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movest me against him to destroy him without cause*: he rises higher under every pressure, and gains in true greatness by his losses.

2. With persevering accusation this enemy dares to support his plea; and, though baffled, pretends that it was more owing to the insufficiency of the test, than the integrity of Job, that he had not made good his allegation. *Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life*: while he himself rests in a whole skin, he can sit calm under other losses; but put forth thy hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, torture him with pain, or afflict him with sickness, and then he will curse thee to thy face. *Note*: Bodily torture is, in general, the severest trial of human patience.

3. God consents that he shall make the experiment; reserving only Job's life, he is at liberty to afflict him to the uttermost: thus purposing ultimately to make a more glorious display of the power of his grace; to preserve to future ages an eminent monument of patience under every affliction; with deeper confusion to cover this accuser of

2 And Job spake, and said,

3 Let the day perish wherein I was born, and the night in which it was said, There is a man-child conceived.

4 Let that day be darkness; let not God regard it from above, neither let the light shine upon it.

the brethren, and by these works of wickedness permit him to fill up the measure of his iniquities.

2dly, No sooner is the permission granted, than the devil is impatient to worry his prey; and while every thing that Job feels is tormenting, and every thing he hears discouraging, Satan hopes that he shall at last prevail.

1. Job is smitten from head to foot with sore boils. What was the specific disease has occasioned many conjectures: I should suppose it was no common case; but some extraordinary effort of him who has the power of death, to concenter perhaps in some sense the force of every disease in one, uniting anguish, pain, sickness, nausea, restlessness, and every other ill which flesh is heir to; while no comforter was near, no medicine to assuage, no oil to supple, no rags to cover, not even a dog to lick his sores. In the ashes he sat, a potsherd in his hand, and while with this he sought to assuage the intolerable itching, it served but to aggravate his torment. Yet, in this miserable state, no murmuring word is heard; he is dumb before God, and his soul as deeply abased, as his body is in the dust and ashes which were spread under him. *Note*: How admirable does Job appear! what a lesson to us, in pain or sickness, to keep the door of our lips from impatient complaints! See note on ver. 8.

2. The wife of his bosom becomes the tempter of his soul; and what trials can be so severe as those which come through their hands who are dearest to us? *Note*: They are bad judges of true religion, who look no farther than this present world: had we hope here only, we should be often miserable indeed.

3. Job nobly repels this fiery dart thrown at him from Satan's quiver. *Thou speakest* (says he) *as one of the foolish women speaketh*; far different language should flow from those lips which have so long been taught a wiser lesson. *What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?* With indignation he receives the suggestion; many blessings they had received at God's hand: if now he chose to afflict them, it was what with meekness they should prepare to receive, and, under all submissive, wait in hope. *Note*: (1.) When we rebuke even great provocations, we should avoid every rash or hasty expression, and do it calmly and seriously. (2.) We must never parley with vile suggestions, but reject them at once with abhorrence. (3.) In this world, good and evil are set over against each other; whatever we enjoy of the one, we may not expect exemption from the other; and to a child of God the latter usually proves the greatest blessing.

4. God bears a fresh testimony to Job's integrity, *In all did not Job sin with his lips*, never uttered a murmuring impatient word: and, whatever struggle there might be within,

5 Let darkness and the shadow of death stain it; let a cloud dwell upon it; let the blackness of the day terrify it.

6 As for that night, let darkness seize upon it; let it not be joined unto the days of the year,

let it not come into the number of the months.

7 Lo, let that night be solitary, let no joyful voice come therein.

8 Let them curse it that curse the day, who are ready to raise up their mourning.

within, hitherto grace had triumphed; and in bridling his tongue he had maintained the deserved character of a perfect man.

3dly, The afflictive circumstances of so great a man's fall and sufferings soon spread abroad; his enemies rejoiced, but his friends mourned. We have here,

1. An appointment made by three of them to come and condole with him, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, men of deep knowledge and experience. They had known Job in the days of his greatness, and were not like many others, who left him when brought low, but thought themselves then especially bound to testify their regard, and by sympathetic tears to alleviate the sorrows of the mourner. *Note;* (1.) A true friend is known in adversity, and such may be justly esteemed among the chief blessings of this life. (2.) The house of mourning will be frequented by the wife and gracious, both in charity to support others, and as a school to learn themselves.

2. Their astonishment, grief, and anguish, are painted in the strongest colours. When *afar off, they lifted up their eyes*: so changed was his countenance, so disfigured his body, so wretched his appearance, that at first they *knew him not*; but soon discovering, through the dark veil, the miserable sufferer, a burst of tears and cries testified their deep affliction; *they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven*, the tokens of expressive sorrow; *so they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights*,—probably never stirred, and in bitterness ate the bread of mourners, and mingled their drink with weeping: or, at least, each day and part of the night they spent with him, however painful and grievous the scene; and *none spake a word unto him*: in silence overwhelmed with such stupendous woe, too big for utterance; *for they saw that his grief was very great.* *Note;* (1.) Disease makes frightful changes; the dearly beloved countenance will soon be horribly ghastly; let us remember what vile bodies we have, and be abased. (2.) They who haste from the chamber of disease, and are glad to fly from the melancholy door, shew themselves strangers to true friendship, as well as unmindful of, and unprepared for, the evil days that they must shortly see. (3.) When we perceive the grief so great as to be incapable of admitting immediate consolation, we must wait till an opening offers to speak a word in season.

CHAP. III.

*Ver. 1. After this opened Job his mouth*] The days of mourning being now over, and no hopes appearing of Job's amendment, but his afflictions rather increasing, he bursts into a severe lamentation, and wishes that he had never existed, or that his death had immediately followed his birth; life, under such a load of calamity, appearing to him the greatest possible affliction. It may be proper just to remark, that the metrical part of the book begins at the third verse of this chapter.

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*Ver. 3. And the night in which it was said, &c.] And the night which said, See, a man-child is born*; Heath: who observes from Schultens, that the bearing of a son was a matter of great consequence among the Arabians; the form of their salutation to a newly-married woman being, frequently, "May you live happily, and bring forth male children." It is no wonder, therefore, that the night subsequent to the day which had conferred so great a piece of good fortune on a family should be celebrated with a general rejoicing. *Let not God regard it*, in the next verse, is rendered also by this writer, *May God not inquire after it*; and by others, *Let not God take account of it.*

*Ver. 5. Let darkness—stain it, &c.] Let darkness—claim it; let thick night involve it.* Houbigant; who observes well, that there enters nothing of pollution into the idea of darkness.

*Ver. 7. Let that night be solitary] Be full of grief.* Houbigant; which is the proper contrast to the following clause; for we here observe, once for all, that the poetry of Job is of the same kind with that of the preceding pieces in the Old Testament, in which, as we have before remarked, the latter clause corresponds to, and explains the foregoing. See the notes on Gen. xlix. and Exod. xv, &c.

*Ver. 8. Curse the day, who are ready to raise up their mourning]* Houbigant renders it, *May those curse it, who dread the day, who are ready to rouse the Leviathan.* The word קבא *kabab* rendered *curse*, says Heath, hath in the Arabic the signification of *conceiving or exciting terror*; and, being translated *dread the day*, makes better sense than the common rendering. The verse may be thus paraphrased: "Let even those who reckon the night as their protector, who dread the appearance of the day, curse this night; who are ready to awake, or arouse the Leviathan;" i. e. are weary of their lives, and are ready for the most desperate undertaking; as for waking the Leviathan, see ch. xli. Houbigant, however, is by no means satisfied with this interpretation. He thinks, that, to justify it, it should be shewn that they who rouse such monsters as the Leviathan, or crocodile, do not dread either the coming or departing day; which by no means appears to be the case. He therefore renders it, *Who prepare themselves to raise up the dragon, or serpent*, meaning the old serpent which seduced our first parents, whom they are accustomed to raise up, who use magic arts, and with whom it is common to curse the approaching day, as preventive of those arts: so that Job seems to say, that that night in which *he was conceived*, is more to be detested than that day which they detest who exercise magic arts. For my own part, I should be apt to prefer to either of these interpretations the common version; which may certainly be justified, bears a sense much less forced than either of the foregoing, and seems well to correspond with the preceding verse.

4 Z

Ver.



9 Let the stars of the twilight thereof be dark; let it look for light, but *have* none, neither let it see the dawning of the day:

10 Because it shut not up the doors of my mother's womb, nor hid sorrow from mine eyes.

11 Why died I not from the womb? *why* did I not give up the ghost when I came out of the belly?

12 Why did the knees prevent me? or why the breasts that I should suck?

13 For now should I have lain still, and been quiet, I should have slept: then had I been at rest,

14 With kings and counsellors of the earth, which built desolate places for themselves;

15 Or with princes that had gold, who filled their houses with silver:

16 Or as an hidden untimely birth I had

not been; as infants *which* never saw light.

17 There the wicked cease *from* troubling; and there the weary be at rest.

18 *There* the prisoners rest together; they hear not the voice of the oppressor.

19 The small and great are there; and the servant is free from his master.

20 Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery, and life unto the bitter *in* soul;

21 Which long for death, but it *cometh* not; and dig for it more than for hid treasures;

22 Which rejoice exceedingly, *and* are glad when they can find the grave?

23 *Why* is light given to a man whose way is hid, and whom God hath hedged in?

24 For my sighing cometh before I eat, and my roarings are poured out like the waters.

25 For the thing which I greatly feared is

*Ver. 11. Why died I not from the womb?*] The LXX render it, *in the womb*. See Jer. xx. 17. and Noldius, p. 153. The *breasts that I should suck*, in the next verse, would be rendered more properly, *the breasts which I have sucked*.

*Ver. 14. Which built desolate places*] The Hebrew word חרבות *charaboth* rendered *desolate places*, comes from an Arabic root, denoting buildings of the pompous kind; and so may signify apartments of great elegance, or the place where a monarch sits apart from the rest. This, when applied to a dead king, will denote the pompous sepulchral monuments by which monarchs, and other mighty men, in the early ages, endeavoured to preserve their memories, as the pyramids of Ægypt, the Mausoleum, and others; and indeed the manner of expression seems to glance at the former of these; as the pyramidal figure is not altogether unlike a *sword*, which is the common signification of חרב *chereb*. Heath.

*Ver. 17. The weary be at rest*] The Hebrew here יגיעי כח *yegiai koach* signifies, *The toils of power*; and these toils of the great are put in opposition to those of the slave, the meanest condition. The verse may be rendered, *There the wicked cease to be a terror, and there the toils of power are in repose*. The beginning of the 19th verse should be rendered, *The small and great are equal there*.

*Ver. 21. Which long for death*] *Who call aloud for death*. Heath.

*Ver. 23. Why is light given to a man, &c.*] There is nothing for *why is light given*, in the original. Houbigant supposes it repeated from the 20th verse; and he renders the present, *Why, to that man, whose way is dark, and intercepted against him from heaven?* But Heath, after Schultens, renders it thus: *Well might it befit the man whose way is sheltered, and whom God hath made an hedge around*.

*Ver. 24—26. For my sighing cometh before I eat*] *My*

*groaning cometh like my daily bread*. Heath. *In presence of my meat, or at my meals*, says Peters. *And my roarings are poured out like the waters*; i. e. which I then drink. After which it immediately follows: *For the fear which I feared is come upon me*. Now, why should Job's grief and sighs recur at his meals particularly, but because these would naturally put him in mind of his sons and daughters being met together at their banquets, when the house fell upon them and destroyed them? The Chaldee paraphrast thought this to be the fear which Job feared, as appears from his interpretation of the 26th verse, which he reads interrogatively, *was I not, &c.*? The paraphrase is to this purpose: Job could easily suppress his grief when he heard of the loss of his oxen and asses, nor did the other pieces of bad news disturb his rest or quiet much, till it was told him of the death of his children, and then *trouble came* upon him indeed. This is but following the *history*, which gives exactly such a description of the behaviour of Job. See ch. i. 5. And thus, understanding the *fear* here mentioned as a fear for his children, and the hope and confidence which he expresses in other places as flowing from a consciousness of his own integrity, and sincere endeavour to discharge his duty, there will be found no discordance in the passages, as some would suppose. See ch. xxix. 18. xxx. 26. and Peters.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, At last the solemn silence breaks. Big sorrows flow into his lips; and, feeling his wretchedness, *Job cursed the day* which first brought into life a miserable being, doomed to such tormenting anguish. Herein corruption prevailed; he stumbled, yet not so as to fall. In general, he still appears our admiration; and we shall see him recovering his resignation, his sin pardoned, his soul restored, and Satan's accusation of him as a hypocrite clearly confuted; and, though compassed with infirmities, in the main he is found faithful and upright, and fixed



come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me.

26 I was not in safety, neither had I rest, neither was I quiet; yet trouble came.

CHAP. IV.

*Eliphaz reproves Job, who, having consoled others in adversity, nevertheless desponds himself. He affirms, that it was a thing unheard of, for an innocent man to perish; on the contrary, that the wicked perish at the blast of God, and are destroyed for ever.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**T**HEN Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said,

fixed in his adherence to God. *Note;* The day of our birth had need be kept with humiliation, when we remember the sin of our conception, and the evil of our years; but should never be curst, since there is so blessed a hope set before us, in that Child who to us is born, and through whom we have now a prospect of endless glory. If, indeed, we should look no farther than the grave, and full in view behold those miseries which flesh is heir to, it might lead us to join Job's imprecation; but beyond the grave the prospect brightens to the eye of faith, and enables the soul, amidst its sorrows, to rejoice in hope.

2dly, 1. Tired of life, in love with death, impatiently Job expostulates, Why he died not, as an abortion, or was suffered to survive the hour of his birth? Why the knees supported him, the breasts suckled him, and robbed him of an infant grave? *Note;* (1.) Man is, of all creatures, born the most helpless; and, without the tenderest care and kind providence, he could never survive the days of helpless infancy. (2.) To quarrel with the life that God bestows, is to sin against our own mercies; and if ever in hell we curse the day of our birth, we shall have none but ourselves to blame. (3.) Fretfulness and impatience at our lot are foolish as well as sinful, and can only aggravate instead of alleviating our burdens. (4.) To desire death to be with Christ, and delivered from sin, is commendable; but to be tired of the burdens of mortality, is selfish and evil.

2. He speaks of the grave, as the desirable asylum for the wretched. There he should have enjoyed rest and ease; and, in his bed of dust, slept (as he could not now, through raging anguish) as it were on a bed of down. There he should have lain down with kings and counsellors, no longer distinguished in this cold mansion, *unless by the desolate habitations, those sepulchral monuments which they built for themselves.* There, like an untimely birth, or the still-born infant, carried from the womb to the grave, he should know no sorrow: *There the wicked cease from troubling;* Satan no more tempts, nor wicked men vex and persecute: there the weary pilgrim reposes: the prisoners are there at ease, nor hear the clamorous voice of their oppressor or creditor; and the slave ceases his labour, free from his cruel master's yoke: the small and great are there mixed promiscuously, and no distinction marks the wise man from the fool. *Note;* (1.) Though

2 *If we assay to commune with thee, wilt thou be grieved? but who can withhold himself from speaking?*

3 Behold, thou hast instructed many, and thou hast strengthened the weak hands.

4 Thy words have upholden him that was falling, and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees.

5 But now it is come upon thee, and thou faintest; it toucheth thee, and thou art troubled.

6 *Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, thy hope, and the uprightness of thy ways?*

the troubles of life must not make us impatient under them, the shadows of death will be welcome to the afflicted believer. (2.) Death is the terror of many of those called the great, because their honours cannot follow them: happy only and truly great are they who, after death, expect their crown. (3.) It is a comfort to the holy soul which dwells in this disordered world, troubled with the communication of the wicked, that yet a moment, and they will for ever cease from troubling.

CHAP. IV.

*Ver. 1. Then Eliphaz the Temanite]* The three friends who came to comfort Job, disgusted, as it seems, with the bitterness of his complaint, change their purpose, and, instead of consolation, vent the severest reproaches against him. The eldest of these three extraordinary comforters condemns his impatience; desires Job to recollect himself; not to give way to fruitless lamentations, but to put in practice those lessons which he had often recommended to others; *ver. 3—6.* He reminds him of that (as they thought) infallible maxim, that "those who reap misery must have sown iniquity;" a maxim which he confirms by his own particular experience, and which he supposes was assented to by all mankind: and, in the display of this maxim, he throws in many of the particular circumstances attending Job's calamity; intimating, that he must have been a great, though secret oppressor, and that therefore the breath of God had blasted him at once, *ver. 7—11;* and he confirms the truth of his principles by a revelation which he says was made to him in a vision; *ver. 12.* to the end. See Bishop Lowth and Heath.

*Ver. 2. If we assay to commune with thee, &c.]* This verse contains an apology for what Eliphaz was about to say, and is well rendered by Houbigant thus: *If I should attempt a discourse against thee, thou wilt take it ill; but who can refrain from such discourse?* In the following verses he proceeds to put Job in mind, that he had instructed many how to bear afflictions, and that his good advice had been effectual to the healing of their griefs; that, therefore, it would ill become him, now that it was his own time to suffer, to forget the lessons which he had taught, and to deliver himself up to despair, as he had seemed to do by the whole tenor of his speech. The several images of *weak hands, feeble knees, &c.* contain a fine

7 Remember, I pray thee, who *ever* perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off?

8 Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.

9 By the blast of God they perish, and by the breath of his nostrils are they consumed.

10 The roaring of the lion, and the voice of the fierce lion, and the teeth of the young lions, are broken.

11 The old lion perisheth for lack of prey, and the stout lion's whelps are scattered abroad.

12 Now a thing was secretly brought to me, and mine ear received a little thereof.

13 In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth on men.

14 Fear came upon me, and trembling, which made all my bones to shake.

15 Then a spirit passed before my face; the hair of my flesh stood up:

16 It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof: an image *was* before mine eyes, *there was* silence, and I heard a voice, *saying*,

17 Shall mortal man be more just than God? shall a man be more pure than his Maker?

poetical description of affliction. See Peters and Heath.

Ver. 6. *Is not this thy fear, thy confidence, &c.*] Eliphaz points out to Job, in these words, the proper refuge of the afflicted; that their trust or confidence should be in God. *Is not thy fear thy confidence, &c.* that is, "Thy fear of God should be thy confidence." Houbigant renders it, *Was not thy religion thy confidence, thy hope the integrity of thy manners?* There is another sense which may be given to the passage, and which Mr. Heath prefers; *Is not thy fear thy folly, thy hope, and the integrity of thy ways?* That is, "Does not thy fear proceed from some folly and wickedness thou hast been guilty of? Or, if thou art innocent, ought not thy hope to keep pace with thine integrity?" For, *remember, who ever perished, &c.*?" The *vau*, or conjunction *and*, as some interpreters judge, should be before *thy hope*; and then the construction, *say they*, will be plainer; *and thy hope the integrity of thy ways*: but there are several examples where the *vau* is thus postponed, and that with elegance. See Peters.

Ver. 7, 8. *Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, &c.*] *Recollect, I pray thee, &c.* Eliphaz here begins to shew what he suspected. The strong term he uses, *who ever perished, being innocent?* and his adding what himself had observed of the punishment which sometimes befalls wicked men, contains a shrewd insinuation that he believed Job to have been guilty of some secret sins for which the hand of God was thus heavy on him. It will be proper here to remark in general, that it is natural for men earnest in dispute to carry matters to an extreme on either hand, or at least to be sometimes very unguarded in their expressions; and therefore we are not to interpret in the strictest and severest sense every word which fell from these unwary combatants. For example, from the present verse, or from any similar expressions in their following speeches, we are not to conclude, that these friends really believed that there never was an instance of the righteous being cut off untimely, but merely that it much seldomer happened thus than otherwise. The strength of the expression is to be allowed for, by attending to the design that they had upon Job, and their zeal in prosecuting it. See note on ch. vii. 20. and Peters.

Ver. 9, 10. *By the blast of God they perish, &c.*] *By*

*the breath of God they perish; for, at the blast of his anger, the roarings of the lion, and the growling of the black lion, are hushed, and the teeth of the young lions are broken.* Heath.

Ver. 11. *The old lion perisheth for lack of prey*] Schultens imagines, that *this want of prey* was not so much owing to its scarcity, as to its being torn from the mouth and talons of this ravenous creature. But it may be imputed with more probability to his not daring to venture out of his den in search of prey, amidst the roar of thunder, the blaze of lightning, and the violence of the storm, that *blast of God* mentioned in the preceding verse. This sense seems to be confirmed by the word *יתפּרדוּ* *yithparadu* which we render, *are scattered abroad*; the meaning of which is, they are so affrighted by the lightning and thunder, that, *being separated*, they fly every one a different way, and cannot find the path which leads to the den of the lions their dam. See Schultens and Heath.

Ver. 12. *Mine ear received a little thereof*] The word *שמעתי* *shemets* rendered *little*, may be derived from an Arabic one, signifying a *string of pearls*. So the oracle that he here mentions was a collection of precious observations delivered to him in the way of vision, says Heath; who renders the verse, *Moreover, somewhat oracular was secretly imparted to me, and mine ear took in a precious lesson from it.* Houbigant renders the last clause, *of which mine ear took in the whisper.* See Parkhurst on the word *שמעתי*.

Ver. 13. *In thoughts from the visions, &c.*] *In the hurry of the visions*; Heath, who observes from Schultens, that the word properly signifies an absence or confusion of mind, proceeding from a sudden perturbation. Houbigant renders it, *in those appearances of dreams which come by night.*

Ver. 14. *Fear came upon me*] As in a poem every thing is or ought to be alive, so *fear* is here made a person, who comes up to him as an officer of justice, and arrests him. See Heath, and Peters, p. 204.

Ver. 16. *It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof, &c.*] *It stood still indeed, but I knew not its form: the appearance vanished from before mine eyes, but I heard a voice.* Houbigant. Dr. Grey renders it, *he stood, but I knew not his form, nor the image before mine eyes: there was a profound calm, and I heard a voice.* It is supposed by this and many other commentators, that the word *רוּחַ* *ruach*, rendered *spirit*, in this and the 15th verse, should be rendered a wind:

18 Behold, he put no trust in his servants; and his angels he charged with folly:

19 How much less in them that dwell in

houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust, which are crushed before the moth?

20 They are destroyed from morning to

a wind: then a wind passed swiftly before my face; which wind they suppose, as in the case of Elijah, to have been the prelude to the divine presence. See 1 Kings, xix. 11. and Gen. i. 2. But see my own opinion in the Reflections.

Ver. 18. His angels be charged with folly] Schultens observes, that the Hebrew word rendered *charged*, signifies to discern or take notice of; see Isai. xli. 20.; and that the word rendered *folly*, signifies a defect or imperfection; not one that implies any degree of viciousness, but only what appears of no estimation when compared with the attributes of the perfect Deity. Houbigant renders the clause, and in his angels mutability was found.

Ver. 19. How much less in them, &c.] How much more in them. Heath. The expression, *dwelling in houses of clay*, is used with great propriety to convey the idea of the frailty of the human nature: whose foundation is in the dust, is a poetical expression to denote the formation of man from the dust of the ground. There are various opinions concerning the next clause; who are crushed before the moth, עָשׂוּ לִפְנֵי אֵשׁ like or after the manner of the moth. "I retain this interpretation," says Mr. Hervey, "both as it is most suitable to my purpose, and as it is patronised by some eminent commentators, especially the celebrated Schultens; though I cannot but give the preference to the opinion of a judicious friend, who would render the passage more literally, before the face of a moth; making it to represent a creature so exceedingly frail, that even a moth flying against it may dash it to pieces: which, besides its closer correspondence with the exact import of the Hebrew, presents us with a much finer image of the most extreme imbecility; for it certainly implies a far greater degree of weakness, to be crushed by the feeble flutter of the feeblest creature, than only to be crushed as easily as that creature, by the hand of man. The French version is very expressive and beautiful; à la rencontre d'un vermissau."

Ver. 20. They are destroyed from morning to evening, &c.] From morning until evening they are destroyed; for want of discernment they perish together: Heath; who renders the next verse thus: Is not the excellence which was in them pulled up by the roots? They die, but not in wisdom. This seems to allude to the corruption of human nature by the fall.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Having heard Job's impatient complaint, Eliphaz can no longer keep silence.

1. He apologizes for the part that he is about to take, but hopes that Job will not be offended if he and his friends essay to apply some remedy to his disease; and, as they apprehended his wound needed to be laid open, he begs he will not think that unkindness, but friendship, dictates his discourse. He would not willingly grieve him; but he intimates, that in this case silence would be criminal, and that God's glory, as well as Job's good, required them to deal with him faithfully.

2. He suggests the unbecoming tenour of his conduct

under his present trials, so contrary to the advice that himself had often given to others. Thou hast instructed many how they should walk before God, and taught them the submission due to his holy will: thou hast strengthened the weak hands that hung down as ready to faint, under the pressure of heavy afflictions; thy words have upholden him that was falling, either by temptation into sin, or by trouble into despair; and thou hast strengthened the feeble knees, encouraged them to support their burdens, and helped them with good advice, and kind consolation; but now it is come upon thee, the same trials which he had taught others how to bear; and thou faintest, or art weary, sinking under the burden as insupportable; it toucheth thee, as if Job's present griefs were but light afflictions, but a slight stroke of correction; and thou art troubled, like the raging sea which cannot rest. Hence he seems to intimate, that, as his present behaviour so little corresponded to his own advice, it was to be feared that his former conduct had been insincere. Note; To make light of others' trials, and to exaggerate their impatience under them, shews the absence of the spirit of love, which would be glad to plead the excuse of the tempted, and from their circumstances engage us to make the most candid allowances.

3. He charges him with hypocrisy in his former professions; insinuates, that his fear of God, his confidence in his regard, his hope of things unseen, and the uprightness of his ways, however exemplary they might have seemed, were but appearances; that at bottom there was nothing in them; and his present state, as he concludes, evidently proved this, since God would not afflict a truly righteous man, nor would such a one be thus impatient in his trouble. Note; (1.) The charge of hypocrisy is one which is the oftenest laid against God's people, and among the sorest to be borne. (2.) A censorious spirit is exceedingly sinful; they will have judgment without mercy, who have shewn no mercy. (3.) We must not judge of a man's state from a particular failing. He may be truly faithful at bottom, who on a violent temptation may yet be moved from his own steadfastness.

2dly, Eliphaz here lays down two positions in support of his former charge that Job must be a hypocrite because of his afflictions.

1. That the innocent and righteous never perish under such heavy visitations; but his case appeared desperate, therefore he was not innocent or righteous, as he pretended. Alas! Job, to whose experience he appealed, might easily have confuted him with the death of Abel, and the sufferings of Jacob. Note; The conclusions of the revilers of God's people are usually drawn from premises as weak and insufficient to support them.

2. That wickedness was ever attended with, or followed by, temporal punishment; and for this he vouches his own experience, in the case of sinners in general; who, sowing iniquity, and expecting to reap comfort, find the harvest misery; their crop blasted with the divine displeasure, and consumed as corn rooted up by the whirlwind:

evening: they perish for ever without any regarding it.

21 Doth not their excellency *which is in them go away?* they die, even without wisdom.

wind: and in particular he had seen the proud oppressors thus perish; who, ravening like lions, fierce and greedy of prey, filled their houses with spoil; but soon, by God's judgment, their teeth were broken, the old lion was famished with hunger, and their whelps, their families, were scattered abroad. Though he speaks of the case of others, there seems to be an oblique glance at Job's situation, as if, like this old lion, he had by extortion filled his den, but now was ready to perish for want, and his children had been slain by the breath of God. Hence he would infer his wickedness as the cause of his sufferings; but, whatever the experience of Eliphaz might be, greater and more numerous instances were easy to be collected, where the wicked prospered long, perhaps died in plenty, and saw no bitterness. Such was profane Esau's case; and Lamech seems a still more daring and prosperous sinner.

3dly, To reprove Job's impatient complaints, Eliphaz proceeds to relate a vision from God. The purport of it is, from the view of the frailty, folly, and sinfulness of mortal man, to silence every murmur against his dispensations, and to lead his friend to more humble thoughts of himself.

1. He describes the manner of this revelation made to him: *a thing, or a word of divine wisdom was secretly brought to me, stole upon me unawares, and mine ear received a little thereof*; either his capacity was too weak to retain the whole, or what was revealed was but a small portion of the will of God. *In thoughts of deep and serious meditation from visions of the night, which were vouchsafed him, when deep sleep falleth upon men, to whose spirit nevertheless God hath access, fear came upon me, and trembling*; an awful sense of the Divine Majesty affected his mind, and communicated to his very body a sacred tremor, *which made all my bones to shake, as if each sinew was unstrung, and every joint loosened.* Note; (1.) God hath secret ways of access to the souls of men; his people know it, to their comfort; his enemies feel it, to their terror. (2.) Our highest attainments are poor and inconsiderable; we know but a part, a very little part of God's ways. (3.) When we lie down with good thoughts, we may hope that our very dreams shall be holy. (4.) Though most visions of the night are vain and incoherent, and that to be troubled by them would be superstitious folly; yet there are some, I doubt not, which bear the mark of God's hand, and deserve our solemn attention.

2. The messenger who brought it: *a spirit, one of those bright angelic hosts who minister to the heirs of salvation, passed before my face; struck with surprise and dread, the hair of my head stood up, erect as the bristles of the porcupine. It stood still, as if prepared to speak, but I could not discern the form thereof*, perhaps the brightness of the surrounding glory prevented him: *an image was before my eyes, terrible to behold; there was silence, an awful pause, and then I heard a voice distinct and audible.* Note; (1.) Though apparitions, in general, are the creatures of fear and folly, yet why should it be thought incredible that God may on

important occasions thus send from the world of spirits? (2.) The weakness of our nature shudders, and the consciousness of guilt terrifies us, at the apprehension of a visit from the unseen world. (3.) When God is about to speak, silence and attention become our prostrate souls before him.

3. The message is weighty and important: *shall mortal man, sinful, and therefore weak and frail, be more just than God, or rather be just before God, pretend to affect innocence, or stand at his bar as righteous? Behold, note it with deep attention, he put no trust in his servants, his angels; did not place his confidence in them, as in any measure supporting the glory of his throne; he wanted them not: (nay, he chargeth them with folly; compared with himself, their wisdom is foolishness:)* *how much less in them that dwell in houses of clay, in man, a worm, whose body is but a vessel of finer clay, whose foundation is in the dust, weak and tottering before every blast of disease or accident, which are crushed before the moth; if but such a weak worm push against it, so feeble is the structure, the house is broken through, or more easily crushed than the soft moth between our fingers. They are destroyed from morning to evening, thousands dying daily and continually, or every day their bodies hasten to their dissolution; they perish for ever, are cut off from the land of the living, no more to return, without any regarding it; they themselves little expecting it, and the living usually lay it not to heart. Doth not their excellency which is in them go away, or with them?* all the endowments of their mind, the beauty, health, and strength of their bodies, and all their pomp, greatness, and affluence, vanish as the cloud of the morning; *they die even without wisdom, it perishes with them; or forgetting to consider their latter end, they die unprepared.* Now, if God puts no trust in the angels, and charges them with folly, how much less dependance can be placed on miserable, weak, and sinful man; and how much more chargeable is he with folly and frailty! man, therefore, can in nowise arrogate to himself a wisdom and righteousness beyond his maker, or think of appearing justified in the eyes of his purity. Note; (1.) To be discontent with the dispensations of God's providence is, in fact, to impeach his wisdom, justice, and goodness, as inferior to our own. (2.) If the angels are in God's fight thus weak and imperfect, and in some sense he places no confidence in them, what folly for man to make them the objects of worship, or to direct his prayer unto them! (3.) The more we consider the vanity and frailty of our life, and the nearness and certainty of death, the lowlier thoughts of ourselves it will beget in us. (4.) It were the height of folly, nay of madness, for a sinful dying worm to plead before God his worth and excellence. (5.) It is among the strong proofs of the insensibility and thoughtlessness bound up in the heart of a sinner, that amid such daily warnings around him, and such frequent notices within him, he lives so carelessly, and leaves death, with all its awful consequences, far out of his sight.

## C H A P. V.

*Eliphaz sheweth that the wicked are always punished by an avenging God; on which account he highly extols the providence of God: he exhorts Job not to despise the chastening of the Almighty, and to attend diligently to what he says.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**C**ALL now, if there be any that will answer thee; and to which of the saints wilt thou turn?

2 For wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one.

3 I have seen the foolish taking root: but

suddenly I cursed his habitation.

4 His children are far from safety, and they are crushed in the gate, neither is there any to deliver them.

5 Whose harvest the hungry eateth up, and taketh it even out of the thorns, and the robber swalloweth up their substance.

6 Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground;

7 Yet man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward.

## C H A P. V.

*Ver. 1. Call now, &c.]* Eliphaz here urges further, that, supposing Job had been guilty of no very atrocious crime, yet the common frailties of human nature were abundantly sufficient to account for any afflictions which it should please God to lay upon man; but he takes care to let Job know, that they had a far worse opinion of him, whom he treats as profligate and abandoned, and consequently a proper object of divine vengeance: ver. 1—5. Such, he tells him, is the course of things, as was plain from revelation; and if he was not content with this, he was at liberty, if he pleased, to apply to any of the other deities, and see if he could find better treatment. But were it his case, he would endeavour to reconcile himself in a more especial manner to the true God, who was infinitely more powerful than any or all the gods of the nations, and was not only able to deliver him, but would deliver him out of all his troubles: but then it must be attended with an entire submission to him, which could never be effectual without an ample confession and restitution; thereby acknowledging the justice of God's dealing with him: ver. 17. 27. It was foolish, therefore, to fret and vex himself in vain, since death was all that he could expect as the issue in that way; whereas, if he submitted himself to God, he might expect not only a perfect restoration, but a long continuance in the enjoyments of a flourishing fortune. All this is delivered by Eliphaz in an authoritative way, as the result of an inquiry which he and his friends had made of God in Job's behalf: he had therefore nothing to do, but diligently to attend and apply himself to it, ver. 27. Heath. Schultens renders the first words of the present verse, *make appeal now, &c.*; observing, that *call and answer* here have a judicial sense, and imply, that if the patriarch should be inclined to plead not guilty, he would meet with no one, either among men or angels, who would undertake the defence of his cause: for, says he, the word קדושים *kedoshim*, rendered *saints*, signifies the angels, superintendants (under the Almighty) over this visible world. This opinion was probably of great antiquity, especially if the Septuagint version of Deut. xxxii. 8. be right: *he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the angels of God.* This and the following verse, says Heath, are a strong irony.

*Ver. 2. For wrath killeth, &c.]* "It would surely well besit the fool, that impatience should be the murder of him; and the simple, that repining should bring him to his death." Heath.

*Ver. 3. I have seen the foolish, &c.]* *I saw the profligate taking root, but I marked him out for sudden destruction.* This is the same thought as in Ps. xxxvii. 35, 36. and drawn out at length in Ps. lxxiii. See Heath and Schultens.

*Ver. 4. In the gate] In the tempest.* See ch. ix. 17. and Parkhurst on the word שפגאר *shangar*, 9.

*Ver. 5. Whose harvest, &c.]* Heath renders this verse thus: *Whose harvest the hunger-starved shall devour, and shall take it even from among the thorn-fences; and the thirsty shall swallow down their substance.* In which last clause, the author means to express the suddenness of their destruction; as quick as a thirsty man swallows liquor at a gulp: and with this the Vulgate and Syriac versions agree. Houbigant renders the verse, *Moreover, the hungry hath devoured their harvest; armed men have taken away their corn; robbers have consumed their substance.* See his note.

*Ver. 6, 7. Although affliction cometh not, &c.]* The Hebrew is rather, *For iniquity cometh not forth out of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground; i. e. As the wickedness of men does not proceed from any natural cause in the origin of things, but from their own free-will, or from the abuse of divine grace; so neither are their miseries to be considered as the effects of merely natural causes, but as the distributions of a free agent likewise, who fits men's punishments to their crimes; and hence man, being prone to sin, is necessarily born to suffer: yet man is born, &c.* But this verse would be better rendered, agreeable to the interpretation given of the preceding one, *for then man would be born to trouble as the sparks fly upward; that is, it would fall upon him naturally and necessarily, without any determination or direction of any mortal agent.* He could neither prevent it by his piety, nor hasten it by his impiety. The last clause of this verse is literally in the Hebrew, *As the sons of the burning coal lift themselves up to fly.* This agrees well with the sparks of fire, which naturally ascend. Peters. Houbigant and Heath, after some of the ancient versions, render this clause, *As the young eagles for soaring aloft.*

*Ver.*

8 I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my cause :

9 Which doeth great things and unsearchable ; marvellous things without number :

10 Who giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the fields :

11 To set up on high those that be low ; that those which mourn may be exalted to safety.

12 He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform *their* enterprife.

13 He taketh the wise in their own craftiness : and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong.

14 They meet with darkness in the daytime, and grope in the noon day as in the night.

15 But he saveth the poor from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty.

16 So the poor hath hope, and iniquity stoppeth her mouth.

17 Behold, happy is the man whom God

correcteth : therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty :

18 For he maketh sore, and bindeth up : he woundeth, and his hands make whole.

19 He shall deliver thee in six troubles : yea, in seven there shall no evil touch thee.

20 In famine he shall redeem thee from death : and in war from the power of the sword.

21 Thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue : neither shalt thou be afraid of destruction when it cometh.

22 At destruction and famine thou shalt laugh : neither shalt thou be afraid of the beasts of the earth.

23 For thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field : and the beasts of the field shall be at peace with thee.

24 And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle shall be in peace ; and thou shalt visit thy habitation, and shalt not sin.

25 Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great, and thine offspring as the grass of the earth.

*Ver. 8, 9. I would seek unto God, &c.]* i. e. (For Eliphaz had precluded him from all attempts to justify himself in the foregoing part of his advice.) "I would apply to God with a full and free confession of those sins which have drawn this sad calamity upon me : to God, who was able to do wonders, as he presently adds, and who could and would restore him to his former happy state, if he saw him truly penitent for his past transgressions ; for this is the whole purport of the following part of his speech ; namely, to give him hopes of a happy turn to his condition, if he would do what he thought was absolutely necessary to be done in this case ; that is, make a frank confession of those secret crimes and enormities which had brought down this severe chastisement upon him. See Peters, and the 78th Psalm.

*Ver. 11. That those which mourn, &c.]* That the obscure may be put in a place of safety. See 2 Sam. xxii. 3. and Heath.

*Ver. 15. He saveth the poor from the sword, from their mouth, &c.]* Schultens imagines that it should be read, *from the sword which proceedeth out of his mouth* ; and this reading receives no small confirmation from Psalm lvii. 4. and lxiv. 3. But Mr. Heath renders it, *He delivereth the desolate out of their mouth, and the poor from the hand of the mighty.*

*Ver. 21. Thou shalt be hid, &c.]* If at any time a fire shall rage, thou shalt be hid ; nor shalt thou fear imminent ruin. Eliphaz seems to hint at those wicked persons who have been struck with fire from heaven, such as the inhabitants of Sodom. Houbigant. Heath renders the verse, *From*

*the scourge of detraction thou shalt be hidden ; yea, thou shalt not fear the destroyer when he cometh.* See Psalm xxxi. 20. One observes upon the former clause of this verse, "This is here reckoned by Eliphaz among the acts of God's omnipotency in the protection of those whom he favours ; as if it were a more supreme degree of his power than a deliverance from famine, war, or death, and much easier to escape those than this. Indeed the tongue has so many ways of doing mischief, so much art to wound, that no man can put himself into a secure posture of defence against it, nor without the immediate shelter of God himself be screened from it. He, and he only, can hide us from the scourge of tongues, or wipe out the marks of that scourge, and deliver us from all-devouring words."

*Ver. 22. At destruction and famine]* At savage and plundering.

*Ver. 23. Thou shalt be in league with the stones of the field]* Houbigant reads, *For there shall be a covenant to thee with the fruits of the field* ; for I cannot acquiesce, says he, in the common interpretation ; as both what goes before, and what follows after, seems averse from it ; mention of *famine* naturally leads us to suppose that something should recur correspondent to the removal of that famine.

*Ver. 24. And thou shalt know that thy tabernacle, &c.]* Know moreover, that peace shall encompass thee as a tent ; thou shalt visit thy habitation, and not be disappointed. Heath. *Thou shalt provide for thy habitation, and shalt not be in want of any thing.* Houbigant.

*Ver.*



26 Thou shalt come to *thy* grave in a full age, like as a shock of corn cometh in in his season.

27 Lo this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou *it* for thy good.

*Ver. 26. Thou shalt come to thy grave in a full age, &c.] In old age shalt thou come to the sepulchre, as the corn is reaped upon the threshing-floor in its season. Thus Heath, more agreeably to the Hebrew.*

*Ver. 27. Know thou it for thy good] Attend thou, therefore, diligently; [לך דע דאך לא] know thou it for thyself; make application of it to thy own case;—know the original of the drawing. Heath.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Eliphaz, confident in the goodness of his cause, defies Job to contradict his assertions.

1. He bids him appeal to God or man, and he will be silenced; *call now to God, if there be any that will answer thee*, and see if he will confute the vision that I have related; or *call now to all the holy men of old*, if there be any whose case corresponds with thine, so afflicted and yet innocent, and not a parallel will be found. *And to which of the saints, or angels, wilt thou turn?* either the celestial beings, who would reject his appeal of integrity, or the saints upon earth, whose circumstances and sentiments resembled his own; therefore the charge he brought must be true, that his insincerity was the cause of his sufferings. *Note;* (1.) There are in every age some living saints, sanctified by God's word and spirit; and, though the world use the word as a term of derision, it is a title of the highest honour, and true of every real believer, who is called to be a saint as much as Paul or John. (2.) It were indeed a strong proof of the badness of our state and temper, if we had the experience of all God's saints against us; but the experience of the saints is often pleaded by those who have it least on their side.

2. He asserts the ruin of the wicked as a truth that himself had often been witness to. *Wrath killeth the foolish, or wicked, man*; the wrath of God is revealed against him, or his own hasty spirit urges him on to his ruin; and this notwithstanding his momentary prosperity. *I have seen the foolish taking root*, but destruction awaited him. *Suddenly I cursed his habitation*, not wished him evil, but foresaw the curse impending over him: *his children, the staff of his age, are far from safety, and they are crushed in the gate, buried in the ruins of their desolate houses, neither is there any to deliver them*, neither God nor man interests himself in their behalf; *whose harvest the hungry cateth up*, so that their substance is consumed, and *taketh it even out of the thorns*, leaves none behind, even so much as a handful at the hedge-side; or though fenced in with thorns, break through and plunder it, and *the robber swalloweth up their substance*. In this description of the ruin of the foolish man, there is drawn an evident invidious parallel with Job's case, whose sudden afflictions, the death of his children, and the ruin of his substance by the robbers, Eliphaz would insinuate as a proof that he shared with the wicked in their afflictions, because he had joined them in their sins. *Note;* (1.) The indulgence of our vile passions often proves fatal to ourselves. (2.) The wrath of God, in time and eternity, assuredly rests on the sinner's head, however prosperous his circumstances may appear. (3.) The wicked man must be

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a silly one; how could he else, for the sake of a momentary pleasure, rush into everlasting pain.

2dly, It was the intention of Eliphaz, not to sink Job into despair, but first to lay bare his wound, and then apply the healing balm, suggesting arguments for resignation, and how to bear his burden profitably.

1. He directs him to the origin and cause of all his trouble: *Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground*, as things fortuitous and accidental, or owing merely to second causes operating independent of God's agency (for no creature acts but under his providence and over-ruling power): *yet man is born to trouble*; since sin entered, the curse entered, and close as our shadow afflictions follow us; *as the sparks fly upward*, numerous as these, and the natural consequence of our fallen state; and this should reconcile us to suffering, and engage us to be humble for the sin which is the cause of it. *Note;* (1.) Fortune and chance are the creatures of heathenism and infidelity: we are assured, in God's word, that not a hair of our head falls to the ground without the divine knowledge, and the appointment or sufferance of God. (2.) The more we are acquainted with the sinfulness of our nature, the less reason shall we have to murmur under any affliction, since we must then acknowledge it to be less than our iniquity deserves.

2. He gives him advice how to behave himself: *I would seek unto God, or, doubtless I do seek unto God*; it is the method I myself take in my trials, and would recommend to you as doubtless the most proper and seasonable: *and unto God would I, or do I commit my cause*, in humble prayer and patient resignation, and then rest in hope. *Note;* We may safely commend what we have proved by experience to be good; and people of every age have found, that patient hope and believing prayer will not fail at last of bringing an answer of peace.

3. He enforces his admonition by considerations drawn from God's sovereign dominion, power, and equity: *which doeth great things in the works of creation and providence; and unsearchable*, beyond the deepest penetration of the wisest sages; *marvellous things* that excite our astonishment, and exceed our comprehension; and these *without number*; earth, air, and sea teem with wonders; every day new works of providence awaken our admiration; and the more we attempt to reason, the more we are lost in depths of wisdom unfathomable. How foolish then to dispute against God, and how much wiser to refer ourselves to him, who can do such wonders, and will do ever wisely! By his gracious providence, he sendeth the rain to water the earth; the poor and mourners, whose faces were black as it were with famine, see plenty restored, and themselves exalted from their low estate: such merciful assistance may they expect who wait upon him. But the crafty are disappointed in their schemes; their enterprizes prove abortive; their own snares entangle them, as birds in an evil net, and their precipitate counsels hurry them on to ruin. In the plainest circumstances they become



## C H A P. VI.

*Job sheweth that his complaints are not causeless: he wisbeth for death, wherein he is assured of comfort: he reproves his friends for their unkindness.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**B**UT Job answered and said,  
2 Oh that my grief were throughly

weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together!

3 For now it would be heavier than the sand of the sea: therefore my words are swallowed up.

4 For the arrows of the Almighty *are* within me, the poison whereof drinketh up

infatuated, and fall from the meridian of prosperity into the deepest darkness of affliction, while the helpless servants of God, against whom their tongues were maliciously let loose, and whom their arm cruelly oppressed, are delivered, to the great disappointment of iniquity, and to the encouragement of the hope of the poor, who never trust in him and are confounded. The inference that Eliphaz would draw from hence is evident; that if Job thus humbly trusted in God, he would experience a like deliverance. *Note;* (1.) The wisest become fools, when they turn from God to trust in their own understanding. (2.) The deepest laid plots of men, or devils, need not trouble God's people; there is one who sitteth in the heavens that laughs them to scorn. (3.) They who have their tempers in lowliness conformed to their circumstances, will find him near at hand who will lift them up, and restore comfort to the mourners. (4.) In the worst of times we should never quit our hope in God; for he is faithful that hath promised. (5.) Though the mouth of malignity is now open, and the hand of the oppressors heavy on God's people, their arm shall soon be broken, and their lips sealed up in everlasting silence.

3dly, Eliphaz draws his speech to a conclusion, and closes it with a view of the great and precious promises that would attend Job, if his mind were but conformed to his circumstances.

1. He warns him *not to despise the chastening of the Almighty*; though the draught be bitter, it must not be rejected, because it is the means of health: it is the rod of the Almighty, before which he may not proudly disdain to bow: it is lifted up with the most gracious design of fatherly correction, therefore not to be slighted, but submitted to with patience, heard with reverence, Micah, vi. 9. and the cup of affliction to be drank with cheerfulness. *Note;* In every affliction, our chief concern should be, not the removal, but the due improvement of it.

2. He supports his advice by stating the blessed effects which would flow from it. *Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth* by his word, or providences; it is the proof of his regard, and designed to work eminently for our good; it serves to wean the heart from earth, and urge the soul to seek more diligently the true and abiding joys of glory. The same hand also that wounds can heal, and will, no doubt, when the design of his visitation is answered. The length or repetition of our troubles should not discourage us; for out of them all God will deliver his servants; and in them preserve the souls of his faints from evil, that the wicked one touch them not. Though pale famine stalk ghastly through the land, or horrid war

with garments rolled in blood spread desolations around; though wild beasts of the desert howl and threaten to devour, or men more savage than these beasts bite with malignant teeth, and, with the scourge of the tongue, poisonous as the serpent's sting, strive to infuse their baneful calumnies, God will preserve his faithful people; they shall be fed in the time of dearth, and covered from danger under the wing of the Almighty; the creatures shall be in league with them not to hurt them; and, secure, they shall mock at the impotent malice of their foes: their houses shall be in peace; their families united in love, and defended from the evil of sin and trouble; they shall go in and out under the divine blessing, and piety and prosperity crown all their labours; their posterity shall be great and numerous; and, after beholding them fixed in comfort and affluence, they shall go down to their graves crowned with length of days, riches, and honour; and, ripe for glory as the sheaf is in the day of harvest, be gathered into the bosom of God's everlasting love. *Note;* (1.) When God wounds his faithful people, he heals, binds up their hearts with present divine consolations, and opens a way for them to escape out of every temptation; no wound so deep which he cannot cure. (2.) They who have God for their confidence may defy their foes, and triumph even in the jaws of death. (3.) A peaceable abode is a signal mercy; but the distinguishing blessing is, to be kept from sin. (4.) It is a comfort to gracious parents, to see their children's prosperity in the world, but most of all to behold their piety, for that alone can insure the abiding good. (5.) Age is ripening us for the grave; are we also ripening for glory, filled with grace as with years, full of good fruits, and bending with cheerfulness into the hands of the harvest-man, as ready for the store-house of God?

3. He begs Job's serious consideration: *Lo!* attend to what I have spoken, as the result of sound and deep experience; *this we have searched*, it is our joint sentiments, and *so it is* approved by the concurring testimony of all God's people: *hear it* then with reverence and submission, and *know thou it for thy good, or thyself*, apply it to thine own case, and receive the blessing which this discourse was intended to convey. *Note;* Great truths deserve solemn attention; and from every sermon that we hear, our future conduct should make our profiting manifest.

## C H A P. VI.

*Ver. 1. But Job answered and said]* Job begins his defence with a modest apology for venting his grief in a manner somewhat unbecoming, and begs that it may be ascribed to the great multitude and sharpness of his afflictions; ver. 3—7. But as to the advice given him by Eliphaz,

my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me.

5 Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass? or loweth the ox over his fodder?

6 Can that which is unfavoury be eaten without salt? or is there any taste in the white of an egg?

7 The things that my soul refused to touch are as my sorrowful meat.

8 Oh that I might have my request; and that God would grant me the thing that I long for!

9 Even that it would please God to destroy me; that he would let loose his hand, and cut me off!

Eliphaz, to hope for an amendment of his condition, and to address God for that purpose, he tells them that his petition to God should be of a quite different nature; namely, that he would be pleased to cut him off speedily, for that the desperateness of his condition would by no means permit him to hope for any amendment; ver. 8—13. That he could not, however, help resenting their unkind suspicions of him, that they should think him capable of such great wickedness, but, above all, should imagine him to be so abandoned as to be able to entertain a thought tending to a revolt from the Almighty; which yet they must have done, or Eliphaz would never have dared to make him such a proposition; ver. 14—20. He saw, therefore, what kind of friends he had to do with: as soon as they perceived him in a remediless condition, they began to treat him with contempt; ver. 21—27. As to his recovery, however, he tells them that they may set their hearts at ease; for if they would but consider his condition a little more attentively, they might soon be convinced that there was not the least chance of any thing of that nature, as all hopes of life were at an end with him. He begs them, therefore, not to condemn him barely on suspicion, and on the strength of general maxims; but to consider that it was possible he might be innocent of their charges; ver. 28—30. See Heath.

Ver. 2. *Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed*] Heath, after Schultens, renders this verse, *Would to God my impatience were thoroughly weighed, and that they would in like manner poise my calamities in the balances!* And the next verse he renders thus: *For now are they more in number than the sand of the sea; therefore my words burst forth with vehemence.* See Peters, p. 139.

Ver. 4. *The terrors of God, &c.*] *The terrors of the Lord confound me.* Houbigant. "This," says one, "is uttered by the patient man, when he would excuse his passion by the terror and agony that he was in. He had patience enough for the oppression and rapine of his enemies, for the unkindness and reproach of his friends, and for the cunning and malice of the devil; but he was so tormented with the sense of God's anger against him, that he could not bear that with temper: the apprehension that all those miseries, of so piercing and destroying a nature in themselves, fell upon him, not only by God's permission, to try and humble him, but proceeded directly from his indignation and resolution to destroy him, almost confounded him. When they appeared no more the arrows of his enemies levelled and shot at his greatness and prosperity, the enterprizes and designs of evil men suborned by the devil against him, but the artillery of God himself discharged upon him in his greatest displeasure and fury, he was able to stand

"the shock no longer, and thought he had some reason to pour out his complaints and lamentations with a little more earnestness; and that the grief and trouble of his mind might excuse the want of that order, and method, and deliberation, which the ease, and calm condition, and disputing humour of his friends, who were only healthy spectators of what he suffered, reproachfully required from him. Too many want this apprehension of God's anger, and the pious passion which would attend it; and find out a hundred reasons for any affliction which befalls them, in the pride, and envy, and injustice of men, before they resort to the least consideration that they flow from his displeasure towards us; and are so far from being terrified or perplexed with the sense of his anger, that they seem to be of opinion that he cannot be angry at all; otherwise they would use the same providence to prevent it, as we do towards the anger of those whom we think able or willing to do us good or harm."

Ver. 5. *Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass, &c.*] *Grass and fodder* here are a figure of abundance and tranquillity, such as the friends of Job enjoyed. To *bray* and *low* refer to expressions of grief and uneasiness. Job, therefore, with some smartness, compares his friends to a wild ass exulting in its food, and to an ox perfectly satisfied with grateful pasture; happy themselves, they had not condoled with him in his wretchedness, nor mourned with him, but rather blamed his mourning as importunate clamour, and as if he had behaved himself towards God with insolence and impatience. Schultens.

Ver. 6. *Or is there any taste in the white of an egg*] Job's indignation being raised, he expresses in metaphor how absurd and how nauseous to him the discourse of Eliphaz had been. Our version of the latter clause seems to be void of all connection with what goes before. Mr. Mudge supposes Job to allude, in the original words, to those medicinal potions which were administered by way of alterative; and, agreeably to his criticism, the clause should be rendered, *Is there any relish in the nauseous medicinal draught?* See the *Observations*, p. 128.

Ver. 7. *The things that my soul refuseth, &c.*] Job, persisting in his allegory, goes on to shew how disagreeable to his stomach the speech of Eliphaz had been, says Schultens, who translates the verse thus: *My soul refuseth to touch such things; they are to me as corrupted food.*

Ver. 8, 9. *Oh that I might have my request, &c.*] These two verses, as well as the 11th, with many more that might be quoted to the same purpose, are, as Mr. Peters observes, utterly inconsistent with Job's believing that God would restore him to his former happy state.

10 Then should I yet have comfort; yea, I would harden myself in sorrow: let him not spare; for I have not concealed the words of the Holy One.

11 What is my strength, that I should hope? and what is mine end, that I should prolong my life?

12 Is my strength the strength of stones? or is my flesh of brass?

13 Is not my help in me? and is wisdom driven quite from me?

14 To him that is afflicted pity should be showed from his friend; but he forsaketh the fear of the Almighty.

15 My brethren have dealt deceitfully as a brook, and as the stream of brooks they pass away;

16 Which are blackish by reason of the ice, and wherein the snow is hid:

17 What time they wax warm, they vanish: when it is hot, they are consumed out of their place.

18 The paths of their way are turned aside; they go to nothing, and perish.

19 The troops of Tema looked, the companies of Sheba waited for them.

20 They were confounded because they had hoped: they came thither, and were ashamed.

21 For now ye are nothing; ye see my casting down, and are afraid.

22 Did I say, Bring unto me? or, Give a reward for me of your substance?

23 Or deliver me from the enemy's hand? or, Redeem me from the hand of the mighty?

24 Teach me, and I will hold my tongue: and cause me to understand wherein I have erred.

25 How forcible are right words! but what doth your arguing reprove?

26 Do ye imagine to reprove words, and the speeches of one that is desperate, which are as wind?

27 Yea, ye overwhelm the fatherless, and ye dig a pit for your friend.

*Ver. 10. Then should I yet have comfort, &c.] So should my cry still be; nay, I would raise it louder in proportion to my sufferings: let him not spare, for I dispute not the will (or words) of the Holy One. See Heath.*

*Ver. 11. And what is mine end, &c.?] Or, what is mine end, that I should wish it to be deferred? Houbigant.*

*Ver. 13. Is not my help in me? &c.] Or, because my help is not at hand, is wisdom therefore departed far from me? Houbigant. Heath renders it, Do not I find that I cannot in the least help myself, and that strength is quite driven out of me?*

*Ver. 14. To him that is afflicted] Should a man who is utterly undone be insulted by his friend? and should he tempt him to forsake the fear of the Almighty? Heath; who observes, that this clause plainly refers to chap. v. 1. The words of Eliphaz seem to have sunk very deep into Job's mind, and he resents them extremely.*

*Ver. 15—20. My brethren have dealt deceitfully] Bishop Lowth observes, that though the metaphor from overflowing waters is very frequent in other sacred writers, yet the author of the book of Job never touches upon it but once or twice throughout the whole poem, and that very slightly, though the subject afforded him frequent opportunities to do so. Indeed, says he, a different face of nature presented itself to him, whoever he was, if, according to the opinion of several learned men, the book was written in some part of Arabia; an opinion rendered more probable by that remarkable comparison in which Job likens his three friends to a deceitful torrent, which is manifestly taken from the dry and sandy places of Arabia, and adorned with many images peculiar to that country.*

*Ver. 16. Which are blackish] Houbigant reads it, Which, after they have been congealed by the frost, and after, &c.*

*Ver. 18. The paths of their way are turned aside] Here is a noble climax, a most poetical description of the torrents in hot climates. By extraordinary cold they are frozen over; but the sun no sooner exerts its power than they melt; and they are exhale by the heat, till the stream, for smallness, is diverted into many channels; it yet lasts a little way, but is soon quite evaporated and lost. Heath.*

*Ver. 19. The troops of Tema looked] Mr. Heath so translates this verse, as to introduce the speaker using an animated prosopopœia, or addressing himself to the travellers: Look for them ye troops of Tema; ye travellers of Sheba, expect them earnestly. This gives great life to the poetry, and sets a very beautiful image before the eye: the travellers wasting their time, depending on those torrents for water; but when they come thither, how great the disappointment! They are dried up; ver. 20. The beginning of the 21st verse should be rendered, *Now, ye are nothing.* Mr. Peters observes of this simile, that there is not a more apt one in Homer or Milton, nor one more finely wrought up into a picture. See Jer. xiv. 2, 3.*

*Ver. 25. How forcible are right words!] How persuasive are the words of an impartial man! But how shall a man defend himself, whom you have already condemned? The reason is, they had condemned him unheard. Heath.*

*Ver. 26. Do ye imagine to reprove words] Do you desire speeches to insult me; and the words of him who is desperate, are they as the wind? Heath.*

*Ver. 27. Yea, ye overwhelm, &c.] Yes, ye overwhelm the*

28 Now therefore be content, look upon me; for *it is* evident unto you if I lie.

29 Return, I pray you, let it not be iniquity;

yea, return again, my righteousness *is* in it.

30 Is there iniquity in my tongue? cannot my taste discern perverse things?

*the destitute, and make a mock at your friend.* Heath and Houbigant.

*Ver. 29. Return, I pray you; let it not be iniquity.] Recollect yourselves, I beseech you; call it not wickedness: nay, consider it yet again; righteousness may be in me.* Chappelow.

*Ver. 30. Is there iniquity in my tongue, &c.] Must there needs be perversity in my tongue, because my palate cannot relish misery?* Heath.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Having heard with patient attention the discourse of Eliphaz, however piercing some of the reflections must appear, Job, far from being convinced by his reasoning, replies with warmth to his arguments.

1. He wishes for a more impartial balance than his censorious friends seemed inclined to afford him; who slighted the weight of those calamities which they did not feel, and blamed him as aggravating his troubles, the heaviness of which words were wanting to express, and the half of which he could not tell, while sighing and tears stopped his utterance, or, as the expression, ver. 3. may be rendered, *therefore my words boil up*, through the anguish he felt within. *Note;* (1.) They who are at ease themselves are often partial judges of the complaints of others. (2.) We recommend that advice to others as easy and obvious, which, if in their case ourselves, we might find exceedingly difficult, if not impracticable.

2. He complains of what they could not see—the inward anguish of his soul. His outward trials were heavy as the sand, and as numerous, but his inward pangs far more deadly. Like poisoned arrows, the wrath of God, which he read in these afflictions, *drank up his spirit*, and sunk him almost into despair, while what he feared added to what he felt; he saw God marshalling his terrors against him, and who could tell where they would end. *Note;* (1.) Of all our evils, a sense of God's wrath is most intolerable: a wounded spirit who can bear? (2.) If in the agonies of pain a hasty expression may not be justified, they should at least plead with us in its excuse.

3. He vindicates himself in his complaints; under which to be silent would prove him more insensible than the most stupid animals. *Doth the wild ass bray when he hath grass? or loweth the ox over his fodder?*—no; but, when deprived of these, the very beasts will complain. Now all his comforts were perished; the food that in time past he would not have deigned to touch, was become his sorrowful meat, insipid, without a grain of salt, and tasteless as the *white of an egg*; or more probably he means, that the admonitions and reproof of Eliphaz were as nauseous to him as the bitter morsel that he loathed, and more unfavourable than the most insipid food, being no way suited to his case and condition, and therefore disrelished and rejected. *Note;* (1.) There is no virtue in insensibility. (2.) When we know not to what straits we may be reduced, it is good betimes to avoid all nicety of diet, which tends only to pamper the appetite, and will add peculiar bitterness in any day of future want.

2dly, The words which Job afterwards delivers, he would certainly wish unaided; and they deserve all the rebuke of impatience which Eliphaz hath bestowed: so hard it is, when the spirit is ruffled, for a good man to refrain from the speech of perverseness. We have here,

1. Job's impatient wish and prayer for his immediate dissolution; *O that I might have my request!* as if the boon was wondrous great; and what is this thing he longs for? why, that God would make an end of him, let loose his arm, and by one stroke put a period to his days of misery: a bad wish, and a worse prayer; but God is kinder to us than we are to ourselves, and therefore mercifully refuses to grant our sinful and hasty requests. *Note;* (1.) However irksome our present state may be, we must not think of ridding ourselves of our troubles, but wait till our change comes. (2.) Through our folly at times, our very prayers are turned into sin.

2. Though he is wrong in his rash desire, he expresses a gracious hope in death; *Then should I have comfort*, the prospect of its approach should be my joy, and after death I should enter into everlasting felicity. *Yea, could I see this wished-for hour*, though death approached with all its terrors, *I would harden myself in sorrow*, and stand unmoved under the shock; and though every boil burst forth into a flame to consume me, *let him not spare*: so he slay me, I am content to suffer every excruciating pang of torment: surely this also is his infirmity: his faith in the prospect of death is commendable; his defiance of suffering, and hardening himself in sorrow, is blamable. *Note;* (1.) Death, to a believer, is a consummation devoutly to be wished for; only, though willing to be gone, let him contentedly wait the Lord's leisure. (2.) To harden ourselves against affliction, is to disappoint the design of God's corrections, and would prove not our fortitude but our obstinacy.

3. He produces the reason why he wished to die: *I have not concealed the words of the Holy One*; far from being conscious of unfaithfulness or hypocrisy, as was suggested, his conscience bore him witness in the Holy Ghost, that he had ever embraced, professed, and propagated, even in the midst of that idolatrous generation, those doctrines of truth which God had revealed to him; and therefore he dared to appear at his bar, unterrified at the fears of judgment, and humbly confident of gracious acceptance. *Note;* (1.) A good conscience gives boldness in the day of judgment. (2.) The truths that we know and believe, we must profess, own, and seek to inculcate, however such profession and zeal for God may make us obnoxious to the sneers of a wicked world.

4. He rejects the consolations that Eliphaz proposed to him, as what, in his present state, were vain chimeras; *what is my strength, that I should hope to see a restoration of my health and vigour?* or *what is mine end*, what purpose would it answer, now all my comforts are gone, *that I should prolong my life?* *Is my strength the strength of fleas,*

## C H A P. VII.

*Job goes on to pour out his lamentations in the most pathetic manner, and expostulates with God, praying to be speedily released from his miseries; or that God would grant him some little respite, till the time of their termination should come.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**I**S there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days also like the days

*or is my flesh brass? to bear up under a weight of troubles so numerous, and insupportably heavy. Note; (1.) Dejected hearts are ready to preach to themselves despair, and refuse to be comforted. (2.) Though our strength is very weakness, yet there is help lent us in one mighty to save, and we can do or suffer all things through Christ strengthening us. (3.) While God is pleased to prolong our lives, we may be assured that he has some end for his own glory to answer, though we may think ourselves useless.*

3dly, Eliphaz, in the name of the rest, had accused him of hypocrisy; with greater evidence he retorts the charge, from their cruel conduct, who, instead of friendly comforters, had turned accusers and tormentors.

1. He pleads his just expectations from them. Pity, at least, he might have expected; and if they could not remove his sorrows, their friendly compassions, in sympathizing with his griefs, should have sought at least to alleviate them. *Note; The bosom of true friendship is the seat of tenderness. Though relief is not in our power, the kind inquiry, the solicitous attention, the soft look of pity, and the sympathetic tear, speak the desires of the faithful heart.*

2. He charges Eliphaz and his abettors with cruel unkindness, and disappointing his just expectations, wherein they shewed as much disregard to the fear of God as faithlessness to their friend. Like brooks swollen by the melted snow and ice in winter, their professions in the days of his prosperity were great; but now that the scorching sun is risen, their streams deceitfully disappear. The travellers that before eyed the rolling flood, came, heated with journeying, eager to quench their raging thirst: the troops of Tema and Sheba, the caravans of merchants, expected with earnest solicitude to discover the welcome river, and waited patiently, in hope that there at least they should find water for themselves and fainting camels: but lo! their hope is vanished; no drop remains amid the burning sands; the brook is dry, and terrible disappointment covers them. Such were the friends of Job, failing him when he wanted their kind help, and deceitful as these vanishing streams. *For now ye are nothing, afford me not the least relief in my distress: ye see my casting down under these afflictions, and are afraid to patronize my cause, as if these strokes bespoke the judgments of the Almighty; or as if he should burden them for a maintenance, or should infect them with his disease, or offend them with its nauseous smell. Note; (1.) It is a bitter trial to find faithless a friend on whom we depended. (2.) The world is full of disappointments; the more we cease from man, and expect our whole comfort from the friend of sinners, the*

of an hireling?

2 As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, and as an hireling looketh for the reward of his work:

3 So am I made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed to me.

4 When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? and I am full of

surfer will be our portion. (3.) We shall, sooner or later, find all creature-confidence nothing, yea, less than nothing, and vanity; and when we are thus assured, what folly to place our hope on any thing below!

4thly, Job goes on to vindicate himself, and to upbraid the unkindness of his friends.

1. Reduced as he was, he had not been troublesome to, or importunate with them, either to relieve him out of their abundance, or to vindicate his conduct, or to make reprisals for him on the Sabeans and Chaldeans; and, as he had given them no provocations to use him ill, their accusations were the more aggravated. *Note; (1.) The importunity of want often provokes the abuse of the uncharitable. (2.) Though a good man, when God so pleases to reduce him, is not too proud to beg, yet, while he is able to work, or a pittance remains, he will not be burdensome, and will rather decline the proffers of his friends, than weary out their generosity.*

2. Though he could not call folly wisdom, he professes himself, however unkindly treated, open to conviction if he had erred, and humbly ready in silence to attend the force of right words; but theirs were neither right nor forcible, nor did their arguing fix on him reproof or conviction: their suppositions were groundless, and their conclusions false. *Note; (1.) They are the truly wise, who are open to reason, and are not ashamed to see wherein they have erred. (2.) It is a bad cause that needs abuse to support it; and it weakens a good one, to use heat or ill language. Arguments clothed with kindness, like the razor set in oil, cut deepest with least pain.*

3. He urges the cruelty of catching at a passionate word, which in his present desperate situation might drop from him, yet was far from proving him insincere or wicked. In his desolate situation they not only bore him down already as the fatherless overwhelmed with sorrow, but digged a pit for their friend; pretended to come to comfort him, and seemed to labour only to entangle him in his talk, and to watch for a rash expression on which to spend their unkind reproofs. *Note; (1.) We must make allowances for a man's situation, and not be severe censurers of every hasty word or wrong step. (2.) To add oppression and insult to the afflictions of the poor, is doubly criminal.*

4. He warmly maintains his integrity, to his vindication of which he begs them to give a patient hearing. *Be content to stay a moment; look upon me; does my countenance betray the consciousness of shame, or blush of guilt? for it is evident unto you, if I lie; you would soon discover it, if it were so. Return, I pray you, to kinder sentiments of me; or perhaps they rose to depart, and he begs*

toffings to and fro unto the dawning of the day.

5 My flesh is clothed with worms and clods of dust; my skin is broken, and become loathsome.

6 My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope.

7 O remember that my life is wind: mine eye shall no more see good.

8 The eye of him that hath seen me, shall see me no more: thine eyes are upon me, and I am not.

9 As the cloud is consumed, and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more.

10 He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more.

11 Therefore I will not refrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I

will complain in the bitterness of my soul.

12 Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me?

13 When I say, My bed shall comfort me, my couch shall ease my complaint;

14 Then thou scarest me with dreams, and terrifiest me through visions:

15 So that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than my life.

16 I loathe it; I would not live alway: let me alone; for my days are vanity.

17 What is man, that thou shouldest magnify him? and that thou shouldest set thine heart upon him?

18 And that thou shouldest visit him every morning, and try him every moment?

19 How long wilt thou not depart from me, nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle?

a patient audience: let it not be iniquity; there is no iniquity, none such as they charged him with; yea, return again, my righteousness is in it. In the whole of his cause, and the present controversy, he doubted not but to prove himself blameless of every accusation. Is there iniquity in my tongue? No; I have spoken the truth, &c. Note; (1.) We are bound to give every man a patient hearing. (2.) Truth is a mighty weapon, when wielded by the weakest arm. (3.) They who have a good cause will never shun the light, but court inquiry.

CHAP. VII.

Ver. 2. As a servant earnestly desireth, &c.] As a servant panteth for the shade; that is, wherein he may refresh and recruit himself when wearied with labours in the heat of the day. Schultens. Heath renders the next clause, And as the hireling earnestly longeth for his wages.

Ver. 3. So am I made to possess] So am I made to inherit—and nights of misery are my portion: Heath; who, instead of I am full of toffings, in the next verse, reads, I am tired, or wearied out with toffings.

Ver. 5. My flesh is clothed with worms, &c.] My flesh is clothed with worms, and with the filth of dust: my skin is broken and putrefies. Houbigant. Heath renders it, The worm covereth my flesh, and filthy mud my skin; suddenly it will turn even to putrefaction. See ch. xix. 26.

Ver. 6. And are spent without hope] ויכלו באפס תקיה wayiklu beapes tikwab. Literally, And they are destroyed even to the extremity of hope. Heath renders it, And even the least glimmering of hope is at an end.

Ver. 7—11. That my life is wind] That my life is but empty breath. Houbigant. It is easy to observe, in almost all Job's speeches, the struggle which he laboured under, between an earnest desire of death, as a removal from a life of pain and misery, and a dread of it, as he must die in the ill opinion of his friends, and leave a blot

and a reproach upon his memory, which he should never have the opportunity to wipe off again; for after death there was no return. Read with attention the following verses in this view; and you will see nothing in them which contradicts the doctrine of a future resurrection, and another state of life, as some would have us believe. The expressions, indeed, are strong; Thine eyes are upon me, and I am not; ver. 8. He that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more, ver. 9. But nevertheless the following verse shews the full importance of these phrases; that they mean just so much, and no more than this: He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more. Peters; who observes, that the expression, and I am not, is used by Homer's heroes for the dead; and yet no one questions their belief of a future state. Thus Telemachus says of his father Ulysses: "If I hear that he is dead, and is not any longer, [μὴδ' εἴ σοῖος] then I will celebrate his funeral, &c."

Ver. 12. Am I a sea, or a whale, &c.] Houbigant renders it, Am I a sea or a whale, that thou raisest a tempest against me? an idea which very well suits with that storm of troubles wherewith Job was nearly overwhelmed.

Ver. 15. So that my soul chooseth strangling, &c.] My soul therefore chooseth strangling; death rather than the recovery of my health. Heath. But Houbigant renders it thus: Yet thou preservest me from a violent end, and drivest death far from my bones: ver. 16. Yet I shall not live alway; cease therefore from me, since my days are vanity. See his note.

Ver. 17. What is man, &c.?] What is mortal man, that thou shouldst contend with him, and that thou shouldst set thy heart against him? Schultens.

Ver. 19. How long wilt thou not depart from me?] Literally, How long wilt thou not take thine eyes off me? This is a metaphor borrowed from combatants, who never take their eyes off from their antagonists. The figure is preserved in the next sentence, which represents a combatant

20 I have sinned; what shall I do unto thee, O thou Preserver of men? why hast thou set me as a mark against thee, so that I am a burden to myself?

21 And why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity? for now shall I sleep in the dust; and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be.

batant seized by his adversary in such a manner as to prevent his swallowing his spittle, or fetching his breath. *Till I swallow my spittle*, is an Arabic proverb at present in use, signifying a very short time. See Schultens and Houbigant.

*Ver. 20, 21. I have sinned, &c.]* As if he said, "Though I am no such wicked and ungodly wretch as these men imagine me to be, for thou knowest the uprightness of my heart, yet I acknowledge myself a sinner, and humble myself under thy afflicting hand; renouncing every sin or error that I may have been guilty of, whether known or unknown. Let my confession and repentance, then, prevail with thee for pardon; take away this heavy load of evils from me; and thereby remove the cause of those suspicions which my friends have entertained against me. For now, if I expire under thy rod, their suspicions are confirmed, and my character entirely stained beyond redress: and shouldst thou seek me in the morning (the usual hour of judicature) to judge between me and my friends, behold I am not, the determination comes too late: when I am dead and gone, there will be no convincing them of the rashness of their censures; which, as they arose from the dreadful evils that they see me suffer, can only be removed by a visible removal of those evils." He must have entered very little into the spirit of this poem, who does not see how great a part of Job's calamity the unjust suspicions of his friends were to him; and how he labours and turns himself every way to remove them, or to support himself under them. Heath, Houbigant, and others, render the 20th verse, *Be it that I have sinned; what injury can I do to thee, O thou Observer of man? Why hast thou set me up as a mark for thee, and why am I made a burthen to thee?*

REFLECTIONS.—Ist, Job proceeds to justify his desire of death, as the period to the miseries that he underwent. *Is there not an appointed time, or a warfare to man upon earth, where he must combat with a variety of evils, till by death he receives his discharge? Are not his days also like the days of an hireling, and full of toil and labour? As a servant earnestly desireth the shadow, wearied with the toils of the day, and longing for repose, and as an hireling looketh for the reward of his work, so do I long for death to relieve me from my miseries, and bring me to that reward which God hath promised to bestow in mercy on every man according to his work. I am made to possess, as if this was the only portion he was heir to, months of vanity, or empty ones, destitute of all joy, comfort, and usefulness, and wearisome nights are appointed to me.* Restless upon his bed, no sweet repose closed his eyes, to sooth his pains; or, if he slumbered, visions of the night scared and terrified him. *When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone, or measured? when shall the welcome day return, and these lingering hours be past? and I am full of tossings to and*

*fro unto the dawning of the day.* I turn, and turn again; every posture is uneasy; and, tired out upon my bed, I watch for the break of day. *My flesh is clothed with worms, that bred in his ulcers, and clods of dust, from the ashes in which he sat. My skin is broken, and become loathsome: my days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, hastening to their end, and are spent without hope of any recovery of his former prosperity.* So that it need not be wondered that he courted death, overwhelmed as he was with such miseries, without the prospect of relief. *Note;* (1.) If we awake refreshed from beds of sleep, let us thankfully acknowledge to whom we owe it. (2.) Our vile bodies should ever humble us: one stroke of disease may make them loathsome to others and a burthen to ourselves. (3.) As our days are incessantly hastening to an end, how diligent should we be to improve them, that, when the thread of life is cut, we may not die without hope!

2dly, Job now directs his discourse to God. If his friends care not for him, he hopes that God will remember him, either to ease or release him.

1. He begs him to remember the vanity of his life, depending upon the breath in his nostrils, and passing as the wind. He despairs of seeing any more prosperity upon earth: hidden in the grave, he should no longer afford this spectacle of woe; and one glance of God's eye were enough to bring him thither. There all his sorrows would end, and, once removed, he should return to this miserable world no more, vanished as the cloud, and forgotten. *Note,* (1.) Our life is vanishing as a cloud, and passing as the wind; and, when we lie down in the dust, there is no returning to redeem or amend the days that are fled. (2.) If we must shortly take our leave of a vain world, it highly becomes us to have our affections weaned from it, that we may with readiness wait our great change, and cast no lingering look behind.

2. He pours forth his passionate complaint: in anguish, in bitterness, he expostulates with God on his afflictions. *Am I a sea, proud and raging, or a whale, ravenous and oppressive, that thou settest a watch over me?* hemming me in with sore afflictions, and preventing my escape by death, which I long for. Nor can it be thought strange that I should thus eagerly court it, when, at my rising up and lying down, misery pursues me closer than my shadow. Terrified with fearful dreams, my bed, instead of easing me, aggravates my complaint: my life is become insupportable; *I loathe it, or am become loathsome;* the most tormenting death is preferable to my present sufferings. *Let me then alone,* that I may close these wretched eyes in the dust. *I would not wish to live always in the most prosperous condition, how much less thus afflicted, where my days all of them are vanity, full of evil, misery, and woe.* Surely this also is his infirmity; how merciful is God to disappoint his wishes, and refuse an answer to his prayers! *Note;* (1.) Though to depart and be with Christ



CHAP. VIII.

*Bildad affirms, that if Job was innocent, he would be immediately restored to his former splendor, on his making supplication to the Almighty. He shews that the wicked is like the bulrush, which withers as soon as it is sprung up.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**T**HEN answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said,

Christ makes death desirable to the believer in his best estate, yet he is not unwilling to wait, in the midst of torture, till God is pleased to give him his dismissal. (2.) Asleep or awake, God can reach our spirits, and on our beds make us a terror to ourselves.

3dly, We have,

1. Job foolishly expostulating with God, *What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him?* which God seemed to do, by entering the lists as an adversary, to wrestle or contend with him, as the word may be rendered, a foe so unequal, and beneath his notice; and that thou shouldst set thine heart upon him, as an enemy? and that thou shouldst visit him every morning with repeated strokes of affliction, and try him every moment, giving him no respite from sufferings? *How long wilt thou not depart from me, or look off from me? turn away thy frowning face, or eye me not so fiercely, as a contending wrestler; nor let me alone till I swallow down my spittle?* Take off thy hand for a moment at least, just whilst I draw breath. *Note;* (1.) If God contends with his people, it is in mercy, because our way is perverse. (2.) The trials that we suffer here are designed, as the furnace for gold, to purge our dross, and brighten our graces; therefore we ought not to murmur under them, but seek to answer their design.

2. We have him wisely confessing his sins, and pleading for pardon and reconciliation. *I have sinned;* though, respecting the charges laid by his censorious friends, he maintained his integrity, yet before God he was ready to acknowledge himself a sinner, and therefore unable to contend with him. *What shall I do unto thee, O thou preserver of men?* Fain would I obtain thy favour, and avoid thy displeasure, which now so heavily oppresseth me. *Why hast thou set me as a mark against thee?* Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me so sorely, that I am a burthen to myself? *And why dost thou not pardon my transgression, and take away mine iniquity?* that the cause of all my evils being removed, the dire effects of them may cease. *For now,* if thou wilt grant me this, *I shall sleep in the dust in peace, when my iniquity is forgiven; and thou shalt seek me in the morning, but I shall not be:* like a kind friend coming in the morning to inquire after him, and lo, he is happily released from his misery. *Note;* (1.) An humbling sense of sin will serve essentially to silence every complaint in our afflictions. (2.) The great concern under our severest sufferings should be, not so much to obtain ease for our bodies, as rest for our souls in the pardon of our sins. (3.) If we ask, what a sinner must do? the answer is, Apply to the sinner's friend, the Saviour of men, and none go from him with a repulse. (4.) When our souls are at peace with God, we can com-

VOL. II.

2 How long wilt thou speak these things? and how long shall the words of thy mouth be like a strong wind?

3 Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice?

4 If thy children have sinned against him, and he have cast them away for their transgression;

fortably commit our bodies to the dust, and take our leave of the world with as much calmness and satisfaction as when we bid good night to our friends on retiring to repose. (5.) If in the morning our spirit should be fled, and the corpse alone remain, let not weeping friends complain that we have so easily and suddenly escaped the pains of dying, if we fall asleep in Jesus.

CHAP. VIII.

*Ver. 1. Then answered Bildad the Shuhite]* Bildad, whose sentiments are the same with those of the preceding friend, now comes on to the attack, and tells Job, that his general asseverations of innocence are of no avail; that to deny his guilt, was to charge the Almighty with injustice; ver. 2, 3. that if he would not yield to the argument of Eliphaz, drawn from his experience, and strengthened by revelation, he would do well to pay respect to the general experience of mankind, as handed down by tradition; where he would find it established, as a certain truth, that misery was the infallible consequence of wickedness; ver. 8—20. that therefore they could not argue wrong, who inferred from actual misery antecedent guilt; and, though he might urge that these calamities were fallen on him on account of his children's wickedness, yet he only deceived himself; for in that case God might indeed have chastised them for their crimes; but he would by no means have destroyed the innocent with the guilty; ver. 4—7. He would rather have heaped his blessings on the innocent person, that the contrast might have vindicated his providence. He would even have wrought a miracle for the preservation or restoration of such a person: and he concludes, that since, from the known attributes of God, it was impossible he should cut off the innocent, or suffer the guilty to go free, and as no interposition of Providence had happened in his behalf, he thought him in a likely way, by his utter destruction, to prove a terrible example of the truth of that principle which they had urged against him. *Heath.*

*Ver. 2. How long wilt thou speak these things?]* *How long wilt thou trifle in this manner?* He compares his words in the next clause to a strong wind, to denote the vehemence and impetuosity wherewith, according to his opinion, the pride of Job's heart burst forth against God. There is a passage in Silius Italicus, which is a fine comment upon this verse.

*Qui tanta superbo  
Facta sonas ore, et spumanti turbine perflas  
Ignorantum aures.* Lib. xi. ver. 581.  
With haughty mouth who speaks such swelling deeds,  
And like a foaming tempest overflows  
The vulgar ears.

5 B

*Ver.*

5 If thou wouldest seek unto God betimes, and make thy supplication to the Almighty ;

6 If thou wert pure and upright ; surely now he would awake for thee, and make the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous.

7 Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase.

8 For inquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers :

9 (For we are but of yesterday, and know

nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow :) )

10 Shall not they teach thee, and tell thee, and utter words out of their heart ?

11 Can the rush grow up without mire ? can the flag grow without water ?

12 Whilst it is yet in his greenness, and not cut down, it withereth before any other herb.

13 So are the paths of all that forget God ; and the hypocrite's hope shall perish :

*Ver. 4. If thy children have sinned] Though thy children have sinned.*

*Ver. 6. Surely now he would awake for thee] Surely now he would make bare his arm on thy behalf; he would make the beauty of thy righteousness perfect. Heath.*

*Ver. 8—13. For inquire, I pray thee, &c.]* Bildad had exhorted Job to apply himself to God by prayer, upon the assurance, that if he were innocent, as he pretended, or shewed any marks of a sincere repentance, there was no doubt but he would be restored, through the divine mercy, to his former state of prosperity ; but, if he should forget God in his calamity, or play the hypocrite with him, there were then no hopes for him ; and for this he quotes a saying of their ancestors in these remarkable words. There are three things in this passage well worthy of our observation : First, his referring Job to their ancestors of former times, as the best instructors in wisdom ; then urging the comparative ignorance of the generation which then was, and the reason of it, viz. the shortness of men's lives ; *We are but of yesterday, &c.* human life being at this time in a swift decline, and reduced, in a few generations, from eight or nine hundred years, to one hundred and fifty, or thereabouts : but what is most to our purpose is, in the next place, his representing these long-lived ancestors of theirs, from whom they derived their wisdom, as living but an age or two before them : they were the *men of the former age*, or perhaps the fathers and grandfathers of these. And it appears from the Scripture history, that Shem, the son of Noah, who lived five hundred years after the flood, might well have been a cotemporary with the grand-fathers or great-grand-fathers of Job and his friends : with what authority, therefore, would such a one teach them ! and with what attention would his instructions be received ! Indeed, the fame of these restorers of the human race was so great for many ages after, that when mankind fell into the superstition of worshipping men-deities, there is little doubt to be made, but that these were the first mortals who were deified ; and that Saturn and his three famous sons (who are said by old Homer, *Iliad xvi. ver. 187.* to have "divided the world between them by a fair lot,") were, in reality, no other than Noah and his sons. See Bochart, *Phaleg. c. 1.* The last thing that I shall observe from the passage is, the style or manner in which the precepts of their ancestors were transmitted to them ; and that is, by some apt simile, or comparison, drawn from nature, and, like a picture, fitted to engage the

attention ; and, by agreeably entertaining the imagination, to leave a strong impression on the memory. Such is that natural and beautiful comparison which we have here ; and which, by the way of introducing it, appears plainly to have been a proverbial saying, delivered down from their forefathers, and perhaps taught them from their cradles : *Enquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers. Shall not they teach thee, and tell thee, and utter words out of their heart : out of the heart, the seat of wisdom always with the ancients. Have not they then, says he, transmitted to thee this wise lesson ? That as the rush cannot grow up without mire, nor the flag without water, so neither can any thing flourish or prosper long without the blessing of Almighty God ? and how should the ungodly or the hypocrite expect his blessing !* One scarcely knows which to admire most, the piety of the sentiment, or the elegance and justness of the comparison. The Redeemer of mankind, who came into the world, among other great designs, to revive, by his teaching, that simplicity of manners which was so observable in those ancient times, I mean that piety, and love, and humility, and purity, and probity, and truth, and those other ornaments of the mind of man, which we see so admirably delineated throughout this book,—was pleased to choose the same method of conveying his doctrines and precepts, under the delightful style of an easy parable or similitude : but enough has been said, I hope, to vindicate the interpretation given of this passage : and I have dwelt the longer on this point, as judging it a thing of some importance in itself, as well as necessary to a right understanding of the following part of the chapter.

*And prepare thyself to the search of their fathers] Search diligently of the fathers for their memorial. Houbigant. The Syriac has it, and understand the histories of the fathers of them.*

*Ver. 11. Can the rush grow up without mire ? &c.]* A bulrush without water is proverbial. It is adapted to the hypocrite, who, while he suddenly grows up, withers as suddenly, and while he flourishes most verdantly, is immediately dried up. *Can the flag, or, can the sedge.* Houbigant renders the 12th verse, *whilst it yet flourishes, it is not cut down; yet it withereth before any other herb.*

*Ver. 13. Whose hope shall be cut off, &c.]* The thing which he longed for shall be a torment to him ; and his confidence shall be as the spider's web. Heath.

*Ver.*

14 Whose hope shall be cut-off, and whose trust shall be a spider's web.

15 He shall lean upon his house, but it shall not stand: he shall hold it fast, but it shall not endure.

16 He is green before the sun, and his branch shooteth forth in his garden.

17 His roots are wrapped about the heap,

and he seeth the place of stones.

18 If he destroy him from his place, then it shall deny him, saying, I have not seen thee.

19 Behold, this is the joy of his way, and out of the earth shall others grow.

20 Behold, God will not cast away a perfect man, neither will he help the evil doers:

Ver. 15. *He shall lean upon his house*] He may prop up his house, but it shall not stand: he may make himself strong in it, but it shall not endure. Heath, after the LXX.

Ver. 17. *His roots are wrapped about the heap*] Heath renders it, *He windeth his roots about a spring; he twisteth himself about a heap of stones.* Houbigant reads it, *he has his roots involved or fixed in a hill; he adheres to the midst of stones;* by which the writer seems to express the apparent firmness and worldly dependance of the hypocrite. The next verse should be rendered, according to Houbigant, *But when they shall eradicate, or destroy him, his place shall disown him; it shall say, I never saw thee.* See Scheuchzer, tom. vi. p. 29.

Ver. 19. *Behold, this is the joy of his way, &c.*] Behold him now; destruction is in his path; and strangers out of the dust shall spring up in his room. Heath.

Ver. 20—22. *Behold, God will not cast away*] Lo! as God doth not cast away the perfect man, so neither doth he strengthen the hands of the wicked; ver. 21. *Therefore he will again fill thy mouth with laughter, &c.* Houbigant. This appears a kind of sarcastical conclusion; in which Bildad observes, that, though the hypocrite perishes in the manner above described, yet God will never reject the good man; and therefore, if Job were really such a one, which he appears greatly to doubt, he might be assured that God's providence would remarkably display itself in his behalf.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here,

1. Bildad's hasty reproof of Job: *How long wilt thou speak these things?* impatient in thy complaints, obstinate in self-vindication, disregarding the good advice that was given thee, and charging God foolishly. *How long shall the words of thy mouth be like a strong wind?* rude to thy friends, and insolent against the Almighty. Note; Reviling language shews both a bad disputant, and a weak cause.

2. His vindication of God. *Doth God pervert judgment? or doth the Almighty pervert justice?* No; the Judge of all the earth must do right. So far the truth was evident, and none would dispute it; but he was greatly mistaken in,

3. The application. He supposes Job's children wicked, and himself a hypocrite; and intimates, that the awful providences upon him were the consequences thereof. *If thy children have sinned against him, which he concludes from their sudden death, and he have cast them away for their transgression, it was an act of justice.* *If thou wouldst seek unto God betimes, and make thy supplication to the Almighty, notwithstanding all these heavy*

visitations, if thou wert pure and upright, as thou pretendest to be, surely now, without delay, would God appear to comfort and restore thee: he would awake for thee, to rebuke thy afflictions, and make the habitation of thy righteousness, in which thou maintainest thyself, prosperous; which would be the sure evidence of his approbation; then, though thy beginning was small, reduced as thou now art, yet thy latter end should greatly increase. He seems to advise him as a friend, but insinuates a strong suspicion of his hypocrisy, and makes two suppositions. [1.] That extraordinary afflictions are always the punishment of extraordinary sins. [2.] That righteousness was always blessed with outward prosperity: both which are false, and yet God's judgment and justice in no wise impeached thereby. Note; (1.) In every affliction it is good advice to fly to God for help. (2.) We can have no good hope that he will answer us, if we are conscious of our own hypocrisy before him. (3.) God's blessing can soon make a little afford a great increase. (4.) Though men call us hypocrites, if God knows our simplicity, it need little move us.

2dly, From the miserable disappointment and end of the hypocrite and ungodly, Bildad goes on to infer, that the similar effects in Job's case proceeded from a similar cause.

1. He appeals to the experience of former ages for the truth of what he was advancing, and bids Job search for the traditions of the ancient fathers in proof of his argument, as he wished not to rest the matter on their own authority, who, though men of age and experience, were but of yesterday, creatures of a day, compared with the age of those who had gone before; and knew nothing, comparatively speaking, because their days upon earth were a shadow, so soon gone, and afforded less time for the improvement of knowledge, and opportunity of observation. But if he would be at the pains to inquire of those impartial judges, he would, doubtless, receive satisfaction. Note; (1.) The experience of God's saints of old, recorded in the word of truth, should be diligently inquired into, and applied to our own case. (2.) We are not now, through mercy, left to precarious tradition, but have God's infallible oracles to guide us. (3.) There is a great deference due to age and experience, and, in general, to consult with these is to do wisely.

2. He illustrates his main position by a variety of similitudes. *Can the rush grow up without mire? can the flag grow without water?* these are their nourishment and support. *Whilst it is yet in its greenness, seems most flourishing, and not cut down by the scythe, of its own accord it withereth before any other herb, or in their presence,*

21 Till he fill thy mouth with laughing, and thy lips with rejoicing.

22 They that hate thee shall be clothed with shame; and the dwelling-place of the wicked shall come to nought.

### CHAP. IX.

*Job, acknowledging God's justice, sheweth that there is no contending with him. Man's innocency is not to be condemned by afflictions.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**T**HEN Job answered and said,  
2 I know it is so of a truth: but how

they looking on, and deriding its fall. *So are the paths of all that forget God.* Though planted in earth, and fed with the mire of sensual indulgencies, prosperous for a while, and flourishing; yet at best they are hollow and useless, and in a moment they wither under the blasts of God's displeasure; and the hypocrite's hope perisheth. Fair as their profession seemed, and well-grounded as their hope appeared, a day of trial, like the scorching sun, exhales the water, and, their worldly supports being withdrawn, they perish for ever; *whose hope shall be cut off in black despair, and whose trust shall be as the spider's web, or house, spun from their own bowels of self-sufficient righteousness, too weak to make a cable for hope's anchor, and too thin for garments to hide the shame of their nakedness; swept away without resistance by the besom of destruction, and affording no more shelter for the soul against divine justice, than the hole of the spider. He shall lean upon his house, his prosperity, his religious profession, his moral duties, his external worship and services, but it shall not stand; tottering on the sandy foundation, it can yield the hypocrite no support; he shall hold it fast, cling to it, as the spider to her web, refusing to be beat out of his vain confidence and self-dependance, but it shall not endure; his prosperity shall fail, and his false professions be detected. He is green before the sun, like a flourishing tree, while the world smiles; or in the eyes of men he appears eminently blest, and his branch shooteth forth in his garden, strong and vigorous, and fenced on every side. His roots are wrapped about the heap, strike deep, and he seeth the place of stones, or house of stones, grow so high as to overlook the stately building. Such is the appearance often of prosperous iniquity, and so high the hypocrite lifts his head. If he desire him from his place, as God assuredly will, then it shall deny him, saying, I have not seen thee: so complete will be the extirpation, that neither root nor branch will be left. Behold, this is the joy of his way, spoken ironically, this is what it comes to at last; and out of the earth shall others grow; either hypocrites, like them, who take no warning by their end; or good men, for whom the wealth of the sinner is laid up. Note: (1.) Hypocrisy among professors is the most common and deadly weed that grows in the church and garden of God upon earth. (2.) Forgetfulness of God is at the bottom of all iniquity. (3.) The self-righteous formalist, fair as he may*

should man be just with God?

3 If he will contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand.

4 *He is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?*

5 Which removeth the mountains, and they know not: which overturneth them in his anger.

6 Which shaketh the earth out of her place, and the pillars thereof tremble.

7 Which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not; and sealeth up the stars.

appear without, hath his spider's poison within; and, though he pride himself in his works and duties, they will be found as unable to bear the severity of God's justice, as the spider's web to bind Leviathan. (4.) Though worldly prosperity continue long with sinners, even until death, yet then, at least, the axe will be laid to the root of the tree, and all their hopes perish.

3dly, Bildad here sums up his discourse, confident that every man would receive from God according to his work; but, as he looked no farther than temporal rewards and punishments, and extended no view to eternal ones, his inference was utterly defective.

1. The holy and pious man God will not cast away: however great his distress might be for a season, joy and gladness would again return, and peace and plenty crown his head, to the confusion of all that hated him.

2. The evil-doers God never will help out of the pit into which they are fallen, but their dwelling-place shall be covered with perpetual desolations. Hence he puts the issue of the controversy on the return of Job's prosperity; insinuating, that the continuance of his afflictions, from which there now appeared no prospect of deliverance, would be a full evidence of his insincerity and iniquity. *Note: (1.)* Though here the same event cometh in some sense alike to all, it is a blessed and comfortable truth, that in eternity God's justice shall be vindicated in the everlasting salvation of the righteous, and the eternal condemnation of the wicked. (2.) Till this great day comes, we may not conclude from men's outward circumstances either God's love or hatred, but must, in various circumstances, wait patiently to know the true characters of men, and judge nothing before the time when every man shall receive according as his work is.

### CHAP. IX.

*Ver. 1. Then Job answered and said.* In reply to Bildad, Job begins with hinting that their opinions seemed a little to clash; Eliphaz had insisted from revelation, that the common failings of men were a sufficient justification of Providence, even in the most afflicting dispensations. Bildad says, if he were pure and upright, God would interpose in his behalf. Job replies, that all this is very true; but the difficulty is, to be thus pure and upright; "For I am not exempt from the common failings of men:

8 Which alone spreadeth out the heavens,  
and treadeth upon the waves of the sea.

9 Which maketh Arcturus, Orion, and

Pleiades, and the chambers of the south.

10 Which doeth great things past finding  
out; yea, and wonders without number.

“men: if, therefore, they are sufficient to account for the great calamities which have befallen me, I am still without a remedy. As to God’s power and wisdom, I am as thoroughly convinced, and can give as many instances of it, as you; and, therefore, I know it is in vain for me to contend with him; ver. 2—13. I have nothing left but to acknowledge my own vileness, and to make my supplication to him, ver. 14—19. But yet, as to any heinous crimes, beyond the common frailties of human nature, these I disclaim; and, let the event be what it may, I will rather part with my life, than accuse myself wrongfully. And whereas you affirm, that affliction is an infallible mark of guilt, you quite mistake the matter; for afflictions are indifferently assigned to be the portion of the righteous and the guilty. God, indeed, sometimes in his anger destroys the wicked; but doth he not as frequently afflict the righteous? The dispensations of Providence in this world are frequently such, that, were it not that God now and then lets loose his fury against them, one would be almost tempted to imagine the rule of this world was delivered over into the hands of wicked men; ver. 21—24. As for my own part, my days are almost come to an end; therefore it is labour lost for me to plead the cause of my innocence. Besides, in the sight of God I must appear all vileness; so that it is not for such a one as me to pretend to put myself on a level with him: and even if I were able to do so, there is no one who hath sufficient authority to judge between us; ver. 25—33. Yet were it his pleasure to grant me a little respite, I should say a great deal in my own vindication; but, as matters stand, I dare not; for which reason my life is a burden to me, and my desire is, that it may speedily come to an end; ch. x. ver. 1. to the end. I would, however, expostulate a little with “the Almighty;”—And here he enters into the most beautiful and tender pleadings that heart can conceive; ending, as before, with a prayer, that his sufferings and life might soon come to a period, and that God would grant him some little respite before his departure hence. Heath.

Ver. 3. *If he will contend*] To contend is a judicial term, and signifies properly to wage law. To answer him one of a thousand, signifies to justify himself for one of the thousand crimes which shall be charged against him. Though the uncharitableness and reproaches of Job’s friends transported him into some passionate and bold expressions of his own innocence and integrity, yet he no sooner perceived that they took advantage of those expressions to charge him with presumption, as if God had unjustly afflicted him, but he made haste to free himself from that imputation. *How should a man be just with God?* and he who is best prepared for an account with him, can pay him nothing but his own coin; and that, rather laid up in a napkin, than husbanded and employed as it ought to have been. If he could offer him a good thought, an honest purpose and intention, he had received them from him, and, it may be, wanted courage to improve and exe-

cute them; and so the world had no more fruit of them, than if his heart had been as wicked as his neighbour’s. So that, when he has said the best he can for himself, there will be no abiding the judgment which must still be deprecated; mercy must be implored; no satisfaction or payment pretended; but an entire release and pardon begged and relied upon.

Ver. 5. *And they know not*] *And they are not broken to pieces*: an instance of the power of the Almighty, who can remove whole mountains as easily as the least pebble. See Heath, and Judg. viii. 16. Schultens and Houbigant render it, *on a sudden, unawares*. See Psalm xxxv. 8.

Ver. 6. *And the pillars thereof tremble*] The image is taken from a man in so great fear, that all his limbs tremble and shake like a leaf.

Ver. 7. *Which commandeth the sun, and it riseth not*] Bishop Warburton supposes that this alludes to the miraculous history of the people of God; such as the Egyptian darkness, and the stopping of the sun’s course by Joshua. But surely there is no necessity, from the words themselves, to suppose any allusion of this kind, or, indeed, any thing miraculous, since God, by throwing a cloud over the sun and stars, can and does obscure them when he pleases; and thus it is that the Chaldee paraphrast understands it; *and seals up the stars with clouds*: or, if we will take Bishop Patrick’s exposition, it is thus, *that the heavens are subject to the power of God, and neither sun nor stars can shine if he forbid it*. There is a beautiful fragment of Pindar preserved to us by Clemens Alexandrinus; where he gives it as an instance of the “power of God,” that he can, when he will, cause the pure light to spring out of thick darkness, or cover with a gloomy cloud the clear lustre of the day.

Ver. 8. *And treadeth upon the waves of the sea*] Mr. Heath (following the reading of the Hebrew found in a correct copy) agrees with Houbigant in rendering this, *who treadeth on the heights of the clouds*; which, as he justly observes, makes a more elegant image. See ch. xxii. 14. Isai. xiv. 14.

Ver. 9. *Which maketh Arcturus, &c.*] *Who maketh the constellations of the northern hemisphere, as well as the hidden chambers of the south*, i. e. the furthest part of the south, or those constellations which are toward the south pole. The various and unsatisfactory attempts of learned men to ascertain the several constellations here mentioned, are sufficient to convince any person that we do not know enough of the ancient astronomy to determine upon it with any certainty; only, as these three seem to be put in opposition with the chambers of the south, I think it best, says Mr. Heath, to translate it in general, *the constellations of the northern hemisphere*. Parkhurst renders it, *making the fire, the spirit or air, and the light*; which he supposes to give us a nobler idea of Jehovah’s power, than claiming the formation of these three constellations; and he observes, that all the fixed stars had been claimed as Jehovah’s workmanship only two verses before. See his Lexicon on the word *כימאב kimab*, and Peters, p. 136.

Ver.

11 Lo, he goeth by me, and I see *him* not: he passeth on also, but I perceive him not.

12 Behold he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, What doest thou?

13 If God will not withdraw his anger, the proud helpers do stoop under him.

14 How much less shall I answer him, and chuse out my words to reason with him?

15 Whom, though I were righteous, yet would I not answer, but I would make supplication to my judge.

16 If I had called, and he had answered me; yet would I not believe that he had hearkened unto my voice.

17 For he breaketh me with a tempest, and multiplieth my wounds without cause.

18 He will not suffer me to take my breath, but filleth me with bitterness.

19 If I speak of strength, lo, he is strong: and if of judgment, who shall set me a time to plead?

20 If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.

*Ver. 11. Lo, he goeth by me, &c.]* Who, if he passeth by me, I cannot behold him: yea, while he glideth swiftly away, I perceive him not. Houbigant and Heath.

*Ver. 12. Behold he taketh away, &c.]* But if he should take any thing away, who shall prevent him, or cause him to make restitution. Houbigant and Heath.

*Ver. 13. If God will not withdraw his anger]* He is not a God who will restrain his anger; they stoop beneath him, who have surrounded themselves with strength: i. e. his majesty is most dreadful and inaccessible, which nothing can resist, and to which every thing that dares to oppose it must submit. Houbigant and Schultens.

*Ver. 14. And chuse out my words to reason with him]* And chuse out arguments against him. This is in the judicial stile, and signifies the pleadings of the person accused. To my judge, in the next verse, should be rendered, to my adversary. Heath. Houbigant renders the word which we translate answer, in this and the next verse, by dispute.

*Ver. 16. If I had called, and he had answered me]* But if I should call, that he might answer me, I could not easily believe that he would hear my voice; ver. 17. Since he hath broken me with a tempest, and inflicted many wounds upon me without cause, ver. 18. Nor hath given me space to take my breath, so hath he filled me with bitterness. Houbigant. This version shews the connection, and seems to give us the true sense of the passage. See Lowth's Prelections, p. 455. 8vo.

*Ver. 19. If I speak of strength]* If we were to plead by strength, he is most strong; if by law, or judgment, who shall bear testimony for me? Houbigant. The meaning is, says Heath, "If I think to right myself by force, it is in vain; for he is infinitely stronger than I: if I choose to decide our dispute by law, who hath authority to call us before him?"

*Ver. 20. If I justify myself]* If I call myself righteous, my mouth shall condemn me: if innocent, it shall prove me perverse; ver. 21. Innocent, or being innocent, yet would I not make trial; nor would my soul be less weary of life. Houbigant and Schultens. The meaning of the 21st verse is sufficiently cleared by the 22d. Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul, or life; i. e. "I would make no account of it,—I would despise it; (as it follows) for I should not think this perfection any security either for a long life or a prosperous; much less, were I never so perfect, should I flatter myself with the vain hope that you

would instil into me, of being delivered from this deep distress wherein I am now plunged, and from which nothing but a miracle can restore me. For, one thing I have learned from experience, that God destroys the perfect as well as the wicked." And of this he gives a demonstration in the following verse: *If the scourge stay suddenly, &c. i. e.* "In times of common calamity, the righteous and the wicked perish for the most part indiscriminately." This is apparently the general course of Providence; and if any exceptions be made, they are rare and extraordinary, by the special appointment and direction of the great Lord and ruler of the world, for extraordinary reasons of which he alone is judge. But no wise man would ever build any great hopes upon these extraordinary and excepted cases; at least, they can never be a just ground for confidence and assurance. This seems plainly to be the sense of Job in this matter; for, it is very observable, that he builds his arguments on the general course of Providence; the others argue chiefly from the extraordinary exceptions to it. They had seen a good man now and then remarkably delivered; they had seen many a wicked man remarkably punished. These remarkable things, as they are the most sensible demonstrations of a present Providence, led Job's friends, whose thoughts were full of them, to push the matter of an exactly remunerating Providence in this life too far; so as scarcely to allow a good man to be finally unhappy in the present world, or a wicked man prosperous upon the whole. And I suppose their own prosperity, which they were but too fond, perhaps, of ascribing to the blessing of God upon their piety, (for, except their hard censures of Job, there is nothing but what shews them to have been good religious persons in the main,) might help to confirm them in this notion; for it is an old observation, that we borrow our very thoughts and reasonings sometimes from the state and temper that we are in. Job therefore, on the other hand, being in a state of the deepest distress, we need not wonder that his thoughts were black and cloudy; that, even with the consciousness of an upright heart and righteous life, he could neither enjoy himself by day with cheerful thoughts, nor prevent the dreadfulest dreams by night, especially considering the obscure dispensation under which he lived. See chap. vii. 13, 14. The same melancholic disposition it was, no doubt, which made him dwell



21 *Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my foul: I would despise my life.*

22 *This is one thing, therefore I said it, He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked.*

23 *If the scourge slay suddenly, he will laugh at the trial of the innocent.*

24 *The earth is given into the hand of the wicked: he covereth the faces of the judges thereof; if not, where, and who is he?*

25 *Now my days are swifter than a post: they flee away, they see no good.*

26 *They are passed away as the swift ships; as the eagle that hasteth to the prey.*

27 *If I say, I will forget my complaint, I will leave off my heaviness, and comfort myself:*

28 *I am afraid of all my sorrows, I know*

that thou wilt not hold me innocent.

29 *If I be wicked, why then labour I in vain?*

30 *If I wash myself with snow water, and make my hands never so clean;*

31 *Yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me.*

32 *For he is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment.*

33 *Neither is there any day's-man betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both.*

34 *Let him take his rod away from me, and let not his fear terrify me.*

35 *Then would I speak, and not fear him; but it is not so with me.*

upon the general course of Providence, without allowing for those extraordinary and excepted cases, wherein God, as it were, makes bare his arm, to deliver a good man from distress, and of which he himself was in the end a noble instance. Peters. And we must never forget, that Job lived under a dispensation far inferior to ours. Schultens renders the 23d verse, *If the scourge slay suddenly, it [the scourge] will laugh at the trial of the innocent.* The figure is bold, but not too bold for the elevated poetry of this book.

*Ver. 24. He covereth the faces of the judges.] He hath covered the face of the judgments which are done in it; but the cause of his anger who shall declare? That is, Who can set forth the reasons why God is angry at miserable mortals, and why he permits the earth to the wicked? Houbigant. Heath, after the Syriac, renders the last clause, were it not for his fury, who would regard him? i. e. This would be the language of the wicked, if the Almighty did not sometimes let loose his fury, and shew them that they are but men.*

*Ver. 26. As the swift ships, &c.] There are but two places that I remember, says Mr. Peters, in the book of Job, where there is any allusion to navigation. One in the present passage, where Job compares the course of human life, and the rapidity wherewith it passes, to the swift ships, [swiftest ships, most excellent for sailing, Houbigant,] or, as it is in the margin of our English Bibles, ships of desire; i. e. such as are longed for, and long to be at their destined port, and crowd all the sail they can for that purpose. This gives, indeed, a very poetical image. But, if we will take the judgment of Schultens, he tells us, it ought rather to be rendered, ships of cane, or the Papyrus; i. e. such light vessels as they used in passing the river Nile, and other great rivers and arms of the sea. This, no doubt, was the first essay made by mankind towards navigation, and, perhaps, the utmost that their skill had reached in Job's time. See chap. xxviii. 4. and Peters.*

*Ver. 28. I am afraid of all my sorrows.] I shudder in all my limbs. Heath, after the LXX.*

*Ver. 29. If I be wicked, &c.] I shall be esteemed as guilty;*

*why, therefore, should I take so much pains? Houbigant. Let me be condemned, why should I, &c. Heath.*

*Ver. 30, 31. If I wash myself, &c.] i. e. Though I should appeal to my former life, spent in a religious, holy, and virtuous manner, yet this will be in vain; as I find, from the increase of my calamities, that I shall perish under them; and, being plunged into an immature death, shall have all my former ornament of righteousness and justice defiled; myself being esteemed, at least in the sight of my friends, as an impure and wicked monster.*

*Ver. 33. Any day's-man.] There is no one who may judge between us; who may lay his hand, &c. Houbigant. The laying the hand on both parties, implies a coercive power to enforce the execution of his decrees. This no one could have over the Almighty: it was in vain, therefore, to contend with Him. Heath. In some of the northern parts of England, any arbitrator, umpire, or elected judge, is commonly termed a dies-man, or day's-man. Dr. Hammond, in his Annotations upon Heb. x. 25. observes, that the word day, in all idioms, signifies judgment.*

*Ver. 35. But it is not so with me.] For thus I am not myself. Houbigant. But I am not sufficient master of myself. Heath.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Without a reflection on the insinuations of his unkind friend, Job enters directly into the argument.

1. He admits God's justice as a sure truth, nor dared to question how unequal a match he was for his Maker. Unable to stand before his bar, sinful man could not answer to one of a thousand of the charges that God could bring against him, but must plead guilty; nor can he resist the execution of his deserved sentence. Should he dare to plead for himself, *God is wise in heart*, and would detect the folly, and silence the sophistry of his arguments: should he dare to resist, *God is mighty in power*, yea, almighty to put his sentence in force, and every struggle is vain; *for who ever hardened himself against him, in self-justification, or impious opposition, and prospered?* Note; (1.) The knowledge of our own sinfulness, and especially of our fallen nature, will silence all self-dependance.



## C H A P. X.

*Job expostulates with God concerning his afflictions: he complains of life, but wishes for a little ease before his death.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**M**Y soul is weary of my life; I will leave my complaint upon myself; I will

speak in the bitterness of my soul.

2 I will say unto God, Do not condemn me; shew me wherefore thou contendest with me.

3 *Is it good unto thee that thou shouldest oppress, that thou shouldest despise the work*

ance, and bring us to God through the infinite and alone merits of Jesus, for justification unto life. (2.) Though wicked men and devils harden themselves in rebellion against God, as if he was weak to punish them, or negligent about their iniquity, a few short days will detect their folly, and lay them trembling under the rod of judgment in the belly of hell.

2. He expatiates on the glorious evidences of God's wisdom and power: so far was he from cursing God, that he could, in the midst of his pains, delight to dwell on the contemplation of his divine perfections. (1.) His power how amazing! At his word the mountains leap from their rooted bases, and they know not whither they are hurled: if his anger burns, they are overturned as the mole-hill. Shaken by his arm, earth's loosened pillars tremble, and all the cumbrous load thereon sustained shakes like the leaf, and is as easily removed. The sun, that rose in glory at his word, shall, at his will, sink back into primæval darkness, or, standing still in its course, withdraw from our hemisphere the light of day. Black with thick tempests, the lowering sky veils the bright stars, and their light is sealed up in darkness. Such works of wonder God wrought, when in the deluge the powers of earth and heaven were shaken; and works equally wonderful, whenever he pleases, he can still repeat, to scourge guilty mortals, and make his power be known. (2.) His wisdom how great! He alone spread the heavens over us with such admirable contrivance, and the waves of the sea beneath his feet retire to their appointed deep: yea, though they lift high their curling heads, their boundary is fixed, which they cannot pass. Each constellation moves in its appointed order, and the southern stars, unseen by us in this hemisphere, rise and set in regular succession, as we return to, and go forth from, our chambers. *Note;* The heavens are an expanded volume, the stars legible characters, where man should read the wisdom, power, and glory of God. (3.) *His agency is invisible,* and his works unsearchable. We cannot comprehend their number, or fathom his mysterious ways. He passes by us, and we see him not. The effects of his wisdom and power are evident, while himself, his counsels, his agency, are hid and secret. (4.) *His sovereignty is uncontrollable.* Whatever he pleases he doth in the hosts of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. If he take away every gift that he has bestowed, *who can hinder him, or make him restore it again? who dare plead with him, and say, What dost thou? may he not do what he will with his own?* (5.) *His anger is terrible: if God will not withdraw it, the proud helpers, or the helpers of pride, the stoutest sinners, the most exalted of the sons of pride, can neither support themselves, nor afford others the least succour: they do stoop under him, sinking down to the earth in affliction, or lower, crushed into hell under the insup-*

portable load of his wrath. *Note;* How should we then fear to offend him, if such is the power of his anger?

2dly, Job applies to his own case the views of God's perfections which he had described, as a ground of self-abasement before him. However he could maintain his cause before man, as being in no wise a hypocrite, as was alleged, he could not vindicate himself before God as not being a sinner.

1. He owns his inability to stand the contest with God: he is too wise for man to plead with him; too mighty to be resisted; and from his judgment no appeal can lie to any superior court. *Note;* There is no standing before God on the footing of our own deserts: in a covenant of grace, only, not of works, can the sinner be justified. Therefore,

2. However righteous he was as a magistrate, and sincere in profession as a good man, he resolves rather to cry for mercy than to plead his merits: not that he expected to be heard for his prayer's sake; but, if answered, he should ascribe it solely to God's rich grace, and not to the worth of his own supplications. *Note;* Mercy, not desert, must be our plea; nor can our best prayers make God our debtor.

3. Job had spoken rightly hitherto; but his infirmity now appears in the conclusion he draws, that while his afflictions were not removed, his prayers could not be answered; and, though acknowledging himself a sinner, he seems to think that his sufferings exceeded his deserts. *He breaketh me with a tempest of afflictions, and multiplieth my wounds without cause,* any such cause at least at his censorious friends had suggested. *He will not suffer me to take my breath, I can scarcely pray or speak through the violence of my disease; but he filleth me with bitterness.* *Note;* We must not judge that our prayers are rejected, because our sufferings remain: though we cannot now see why God deals with us thus, we shall be convinced by and by, that the greatest kindness God could do us was the continuance of our affliction.

3dly, The grand point in dispute is, Whether the wicked are always miserable, and the innocent prosperous. This his friends affirm, and he as resolutely denies. *This is one thing,* singular as it may appear to you, yet certain and sure, and which from the fullest conviction I advance, *God destroyeth the perfect and the wicked;* eternally, indeed, the faithful cannot perish; but often they fall in the promiscuous ruin, when desolating judgments arise; and if the scourge slay suddenly, he will laugh at the trial of the innocent. Not that God delights in the miseries of his people, but if he seem unconcerned for their sufferings, it is because he intends their trials for the increase of their graces, and the brightening of their crown. - *The earth, in general, is given into the hand of the wicked;* they prosper, have dominion, and bear the sway. *He covereth the faces*

of thine hands, and shine upon the counsel of the wicked?

4 Hast thou eyes of flesh? or seest thou as man seeth?

5 *Are* thy days as the days of man? *are* thy

years as man's days,

6 That thou enquirest after mine iniquity, and searchest after my sin?

7 Thou knowest that I am not wicked; and *there is* none that can deliver out of thine hand.

of the judges thereof; gives them up to blindness of heart, and leaves them to execute their unrighteous decrees, to the oppression of the innocent: *if not*, if this be not fact and truth, *where and who is he* that can confute me? God hath the government of the world, and these things cannot be done but by his permission: sufferings, therefore, are no proof of his anger, nor prosperity of his favour. *Note*: (1.) Though the righteous here suffer *with* the wicked, they suffer not *as* the wicked; their afflictions are merciful corrections, not angry judgments, and the end of them not their ruin, but more abundant glory. (2.) It must silence our complaints under oppression, and suppress all envy at the prosperity of the wicked, that it is permitted for wise ends, which, though we know not now, we shall know hereafter.

4thly, His complaints mingle with his arguments.

1. He bewails his past prosperity fled, his present sorrows incurable. Swifter than a post on full speed his days of joy were hurried by, and now are succeeded by days of misery, which made the former forgotten, as if they had never been: they are gone, like ships that skim before the wind; and, as if labouring for an expression to set forth their velocity, fled as the eagle, when darting on his prey. In vain he sought to recover a glimpse of former comfort, or to compose himself under present afflictions; *If I say, I will forget my complaint, I will leave off my heaviness, and comfort myself*, the attempt were fruitless; sorrows followed him close as his shadow, and he feared they would overwhelm him at last. *Note*: (1.) Time is rapid, our day expiring, all temporal good transitory; let us be wise then to redeem it, that when the present moment is lost in eternity, as the drop in the boundless ocean, our happy portion there may be secured. (2.) It is easier to know that we ought to submit, and to bid the miserable forget their complaints, than to exercise that silent resignation which is so evidently our bounden duty.

2. He despairs of being able to plead with God: either it is the language of humility, expressive of his worthlessness, or of his impatience and hard thoughts of God, as if he had cleansed his hands in vain. *I know that thou wilt not hold me innocent*; I begin to despair of recovery, and expect, in the continuance of my afflictions, to be treated as *if I be wicked*, which will be believed, without doubt, if I perish in my suffering. *Why then labour I in vain* to clear myself, when the calamities that I suffer will plead against me in the eyes of the world, stronger than any arguments that I can urge will vindicate me. *If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean, use every effort to maintain my innocence, and shew my conversation never so blameless, yet shalt thou plunge me in the ditch of deep afflictions, and mine own clothes shall abhor me*; my dearest friends will construe my case abominable, and my sufferings will make me a burden to myself. *Note*: (1.) The best of men have the lowest thoughts of themselves.

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(2.) The more a sinner goeth about to establish his own righteousness, instead of submitting to "the righteousness of faith," [Rom. iv. 13.] the more desperate his case grows.

3. He complains of the unequal contest. *He is not a man, as I am*; the potsherds may strive with the potsherds of the earth, but impossible it is, *that I, a worm, should answer him*, the glorious and infinite God, *and that we should come together in judgment, or alike*, on equal terms. He can have no superior, nor is there any court where the cause can be tried; *neither is there any day's-man, or arbitrator*, to whom the cause can be referred, and by whose decisions we must abide. Or, it may be rendered, *O that there were a mediator, that might lay his hand upon us both*, so as effectually to settle and adjust the dispute. *Note*: The Lord Jesus Christ appears to be the day's-man whom Job wanted: his hand is laid on both, to bring an offended God near in mercy to sinful man, and to incline man, a sinner, to return in humiliation to a pardoning God.

4. He wishes for a short respite, that he might speak for himself. *Let him take his rod away from me, of chastisement that oppressed him, and let not his fear terrify me*, that dread of his awful majesty which now overwhelmed him; *then would I speak*, in prayer and supplication, or plead for himself, *and not fear him*, as in his present state he did, God appearing as an enemy; or perhaps, daring as the challenge was, he would then maintain his cause without fear; and, though a sinner confessed, reason with him on the exceeding greatness of his sufferings; *but it is not so with me*; I am disabled by his terrors to speak before him; and I have no day's-man; or, *I am not so with myself*, so master of himself, as to be able, in his disordered state, to maintain his cause aright. *Note*: Even truly godly men, under sore trials, have spoken unadvisedly with their lips; therefore we had need ever pray, that we may not be led into temptation.

## CHAP. X.

*Ver. 1. I will leave my complaint upon myself*] *I will not keep my complaint within myself*. Houbigant. See the note on the 1st verse of the preceding chapter.

*Ver. 3. That thou shouldst despise, &c.*] *That thou shouldst hate or destroy the work of thine hands, and give countenance to, or favour the counsel of the wicked?* Houbigant and Heath.

*Ver. 4. Hast thou eyes of flesh?*] Schultens observes, that *eyes of flesh* are here used for *eyes of envy and hatred*; and that *to see*, in the next clause, signifies *to envy*.

*Ver. 7. Thou knowest that I am not wicked*] *Flagitious*. Houbigant. *Guilty of atrocious and enormous crimes*. It would be injurious to the character of Job, says Mr. Peter, should we interpret in a severe and rigorous sense, as it is certain his friends too often did, his frequent protestations of his innocence and his bold appeals to the supreme

8 Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about; yet thou dost destroy me.

9 Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay: and wilt thou bring me into dust again?

10 Hast thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese?

11 Thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and hast fenced me with bones and sinews.

12 Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visitation hath preserved my spirit.

13 And these things hast thou hid in thine

heart: I know that this is with thee.

14 If I sin, then thou markest me, and thou wilt not acquit me from mine iniquity.

15 If I be wicked, woe unto me; and if I be righteous, yet will I not lift up my head, I am full of confusion; therefore see thou mine affliction;

16 For it increaseth. Thou huntest me as a fierce lion: and again thou shewest thyself marvellous upon me.

17 Thou renewest thy witnesses against me, and increasest thine indignation upon me; changes and war are against me.

18 Wherefore then hast thou brought me

Judge to prove and try him; for where he is thus strenuous in asserting his integrity, it is only in opposition to the notion which those mistaken friends had entertained of him; namely, that he had been guilty of some gross sins which he had the art to hide from the world, and that he was in reality a wicked man, and a hypocrite in his behaviour. This is what Job utterly denies and disclaims; though he nowhere arrogates to himself perfect innocence, or freedom from sin.

Ver. 8. *Yet thou dost destroy me*] *And wilt thou tear me to pieces?* Heath.

Ver. 10. *Hast thou not poured me out as milk, &c.*] See Pliny, Hist. Nat. l. 7. c. 15.; see also this and the following verses finely elucidated in Scheuchzer, Physique Sacrée, tom. vi. p. 39.

Ver. 13. *And these things hast thou hid in thine heart*] *And all the while didst thou treasure up these things in thy heart: I find by experience that this was thy purpose*; ver. 14. *That if I should sin, thou wouldst observe me, and wouldst by no means acquit me from mine iniquity.* Schultens.

Ver. 15. *If I be wicked, woe unto me!* &c.] i. e. "I cannot, will not hope for any temporal deliverance upon account of my righteousness, as you, my friends, are endeavouring to persuade me, from a mistaken principle; and according to which, if no such deliverance should happen, you are still resolved to condemn me as a wicked man." The latter clause of this verse, *I am full of confusion, &c.* should be rendered thus, *I am full of ignominy; and those who are spectators of my affliction even pride themselves against me, and insult me*; ver. 16. *Thou huntest me as if I were a lion, and repeatest thy marvellous assaults upon me*: that is, in short, "Thou sufferest my friends to attack and worry me in their turns, as the hunters usually do a stout lion when they surround him on all sides, and attack him one after another." See ch. xvi. 11. 13. I am persuaded that we should be very sensible of the beauty of this comparison had we lived in Job's days, and been with him at the hunting down of a lion. This circumstance of his friend's haughty behaviour towards him, their even priding themselves against him, and insulting him, was so insupportable, that he proceeds, ver. 18. addressing himself to God: *Wherefore then, &c.*?—*I should have expired, and no eye had seen me*; "I should neither have undergone

"the reproaches which I now suffer, nor would these spectators of my affliction have incurred the guilt of this their hard usage of me; ver. 19. *I should have been as though I had never been*; a mere abortion, carried directly from the womb to the grave, ver. 20. *Are not my days few? cease then.*"—The Hebrew is, *באלו ימי יאכדאל* *balo meat iachadal*, *Will not the little of my days cease?* Is it not a very short time that I have to live? In the next verses we have a gloomy prospect indeed: but it should be remembered, that the Easterns in general, and the Hebrews in particular, took their ideas of death, for the most part, from their places of sepulchre, which were large caves in rocks, where no light was admitted, except through the entrance. See Bishop Lowth's Prelections, Lect. 7. Heath renders the last verse of this chapter, *A land, the darkness of which is as the thick darkness of the shadow of death; where there are no consolations, but its brightest ray is as the thick darkness.*

Ver. 17. *Thou renewest thy witnesses*] *Accusations.* Heath. Literally, says he, thy evidences; but, being a judicial term, it signifies *indictments, charges*: the phrase is somewhat analogous to the term in the English law, *thou renewest thy bill.* The word rendered *changes* is a military term, importing the leading on fresh troops to the attack to relieve those who were fatigued. Heath renders this latter clause, *Thou devisest an army of new torments to inflict me.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Though in general Job acknowledged himself a sinner, and unable to stand the severity of God's judgment; yet, when he considered his own integrity in general, and the uncommon weight of his afflictions, he seemed to feel an argument for impatient complaint, and charges God foolishly.

1. He repeats his passionate wish for death; *My soul is weary of my life*, burdened with afflictions, and longing to be rid of them in the grave. *I will leave my complaint upon myself*; I must complain, though I lay the blame on myself; such anguish cannot be suppressed, *I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.* Note; To be weary of life before God sends a discharge, is to be unfaithful to the post that he hath given us to maintain.

2. He resolves to inquire of God the cause of his sufferings, *I will say unto God, Do not condemn me, or account me wicked, deal with him as if he really was such as his friends*

forth out of the womb? Oh that I had given up the ghost, and no eye had seen me!

19 I should have been as though I had not

been; I should have been carried from the womb to the grave.

20 *Are not my days few? cease then, and*

friends suggested, and who, while his troubles continued, would be confirmed in their suspicions. *Show me wherefore thou contendest with me*; he was not conscious of having wilfully offended, and therefore fain would know the design that God proposed in the heaviness and continuance of his calamities. *Note*; (1.) It becomes us in suffering times to inquire into their cause, that we may answer their end. *Though we may know nothing of ourselves*, particularly to condemn us, *he that judgeth us is the Lord*, who sees what we overlook, and whose ways and thoughts are as much above ours as the heaven is higher than the earth. (2.) When we suffer the rod of correction, we need especially pray to be saved from the condemnation of sin. Every other burden is supportable; that intolerable.

3. He presumes to expostulate with God on his case. *Is it good unto thee that thou shouldst oppress?* can it be agreeable to thy perfections to take pleasure in tormenting me? *that thou shouldst despise the work of thine hands*, and be indifferent to my sorrows, though thy creature by nature, by grace thy servant too? *and shine upon the counsel of the wicked*, prosper their devices against the righteous, or, by the continuance of his afflictions, seem to approve the hard censures of the world and his friends. *Hast thou eyes of flesh? or seest thou as man seeth?* Looking no farther than outward appearances, they condemn me; wilt thou do like them, who seest the secrets of the heart, and knowest my innocence? *Are thy days as the days of man*, whose life is short, his purposes mutable, and his researches after truth, through the imperfection of his faculties, tedious? *that thou inquirest after mine iniquity, and searchest after my sin?* continuing his anguish, as if to draw from him a confession of his guilt, as from a person under the torture; which seemed to Job severe and needless, persuaded of God's all-seeing eye and unerring wisdom, and assured of his own uprightness before him. *Thou knowest that I am not wicked*, chargeable with open or allowed iniquity, nor hypocritical in my professions; *and there is none that can deliver out of thine hand*. No power could rescue him from God's hand, and therefore he need not be bound with these cords of affliction, as if to prevent his escape. *Note*; (1.) It is difficult under extraordinary troubles to be silent, and not impeach, by murmuring, God's goodness or his righteousness. (2.) The sense of God's omniscience should ever fill our minds with reverence and godly fear before him. Who will not dread the sin which darkness promises to cover when God's eye is there? (3.) Resistance against God is vain; to struggle against his corrections is but to torment our own souls.

2dly, Having called himself the work of God's hands, he here enlarges on that consideration; begs God to remember his own past favours and his frailty, as a reason against the severity of those sufferings which threatened to destroy him. *Thine hands have made me and fashioned me together round about, yet thou dost destroy me*, for under these troubles I must quickly sink. *Remember, I beseech thee, that thou hast made me as the clay*, thou art my potter, I am moulded at thy will, brittle as the clay; remember it, for I cannot

stand under such strokes of correction, but must be broken to pieces. *And wilt thou bring me into dust again?* delight to make and unmake me, give me a momentary existence, only to bring me to a miserable end? especially after being so fearfully and wonderfully made. *Hast thou not poured me out as milk, and curdled me like cheese? thou hast clothed me with skin and flesh, and fenced me with bones and sinews*, carried on the formation of my body till I breathed vital air: *thou hast granted me life*, and with it numberless mercies, *and favour*, thy gifts of nature, and the better portion of thy grace: and *thy visitation hath preserved my spirit*, kept me long amid the dangers that surround me, and supported and preserved the life thou didst bestow; *and these things hast thou hid in thine heart*: amidst all thy apparent mercies lay concealed the miseries which I endure. *I know that this is with thee*, thou alone canst assign the reasons of thy conduct, which to me appears strange and mysterious. *Note*; (1.) The curious structure and formation of the human body should lead us to an admiration of the hand that made it. (2.) All our mercies of nature, providence, and grace, are derived from God, and he should be acknowledged by us in all with thankfulness, and a grateful return made to him in bounden love and service. (3.) Though sometimes we cannot reconcile God's former dealings or his promises with our present afflictive dispensation, he will appear at last righteous in his word, and just in all his works.

3dly, The more Job went on to complain, the warmer his words grew.

1. He reflects upon the severity of God's inquiry, and the rigour of his sentence. If he took one false step, it was marked as if God's eye was over him for evil. Full of confusion through his anguish, he scarcely knew what or how to speak, and therefore begs God to look upon his affliction in mercy before it quite overwhelmed him; for, instead of abating, the waters of trouble swelled daily higher: he was hunted with afflictions, as the fierce lion pursues his prey; and these so repeated and strange, that he was an astonishment to others, and a wonder to himself. Every day fresh calamities, as new evidences, arose to testify his guilt, and the increasing indignation against him; his changes were only from evil to worse; and war from heaven, earth, and hell, seemed to assault him. *Note*; (1.) If God be strict to mark what is amiss, who may abide it? (2.) Woe to the impenitent! whether prosperity or adversity attend them here, misery, intolerable as eternal, must be their portion hereafter. (3.) If a child of God seem sunk in uncommon calamities, let him not despair; though the dispensation is grievous, it is for the trial of his faith. (4.) Reflections upon God, as being hard and severe, are very sinful.

2. He renews his impatient desire of death, but begs that God would give him some short respite from his afflictions before he dropped into the grave. He expostulates with God, why he so unkindly drew him into a world so miserable;—wishes as before, chap. iii. 11. to have died from the womb, that no eye might have seen his misery,

let me alone, that I may take comfort a little,  
 21 Before I go *whence* I shall not return,  
*even* to the land of darkness and the shadow  
 of death;

22 A land of darkness, as darkness *itself*;  
*and* of the shadow of death, without any  
 order, and *where* the light is as darkness.

### CHAP. XI.

*Zophar reproves Job for justifying himself: he declares God's wisdom to be unsearchable; but that it would be well with Job, if he would repent.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**T**HEN answered Zophar the Naamathite,  
 and said,

2 Should not the multitude of words be

and that he might have departed as one that had never been. He urges the shortness of his days, as a plea for some moments' comfort before death should close his eyes in darkness, and lay him in the grave, whence there could be no return to earth again; where no succession of days and years cheered the melancholy scene, no distinction of age, sex, or station appeared, no beam of light ever pierced the dreadful gloom, but shadows of death, dark and dismal, were perpetually extended over it. *Note*; (1.) Every moment's respite and ease that we enjoy here should be regarded as a mercy from God. (2.) The shorter our days are, the more need have we to improve them. (3.) The grave affords to sense a very melancholy prospect; but to the righteous there ariseth up light in the darkness; and faith can look through the thick cloud, and behold those glories beyond, in prospect of which we can say, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.

### CHAP. XI.

*Ver. 1. Then answered Zophar*] Zophar, highly provoked that Job should dare to call in question a maxim so universally assented to as that urged by his friends, immediately charges him home with secret wickedness. He tells him, that he makes not the least doubt, were the real state of his heart laid open, it would be found that God had dealt very gently with him; *ver. 2—7*. That he was highly blame-worthy for pretending to fathom the depths of divine Providence, a task to which he was utterly unequal; that, however his wickedness might be concealed from men, yet it was open and bare to God's all-seeing eye. Could he, then, imagine that God would not punish the wickedness that he saw? *ver. 7—11*. That it would surely be far more becoming in him to submit, and give glory to God, by making an ample confession and full restitution: in that case, indeed, he might hope for a return of God's goodness to him; but the way he was in at present was the common road of the wicked, whose only hope was annihilation; *ver. 12—20*. *Heath*.

*Ver. 2. Should not the multitude of words be answered?*

answered? and should a man full of talk be justified?

3 Should thy lies make men hold their peace? and when thou mockest, shall no man make thee ashamed?

4 For thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes.

5 But, Oh that God would speak, and open his lips against thee;

6 And that he would shew thee the secrets of wisdom, that *they are* double to that which is! Know therefore that God exacteth of thee *less* than thine iniquity *deserveth*.

7 Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?

The three friends of Job, though they all agree in persecuting him, yet differ somewhat in their character. The speeches of Eliphaz appear artful and insinuating; those of Bildad, grave and mild; of Zophar, fierce and violent: the two former had observed some decorum in their reprehensions of Job; the zeal of the last transports him beyond all bounds: *Should not the multitude, &c.* to the end of *ver. 6*. Strange rashness and presumption! thus to pronounce upon a point of which he could not possibly be a judge. But it happened here, as usual, that this speaker, who sets out with the greatest heat, is the first whose arguments are spent. For, after this vehement speech, he makes but one reply, and it is over with him. See on *chap. xxv.* and *Peters*.

*Ver. 4. Thou hast said, my doctrine is pure*] The Hebrew signifies *my way of life, my morals, or conduct*. Mr. Chappelow rightly observes, that this phrase is the same as is made use of by St. Paul, *Acts, xxvi. 4*. *H' Gen. 24, 44, my way of life*.

*Ver. 5. Open his lips against thee*] The purpose of this wish is, that Job might be openly convicted of that wickedness of which they all concluded he must have been guilty, to draw down the wrath of God upon him to such an extraordinary degree.

*Ver. 6. That he would shew thee the secrets of wisdom*] *That he would even tell thee to thy face the secrets of thy craftings for they are double to thy real worth. Know, therefore, that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity*. *Heath*. It is plain that the thing to be discovered was the wickedness of Job, which had hitherto, in the judgment of these friends, been covered by his hypocrisy; and, in truth, there was little reason to lay open the hidden treasures of God's wisdom to demonstrate this. Supposing Job (as they did) to be really a hypocrite, there was no more to do than to strip off the disguise, and his wickedness would at once appear: and this is what Zophar wishes to be done.

*Ver. 7. Canst thou by searching find out God?* *Canst thou penetrate into the secrets or depths of God? Canst thou search the immensity of the Almighty?* *Houbigant and Heath*.

*Ver.*

8 *It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than hell; what canst thou know?*

9 The measure thereof *is* longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.

10 If he cut off, and shut up, or gather together, then who can hinder him?

11 For he knoweth vain men: he seeth wickedness also; will he not then consider it?

12 For vain man would be wise, though man be born *like* a wild ass's colt:

13 If thou prepare *thine* heart, and stretch out *thine* hands towards him;

14 If iniquity *be* in *thine* hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in *thy* tabernacles.

15 For then shalt thou lift up *thy* face with-

out spot; yea, thou shalt be stedfast, and shalt not fear:

16 Because thou shalt forget *thy* misery, and remember *it* as waters *that* pass away:

17 And *thine* age shall be clearer than the noon-day; thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning.

18 And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope; yea, thou shalt dig *about* *thee*, and thou shalt take *thy* rest in safety.

19 Also thou shalt lie down, and none shall make *thee* afraid; yea, many shall make suit unto thee.

20 But the eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall not escape, and their hope *shall be* as the giving up of the ghost.

*Ver. 8. It is as high as heaven*] The universe was divided by the ancient Hebrews into the upper and the lower, the visible and invisible hemisphere; the one they call שמים *shamaim*, or *heaven*; the other שואל *sheol*, which we have no English word to express: these two are opposed to each other in Scripture for height and depth, as in this verse and Psalm cxxxix. 8. Again, heaven was considered by them as the habitation of God and his holy angels; שואל *sheol* as the region of departed souls; and the surface of the earth, lying in the middle betwixt both, as the habitation of the sons of men, during their short continuance in this life. As little philosophical as this may seem, the division is simple and natural; and we are not further concerned with it in a philosophical, but in a theological view; as it shews the belief of the ancients under the Old Testament, that the soul subsists after death in a certain place and state. See Psalm xvi. 10. Isai. xiv. 9. and Peters, p. 319. where a complete investigation of the meaning of the word שואל *sheol* will be found. Houbigant renders it, *He is as high*; and in ver. 9. *the measure of him*, &c.

*Ver. 10. If he cut off, and shut up*] *If, by a change of things, he shall confine this man to his house, or grant that man to appear in public, who shall hinder him?* I have expressed the matter rather paraphrastically for the sake of greater perspicuity. Zophar hints that Job himself had experienced a change to adversity from prosperity, and was confined to his house by a disease after he had been conversant in the public assemblies of men with the greatest honour. Houbigant.

*Ver. 12. For vain man would be wise*] *A man who hath understanding will become wise; but he who is as the wild ass hath no prudence.* So Houbigant translates the verse; and he adds, that Zophar here means to say, that a man of a good disposition, if he sins at any time, will become wiser from thence; while, on the contrary, they who are like the wild ass in ferocity, will persevere in their blindness and folly: intending hereby to draw Job from that savageness which he supposes to be in him, to meekness, and an application to God for pardon. Though Schultens varies a little in his version, yet he gives nearly the same interpre-

tation. The next verse seems properly to connect with the former in this view; *If thou therefore, longer like such a wild ungovernable colt, but like a wise man, wilt prepare thine heart, &c.* If (ver. 14.) *thou wilt cast iniquity from thine hands, that wickedness may not dwell in thy tabernacle;* ver. 15. *Surely then thou shalt lift up thy face, &c.*

*Ver. 17. Thine age shall be clearer than the noon-day*] *Thy continuance in this life shall be as the noon-day; thy darkness or thy present obscurity itself as the morning light.* Houbigant and Schultens.

*Ver. 18. And thou shalt be secure, because there is hope*] *Thou shalt also be confident, because hope shall be with thee: thou shalt dig securely; thou shalt have a quiet habitation.* *Thou shalt dig securely* alludes to the custom of the eastern people, who pitched their tents near wells for the conveniency of water for their cattle; a matter of the utmost consequence to them, and therefore very apt to raise disputes among them; as may be seen in the histories of Abraham and Isaac. Heath. Schultens understands it of digging up a fosse or moat round his house for the defence of his family; observing that the writer finely alludes to that torrent of evils and vehement flood of waters by which the tabernacle of Job had been carried away, and from which they would be safely preserved by means of this moat. So that, in the word *digging*, you have, what might scarcely be expected, a most noble metaphor, which opens a wide field for meditation.

*Ver. 20. The eyes of the wicked shall fail*] i. e. "Their hope shall be deferred and utterly disappointed." The latter clause מפת נפשם, ומהם ומהם אהר מנהם ותקותם *umanos ahad minnehem, vethikvatham mappach napeß*, is literally, *flight perisheth from them, and their hope, the expiation of life.* There is the utmost virulence in this conclusion. Job had expressed his earnest desire that God would put an end to his life: this Zophar objects against him, as a certain proof his being a bad man; supposing it to proceed from a consciousness of guilt, which would not permit him to hope for any favour from God. Heath.

REFLECTIONS.—With eyes sparkling with indignation, at seeing all the former arguments slighted and ineffectual, Zophar, the third, replies.

2. He



## C H A P. XII.

*Job reproves the boasting of his friends: he shews that in this life it is frequently well even with those men who offend the Lord; yet allows that nobody could deny their general doctrine, that all things were governed by an Almighty God.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**A**ND Job answered and said,  
2 No doubt but ye *are* the people, and

1. He opens his speech with much insolence and abuse. Far from admitting any part of Job's vindication of himself to be either true or pertinent, he treats him as a mere babler, who pretended by a multitude of words to make a shew of wisdom; gives the lie to his assertions of his integrity, and brands him as mocking God in such appeals to his omniscience. *Note;* (1.) Controversy of every kind usually produces unbecoming warmth; but, in religious controversy, to be abusive and passionate is, though too common, particularly indecent and sinful. (2.) When there is a disposition to find fault, the most inoffensive words, the most reasonable discourse, will afford a handle for malevolence. (3.) We need not account it strange to be treated unmercifully, when we see so good a man thus abused by his nearest friends. (4.) Though some may be so rude as to give us the lie, and others so wicked as to brand those with meanness who do not shew their resentment, the grace of God teaches a different lesson, and bids us overcome evil with good.

2. Zophar had called Job liar, and, lo! his first charge against him appears to be itself a falsehood; so sure it is, that the first to give the lie is usually the most guilty, and abuse is a sad symptom of a bad cause. Job had maintained his integrity; but had acknowledged withal, that, though no hypocrite, or wicked man, he was a sinner, and therefore in God's sight worthy of condemnation.

3. He wishes God to take up the controversy, since their arguments seemed fruitless, concluding that he must be on their side; though, alas! they who most solemnly appeal to him are often very far from being most in the right. Of two things Zophar wished God to convince Job, 1. *The unsearchable depths of his wisdom, that they are double to that which is in man, who shews only his own weakness and wickedness when he attempts to arraign what he cannot comprehend.* 2. *The unexceptionable equity of his procedure; far from exacting more than our iniquity deserves, his chastisements are less than our provocations.* *Note;* (1) Men may speak great truths, though they may draw very wrong inferences from them. (2) A sense of our own blindness should ever make us silent under God's afflictive dispensations; though we know not how, there is wisdom, yea, and mercy in them. (3.) It is certain, that every man, while he is out of hell, has less than his iniquities deserve; and has cause, therefore, to praise God for his mercy, and cheerfully to submit to whatever burden is laid upon him.

2dly, In our present fallen state we can comprehend so little either of the Divine perfections or providence, that we pretend to find fault with them were the extreme of arrogance and folly. Zophar here,

1. Displays God's incomprehensibility, sovereignty, and

wisdom shall die with you.

3 But I have understanding as well as you; I am not inferior to you: yea, who knoweth not such things as these?

4 I am as one mocked of his neighbour, who calleth upon God, and he answereth him: the just upright man is laughed to scorn.

5 He that is ready to slip with his feet is as

omniscience, as argument to silence Job's plea before him. His infinite perfections are beyond our most enlarged and persevering researches; the more we labour to comprehend his immensity, eternity, &c. the more shall we be lost in the contemplation, and forced to cry, *O the depth, &c.* Rom. xi. 33. His sovereignty who shall control: if he cut off by death and judgments, or make a change in his dealings with any person or family, (as in Job's case) yea, should he reduce to its primitive nothing the whole created universe, who can say unto him, What dost thou? not that God, to display his sovereignty, makes his creatures miserable: infinite wisdom and justice mark all his ways. *He knoweth vain men, he seeth wickedness;* however closely covered or concealed, he detects the vain pretence; *Will he not then consider it?* yes, and visit such persons with the judgments which they have provoked. *Note;* (1.) Every view of the divine perfections should humble us before God. (2.) From him nothing is hidden: how should this consideration engage our watchfulness against the most secret desire of evil within our hearts!

2. He represents man as vain in his imaginations, affecting to be wise, though born stupid as the wild ass's colt, and like that animal stubborn and untractable. *Note;* (1.) Man is by nature proud, and wise in his own conceits; ever since the first man, by affecting forbidden wisdom, fell, all his posterity have imitated his sin. (2.) Pride ever makes a man untractable; they who have a high opinion of themselves are usually above advice.

3dly, Zophar concludes his speech with sound advice; but evidently intimates his conviction that Job's afflictions proceed from his secret sins, which, if not parted with, must provoke his utter ruin.

1. His advice is, to *prepare his heart* by serious reflection, and, setting before himself the humbling views of his sin, to *stretch out his hands* in penitent prayer for mercy, to *put away iniquity from his hand*, allowed sin, and to *purge out wickedness from his tabernacles*, which he seems to intimate he had allowed or connived at. *Note;* The sins of his household are chargeable on the negligent master, and God will more or less require them at his hands.

2. He supports his counsel by a variety of considerations evincing the comfort that would accrue to Job from following it: *For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot before God and man, who would regard him with favour; thou shalt be steadfast, fixed in prosperity, and shalt not fear such awful changes as of late he had beheld. Because thou shalt forget thy misery;* the comforts restored will obliterate the remembrance of past calamities; and *remember it as waters that pass away;* if they are reflected upon, they will vanish as the brook dried up in summer; and

thine



a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease.

6 The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly.

7 But ask now the beasts, and they shall

teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee:

8 Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee; and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.

9 Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the LORD hath wrought this?

*thine age shall be clearer than the noon-day, thou shalt shine forth, thou shalt be as the morning; though clouds and darkness of affliction had covered him, these in his age should be dispelled; comfort and joy, as the light at noon, should cheer his future day, and his evening sun shine bright as the splendour of the morning. And thou shalt be secure, confident in the mercy of God, because there is hope of God's returning favour. Yea, thou shalt dig about thee, and fix a durable mansion, or find wells of water for his cattle, or be secured as in an intrenchment; and thou shalt take thy rest in safety, no danger being near to terrify or disturb: thou shalt lie down, and none shall make thee afraid; yea, many shall make suit to thee; thou shalt be more honoured and courted than now thou art slighted and despised. Note; (1.) When we have returned to God in faith and humble prayer, we may be confident of his favour. (2.) If God establishes us, we need not fear what all the powers of evil can do against us.*

3. He describes the miserable end of the ungodly: *The eyes of the wicked shall fail, while looking after relief in vain, and they shall not escape from the hand of God's judgments, and their hope shall be desperate, and the disappointment terrible, as the giving up of the ghost.* And such he seems to insinuate would be Job's case, if, rejecting the admonitions of his friends, he continued proudly and falsely to vindicate himself, while his sins remained. *Note; (1.) If not before, in death at least, the vain confidence of the wicked and self-righteous expires. (2.) There is no escaping God's judgments; they who will not turn must burn.*

CHAP. XII.

*Ver. 1. And Job answered]* In this and the two following chapters Job replies to Zophar. Greatly vexed that his friends should entertain so firm an opinion of his being a wicked man; that they should press him so hard with their maxim, "That affliction was a demonstration of "guilt," and should make a mock of his appeal to God, he can no longer refrain from being very sharp in his treatment of them. He taxes them with self-conceit; their maxims he treats as mean and poor, the contrary of which was evident to all observing persons; good men were frequently in distress, while robbers and public plunderers enjoyed their ill-gotten wealth in perfect security; ver. 2—6. This was so notorious, that it was impossible it could have escaped their observation; ver. 7. to the end. This was, indeed, the work of Jehovah, who was all-wise and all-powerful, and no one could call him to account. All this he was as sensible of as they could be, for which reason he was the more desirous to argue the point with God; ch. xiii. ver. 1—10. And as for them, if they would pretend to be judges, they should take great care to be upright ones; since God would by no means excuse corruption of

judgment, though it should be in his own behalf; and his all-seeing eye would penetrate their motives, though ever so closely concealed from human view; and in his sight, all their maxims of wisdom, on which they seemed so much to value themselves, would be regarded as dross and dung. He was not, he intimated, in the least apprehensive of bringing his cause to an issue; because he was satisfied that the Almighty, far from oppressing him by dint of power, would rather afford him strength to go through his defence; and he was persuaded that the issue would be favourable to him; ver. 11—19. He, therefore, challenges any one among them to declare himself the accuser; secure enough as to that point, as he well knew they could not make good their charge: and as, in case of false accusation, the accuser was to undergo the punishment due to the accused if guilty, he knew they would run no such hazards, unless they knew themselves able to prove their charge. He, therefore, again ends with a tender expostulation with the Almighty, begging that he might, before his death, have an opportunity of publicly vindicating his integrity; since afterwards he could have no hope of doing it; ver. 20. to the end of chap. xiv. Heath.

*Ver. 2. No doubt but ye are the people]* No doubt knowledge is yours; perfect wisdom dwells with you!

*Ver. 4. I am as one mocked of his neighbour]* I am a mocking-stock to my neighbour. "He hath appealed to God, to be sure he will answer him! The integrity of the "righteous man is become a scoff." *He hath appealed to God,* was the mock which had been thrown out to him, and alludes to what he had said, chap. x. 7. which had drawn forth that wish of Zophar (ver. 5 and 6. of the last chapter), that God would appear, and convict him of his hypocrisy. Heath.

*Ver. 5. Is ready, &c.]* This is much more beautiful in the original. It is a metaphor taken from the archer, whose arrow is fitted to the string, and ready to be discharged. The word *שׁוּאן* *shaanan*, here rendered *at ease*, doth not make so complete a sense as could be wished: its root, *שׁוּא* *shuan*, particularly refers to such wicked persons as are so void of humanity, that the afflictions of their neighbours are a pleasure to them; and who are so far from endeavouring to alleviate them, that it is their delight to increase them by taunts and insults. I render the whole verse, *In calamity, contempt is ready in the thoughts of the insolent, for those whose feet are tottering.* Heath.

*Ver. 6. Into whose hand God bringeth abundantly]* Those who provoke God, enjoy in security whatever God pleases to bestow upon them.

*Ver. 8. Or, speak to the earth]* Or, survey the earth.

*Ver. 9. Who knoweth not, &c. ?]* Who knoweth not among all these, that it is the hand of Jehovah which hath made them all? From the word *Jehovah's* being used in this place, some would infer that the book of Job must be at least posterior

10 In whose hand *is* the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.

11 Doth not the ear try words? and the mouth taste his meat?

12 With the ancient *is* wisdom; and in length of days understanding.

13 With him *is* wisdom and strength, he hath counsel and understanding.

14 Behold, he breaketh down, and it cannot be built again: he shutteth up a man, and there can be no opening.

15 Behold, he withholdeth the waters, and they dry up: also he sendeth them out, and they overturn the earth.

16 With him *is* strength and wisdom: the deceived and the deceiver *are* his.

17 He leadeth counsellors away spoiled, and maketh the judges fools.

18 He looseth the bond of kings, and

girdeth their loins with a girdle.

19 He leadeth princes away spoiled, and overthroweth the mighty.

20 He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged.

21 He poureth contempt upon princes, and weakeneth the strength of the mighty.

22 He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death.

23 He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them: he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them *again*.

24 He taketh away the heart of the chief of the people of the earth, and causeth them to wander in a wilderness *where there is* no way.

25 They grope in the dark without light,

posterior to the time of Moses, and written by a Jew: a very weak argument! as there seems no doubt that the name *Jehovah* was well known to Abraham and the patriarchs; nor was it made known to Moses by God, as a new name which he chose for himself, but as a name referring to the great covenant. See Exod. iii. 14, 15. Job means in these verses to express his firm opinion, that all animate and inanimate nature clearly bore testimony to the creating power and over-ruling providence of God. See Neh. ix. 6.

*Ver. 11, 12. Doth not the ear try words? &c.] Doth not the ear try words, as the palate tasteth food?* Job, being about to speak of the supreme and absolute dominion of God over his creatures, begins with two proverbial expressions, in which he seems to insinuate that he wished for other judges of what he had to say, who, endued with a more mature and solid understanding of spiritual things, were better able to distinguish sincere piety, and the just complaints of oppressed innocence, from impiety and hypocrisy, and to dispute more prudently concerning God and his providence. Schultens.

*Ver. 13. With him is wisdom and strength] With him dwell, &c. Counsel and understanding are peculiar to him.* Thus Houbigant; who supposes the expression of *dwelling* to be in immediate opposition to the foregoing verse, where wisdom is said to *BE* with old men, but here to *DWELL* with GOD, as in its proper and peculiar home, the fountain of all human wisdom. Job shews, in the following verses, that the affairs of the world, and the fortunes of men, are subject to such a variety of changes and chances, that all human reason and wisdom must be silent with respect to them; since the same misfortunes involve the good and the wicked, and seem rather to flow from the supreme dominion and unsearchable will of God, than to be distributed according to the rule of exact justice. See Schultens.

*Ver. 15. He withholdeth the waters]* This seems to refer to the universal deluge; as the latter part of the next verse probably alludes to the fall.

*Ver. 19. He leadeth princes away spoiled]* *He depriveth the priests of their understanding.* Schultens.

*Ver. 20. He removeth away the speech of the trusty]* *He bereaveth orators of their eloquence.* Heath. On the latter clause Peters observes, that when Job would set out the uncontrollable power of God to defeat all the counsels and purposes of men, one of the strongest phrases that he could find to express it by is, *He taketh away the understanding of the aged*; for in those early days the highest veneration possible was paid to old age.

*Ver. 21. And weakeneth the strength of the mighty]* The girdle being an ornament, the losing it implies disgrace.

*Ver. 24. He taketh away the heart, &c.]* Bishop Warburton thinks that these words allude to the wandering of the Israelites forty years in the wilderness. But whoever will be at the pains to consult the Hebrew, will find that there is no mention of any wilderness or desert in the passage. The word *תֹּבֹט* *tohu*, so rendered, properly signifies *confusion*, and is the very word used Gen. i. to express the *chaos* before the world was brought into form; so that the persons here said to *wander in the wilderness*, were only bewildered in a metaphorical sense; and so Schultens understands it. It might be rendered, *and causeth them to wander in inextricable confusion*. Moreover, the wandering of the Israelites was that of a whole people; this is only of the *chiefs* or heads of the people. Peters. Houbigant thinks that Job refers here to those chiefs or heads of families who, in the first ages of the world, led out colonies into new countries; and especially to such as God in his anger dispersed into distant and solitary places. He says, they are wholly wide of the mark, *totò caelo*, who suppose that the passage has any reference to the Israelites in the wilderness.

REFLEC.

and he maketh them to stagger like a drunken man.

C H A P. XIII.

*Job reproves his friends for their prejudice: he professes his confidence in God, and entreats to know of him why he hides his face from him, and holds him for an enemy.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**L**O, mine eye hath seen all *this*, mine ear hath heard and understood it.

REFLECTIONS.—Ist, Exasperated by such treatment and insinuations, Job replies with equal severity, and returns the more justly deserved rebuke.

1. He ridicules their arrogance in conceiting themselves the only living oracles: *No doubt but ye are the people*, ironically admitting their pretensions as the only wise men in the world, compared with whom, Job and others were as the wild ass, ignorant and stupid, *and wisdom shall die with you*; to be sure, when you are gone the world will, for want of such instructions, soon grow brutish. *Note*; (1.) Nothing is more disgusting and offensive than the boasts of vanity. (2.) A high conceit of our own importance is as foolish as it is sinful.

2. He pleads a right to the exercise of reason, as well as they: *But I have understanding as well as you*; my natural faculties are unimpaired; and if I claim equality with you, I may do it without presumption, for *I am not inferior to you* in parts or knowledge; or *falling before you*, as one vanquished; or, *more than you*, an apostate from God, as was suggested. *Yea, who knoweth not such things as these?* What they had discoursed of the wisdom, justice, power, and sovereignty of God, were subjects that he was equally acquainted with, and which others could speak of as knowingly as they had done; they need not, therefore, on that account think so highly of themselves. *Note*; (1.) Though a wise man never chooses to speak in his own praise, there may be times when self-vindication may oblige us, as it may seem, to boast ourselves a little, 2 Cor. xi. 6. (2.) When we differ from others in sentiment, it becomes us neither to be overbearing, nor to despise them, however clear the argument may appear to us: they are men as well as we, and may be endued with equal, perhaps superior, understanding.

3. He complains of their insolent usage. *I am as one mocked of his neighbour*; for so it appeared to him, who expected comfort from his friends, and found nothing but railing accusation; and this was the more cruel from a professor of religion, such as each of them appeared, *who calleth upon God, and he answereth him*; or he means himself, who, though they insinuated his neglect of prayer, continued ceaseless at a throne of grace. *Note*; (1.) It is a sore trial to be trodden upon in our afflictions, especially by those from whom we might have hoped for kinder treatment. (2.) When we are reduced in our circumstances, we are apt to be over-jealous, to pervert every inattention into a designed slight, and in trouble to account every word of reproof a reproach and cruelty. (3.) It is a comfort, amidst all the censures of men, even sometimes

2 What ye know, *the same* do I know also: I am not inferior unto you.

3 Surely I would speak to the Almighty, and I desire to reason with God.

4 But ye *are* forgers of lies, ye *are* all physicians of no value.

5 O that ye would altogether hold your peace! and it should be your wisdom.

6 Hear now my reasoning, and hearken to the pleadings of my lips.

of good men, that we have a throne of judgment open, and are there sure to be heard with impartiality.

4. He proceeds to confute their suggestion that the righteous were always externally happy. *The just upright man is laughed to scorn*; it was not merely his own case, but the frequent lot of the righteous: thus Noah, Lot, and others, fared from wicked men. *He that is ready to slip with his feet*, the righteous in affliction, *is as a lamp despised in the thought of him that is at ease*: the sinners in affluence despise his troubles, and he appears like the lamp ready to go out, the snuff of which is disagreeable and nauseous. *Note*; (1.) Religion, and the sincere professors of it, have been objects of mockery and scorn in every age: let it not then appear strange if we share in their reproach. (2.) It is too common to see poverty slighted and scorned by those who are at ease; but the portion of Lazarus at the gate is still infinitely preferable to that of Dives at the table.

2dly, The two grand positions that Job's friends lay down he effectually controverts. First, he affirms the sufferings of the upright, and then remarks the prosperity of the wicked.

1. *The tabernacles of robbers prosper*, such as the Sabæans who plundered his substance, and many other wicked men who build up their houses by oppression and fraud; and *they that provoke God* by open and daring iniquities *are secure*, and frequently in this world live in affluence and at ease: *into whose hand God bringeth abundantly of every temporal blessing*. *Note*; (1.) They who abuse the gifts of God, or by dishonest gain enrich themselves, however fair their character may appear among men, will be counted robbers in the day of God. (2.) Many have a rich portion in this life, who have none in another.

2. He appeals for the truth of what he advances to all the creatures, among whom in general the most innocent are the prey to the most rapacious; or he bids them observe the flocks and herds of the wicked, their tables covered with fish and fowl, and every delicacy; and then they will be convinced whether they are in general most affluent who are most pious. Or this is urged as an answer to what Zophar had advanced, of the wisdom, power, and dominion of God, in which there was no such mystery as he seemed to intimate, chap. xi. 7.; but it might all be read as immediately respecting the brute creation. They were the work of the hands of Jehovah (which name of God nowhere else occurs throughout the whole book); they subsisted by his care, and were at his sovereign disposal: truths clear and evident to enlightened reason, as sounds to the attentive ear, or different favours to the palate;

7 Will ye speak wickedly for God? and tend for God?  
talk deceitfully for him?

8 Will ye accept his person? will ye con- as one man mocketh another, do ye so mock him?  
9 Is it good that he should search you out? or

palate; or he intimates, that, if any unprejudiced ear heard their dispute, he would as easily discover the perverseness of their arguments, and the solidity of his own, as the taste discerns between sweet and bitter. *Note;* The fallen understanding is like a vitiated palate, unable rightly to taste or relish; but when God gives the hearing ear, then we are able to prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good.

3dly, Job had asserted, that he was not inferior to his friends in understanding; and he shews it.

1. By exalting the wisdom and power of God as much as they had done. However wise the ancients were, and however deeply skilled by long experience any man might appear, he was nothing compared with God, *the Ancient of Days*, whose wisdom is infinite, his counsels and understanding deep and unfathomable, and his strength almighty and irresistible. *Note;* If fierce disputants would lay aside the weapons of controversy, and desire to improve the undisputed and glorious truths that both sides admitted, how much more would it be to their own and others' edification and comfort?

2. He mentions a variety of instances wherein this wisdom of God appeared in the various dispensations of his providence in the world. (1.) There is frequently no building up what he makes desolate, as the cities of Sodom; nor any possibility of delivering his prisoners, especially when shut up in the dungeon of hell, where there is a great gulph fixed, so that none, once entered, can ever pass from thence. (2.) He has different engines, able to act either way for the punishment of the sinner, when he pleases. If he bind up the clouds, drought and famine consume the earth; if he open the windows of heaven, a deluge sweeps away the ungodly. *Note;* If God withhold the rain of Divine influence from an unfaithful soul, it must quickly wither; or if he pour forth the flood of his wrath upon us, who may abide it? (3.) From him is derived all the wisdom of man, *the deceived and the deceiver are his*; so that the crafty can proceed no farther than his permission: and, as he pleases, he can counteract and disappoint all their deep devices, and make them subservient to the purposes of his own glory. *Note;* Though all the evil in the world proceeds from the abuse of what God bestows, and can proceed no farther than he pleases, yet is he in no wise to be charged as the author of the evil, which is wholly man's own work. (4.) As an evidence of what was asserted, a proof is added in the infatuation that God is pleased to put on the counsels of the wise; as in the case of Ahithophel, he maketh even those, who, as most eminent for understanding, were created judges in the land, foolish in their determinations. (5.) The greatest are equally under his dominion with the lowest. Kings are not too high for him to humble; he can loose their bonds, the tyrannical oppressions which they laid on their subjects; or their girdles, the ensigns of royalty, strip them off, reduce them to badges of servitude, so that their honour fades into contempt, and all their might affords

them no protection. *Note;* No might of body, no advancement of station, not even the thrones of kings, are the least security, when God pleases to lay men's honour in the dust. (6.) The persuasive orator, intrusted with the concerns of state, who had words at will, hesitates, and is confused, if God withholds his help; and the aged senator, renowned for wisdom, becomes foolish. Have we ready utterance, or solid understanding? Be it remembered who made man's mouth, and teacheth him knowledge, lest, abusing these gifts to minister to our pride, confusion and folly should be our righteous punishment! (7.) The deep-laid plots of men his eye sees, his providence unfolds; the sins covered with darkness, thick as the shadow of death, are unveiled to their perpetual shame. *Note;* Let no sinner promise himself secrecy or impunity; there is an eye that pierces the darkness, from which no workers of iniquity can hide themselves. (8.) Nations are increased or diminished at his will. They prosper by his arm, and, that withdrawn, rush into ruin. *Note;* National strength is from God; if he be provoked, when at the summit of prosperity, by undiscerned means, he can quickly breed division, and the disjointed structure falls by its own weight. (9.) The greatest generals and wisest commanders, deprived of him of valour and counsel, lose their courage, are sunk with panic fear, utterly at a loss how to act, and, by mistakes gross as darkness, stumble, and lose the power of resistance, like a drunken man: so weak are the wisest and greatest without God; and so sure is it, that wisdom and power alone belong unto the Lord, and can only be derived from him.

#### C H A P. XIII.

*Ver. 4. Physicians of no value]* *Empty boasters*: men who put on airs of great consequence, though in reality they were nothing. See Heath.

*Ver. 8. Will ye contend for God]* The Hebrew for contend is a judicial term, and oftentimes used for putting a sentence in execution. Of this there is a particular instance in the case of Gideon, who was demanded by the men of his city to be put to death for casting down the altar of Baal, *Judg. vi. 31.*; where, though our translators render it *plead*, the sense necessarily requires it to be rendered *execute vengeance*; for the question was, not about *pleading*, but *instantaneously putting to death*. *If he be a God, let him execute vengeance for himself*. Job here convicts his friends of wickedness; of taking upon them to defend God in an improper manner, as if he needed their rash censures to vindicate the ways of his providence. This was such a fault as they had but too much reason to fear might, one time or other, draw down his severe chastisements on their own heads. *He will surely reprove you, ver. 10. if you secretly accept persons*: i. e. if you judge thus rashly and unjustly even for him, or in vindication of his ways. See Peters.

*Ver. 9. Is it good, &c.] Is it right for you to pay false adulation to him?* Houbigant; who observes, that the word *adulate*,

10 He will surely reprove you, if ye do secretly accept persons.

11 Shall not his excellency make you afraid? and his dread fall upon you?

12 Your remembrances *are* like unto ashes, your bodies to bodies of clay.

13 Hold your peace, let me alone, that I may speak, and let come on me what *will*.

14 Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth, and put my life in mine hand?

15 Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him.

16 He also *shall be* my salvation: for an

hypocrite shall not come before him.

17 Hear diligently my speech, and my declaration with your ears.

18 Behold now, I have ordered *my* cause; I know that I shall be justified.

19 Who *is* he *that* will plead with me? for now, if I hold my tongue, I shall give up the ghost.

20 Only do not two *things* unto me: then will I not hide myself from thee.

21 Withdraw thine hand far from me: and let not thy dread make me afraid.

22 Then call thou, and I will answer: or let me speak, and answer thou me.

*adulate*, in this clause, properly corresponds with *mock* in the next.

Ver. 11, 12. *Shall not his excellency, &c.*] *His majesty shall wholly confound you, and his terror shall fall upon you;* ver. 12. *Your boasting shall be like unto dust; your pride like a heap of sand,* ver. 13. *Hear me in silence and I will speak; I will deliver that which hath been known to me.* Houbigant. Heath renders the 12th verse, *Are not your lessons empty proverbs? Your high-flown speeches, what are they, but heaps of dung?* Job refers, says he, to those general maxims of the course of providence towards wicked men, which they had thrown out to insinuate to him that he was certainly guilty of some great wickedness, for which the wrath of God had overtaken him.

Ver. 14. *Wherefore do I take my flesh in my teeth, &c.?*] That is, "You ask me, why I should consider my case as thus desperate? (for that is the meaning of these phrases.) "Why should you be thus slow to believe that God will deliver you out of your troubles? This looks as if you were conscious of some wickedness rendering you unworthy of such a deliverance." Job answers to this charge immediately: "It is not the want of a due hope or trust in God, occasioned by any wickedness whereof I am conscious, that makes me thus despair of my condition; for, though he slay me, (ver. 15.) yet will I trust in him; but still I will maintain mine own ways, my own integrity before him; ver. 16. He also shall be my salvation; for an hypocrite,—a sycophant, or false accuser, as the Hebrew word חָנֵף *chanep*, sometimes signifies,—shall not come before him, to charge me with crimes of which I am not guilty, in the future judgment." If we understand the word rendered *hypocrite* in its ordinary signification, it will afford a good sense: as thus, *He also shall be my salvation, for I am no hypocrite.* Here Job gives a very poetical turn to his speech; supposes himself as already dead, and standing before the tribunal of God; and bids his friends, as in that awful presence, say what they had to charge him with; ver. 17, 18. As if he had said, "I address myself to my trial, and plead not guilty; ver. 19. Who is he that will litigate the matter with me? for now I will be silent, and expire." This is the Hebrew, rendered as literally as possible; and the meaning, I think, is clear;

namely, "Who is he that will bring a charge against me? for you are now to consider me as dead, and standing before the tribunal of God." The translators, who certainly mistook the meaning of the words, have added an *if*, and so spoiled the whole turn of the sentence, thus: *For now if I hold my peace, I shall give up the ghost:* but there is no *if* in the Hebrew. It is literally as rendered above. Here, then, we must suppose Job to break off his speech for a moment, to see whether his friends would venture to accuse him of any thing when summoned before the Supreme Judge, in this solemn and affecting manner: and as they had no particular crime to charge him with, nothing but a groundless suspicion against him, we may conclude, that they must needs remain as silent upon this occasion as Job, and as if they had expired with him: upon which this holy man seems to recollect himself, and, as fearing that he might have been too bold in his appeal, addresses himself in the following verses to the Judge himself; beseeching him, in the most submissive manner, before he enters into judgment with him, to grant him two things: to withdraw his afflicting hand from him, and to veil the terrors of his majesty, that it might not strike him with too great a dread; and then to question him, and he would answer; or permit him to speak, and vouchsafe to inform him what his guilt was, and what were the reasons of these severe afflictions. See the 20th and following verses. This beautiful passage evidently shews, as well as several others in his speeches, that Job looked forward to a day of judgment, when he hoped to have his innocence cleared. See Peters, p. 165, 166.

Ver. 15. *Though he slay me, &c.*] It is impossible to understand this of a temporal deliverance; for how should a man hope for this, though he were slain? This passage, according to another reading, is, "Lo, he will kill; I will not hope; nevertheless, I will argue mine own ways, or plead mine own cause before him. He also shall be my salvation, &c." It is plain that Job here despairs of life, and yet hopes for salvation; which, therefore, must necessarily be understood of a future absolution and reward in the day of judgment. Peters.

Ver. 22. *Then call thou*] The word *call* is here a judicial term, and imports the declaring the accusation. This, in

- 23 How many *are* mine iniquities and sins? make me to know my transgression and my sin.
- 24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and holdest me for thine enemy?
- 25 Wilt thou break a leaf driven to and fro? and wilt thou pursue the dry stubble?
- 26 For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.
- 27 Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks,

our law, is termed *arraigning* the criminal. The whole verse is of the same kind. Heath.

*Ver. 24. Wherefore hidest thou thy face, &c.?*] This expression, among some others, has been charged upon Job by a learned writer as very improper and unbecoming. Now, though we might admit that there is something faulty in the expostulation, yet it is very much alleviated by those expressions of humility and self-abasement which immediately precede and follow it. Read the 23d and 25th verses. Scarcely ever were the feelings of the human heart, burdened with such a load of grief, expressed in a more natural or less blameable way; and I could almost recal the concession that I have made, of any thing at all wrong in it: for, if it be a rule of equity to put upon words and things the best construction that they will bear, Job seems, in the first part, to wish that God would discover to him the particular sins, if any, for which he thus afflicted him, and he was ready to deplore them, and to correct his errors for the future: in the second, the exceptionable part, he seems nevertheless to account it the greatest of his calamities, that God should hide his face from him, and deal with him as an enemy; on whose friendship and favour he had always set the highest value; had endeavoured to preserve it by the integrity of his life, and was resolved never to depart from that integrity. In the last part he confesses his own meanness, or rather nothingness, in comparison of God; and that in a manner so ingenuous and simple, as to shew that his complaints, however passionate and moving, had but a small mixture (for I must not venture to say none) of pride or stubbornness at the bottom of it. Peters.

*Ver. 26. Thou writest bitter things against me*] The author of the Divine Legation, zealous to support his allegorical scheme, is always desirous, for that end, to point out inconsistencies in this book. "The great point Job insists upon (says he) throughout the whole book is, his innocence; and yet, to our surprize, we hear him thus expostulating with God: *Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.* This can be accounted for no otherwise than by understanding it of the Jewish people:"—but why so? May not the best man that ever lived find something to condemn in the levities and sins of his youth, or when he was a boy or child? for the Hebrew word נַעֲרָיִי *neuraii*, sometimes denotes a state of childhood. See Schultens and Grey. We may certainly allow him to have had respect to some *actual* sins of his youth, without any detriment to his argument, drawn from that present uprightness of heart and life which he now pleads, and had long practised; for, by the way, it is not his *innocence*, strictly speaking, which Job insists on, but his *integrity*. Peters.

*Ver. 27. Thou puttest my feet also in the stocks, &c.*] *Thou puttest my feet also in a clog; thou watchest all my paths; thou fettest a mark on the soles of my feet.* This alludes to the

custom of putting a clog on the feet of fugitive slaves with the owner's mark, that they might be tracked and found. Heath. Houbigant renders the next verse, *So that I am become like a thing consumed with rottenness; like a garment eaten up by the moth.* I would just observe, that the dividing these speeches by chapters very frequently interrupts the connection; and the reader would do well in his perusal of them to neglect this division, which, though it has its uses, is of very modern date.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, In vindicating his cause against his unkind friends, some severity mixes with his just self-defence.

1. He desires them to weigh what he had said, that they might be convinced that he was not so weak as they would insinuate; he spoke from experience and observation, and he was assured that both would corroborate his sentiments, and prove him at least their equal in understanding. *Note;* We should well weigh before we condemn; rash censures only shew the folly of those who bestow them.

2. He wishes that the cause might be brought before God, as the umpire between him and his friends; could this be granted, he feared not to carry the point. *Note;* Conscious simplicity fears not the eye of piercing truth.

3. He sharply upbraids their cruel treatment of him: *Ye are forgers of lies*, contriving and publishing positions contrary to the truth of God, and highly injurious to the character of their neighbour—in saying that God never afflicted the righteous, and that his (Job's) sufferings were on account of his wickedness: *ye are all physicians of no value, idol-physicians*, pretenders to science, but ignorant both of the cause of his maladies, and the method of cure, deceiving his hopes, and as useless as the idol stock or stone. *Note;* (1.) A deliberate lie is a crying sin; against such false tongues no innocence can protect. (2.) Whatever here below the awakened sinner flies to for help and healing, will make him worse rather than better: none can cure the miseries of a fallen spirit, but that great physician who has the balm of life and grace to minister to the sick soul.

4. He begs them to hold their peace rather than speak such words as wound, instead of healing; and observes, that their wisdom would better appear in silence, than in arguments so weak, and urged with such unkindness. He earnestly intreats them to hear his reasoning, and not be inattentive to, or disregard his pleadings, as they seemed to do. *Note;* (1.) Hastiness to speak, and rashness to utter without mature deliberation, expose the folly, instead of displaying the wisdom of a disputant. (2.) Truth needs only a fair hearing; but prejudice is deaf, and the best of men often suffer unheard or unnoticed.

5. He expostulates with them on the folly, sin, and danger of their conduct; who, while they pretended to plead the cause of God and truth, dishonoured him by falsehood, and misrepresented his dispensations; *Will you speak*



and lookeſt narrowly into all my paths; thou ſetteſt a print upon the heels of my feet.

28 And he, as a rotten thing, conſumeth, as a garment that is moth-eaten.

*ſpeak wickedly for God?* in condemning a righteous man as a hypocrite, and talk deceitfully for him; by pretending to vindicate his juſtice at the expence of his truth. *Will ye accept his perſon,* according to human partiality, and, conſtruing my afflictions into ſigns of guilt, reſuſe to examine my caſe, and judge me unheard? *Will ye contend for God?* does his cauſe need ſuch advocates? or will your pretext to plead for him excuſe the falſhood of your principles, or the raſh cenſure of your concluſions? *Is it good that he ſhould ſearch you out?* would he not then, detect the evil of your principles, and the cruelty of your conduct? or as one man mocketh another, do ye ſo mock him? pretending to be on his ſide, yet ſpeaking to his diſhonour. *He will ſurely reprove you, if ye do ſecretly accept perſons;* however you may deceive yourſelves with imaginations of zeal for the honour of his perfections, he will reſent your accuſations of an upright man, condemned unjuſtly by you: *Shall not his excellency make you afraid?* or his height, his glorious perfections, of power, holineſs, truth, &c. and his dread fall upon you, as falſe witneſſes for him, doing ſo bad a thing under a pretence of zeal for his glory. *Your remembrances are like unto aſhes, your bodies to bodies of clay;* your arguments are light as aſhes, and as weak as a fortification compoſed of eminences of clay; or he ſuggeſts their weak and mortal ſtate, as a reaſon why they ſhould be afraid to provoke the holy and avenging God. *Note;* (1.) A good intention will not excuſe, much leſs juſtify, an ill thing. (2.) They who plead for God had need be ſerious inquirers after truth themſelves, and neither wilfully nor wickedly condemn thoſe whom God hath not condemned. (3.) Whatever deceit we may put on others or ourſelves, God is not mocked; he ſearcheth the heart, is no reſpecter of perſons, and will aſſuredly reprove the evil that he diſcerns, however ſecretly committed, or coloured over with whatever pious pretext. (4.) The conſideration of God's excellency and our meanneneſs, his perfections and our vanity, ſhould awaken in our mind a holy awe, and make us afraid to provoke his diſpleaſure.

2dly, Full of matter, he reſolved to utter his ſpeech, and begs a moment's diligent attention to the declaration that he was going to make.

1. Whatever became of him, whatever cenſures his friends laid on him, ſpeak he muſt; he would not ſmother the proteſtations of his innocence, nor pine to death in ſilent vexation; for, to hold his tongue under ſuch circumſtances of ſuffering and wrong, would be to burſt with grief and expire: or, as ſome render the words, *At all events I will take my fleſh in my teeth, and put my life in my hand;* come what will come, I will maintain my integrity. *Note;* If we have the teſtimony of a good conſcience, we need fear no evil.

2. He ſtrongly maintains his ſimplicity before God, *Though he ſlay me, yet will I truſt in him:* the ſeverity of my trials ſhall not make me quit my dependance on him; and the conſciouſneſs of my integrity till death will I never renounce. *I will maintain mine own ways before him,* that I have walked in truth and all good conſcience. Not that herein he placed his hope of ſalvation; no; *He alſo ſhall*

*be my ſalvation,* in his rich and free grace is my truſt, whatever becomes of me here below; but this he never could hope to partake of, if allowed guile had been chargeable upon him; *for an hypocrite ſhall not come before him:* this he was fully aſſured of, and as ſure that this character was not applicable to himſelf, as his friends had inſinuated. *Behold, now I have ordered my cauſe,* am ready to maintain it againſt every accuſer; *I know that I ſhall be juſtified* from the malicious accuſations of men, from the ſin he had confeſſed, and in his own heart enjoy the conſciouſneſs of his acceptance before God. *Who is he that will plead with me?* let him appear, and I am prepared to answer every allegation. *Note;* (1.) Whatever diſcouragements are in our way, confidence in God is our great duty and ſupport. (2.) They who plead the ſalvation of Jeſus Chriſt, and truſt in it in living loving faith, are conſciouſ that no charge lies againſt them in the court of heaven. (3.) Though ſincerity is not our juſtification before God, it is a comfortable evidence to our own ſouls of an intereſt in his ſalvation, while hypocrify gives the lie to every hope.

3. He turns from his friends to make his addreſs to God. Two things he deſires, and then he will undertake to open his cauſe: (1.) That his afflictions be removed, or ſuſpended; and (2.) That the terror of the Divine Majeſty be withdrawn; and that ſuch a manifeſtation of his preſence might be made, as would not confound and diſmay him; then, as Defendant, he would answer, or as Plaintiff interrogate, and reaſon with God on his dealings with him: a daring propoſal, for which he was afterwards, by Elihu, and God himſelf, juſtly cenſured. *Note;* In their diſtreſs men are too apt to utter what, on reflection, they muſt deeply condemn.

3dly, Having propoſed a fair trial, Job now,

1. Begs to be informed of the number and nature of his ſins, being confeſſedly a ſinner, though not chargeable with any of the groſſer crimes. Some underſtand this as the language of humility; others, as a complaint of hard meaſure, to ſuffer without knowing the cauſe, or being conſciouſ of having given any particular provocation: the latter ſenſe ſeems moſt to correſpond with the ſucceeding expoſtulations. *Note;* Who can underſtand his errors? they who know moſt, know but a little of the evil that they ſtand chargeable with before God.

2. He grieves bitterly at the abſence of a ſenſe of God's favour, a more afflictive burden than all his other loſſes; and cannot bear the thought of having the God he loved to treat him as an enemy, and frown on him in diſpleaſure. *Note;* (1.) Thoſe alone who have enjoyed communion with God know the miſery of darkneſs, and diſtance from him. (2.) An apprehenſion of God's wrath is a kind of hell upon earth. (3.) When God ſeems to depart from us, it becomes us to examine and ſee what hath provoked him; for aſſuredly there is a cauſe.

3. He expoſtulates with God on his treatment of him, as beneath his majeſty to cruſh a worm, who is as unable to reſiſt him as the ſtubble the furious whirlwind: perhaps he meant it to move his commiſeration. He complains of the hard meaſure that he endured, for which the iniquities

of



## C H A P. XIV.

*Job sets forth the shortness and misery of human life. He expresses his faith in a future state; and declares, that after his change God will call, and he will answer him.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**M**AN *that is* born of a woman *is* of few days; and full of trouble.

2 He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not.

3 And dost thou open thine eyes upon such an

one, and bringest me into judgment with thee?

4 Who can bring a clean *thing* out of an unclean? not one.

5 Seeing his days *are* determined, the number of his months *are* with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass;

6 Turn from him, that he may rest, till he shall accomplish, as an hireling, his day.

7 For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease.

of his youth were raked up against him, as those which afforded most cause for condemnation; and intimates God's severity in putting him into such a state of suffering, marking every false step, as if solicitous to catch at the least infirmity to vindicate his procedure, and to increase his anguish, under which already he pined away, as a corpse turning to putrefaction, and as a garment moth-eaten: under such misery to add to his sufferings seemed bitter, not to say cruel. *Note;* (1.) They have sadly-mistaken notions of the divine compassions, who can entertain a thought of his breaking with his wrath the heart which is bleeding in humiliation. (2.) However lightly youthful sins may be considered, God frequently makes his servants possess the bitter remembrance of them. (3.) They who think God too strict and severe, prove their own ignorance of themselves and him. (4.) Man is a perishing worm. How vile does disease make our bodies! but how much more odious has sin made the souls of all men by nature! What a blessed hope to be fixed out of the reach of both for ever on the resurrection-day!

## C H A P. XIV.

*Ver. 3. And bringest me into judgment with thee?]* And dost thou bring such a one into judgment with thee?

*Ver. 4. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?]* Who can be clean, that is born of the unclean? Not one. Houbigant, who observes, that Job, without doubt, here alludes to our natural corruption. The Vulgate renders it, *Who can bring a clean thing from unclean seed?*

*Ver. 6. Turn from him]* This is a metaphor taken from combatants, who keep their antagonist always in their eye. See on chap. vii. 19. Heath.

*Ver. 7-16. For there is hope of a tree, &c.]* Job begins this chapter with a reflection on the shortness and wretchedness of human life, a truth which he had so sadly learned from experience. In his progress, therefore, as was natural, he seems to be casting about for arguments of support and consolation under these distressed circumstances; and particularly for proofs to confirm him in the belief of what they had received an obscure tradition of, the resurrection of mankind to another life. In ver. 7. he touches upon that argument, from the analogy of things, which has been so often made use of in treating upon this subject: *for there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again:* Hebrew יַחַלִּיפַּי *iachalip, will yet renew itself, will revive and flourish, as the spring comes on.* This description is pursued for three

verses. Then, ver. 10. *But men die, and wasteth away; man expires, and where is he?* As if he had said, "After a tree is cut down, we see, nevertheless, the old stock flourish again, and send forth new branches; and shall man, then, when he once expires, be extinct for ever: is there no hope that he shall revive, and be raised again hereafter? Yes, there is, according to the doctrine delivered to us from our ancestors: but then they inform us, at the same time, that this resurrection shall not be but with the dissolution and renovation of the world; ver. 11, 12. *The waters go off from the sea, and the flood (the river) will decay, and dry up. And man lieth down and riseth not till the heavens be no more; (till then) they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep.*" The meaning seems to be, that as we see every thing in flux, and subject to change, so the whole shall one day be changed. The sea itself will, at length, be quite absorbed; and the running rivers, which now flow perpetually, as if supplied by everlasting springs, will, nevertheless, in time quite cease and disappear. This visible frame of things shall be dissolved, and the present heavens themselves shall be no more: and then, and not before, comes the resurrection and the general judgment. The common translation is somewhat different. Though the comparison here expressed has nothing to answer to it in the Hebrew, yet, it must be owned, the כּ, *cap* of similitude, as they call it, or the particle כִּי, *as*, is sometimes understood; and, therefore, the passage may be so rendered, if there be occasion; and then the meaning will be, that the death of man is not like the cutting down of a tree, which soon sprouts out again, and flourishes in the same place: but rather like the drying up of a river, whose waters disappear, and we see no more of them. So man appears no more upon the stage of this world: *he lieth down, and riseth not till the heavens be no more.* Job proceeds: "Since, then, this is the lot of mankind, to die to all intents and purposes to the things of this world, and not to be raised again till the end of it; ver. 13. *Oh that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, (Hebrew בְּשִׁמְרֵי תְּהוֹמֹת שְׁאוֹל, in sheol, the region of departed souls) that thou wouldst keep me secret till thy wrath be past: that thou wouldst appoint me a set time, and remember me!*" As if he had said, "Tired out with the calamities of life, let me then presently undergo this lot, which must be undergone, the effect of Adam's sin and of thy wrath against it, till the time for us to remain in this separate state be fulfilled; and then remember me, and raise me to that better state" which

8 Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground;

9 Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant.

10 But man dieth, and wasteth away: yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he?

11 As the waters fail from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up;

12 So man lieth down, and riseth not: till

the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep.

13 O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set-time, and remember me!

14 If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.

15 Thou shalt call and I will answer thee:

“ which thou hast prepared for thy faithful servants.” And here he breaks out into an expression of joy and admiration; ver. 14. *If a man die, shall he live, or revive?* Is it true that we shall rise again to a new and better life hereafter? Let me, with hope and patience, wait this happy change, how long soever it may be in coming. *All the days of my appointed time (or station) will I wait, till my change* (Hebrew *חַלְפָתִי chalphathi*, my renovation) comes: It follows, ver. 15. *Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee; thou wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands.* What can this mean, but that God would call him forth to judgment? That he should then be admitted to answer for himself before a just and equitable Judge, who knew the uprightness of his heart, and had a love for all his creatures who did not render themselves unworthy of it; and that then he should receive another sort of sentence than that which his rash, ill-judging friends had passed upon him, and be acquitted before him and all the world? though now, as it follows in the next verse, God had seemed to deal so hardly with him, had numbered all his steps, and sealed up his transgression and iniquity, as in a bag: ver. 16, 17. that is, had seemed to take account of every the smallest transgression of his life, and, by the severe chastisements inflicted upon him, had laid him open to the bitter censures and reproaches of his three friends. For his hopes of being acquitted in the day of judgment, could not entirely allay that grief and indignation which he had conceived at the cruel usage inflicted on him by these men, who measured his guilt by his afflictions, and treated him upon this account, in all their speeches, as a wicked man and a hypocrite. The reading of the LXX, understood by way of interrogation, which is Rufinus’s conjecture, favours the sense that I have given of this passage. It is thus; *for there is hope of a tree if it be cut down, that it will sprout again; but man dieth, and is he no more?* intimating that it would be strange if a tree should revive after it was cut down; but that man, a creature of such excellence, should die, and there be an utter end of him. This kind of argument, I am sure, was much insisted on by the first apologists for Christianity; and while the Heathens complained in such strains as these, *Soles occidere, et redire possunt, &c.* “ the sun sets and rises again; “ but for us, when our short day expires, there remains “ one perpetual night of sleep;” (Catull. Epig. v.) the Christians argued, on the other hand, that, as the sun sets and rises again, the stars glide away and return, the trees grown old and dead in winter, recover life again, and bud and blossom in the spring; so, *expectandum nobis etiam cor-*

*poris ver est; “ We too shall have our spring-time of resurrection;”* *Vide adeo quam in solatium nostri, resurrectionem futuram omnis natura meditatatur,* says Minutius Felix. And, as this reasoning is natural and obvious, as well as peculiarly calculated to shine in poetry, I see not why Job, in this noble poem, may not be allowed to reason in the same way. But, supposing the question *where is he?* to mean “ he is gone for ever;” still this can only be understood of his returning no more to this world; for, as to the future resurrection, I must insist upon it that Job declares his hope of it very clearly in ver. 14. *All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.* I know it is a common opinion, that by the *change* here mentioned is meant the change of death; but the sense above given suits best with the context, as also with the Hebrew word *חַלְפָה chalphah*, which properly signifies a change for the better, a *renewal*. Peters. Houbigant renders the beginning of the 14th verse, *For, though a man die, yet he shall revive again; and therefore I will wait all the days, &c.*; observing, in agreement with the ingenious Mr. Peters, that nothing can be so absurd as to suppose that the words contain any doubt of a future life, according to the common version. The learned Scheuchzer on this passage, as well as many others of this book, has entered into a variety of pleasing disquisitions in physics, which are by far too copious for our work: we beg, therefore, to refer the reader to him.

Ver. 14. *My appointed time*] *My appointed service. My station, or my warfare,* as some render it: *צְבָאִי zebai.* The word is commonly used in a military sense, either for an army, or a state of warfare; but it is likewise used in a religious sense, if I may so term it. The angels which attend the throne of God are called his *צְבָא zaba*, his *host*; and it is with respect to these that he is so often called *the God and Lord of Hosts: צְבָאוֹת zebaoth*. The Levites, who attended the service of the tabernacle, are said to wait to do their office in this phrase. See Numb. iv. 23. The word is used remarkably by the Prophet Isaiah, xl. 2. either to express the state of the Jews in the captivity of Babylon, waiting for the promised deliverance; or rather, the state of the faithful, who expected a much more glorious redemption under the Messiah: *Cry unto her, that her warfare (צְבָא zaba), is accomplished.* If Job had the same notion of a separate state which Isaiah seems here to have, either of the captivity of the Jews, under which they were to remain for a certain season, as a state brought upon them by their sins, till the day of their deliverance came; or of the

thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.

16 For now thou numberest my steps, dost thou not watch over my sin?

17 My transgression is sealed up in a bag, and thou sewest up mine iniquity.

18 And surely the mountain falling cometh

to nought, and the rock is removed out of his place:

19 The waters wear the stones: thou wastest away the things which grow out of the dust of the earth; and thou destroyest the hope of man.

20 Thou prevailest for ever against him, and

the state of the faithful, waiting with hope and patience for the redemption of the Messiah; we see how aptly he uses the word זְבַאִי *zebaai*. The idea which the word conveys, is that of a *post* or *station* given him by God to maintain, till released from it and called to a better state; as if he had said, "Whatever station or condition God shall please to appoint me, either here, or in *sheol*, the intermediate state, I shall still wait in earnest expectation of the "future renovation and resurrection." Peters.

*Ver. 16. For now, &c.] But now thou, &c. Do not watch mine offences so narrowly: ver. 17. Do not seal up my transgression in a bag, or note mine iniquities in thy register. The word rendered sewest up in our version, signifies the taking down any remark or memorandum in a table-book. Heath.*

*Ver. 19. Thou wastest away the things, &c.] And the inundations of waters sweep away the soil of the earth. So the hope of man hast thou utterly destroyed. Heath; who renders the beginning of the 18th verse, for as the mountain falling wasteth away, and the rock may be removed from its place. Job, in these latter verses, returns to his deploration of that mortality which consumes and destroys the human race; which he illustrates and exaggerates by several similes: as of a mountain fallen, a rock plucked up by the roots, stones worn away by the continual lapse of water, and the earth itself carried away and consumed by inundations. See Schultens. Chappelow renders the 22d verse, *But his flesh shall have pain for him, and his dead body shall mourn for him: To which version, says he, an objection will possibly be raised from what we read in the 21st verse; for there it is mentioned as if man, after his departure hence, had no knowledge or perception of his sons coming to honour, or of their being brought low; therefore, how can it be said that his flesh shall have pain, and his soul, or dead body, shall mourn? This must be understood in an allegorical or poetical sense. Thus the Jews used to say, "The worm is troublesome to a dead man, as the needle is to the flesh of the living." Job writes in the same style, chap. xxi. 33. The clods of the valley shall be sweet unto him, i. e. when brought to the grave.**

REFLECTIONS.—We have here,

1. A lively and affecting description of man, that is born of a woman, a dying worm, sprung from dying worms. He is of few days, so short his passing existence, that years or months are too long to reckon by: he is the creature of a day, a few short days terminate his mortal being, and full of trouble withal. From the hour that in cries he first bemoaned his entrance into a wretched world, sorrow is his portion; infancy, youth, manhood, age, have their attendant diseases, griefs, vexations, cares, and fears; till death, the king of terrors, closes the scene. In his best estate,

he cometh forth like a flower, which of itself would quickly fade, but is seldom left to such a gradual decay; and is cut down, by the stroke of disease or accident, as grass before the mower's scythe: so transitory is all his excellence! He fleeth also as a shadow; there is no more substantial good in his short-lived enjoyments, than there is solidity in a shadow; and, what makes them still more vain, he continueth not, but hastens from life to death, as the shadow of the flying bird: withal full of sin by nature as of sorrow, and indeed thence all his sorrow flows. He came a corrupted creature into the world, a child of fallen man, begotten in his image, for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? or, from such a sinful original, what but evil can be the natural fruit? Not one is born but in this state; not one is found, who is not a transgressor from the womb. Note, (1.) An humbling sense of original sin is the foundation of all true humiliation. (2.) The vanity and shortness of our present life should quicken us to greater diligence in securing an eternity of substantial bliss.

2. Job expostulates with God, why, as a creature so weak, corrupt, and worthless, he should so strictly eye his ways, and so rigorously severe call him to his bar? He begs a moment's respite; that God would turn his frowning face away, and suffer him as a hireling to accomplish his day, with some little intermissions from ceaseless toil, and bring him at last to the sleep of death. Note, (1.) Life is a day of toil, but, blessed be God, "there remaineth a rest to his people (Heb. iv. 9.)" eternal in the heavens. (2.) We have a God who knows our frailty, and can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; it is good in prayer to spread our case before him.

2dly, Having pathetically described the miseries of life, he passes on to the consideration of death, where his flesh might rest in hope, though not of prosperity on earth, yet of a joyful resurrection.

1. At death, man's hope in this world finally perishes. A tree cut down will sprout again; and, though the stock be dead, fibres from the root will put forth new suckers: the waters, exhaled from the sea, fall down again in showers; and winter's floods, though dried up by the scorching sun, at the returning season rise as before. But man's waste is irreparable; and when, at death, he gives up the ghost, as soon he must, he is gone for ever: no shoot shall spring, no flood of life return; where he lieth down he must abide, till the heavens be no more, never to return to life below: or perhaps intimating, that in another world only, when the heavens shall be wrapped together as a scroll, he might expect to rise again, chap. xix. 26. Note, (1.) Though man's body dies, his soul perishes not with it, but lives in the world of spirits. (2.) Since there is no return hither to correct what hath been amiss, how great

he passeth: thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away.

21 His sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them.

22 But his flesh upon him shall have pain, and his soul within him shall mourn.

## C H A P. XV.

*Eliphaz charges Job with impiety, in justifying himself: he proves by tradition the unhappiness of the wicked.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**T**HEN answered Eliphaz the Temanite, and said,

great need have we to improve that present moment on which eternity depends!

2. As he had hope in his death, he longs for its arrival; *O that thou wouldst hide me in the grave, from all the miseries and sorrows which he endured, and from the strife of tongues; that thou wouldst keep me secret, where no eye should see him, until thy wrath be past, the effects of which, he apprehended, would never remove till his body should return to the dust, and his soul wait a resurrection-day: That thou wouldst appoint me a set time, to discharge me from the labours of life, or to rescue me from the dust of death, and remember me! think upon my sorrows, to end them; or on my sleeping ashes, to raise them once more from the grave.* Note (1.) Till the body sleeps in death, we cannot be entirely hid from troubles; but there at least they will end. (2.) The dust of God's saints is precious to him; he doth not forget them; the time is fixed for their glorious restitution, and herein they can rejoice.

3. He resolves in patient hope to wait God's sacred pleasure. *If a man die, as surely he must, shall he live again, to amend any thing that is past? no; therefore let me with patience bear my present burden. Or, shall he live again? yes; though his body lie down in the dust, he shall rise again: therefore all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come.* This expectation shall reconcile me to my present afflictions: a change will come, a glorious change; the time is fixed; O come the welcome day! Then *thou shalt call, and I will answer thee, ready for the arms of death; or from the dust, joyful to hear the trump that awakes the dead. Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands; the curious fabric of my body, which thy hands have fashioned, thou wilt restore, no more to taste of death, or see corruption.* Note, (1.) The hope of a glorious resurrection is the great support under every human misery. (2.) Death has changed its nature, when grace hath changed our hearts; it then becomes our privilege to die.

3dly, Job returns to his sad complaints,

1. Of God's rigour. He had no hope of rest on this side the grave, while God seemed to mark with curious eye each step, to minute the least transgressions, and seal

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2 Should a wise man utter vain knowledge, and fill his belly with the east wind?

3 Should he reason with unprofitable talk? or with speeches wherewith he can do no good?

4 Yea, thou castest off fear, and restrainest prayer before God.

5 For thy mouth uttereth thine iniquity, and thou choolest the tongue of the crafty.

6 Thine own mouth condemneth thee, and not I: yea, thine own lips testify against thee.

7 *Art thou the first man that was born? or wast thou made before the hills?*

them up, as indictments ready to be produced in court against him. Note, (1.) Hard thoughts of God are as bitter to ourselves, as dishonourable to him. (2.) It is the want of a due sense of the evil of sin, which leads us to complain.

2. Of man's wasting and irreparable condition. The mountains moulder; the rocks are removed by floods, or earthquakes; the stones, by continual dropping, are hollowed out; and floods sweep away the productions of the earth. These wastes none can repair; the mountains cannot grow again, nor the rocks return; the hollow of the stone is never filled up, nor the desolations of the flood repaired; and, or so, *thou destroyest the hope of man, who, once removed by death, never returns to his place again: thou prevailest for ever against him, contention is vain, disease and death cannot be resisted; and he passeth, as a wind, from the face of the earth. Thou changest his countenance; the stroke of sickness covers the blooming face with livid paleness, and death makes it ghastly and frightful; and sendest him away into the grave.* There, insensible of all that passes here below, *his sons come to honour, and he knoweth it not; and they are brought low, but he perceiveth it not of them. But his flesh upon him shall have pain, in the dying hour, and his soul within him shall mourn at the bitterness of death.* Note, (1.) This is a perishing world; we and it consume together; how vain then to place our confidence in any thing here below! (2.) Death makes strange alterations; proud beauty should look in that glass to humble its self-idolatry. (3.) It is to mere nature a bitter thing to die, and expiring groans are often full of anguish: to a sinner they are only the beginning of sorrows; but to a saint they are a farewell to pain and grief for ever.

## C H A P. XV.

*Ver. 1. Then answered Eliphaz]* Eliphaz, not a little incensed that Job should pay no regard to his advice, and should dare to challenge the Almighty to argue the point with him, charges him home with self-conceit, in entertaining too high an opinion of his own knowledge; with arrogance, in undervaluing the arguments drawn from their experience, whose age was a sufficient voucher for their

5 E

wisdom;

8 Hast thou heard the secret of God? and dost thou restrain wisdom to thyself?

9 What knowest thou, that we know not? *what* understandest thou which *is* not in us?

10 With us *are* both the gray-headed and very aged men, much elder than thy father.

11 *Are* the consolations of God small with thee? is there any secret thing with thee?

12 Why doth thine heart carry thee away? and what do thine eyes wink at,

13 That thou turnest thy spirit against God, and lettest *such* words go out of thy mouth?

14 What *is* man, that he should be clean? and *he which* is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?

15 Behold, he putteth no trust in his saints?

yea, the heavens are not clean in his sight:

16 How much more abominable and filthy *is* man, which drinketh iniquity-like water?

17 I will shew thee, hear me, and that *which* I have seen I will declare;

18 Which wise men have told from their fathers, and have not hid *it*:

19 Unto whom alone the earth was given, and no stranger passed among them.

20 The wicked man travaileth with pain all *his* days, and the number of years is hidden to the oppressor.

21 A dreadful sound *is* in his ears: in prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him.

22 He believeth not that he shall return out of darkness, and he is waited for of the sword.

wisdom; and with impiety, in thus rudely challenging the Almighty to answer for his conduct in afflicting him, ver. 2—13. He presses home the same argument upon him a second time; to which he adds that of universal tradition; insinuating, that he had yet worse to expect, unless he prevented it by a contrary conduct: and then presents him with an image, setting forth the final state of a wicked man; in which he so works up the circumstances, as to make it resemble Job and his condition as much as possible; intimating thereby, that he imagined him to be that very wicked man whom he had been describing, and that he had by that means drawn down God's judgments on himself, ver. 14—30. That therefore his conceptions of innocence were an illusion, but one, however, of the worst kind: he had deceived himself: ver. 31—35. Heath.

Ver. 4. *Yea, thou castest off fear, &c.*] *Truly thou loosest the bonds of religion; thou preventest the groans or prayers which are sent up to God.* Houbigant.

Ver. 7. *Art thou the first man that was born?*] *Wast thou born before Adam?* Schultens, Heath, &c.

Ver. 8. *Hast thou heard the secret of God?*] *Decrees from God and his council?* Heath. See on ch. xxix. 4.

Ver. 11. *Are the consolations of God small with thee?*] *Dost thou make light of the indignation of God? or hast thou some secret charm?* Heath. Houbigant renders the latter clause, *Or hath any thing been secretly revealed to thee?* וְנִלְיָ לֵאמֹר, rendered *secret thing* in our version, besides its general signification of something concealed, has a peculiar reference to spells and charms. See Exod. vii. 11. Those charms were frequently used to prevent the effect of ill designs against any one.

Ver. 12. *And what do thine eyes wink at?*] Or, *And what are thine eyes taking aim at?* The verb signifies properly to *wink with one eye*, as those who aim at a mark. See Heath and Houbigant.

Ver. 17. *I will shew thee, hear me, &c.*] *I will shew thee, hear me, for this I have seen; I will declare also* (ver. 18.) *what the wise men recounted; for they concealed not the tradition of their fathers.* Heath and Houbigant. Eliphaz,

says Bp. Warburton, speaking of the wonderful works of God, declares how he came to the knowledge of them. *I will shew thee*, ver. 17, 18. The very way which Moses directs to preserve the memory of the miraculous works of God. "It is so," replies Mr. Peters; "and the very way that all the ancient history, and all the ancient wisdom, from the beginning of the world, was transmitted to posterity." The Bishop adds, "And who are these wise men? They are so particularly marked out, as not to be mistaken; unto whom the earth was given, and no stranger passed among them, ver. 19. a circumstance applying to no people whatsoever, but the Israelites settled in Canaan." But, is Eliphaz here speaking of a nation or people? says Mr. Peters in return: no; he only speaks of wise men: and this could never be meant of the Israelites in general, whom the learned writer himself now and then represents as a gross sort of people. I shall not perplex the reader or myself with the various conjectures of expositors, in order to shew who are meant by these wise men; they are so particularly marked out, as the learned writer above mentioned observes, that one would think they could not easily be mistaken; and yet none of the commentators, who have come within my reach, seem to have been aware, that the characters here laid down so distinctly, can belong to none so properly as to Noah and his sons, from whom, in reality, the ancient traditions were delivered down: and it is evident, from the scripture history, that the earth was divided among these; that they were all of one family, and no stranger passed among them. See Peters, p. 32.

Ver. 20, &c. *The wicked man travaileth*] This is a most beautiful image of the perpetual anxiety in which a tyrant lives: when he goes to sleep, he is afraid that he shall be murdered before morning. The whole description, taken together, is undoubtedly meant for Job himself; for which he had given some grounds, chap. iii. 25, 26. See Heath.

Ver. 22. *He is waited for*] *He is marked out for, destined to.* Heath.

Ver.

23 He wandereth abroad for bread, *saying* Where is it? he knoweth that the day of darkness is ready at his hand.

24 Trouble and anguish shall make him afraid; they shall prevail against him, as a king ready to the battle.

25 For he stretcheth out his hand against God, and strengtheneth himself against the Almighty.

26 He runneth upon him, *even on his neck*, upon the thick bosses of his bucklers:

27 Because he covereth his face with his fatness, and maketh collops of fat on *his flanks*.

28 And he dwelleth in desolate cities, *and in houses which no man inhabiteth*, which are ready to become heaps.

29 He shall not be rich, neither shall his

substance continue, neither shall he prolong the perfection thereof upon the earth.

30 He shall not depart out of darkness; the flame shall dry up his branches, and by the breath of his mouth shall he go away.

31 Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity: for vanity shall be his recompence.

32 It shall be accomplished before his time, and his branch shall not be green.

33 He shall shake off his unripe grape as the vine, and shall cast off his flower as the olive.

34 For the congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate, and fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery.

35 They conceive mischief, and bring forth vanity, and their belly prepareth deceit.

*Ver. 23. He wandereth abroad, &c.] His carcase to be cast forth as food for the vulture. Heath. He wandereth about, flying the oppressor. Houbigant.*

*Ver. 24. As a king ready to the battle] As the master-goat ruleth over the flock. Heath. Schultens reads the verse thus, Distress and perplexity shall terrify him; they shall overpower him, like a king: he is destined to the most troublous fortunes.*

*Ver. 26. He runneth upon him] Who will run upon him, &c. ver. 27. after he had covered his face. Houbigant: who says that Eliphaz here points out the wicked man, flying before his destroyer, and before God himself pursuing him; who, although in his flight he throws his shield over his shoulders, yet will soon be cast down by the stroke of the Divine hand from behind. Schultens renders the verse, For he hath run against him with his neck, with the thickness of the bosses of his bucklers; supposing that Eliphaz here points out the fierce and insolent pride of the wicked man, opposing himself against God; the cause and foundation whereof, he imagines, to be assigned in the 27th verse; namely, the wantonness of his pride, through success and indulgence. Heath, however, closing the period at the 26th verse, reads the 27th thus: Though he covereth his face; ver. 28, though he dwelleth in desolate cities, &c. ver. 29. Yet he shall not be rich, &c. The founding and restoring of deserted cities was reckoned one of the chief glories of a prince's reign. Houbigant renders the last clause of the 29th verse, Neither shall his offspring be propagated upon the earth.*

*Ver. 31. Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity] Let him not trust in prosperity; it is a mere illusion; for it will turn out nothing but vanity: Heath: who renders the next verse, For his branch shall not flourish; it shall be cut off before its time.*

*Ver. 35. They conceive mischief, &c.] Conceiving in misery, and bringing forth in sorrow, their belly hath at last proved a deception. This whole description is evidently pointed at the situation of Job. His prosperity was become vanity; his children were all cut off before their time; his family become solitary; and his hopes, to all appearance, an illusion. All the fine prospect with which the wicked man enter-*

tained himself, and for which he endured all the anguish here described, produceth only a deceit. He hath imposed on himself. Heath.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Job's friends had all spoken in turn; and Eliphaz, who had opened the dispute, undertakes again to reply, much offended that Job presumed to controvert their arguments, and endeavouring, from his own words, to produce sundry accusations in confirmation of the point which he so strenuously denied.

1. He reproaches him with folly and emptiness in his arguments, whereby he had for ever forfeited the character of a wise man. His reasonings were vain, and his words blustering as the east wind, yet without solidity; unprofitable and useless. *Note;* (1.) It is much easier to treat an adversary with contempt, than to answer him. (2.) Unprofitable talk deserves censure: they who must give an account of every idle word had need keep well the door of their lips.

2. He charges him with great impiety, as casting off the fear of God, and restraining prayer before him; since the principles that he advanced, according to Eliphaz's opinion, made all religion void. *If the tabernacles of robbers prospered, if just men were laughed to scorn, and God destroys the perfect and the wicked*, then, says he, of what use is it to fear him, or to pray to him, who laugheth at the trial of the innocent? Such speeches Eliphaz regards as deep iniquity, and the crafty glosses of piety, with which Job covered his words, but could not conceal the hypocrisy within. His own lips spoke his condemnation, and there was no need for further proof. *Note;* (1.) It is too common for angry disputants to distort the arguments of their adversaries and to charge them with inferences from them, not only never dreamt of, but utterly abhorred. (2.) They that cast off the fear of God will not think of prayer; and they who restrain prayer, can have no fear of God before them; and such a prayerless and careless state is the sure proof of a man's impiety, and the forerunner of eternal ruin.



## C H A P. XVI.

*Job expostulates with his friends on their unkind treatment; and declares, that if they were in the like distress he would behave to them in a different manner. He sets forth the greatness of his sufferings, but still maintains his integrity.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**T**HEN Job answered and said,  
2 I have heard many such things:

3. He arraigns him of arrogance and self-conceit, as if his claim to an equality of understanding, chap. xiii. 2. was to be interpreted a monopoly of wisdom. *Art thou the first man that was born? or before Adam?* that all knowledge and experience must center in thee? Yea, art thou wise as God, pretending to be from everlasting? *Wast thou made before the hills?* or, did God consult with thee in his glorious works, and communicate to thee his great designs? *Hast thou heard the secret of God? and dost thou arrogate and restrain wisdom to thyself?* *What knowest thou that we know not?* respecting numbers, and the current of antiquity, all are on our side: *with us are both the gray-headed, and very aged men, much elder than thy father.* Note; (1.) Nothing is easier than to triumph over our adversary, by making him speak what he never meant, and then confuting our own suppositions. (2.) There are secret things which belong unto God; to pretend to fathom which, proves not our wisdom, but our pride and folly. (3.) Many appeal to antiquity, who would often find it hard to support their pretensions; not that error supported by antiquity is at all the better for being the older: God's word is the only sure guide. (4.) Gray-heads are not always oracles; whatever veneration is due to them, truth is too great a sacrifice to make to any man.

4. He accuses him of contemning the counsels of his friends, and the consolations of God, when those were the very things that he wanted, and for want of which his complaint was bitter; but, because he declared them miserable comforters, they would infer, as they spoke for God, that it was a slight put upon him. *Are the consolations of God small with thee?* despised and slighted? *Is there any secret thing with thee?* any charm which others know not of, to support thee; or any secret sin, which being indulged prevents the entrance of divine comforts? Note; (1.) Many speak in God's name, whom he never sent; and would interest him in their quarrel, though he disowns any relation to them. (2.) The consolations of God are what an afflicted soul wants above all things; with these every trial is lightened; without them, every burden is grievous. (3.) Allowed sin necessarily cuts off the sources of true comfort.

5. He charges him with insolence against God. *Why doth thine heart carry thee away?* like an unruly horse, which refuses bit or bridle; *and what do thine eyes wink at?* Why so contemptuous of us? or what is thy aim and intention in those hard speeches of thine, *that thou turnest thy spirit against God,* as if daring to contend with him, *and lettest such words go out of thy mouth?* arraigning his wisdom, justice, and providence. It must be owned, that Job had given

miserable comforters *are ye all.*

3 Shall vain words have an end? or what emboldeneth thee that thou answerest?

4 I also could speak as ye *do*: if your soul were in my soul's stead, I could heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you.

5 *But* I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips should *aswage your grief.*

some handle for this charge, chap. ix. 12. x. 3. xiii. 22—27. but Eliphaz draws a sudden temptation into a settled enmity and opposition against God, exaggerates the evil, and makes no allowance for Job's heavy afflictions, nor any account of the expressions of unfeigned piety which he constantly mingles with his most impatient complaints.

6. From the glaring proofs of man's original corruption, Eliphaz would infer Job's falsehood in his self-vindication. *What is man that he should be clean? and he which is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?* If the faints in glory are not trusted by him, and the bright heavens are not clean in his sight, *how much more abominable and filthy is man, which drinketh iniquity like water?* as naturally disposed to it, as the appetite craves for food, and swallows it as greedily and copiously as those who are parched with thirst do the cooling draught. Note; (1.) Man is naturally disposed to evil, and only evil, and that continually. (2.) Indulgence in sin makes our bestial appetites only the more craving. (3.) Sin is the abominable thing which God hates, and will assuredly punish, unless the soul be washed in that blood of Jesus which alone can make us clean.

2dly, Eliphaz proceeds with his arguments, which are as weak as his reproaches are unjust. He insists that the wicked are always miserable; and Job's sufferings, therefore, are to him a sufficient proof of his guilt.

1. He bespeaks Job's attention; *I will shew thee, hear me,* something worth notice, and not such unprofitable talk as he had declared his to be, ver. 3. He had claimed antiquity for his voucher, and professed to speak not more his own sentiments, than the traditions of the wisest and best of men, who were as great as they were good; *and no stranger passed among them, either to share their blessings, or, as robbers, to plunder them; but their prosperity, the reward of their piety, was uninterrupted: in which he seems to glance at Job, unlike them in prosperity, and therefore unlike them in piety.*

2. He describes the wicked man, and his constant misery, wherein, though he speaks in a third person throughout, it is easy to see that the application is designed for Job himself. He draws the character of the wicked man, as daring in iniquity, fearless of God's threatenings, mocking at his wrath as a bugbear, and, as a combatant in arms, rushing on the thick bosses of his buckler, as if desiring his power. In ease and luxury he riots, fed to the full, fattened as an ox in a rich pasture, gratifying every lust, and ministering to the cravings of a pampered appetite. By oppression he enlarges his habitation, and, having seized the houses of others, makes desolations around him, as if he would dwell alone in the earth, to enjoy the fruits of his



6 Though I speak, my grief is not abated: and though I forbear, what am I eased?

7 But now he hath made me weary, thou hast made desolate all my company.

8 And thou hast filled me with wrinkles,

which is a witness against me: and my leanness rising up in me beareth witness to my face.

9 He teareth me in his wrath, who hateth me: he gnasheth upon me with his teeth; mine enemy sharpeneth his eyes upon me.

his ill-gotten abundance. *Note*; (1.) God is patient toward daring sinners; but their time of ruin is at hand. (2.) Sensual appetite is the soul's ruin, and fleshly indulgence stupifies the conscience against all fear of God, or sense of danger.

3. The misery of the wicked man is largely described. His mischievous devices cost him much painful thought, his conscience feels at times the pangs of guilt; and short is the reign of iniquity. Terror haunts him, a dreadful sound is in his ears, a fearful looking-for of judgment. In the midst of his prosperity, some calamity sweeps away his wealth, or disease embitters all his portion, and Death seizes him as his prey. In his afflictions he sinks under despair, and in hell it will be the consummation of his misery. The sword of vengeance hangs terrible over him, threatening each moment to fall. Reduced to beggary, he wanders, famished with hunger, and none give unto him. The day of death approaching scares him, and still more the dreadful darkness which obscures his prospect beyond the grave. Increasing troubles expected distress him; eternal anguish in his view dismays him; and, unable to resist, as a man before an armed host, he falls a prey to his own fears. Poor in the midst of his abundance, his covetousness and carking care withhold from him enjoyment; or, squandered on his lusts, he wastes quickly his ill-gotten wealth: at least, his possessions are transitory and vanishing as a dream. His afflictive dispensations are without any prospect of an end; his children, like withered branches struck with lightning, die around him; and, at last, himself is cut off by the blasts of God's displeasure. Deluded by Satan to trust in present vanities, he finds a lie in his right-hand: let others see and dread such fatal delusion! An immature death shall seize him, before the time that his vain hope suggested; and, like a dry stick, all his wealth, family, and friends, shall perish before him, or forsake him. Stripped by the tempest of wrath, like the unripe grape, or the flower of the olive, he shall see the desolation of all that was dear to him. Though hand join in hand, the congregation of the hypocrites shall be desolate: vain will be their pretexts of religion, when God comes to detect and punish them; his fire will consume the tabernacles of the wicked magistrates, where bribery and corruption dwelt. Thus shall the mischief, craft, and falsehood of the wicked return upon his own head, and vanity, vexation, and ruin, be his only portion. Throughout all this description he seems to keep Job in his eyes; whose losses, calamities, afflictions in his children, family, substance, and person, he would intimate, proved him to be this wicked man, this oppressor and hypocrite. *Note*; (1.) It is true, the curse of God is upon the houses of the wicked, and sometimes, though not always, visible in this world. (2.) The happiest sinner has inward terrors, which all his enjoyments cannot soothe or chase away. (3.) A dying hour and judgment-day, at farthest, will verify all that is here asserted of the wicked, and much more.

CHAP. XVI.

*Ver. 1. Then Job answered and said*] Job, above measure grieved that his friends should treat him in this cruel manner, expostulates very tenderly with them on the subject. He tells them, that he should, in the like circumstances, have behaved to them in a very different way: ver. 2—6. That he, as well as every one about him, was in the utmost astonishment to find a man whom he imagined to be his friend accuse him falsely, and give him worse treatment than even his greatest enemies would have done. But that he plainly saw that God was pleased to add this to the rest of his calamities; that he should not only be deprived of the comfort and assistance which he might have expected from his friends, but that he should be used by them in the most relentless way: ver. 7—14. That he had voluntarily taken upon him all the marks of humility used by the guilty, though he was really innocent of their charges; that God above knew his innocence, though his friends so slanderously traduced him: ver. 15—22. that he was sensible he was nigh his dissolution: chap. xvii. 1—3. that he made no doubt, that whenever the cause came to a decision the event would prove favourable to him. In the mean time, they would do well to consider what effect this their treatment of him must have on mankind; and how great a discouragement it must be to the lovers of virtue and holiness, to see a man whose character was yet unstained, on bare suspicion, dealt with so cruelly by persons pretending to virtue and goodness: ver. 4—9. Would they but give themselves time to reflect, they must see that he could have no motive to hypocrisy, since all his schemes and hopes, with regard to life, were at an end; and, as he expected nothing but death, with what view could he play the hypocrite? ver. 10. to the end. Heath.

*Ver. 4. I also could speak, &c.*] *I also could speak as well as you: if your soul were in my soul's stead, would I accumulate sentences against you? would I shake my head at you?* Heath. The rendering of this verse interrogatively gives it a very pathetic turn.

*Ver. 5. But I would strengthen you with my mouth*] *I would rather encourage you with my mouth, and the vehemency of my eloquence should be kept within bounds.* This is very applicable to the treatment that he had received from his friends, and a proper reproof of it. Heath.

*Ver. 7. But now he hath made me weary*] *For my trouble hath now weakened all my frame, and brought wrinkles over me,* ver. 8. *He is present as a witness, and ariseth against me, who telleth lies concerning me; he openly contradicts me to my face.* Houbigant. Heath renders the verses, *Only now it reduceth me to the last extremity; thou causst all my company to be in a consternation.* ver. 8. *It even wounds me to the heart, that my traitorous false friend should thus turn witness; nay, that he should become my accuser; that he should testify to my face.*

*Ver.*

10 They have gaped upon me with their mouth; they have smitten me upon the cheek reproachfully; they have gathered themselves together against me.

11 God hath delivered me to the ungodly, and turned me over into the hands of the wicked.

12 I was at ease, but he hath broken me afunder: he hath also taken *me* by my neck, and shaken me to pieces, and set me up for his mark.

13 His archers compass me round about, he cleaveth my reins afunder, and doth not spare; he poureth out my gall upon the ground.

14 He breaketh me with breach upon breach, he runneth upon me like a giant.

15 I have sewed sackcloth upon my skin, and defiled my horn in the dust.

16 My face is foul with weeping, and on my eyelids *is* the shadow of death;

17 Not for *any* injustice in mine hands: also my prayer *is* pure.

18 O earth, cover not thou my blood, and let my cry have no place.

19 Also now, behold, my witness *is* in heaven, and my record *is* on high.

20 My friends scorn me: *but* mine eye poureth out *tears* unto God.

21 O that one might plead for a man with God, as a man *pleadeth* for his neighbour!

22 When a few years are come, then I shall go the way *whence* I shall not return.

*Ver. 9. He teareth me in his wrath, &c.] His fury rendeth me, and he teareth me to pieces.* Heath; who remarks, that the metaphor is taken from a beast of prey, who rends and tears his booty in pieces; and the same metaphor is carried on through the whole. See Psalm xxxv. 16. xxxvii. 12. Lam. ii. 16.

*Ver. 10. They have gathered themselves together against me] They are ready to burst with fury against me.* Heath. *They have unanimously satiated their wrath upon me.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 13, 14. His archers compass me, &c.] The metaphor is here taken from huntmen.* First they surround the beast; then he is shot dead; his entrails are next taken out; and then his body is broken up limb from limb. Heath.

*Ver. 15. I have sewed sackcloth] The meaning of this verse is, I have sewn sackcloth (in token of grief) over my torn skin, and have defiled my head, my horn, or honour, with ashes.* See Schultens and Heath.

*Ver. 17. Not for any injustice, &c.] Although there is not iniquity in my hands; although my prayers are pure before God.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 18. O earth, cover not thou my blood, &c.] O earth! cover not thou my blood, lest there be no place for my cry! ver. 19. Yea, even now my witness is in heaven; and He who is conscious of my actions is on high: ver. 20. My thought is my interpreter with God; mine eye is dropping before him: ver. 21. Is it for man to dispute with God, as a man disputeth with his neighbour? Houbigant.* Heath renders the 21st verse, *Oh that it might plead, &c.!* meaning the dropping eye, the tears which he shed; and the 22d verse, *that those few years might come to an end; that I might go the way, &c.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Such arguing as Eliphaz offered produced little conviction and less comfort; no wonder, therefore, that Job, insulted and afflicted, retorts sharply the reproaches which his opponent had cast upon him. It was as hard to be patient under such provocation, as to be silent under his sufferings.

1. He is tired of such vain repetition. It was *crambe repetita*, the same jarring string struck with the same rough

hand. He complains of them all, as miserable comforters, who heightened his anguish by unjust reproaches, instead of pouring in the kind balm of friendly sympathy. He thought it high time for such vain talkers to have done, and considers it as insolent and provoking to have such answers obtruded upon him. *Note;* (1.) They who send wounded consciences to better obedience, and their own duties, for a cure, like Job's comforters, do but exasperate the pain. (2.) No human consolations can afford satisfaction to the soul under a sense of sin, till God speak the pardoning word. (3.) To censure men for sins that we cannot prove, and to persist in repeating accusations that have been confuted and answered, deserves a sharp rebuke.

2. He suggests to them how different a conduct he would have adopted toward them, had they been in his circumstances; and therein justly upbraids their cruelty and unkindness. *I also could speak, or ought I to speak? ought I to heap up words against you, and shake mine head at you, if you were under my calamities? No: far other should be my conduct.* 'Twere easy indeed, as you do, to trample on the miserable, and insult the afflicted; *but I would strengthen you with my mouth, suggesting every kind alleviation, ministering the soft balm of friendly sympathy and consolation; and the moving of my lips should assuage your grief.* *Note;* (1.) Though we cannot remove the afflictions of our friends, we may kindly suggest to them arguments to support them, and, by tender sympathy with them, alleviate their sorrows. (2.) If we placed our souls in others' stead, under their temptations and afflictions, it would teach us both to judge of them more favourably, and to treat them with greater tenderness.

2dly, Job's complaints are still uppermost, and all methods to assuage them are vain: whether he spoke, or was silent, he derived no ease from God or man; his prayers returned unanswered: his friends misconstrued his words into passion, and seemed disposed to call his silence fullness. He therefore speaks in the bitterness of his soul.

1. He was weary of his life; deprived now of every comfort, desolate and solitary; bereaved of his family, and forsaken

## C H A P. XVII.

*Job appeals from men to God: the unmerciful dealing of men with the afflicted may astonish, but not discourage the righteous. Job professes that his hope is not in life, but in death.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**M**Y breath is corrupt, my days are extinct, the graves are ready for me.

forfaken of all those who used to assemble at his house for the worship of God.

2. His body, emaciated with pain and grief, looked like decrepit age, and he appeared a kind of living skeleton; witnesses, indeed, of his deep affliction, but cruelly pleaded against him as proofs of guilt and sin.

3. His enemy, who hated him, with piercing eyes observed him, full of indignation, and tearing him in fury. This enemy may be understood of Eliphaz, or Satan, or, as the context seems best to suit, of God himself, who appeared in such a terrible character, and of whom he was ready to entertain such hard thoughts. *Note;* They who have God indeed for their enemy, will be torn in pieces while there is none to deliver them.

4. He was become the object of scorn and contempt, and herein a type of Jesus. But, though like him in scorn, how inferior to him in resignation!

5. He was delivered into the hands of the wicked; the Chaldeans, who robbed him; and his friends, who seemed so set against him; or the wicked one, the devil, whose power to torment him appeared so absolute.

6. The wrath of God seemed let loose upon him. When at ease a little moment, again suddenly the stroke broke into shivers all his comforts; seized as a child in a giant's arms, and shook limb from limb; set up as the butt of God's poisoned arrows, and the mark for the world's enmity; tormented with the most acute pains, and no intermission of his agonies; living as in the pangs of death, pierced through the liver with a sword, and the gall flowing through the wound, and daily aggravated and increasing troubles succeeding as breach upon breach, while with a giant's fury, resistless and cruel, God appeared to delight in crushing him under his feet: such sad thoughts his afflicted heart suggested.

7. His humiliation was as deep as his affliction; sackcloth was his garb, his glory all departed, his horn in the dust, and tears night and day flowed, till his eyes grew dim with sorrow, as if the shadow of death hung on his eyelids. *Note;* (1.) It becomes us to humble ourselves when God's heavy hand is upon us. (2.) Though we sow in tears, as the showers in seed-time, the harvest of patient suffering shall be joy.

3dly, Though his passionate expressions are to be condemned, Job's uprightness in general deserves the highest approbation.

1. He can appeal to God to testify that these afflictions came not upon for any injustice in his hands, as his friends suggested; or for any impiety in restraining prayer before God; for God knew his integrity to man, as also the purity of his intentions, and the fervency of his devotions. *Note;* It is an unspeakable comfort, whatever we suffer, if we

2 *Are there not mockers with me? and doth not mine eye continue in their provocation?*

3 *Lay down now, put me in a surety with thee; who is he that will strike hands with me?*

4 *For thou hast hid their heart from un-*

can still keep a clear conscience, and take God to witness for the simplicity of our souls before him.

2. He supports his appeal to God by a solemn imprecation: if what I say be not true, *O earth, cover not thou my blood*, let it be shed for dogs to lick; or, if there be any secret crime, let it be laid open to the day; and let my cry have no place with God or man: I am content to be condemned of both without mercy.

3. He makes God his resource in his afflictions: amid the scorn and insult of his friends he poured out tears unto him; tears that bespoke his compassion, tears that pleaded against the unkindness of his accusers. *Note;* The tears of God's people are not forgotten; and they who cruelly caused these tears to fall shall be recompensed.

4. He longs to have an opportunity to plead his cause before God, without dread of the Divine Majesty, as a man pleadeth for his neighbour, with freedom and unreserve; then he doubted not he should obtain a verdict in his favour, and silence his censorious friends.

5. He comforts himself that the time is short; and, however now unjustly censured, his character would ere long be cleared up: when the few years of life ended, he should go the way whence he should not return, never come back again to a miserable world, nor be exposed to any of those calamities under which he now groaned. *Note;* (1.) Death is a journey into a far country, whence we are no more to return; the moment we depart from earth, our eternity is determined for hell or heaven. (2.) The time here is short, happy they who employ it in getting ready for their removal, that when the hour comes, they may have nothing to do but die.

## C H A P. XVII.

*Ver. 1. The graves are ready for me.] They are preparing a grave for me. See Houbigant.*

*Ver. 2. Are there not mockers with me?] Were it not so, I have sarcasms enough in store, and I could spend the whole night unmoved at their aggravations. Heath. See chap. xxiv. 25. It is very plain to me, says Peters, that as Job in the fourth verse directs his speech to God, so in the two preceding he points at and addresses himself to his mistaken friends: Are there not mockers with me? Lay down now (some earnest or pledge), put me in a surety with thee; who is he that will strike hands with me? i. e. Which of you, who thus mock and insult me, will venture to try your cause before the Supreme Judge? No; they shew a want of understanding in thus rashly censuring me; and were they to bring their cause before thee, O God, thou wouldst not exalt them; i. e. they would be cast in the trial. This sense, we see, is very obvious and easy: the change of the person addressed, and the several breaks in the sentence, only*

derstanding: therefore shalt thou not exalt them.

5 He that speaketh flattery to his friends, even the eyes of his children shall fail.

6 He hath made me also a by-word of the people; and aforetime I was as a tabret.

7 Mine eye also is dim by reason of sorrow, and all my members are as a shadow.

8 Upright men shall be astonied at this, and the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite.

9 The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger.

10 But as for you all, do ye return, and

come now: for I cannot find one wise man among you.

11 My days are past, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart.

12 They change the night into day: the light is short because of darkness.

13 If I wait, the grave is mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness.

14 I have said to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother, and my sister.

15 And where is now my hope? as for my hope, who shall see it?

16 They shall go down to the bars of the pit, when our rest together is in the dust.

only shew the earnestness of the speaker, and are both natural and elegant.

Ver. 5. *He that speaketh flattery to his friends*] The Hebrew of this verse literally runs thus: לחלק יגיד רעים לחלק בניו חכלנה ועיני בניו חכלנה *lechelek jaggiid reim veinei banaiv tiklenab*, He shall reckon friends for a portion or inheritance, and the eyes of his children shall fail; i. e. with expectation. They may look their eyes out before they receive any benefit or assistance from these friends. The expression is proverbial, intimating how liable men are to be disappointed who depend upon the constancy of human friendships; and nothing could be more apposite to Job's purpose. Peters.

Ver. 6. *He hath made me also a by-word*] But they have marked me out for a by-word of the people; nay, I am even a prodigy in their sight. Heath.

Ver. 8. *And the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite*] The innocent, to be sure, will exert himself against the profligate. The whole of this and the next verse is an irony. Heath.

Ver. 10. *But as for you all, &c.*] Now, therefore, recollect yourselves, all of you, and consider, I pray you: cannot I find one wise man among you? Heath and Houbigant. See ch. vi. 28.

Ver. 11, 12. *The thoughts of my heart, &c.*] The gnawings of my heart (ver. 12.) causeth it to be night instead of day; the light is short in comparison of darkness. Heath.

Ver. 13. *If I wait, the grave is mine house*] I have no hope; the grave is my house: I have spread my couch in darkness.

Ver. 15. *And where is now my hope?*] The repetition of the word *hope* is extremely elegant in this place. The two verses may be thus connected; *Where now, pray, can be my hope? my hope indeed! whoever have a mind to see it, (ver. 16.) they must descend to the confines of the grave, seeing we shall go down to the dust together.* Houbigant renders the last verse, *It [my hope] shall descend together with me into the grave: it shall rest with me in the dust.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Job wished for a fair trial of his case; but it must be soon, or death would prevent him.

1. He speaks of himself, as of one at the point of death, his breath corrupt through his disease, and drawn with difficulty; his days extinct, the last of them just at their end, and the graves of his fathers open, as ready for his reception. Note; (1.) Though the breath of natural life will quickly expire; yet if God has breathed spiritual life into us, we can never die. (2.) The days of time are drawing to their period; what folly then to seek our portion here, instead of securing a part in that eternity, where time will be lost as a drop in the ocean. (3.) If the grave is ready for us, highly it imports us to be ready for the grave; then come death, and welcome!

2. He complains of his friends, as mockers, who insulted him with abuse, and deceived his expectations, provoking him continually, so that neither day nor night his eyes could close. Note; (1.) It is cruel to mock at any man's calamities. (2.) An exasperated spirit drives sleep from the eyelids.

3. He longs that God would hear the cause. *Lay down now some pledge of appearing, put me in a surety with thee,* let me have assurance that the cause shall be heard, or, *appoint my surety with thee, my Divine Redeemer, who will undertake to plead my cause for me, and then I am sure of success.* *Who is he that will strike hands with me, and lay any thing to my charge? I shall then have an advocate to answer for me.* Note; They who have Christ for their surety, may appear with boldness at the bar of God.

4. He imputes the charges of his friends to a judgment of infatuation upon them from God; and thence concludes their unfitness to be exalted as umpires in the dispute. Note; (1.) Wisdom is God's gift; and when the wise abuse their talent, he can infatuate and confound them. (2.) They shall not be exalted, but be cast down into the pit of misery, who employ the wisdom that God hath given them against the cause and people of God.

5. He denounces a curse upon flatterers, such as he considered his friends to be, who pretended to speak for God, and to give him great expectations of prosperity: *The eyes of his children shall fail, his family be desolate, and*

C H A P. XVIII.

*Bildad accuses Job of presumption and impatience: he shews that the light of the wicked shall be put out; that brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation, and that none of his posterity shall survive.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**T**HEN answered Bildad the Shuhite, and said,

find no kindness in their distresses. *Note;* Flattery is abominable, and every wise and good man abhors it.

6. He laments that he was now despised, though once the darling of his friends and the people. His poverty became a proverb, and his wickedness was universally esteemed to be the cause of it. *Note;* (1.) We must place little confidence in men's regard: love and loathing, honour and infamy, are often successive. (2.) Every one is the great man's admirer; but let him be reduced, and how despicable does he in poverty appear! It is well if we have one friend who is not so changeable.

7. Bitter sorrow dimmed his eye, and continual tears wore him to a skeleton; so deeply does the body usually partake in the anguish of the soul. Let us fear inordinate grief, lest it make us self-murderers!

8. He declares what effect his sufferings and his friends' behaviour would have upon the righteous. They would be astonished at his sorrows and their cruelty, and rise up with indignation to reprove the hypocrisy of such as pretended to sanctity, yet were so rash in their censure of the innocent. Far from being discouraged by such a dark dispensation, or the fear of the like usage, they would hold on their way in purity, simplicity, and integrity; and, instead of fainting, grow stronger and stronger. Perhaps he expresses his own confidence of doing so, notwithstanding their revilings, conscious of his righteousness, and the cleanness of his ways before God. *Note;* (1.) A good man may see things that he cannot account for in God's dealings; but he staggers not through unbelief. (2.) They who are faithful to God are zealous for him, and dare to vindicate his oppressed cause and people. (3.) The bitterest abuse that God's people sustain is usually from formal and hypocritical professors. (4.) Difficulties and opposition quicken and strengthen them who walk in the ways of God.

adly, From sad experience he is now convinced how little expectation he could entertain from his friends.

1. He professes his despair of being eased by their counsels, in which no traces of wisdom appeared; and, unless they returned to a better mind, and came with more unprejudiced tempers to hear his defence, he could hope for little good from their conference. *Note;* Many are wise in their own eyes, who, in conference, are found to add nothing to the knowledge of those whom they pretend to instruct.

2. He concludes it folly to flatter himself with the hope of good days. They are passed, no more to return; all his gracious purposes of the employment of his affluence for the good of mankind are frustrated; and the thoughts of his heart are ready to perish with his body in the grave:

VOL. II.

2 How long will it be ere ye make an end of words? mark, and afterwards we will speak.

3 Wherefore are we counted as beasts, and reputed vile in your sight?

4 He teareth himself in his anger: shall the earth be forsaken for thee? and shall the rock be removed out of his place?

they are so bitter, that they change night into day, giving him no rest; and *the light is short, because of darkness;* the days of prosperity seemed but like a flash of passing light, succeeded by thick darkness; or the day obscured with his sorrows drew to an end, and scarcely afforded a beam of welcome light. *Note;* (1.) Death will put an end to all our purposes; therefore what now thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might. (2.) The night is tiresome to the sleepless eye, and the day dark to the sorrowful; let us bless God if we sleep in peace, and awake cheerful to meet the morning sun.

3. His approaching end made it vain to expect a change; he looked for no house but the grave, no bed of lasting repose but the dust, no more dear relatives but worms and corruption; his hope was gone of earthly blessings, which neither he nor they would live to see restored. One prospect only was before him, *They shall go down to the bars of the pit, and rest together there.* *Note;* (1.) We are too apt to faint in adversity, and, when perplexed, to be in despair. Job little thought what good things yet awaited him. (2.) It is useful to keep death in our view, and to make the grave familiar to us. To a gracious soul, death has lost its terror. Since Jesus slept in the grave, it is but our house of passage, as travellers from time to eternity, from life to immortality. (3.) To be proud, little becomes those who are so nearly related to worms and corruption. (4.) They who could obtain no rest before, in death will find it; there, at least, fierce disputes and animosities will have an end.

C H A P. XVIII.

*Ver. 1. Then answered Bildad the Shuhite]* Bildad, irritated to the last degree that Job should treat their advice with so much contempt, is no longer able to keep his passions within the bounds of decency. He proceeds to downright abuse; and, finding little attention given by Job to his arguments, he tries to terrify him into a compliance. To that end, he draws a yet more terrible picture of the final end of a wicked man than any preceding, throwing in all the circumstances of Job's calamities, that he might plainly perceive the resemblance; and, at the same time, insinuating that he had much worse still to expect, unless he prevented it by a speedy change of behaviour: *ver. 2. to the end;* that it was the highest arrogance in him to suppose that he was of consequence enough to be the cause of altering the general rules of Providence: *ver. 4. and that it was much more expedient for the good of the whole, that he, by his example, should deter others from treading in the same path of wickedness and folly: ver. 5—7. Heath.*

5 F

*Ver.*

5 Yea, the light of the wicked shall be put out, and the spark of his fire shall not shine.

6 The light shall be dark in his tabernacle, and his candle shall be put out with him.

7 The steps of his strength shall be straitened, and his own counsel shall cast him down.

8 For he is cast into a net by his own feet, and he walketh upon a snare.

9 The gin shall take *him* by the heel, and the robber shall prevail against him.

10 The snare *is* laid for him in the ground, and a trap for him in the way.

11 Terrors shall make him afraid on every side, and shall drive him to his feet.

12 His strength shall be hunger-bitten, and destruction *shall be* ready at his side.

13 It shall devour the strength of his skin :

*even* the firstborn of death shall devour his strength.

14 His confidence shall be rooted out of his tabernacle, and it shall bring him to the king of terrors.

15 It shall dwell in his tabernacle, because *it is* none of his: brimstone shall be scattered upon his habitation.

16 His roots shall be dried up beneath, and above shall his branch be cut off.

17 His remembrance shall perish from the earth, and he shall have no name in the street.

18 He shall be driven from light into darkness, and chased out of the world.

19 He shall neither have son nor nephew among his people; nor any remaining in his dwellings.

*Ver. 2. How long, &c.] How long will you hunt after cavils against established maxims? speak your meaning plainly, and we will reply.* The sense is, that it was in vain to puzzle the cause with cavils and exceptions; that he should give a plain instance where a righteous man was ever known to have had punishment inflicted on him; or else own the truth of the established maxim, that punishment was a sure mark of wickedness. Heath.

*Ver. 3. Wherefore are we counted as beasts? &c.]* This refers to the 10th verse in the former chapter, where Job had, indeed, treated them very freely.

*Ver. 4. He teareth himself in his anger] Thou sayest, he collects all his fury against me. But shall the earth be forsaken, &c.? Houbigant.* See the introductory note on the first verse, and ch. xvi. 9.

*Ver. 5. Yea, the light of the wicked] Rather, let the light of the wicked be put out.* Heath.

*Ver. 8. For he is cast into a net] The metaphor is taken from a beast, which the hunters have driven into the toils. He runs here and there, striving to find a way out; but the net entangles him more and more, till at length it fastens upon him. Heath: who translates the last clause, he runneth to and fro in the toils; and he observes well, that, the word robber, in the next verse, having no relation to the preceding metaphor, it would be rendered more properly, and the noose fasteneth close upon him. See Houbigant.*

*Ver. 11. And shall drive him to his feet] And shall be spread around at his feet] Houbigant.* The same metaphor seems to be continued.

*Ver. 12. His strength shall be hunger-bitten] The Vulgate renders this, His strength shall be eaten by famine; which appears to be a good translation, and still keeps up the image in the former verses: as does the next clause, Destruction shall be ready at, or for his side, alluding to the arrow which is fitted to the string, and ready to be discharged at him. See ch. xii. 5.*

*Ver. 13. It shall devour, &c.] Filthy ulcers shall consume his skin; an untimely death shall destroy his children.* Heath and Houbigant. This sarcasm was peculiarly adapted to the case of Job, whose skin was thus consumed, and whose children had been destroyed in this manner. The reader must have had occasion frequently to remark, in this book, how often, amid the sublimity of the eastern metaphors, the author drops the metaphor, and treats of his subject simply: as in the present case; having spoken of the wicked man under the metaphor of a wild beast caught in a snare, in this verse he considered him no longer in that view, but speaks of him immediately in his own character.

*Ver. 14. And it shall bring him to the king of terrors] Horrors shall attack him, like a king.* Heath.

*Ver. 15. It shall dwell in his tabernacle] They shall take up their habitation in his tent, because he hath no survivor: brimstone shall be sprinkled upon his habitation.* As much as to say, "Since he hath no one to survive him, his posterity is utterly exterminated: horror takes possession of his habitation, and it is sprinkled with brimstone, that no person may ever after inhabit it, but that it may remain an object of terror to future ages." The image is grand, and worthy of the tragic style. Heath. But I should rather think, that the sprinkling of brimstone upon his habitation alludes to the known custom of purifying a house with sulphur, after it had been abused to wicked and riotous purposes. See Numb. xxxi. 20.

*Ver. 20. As they that went before were affrighted] As his elders were seized with horror.* The plain meaning of the verse seems to be, "His elders, who saw so signal an instance of divine vengeance, were seized with horror; and whoever, in after-times, should hear his history related, would be in amazement at it." Heath.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Bildad sharply takes up the discouric,



20 They that come after *him* shall be affrighted at his day, as they that went before were affrighted.

21 Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked, and this is the place of *him* that knoweth not God.

course, and seems the more exasperated at Job's fancied presumption and obstinacy.

1. He charges him with impertinent talkativeness; as if he took pleasure in hearing his own voice, and would never have done with his idle words, (arguments, or reasons, he will not call them,) as if they were mere empty sound, *Vox et præterea nihil*. Note; (1.) They who engross the conversation, and withal say nothing worth hearing, deserve rebuke. (2.) It is too common with disputants to treat each other with contempt and rudeness; but abuse is not argument.

2. He intimates that Job was inattentive to their sound reasonings, and that it was vain to speak unless he would pay some greater regard to their discourse. Note; It is endless speaking to those who will not hear.

3. He regards himself and his friends as highly insulted: because Job had, chap. xvii. 4. spoken of them as wanting understanding, and chap. xii. 7. referred them to the beasts for wisdom, he would infer that he esteemed them as brutish and vile. Note; Many people are apt to suspect affronts which were never intended.

4. He accuses him of mad rage. He had said, chap. xvi. 9. "he teareth me in his anger:" No (says Bildad), you are your own tormentor; your passions are your plague, Note; Unmortified passions bring their curse and punishment along with them.

5. He charges him with insolent expectation of changing the settled order of Providence: *Shall the earth be forsaken for thee?* shall God invert his order of government, and for thy sake cease to punish the wicked, and bless the righteous? and *shall the rock be removed out of his place?* the unchangeable God alter his purposes, and no longer give to a man according to his works? No: the supposition is presumptuous and arrogant. He first takes it for granted, that Job's sufferings were the punishment of his iniquity, and founds on them this heavy charge.

2dly. Bildad here largely describes the misery of the wicked, and this with a view to Job's case; but he greatly erred from the mark. For, though all that he can say of a sinful state, respecting its punishment and wretchedness, be true, yet it does not always appear in this world; for neither are all who are sinful outwardly afflicted and miserable, nor do the greatest sufferings at all prove the want of the most solid piety.

1. Darkness shall overwhelm the wicked man. His light of prosperity shall be quickly extinguished; the sparks of worldly comforts that he rejoiced in shall be quenched; his family shall be reduced to deep distress, and he shall go down to his grave in darkness and misery. Note; (1.) The joys of a wicked man are but as the sparks from a furnace, so quickly will they be fled and gone. (2.) There is a curse upon the house of the ungodly; and his ill example sways those who belong to him; they perish together.

2. He shall be ensnared and enslaved by afflictions; his strong steps of health shall be straitened by sickness; or his large possessions, round which he stalked in pride, shall

be cut short. His craft shall entangle him, and be his ruin; the net that he spread for others shall take his own feet; and, wherever he walks, the snare of sin, and consequently misery, is at his heels; he shall be caught without power to escape, and the robber shall spoil him, unable to make resistance: hidden dangers surround his steps, and sudden destruction is ready to fall upon him. Note; (1.) Satan first lays the snare of sin; and if once the soul come into his net, he will as surely be a tormentor as he hath been the tempter. (2.) When God leaves a wicked man to his own counsels, he rushes headlong into ruin.

3. Terrors make him afraid on every side: within, an accusing conscience; before him, death looks ghastly, the grave yawns, an offended God frowns, hell opens. He would take to his feet; but whither can he run, to fly from God, or from himself? Note; Many a wretched soul flies to amusements, cares, and dissipations, for ease; but vain the attempt: *Hæret lateri lethalis arundo*.

4. Famine and destruction shall come upon him, and devour him to his very skin: and the most terrible of deaths shall bring him down to his grave. All his confidences shall fail him; he shall be rooted out of his tabernacle after beholding the desolations spread around it, and no one comfort remaining; and at last, as a malefactor reluctantly dragged to execution, he shall be brought to the king of terrors, terrors unspeakable before death, in death, after death. Note; (1.) Death is terrible to nature, till grace has disarmed him of his mortal sting; but to the impenitent sinner he continues a king of terrors, the most terrible of all terribles. (2.) When God strikes, vain are friends and physicians, and every human support. In that hour, the most infatuated soul will feel every creature-comfort and confidence to be vanity of vanities.

5. His family shall fall with him. Death will erect his throne in the sinner's tabernacle, nor leave it till ruin, like that which was poured on Sodom, hath utterly laid it waste; because it is none of his, being gotten by fraud and oppression, or by his abuse justly forfeited. Neither root nor branch shall remain; struck as with the lightning's blast, no heir shall inherit his estate, neither son nor nephew; nor so much as a creature be left in his desolate habitation.

6. His memory shall perish. He thought to perpetuate a great name in the earth, but the remembrance of it shall be blotted from the annals of time. Darkness, utter and eternal, must receive him, driven from his prosperity reluctant, and chased out of the world as a savage beast whose death is a deliverance to the country. Note; However great and honourable among men the prosperous sinner appears, his end will be to lie down in shame and everlasting contempt.

7. His contemporaries, amazed at God's judgments, shall hear of his fall, and posterity be astonished at the relation.

8. Bildad sums up his speech, with confidence of the truth of what he had spoken: *Surely, such are the dwellings*



## C H A P. XIX.

*Job complains of his friends' cruelty, pathetically laments his sufferings, and implores their pity: he appeals to God, and expresses his faith and hope in a future resurrection.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**T**HEN Job answered and said,

2 How long will ye vex my soul, and break me in pieces with words?

3 These ten times have ye reproached me: ye are not ashamed *that* ye make yourselves strange to me.

4 And be it indeed *that* I have erred, mine error remaineth with myself.

5 If indeed ye will magnify *yourself* against me, and plead against me my reproach:

6 Know now that God hath overthrown me, and hath compassed me with his net.

7 Behold, I cry out of wrong, but I am not heard, I cry aloud, but *there is* no judgment.

8 He hath fenced up my way that I cannot pass, and he hath set darkness in my paths.

9 He hath stripped me of my glory, and

taken the crown *from* my head.

10 He hath destroyed me on every side, and I am gone: and mine hope hath he removed like a tree.

11 He hath also kindled his wrath against me, and he counteth me unto him as *one* of his enemies.

12 His troops come together, and raise up their way against me, and encamp round about my tabernacle.

13 He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me.

14 My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me.

15 They that dwell in mine house, and my maids, count me for a stranger: I am an alien in their sight.

16 I called my servant, and he gave me no answer; I intreated him with my mouth.

17 My breath is strange to my wife, though I intreated for the children's *sake* of mine own body.

*of the wicked, as above described; and this is the place, the miserable lot assigned the reprobate soul of him that knoweth not God; for ignorance of God is at the bottom of all sin, and ruin eternal the wages of it.*

In all this description of a wicked man's sufferings, there is an evident allusion to Job's case; afflicted in his person and his family, robbed and spoiled, seeing the desolations of his house, acknowledging the terrors that he felt, and bemoaning his hopeless wretchedness: and hence Bildad would infer, that, being like the wicked in his sufferings, he must have resembled them in his sins.

## C H A P. XIX.

*Ver. 1. Then Job answered and said*] Disgusted by the little regard paid by the three friends to his defence, and finding them still insisting on their general maxims, Job desires them calmly to consider his case; to reflect that his failings, whatever they were, had not been at all prejudicial to them; but if, on the strength of their general principle, they thought themselves warranted from his sufferings to infer his guilt, he desires them to take notice that this was God's particular infliction: *ver. 2—7.* that he insisted on his integrity, and desired nothing but to bring his cause to an issue, which was as yet denied him: *ver. 8—20.* that God's inflictions were indeed very grievous; and, to excite their compassion, he gives here a very moving description of them; but tells them, that that should be a reason why they should pity him, and not add to the load by their unkind suspicions and cruel treatment: *ver. 21, 22.* that he was so far from retracting his plea,

that he was desirous it should remain for ever on record: *ver. 23, 24.* Heath. For he was assured that a day was coming, in which all his afflictions would be fully recompensed, and in which they would wish that they had treated him in a more friendly manner; though he questioned whether that would suffice to avert God's judgments from them.

*Ver. 3. Ye are not ashamed*] *Are ye not ashamed to be so very obdurate against me?* Heath.

*Ver. 10. And mine hope hath he removed*] *He rooteth up my hope like a tree.* Houbigant and Heath.

*Ver. 12. His troops come together, &c.*] The words here are military terms, relative to a siege. *And raise up their way against me,* Houbigant renders, *and fortify their way against me.*

*Ver. 14. My kinsfolk have failed*] *Have departed.* Houbigant. He means to say, that his friends had quite deserted him; had ceased from their office, according to the immediate meaning of the Hebrew word *חללו* *challu*. See Schultens.

*Ver. 16. He gave me no answer*] *And he answered me not, though I intreated, &c.* Houbigant

*Ver. 17. Though I intreated for the children's sake*] The word *חנתתי* *channothi*, rendered *intreated*, may signify the place of a man's dwelling. The sense may be rendered, *And my habitation to the children of my body.* Houbigant translates the verse, *My wife abhors even my breath; the children of my body fly far from my offensive smell:* and he observes, that we are nowhere told that all the children of Job perished, but only such as were feasting in their elder brother's house.

*Ver.*

18 Yea, young children despised me; I arose, and they spake against me.

19 All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me.

20 My bone cleaveth to my skin and to my flesh, and I am escaped with the skin of my teeth.

21 Have pity upon me, have pity upon me,

O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me.

22 Why do ye persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh?

23 Oh that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book!

24 That they were graven with an iron pen and lead, in the rock for ever!

*Ver. 18. Yea, young children despised me.] Even the very meanest of my family despised me; and if I rise up, they flout at me. See Schultens and Houbigant.*

*Ver. 19. Inward friends.] Rather intimate friends.*

*Ver. 20. My bone cleaveth to my skin, &c.] My bones pierce through my skin and my flesh, and my teeth slip out from my gums. Heath and Le Clerc. Chappelow renders the clause, I am escaped with a torn skin, or, with my skin all over wrinkles, to denote his being quite emaciated. Schultens says, that to escape with the skin of the teeth, seems to be a proverbial expression for those who lie beaten and covered with wounds from head to foot; and their mouth being broken with blows, half dead, they are scarcely able to breathe.*

*Ver. 21. Have pity upon me! &c.] Nothing can be more pathetic than the repetition in this passage, as well as the immediate application to his friends: O ye my friends! "You, at least, with whom I have enjoyed so intimate and friendly a correspondence; you, who more especially should exert the tender office of consolation, do you have some pity upon me, since the hand of God hath so fearfully afflicted me!" Heath, after an ancient manuscript, reads, You are my friends. To be satisfied with his flesh, means, according to the eastern style, to feed upon his fame, or life, and, as it were, to glut themselves with his sufferings and afflictions. Bp. Lowth observes, that this passage, as well as that at the beginning of the 14th chapter, affords us a most beautiful specimen of the complete elegy. See his Prælections, p. 452. Octavo.*

*Ver. 23, 24. Oh that they were printed in a book!]* The sense of these words, according to the translation of Schultens, is this: "Who now will write my words? Who will record them in a book? Let them be engraven on some sepulchral stone, with an iron pen and with lead, so as to last for ever." The word *rock*, which our translators have made use of, seems to me to be more just than that used by Schultens. It is certain that the word *צור zur*, signifies in other places of the Book of Job a rock; and never there, or anywhere else in the Scripture that I am aware of, does it signify a small sepulchral stone, or monumental pillar. Nor can the using of this term appear strange, if we consider the extreme antiquity of the Book of Job; since it is easy to imagine that the first inscriptions on stone were engraven on some places of the rocks which were accidentally smoothed and made pretty even; and, in fact, we find some that are very ancient engraven on the natural rock, and, which is remarkable, in Arabia, where it is supposed that Job lived. This is one of the most curious observations in that account of the Prefetto of Egypt which was published by the Bishop of Clogher; and

it is, in my apprehension, an exquisite confirmation of our version. The Prefetto, speaking in his journal of his disengaging himself from the mountains of Paran, says, "We came, at length, to a large plain, surrounded with high hills; at the foot of which we reposed ourselves in our tents at about half an hour after ten. These hills are called *Gebel-el-Mokatub*, i. e. *the Written Mountains*; for, as soon as we had parted from the mountains of Paran, we passed by several others for an hour together, engraved with ancient unknown characters, which were cut into the hard marble rock, so high as to be in some places at twelve or fourteen feet distance from the ground; and though we had in our company persons who were acquainted with the Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, Coptic, Latin, Armenian, Turkish, &c. languages, yet none of them had any knowledge of these characters; which have nevertheless been cut into the hard rock with the greatest industry, in a place where there is neither water, nor any thing that can be gotten to eat." When I consider this nature of the place, and compare it with the account that Maillet gives us of the great burying-place of the Egyptians, which is called *the plain of mummies*, and which, according to him, is a dry sandy circular plain, no less than four leagues over; and when I recollect the account which Maundrell gives of figures and inscriptions which, like these, are engraven on tables planed in the natural rock, and at some height above the road, which he found near the river Lycus, and which, he tells us, seemed to resemble mummies, and related, as he imagined, to some sepulchres thereabouts;—I should be ready to suppose that this must be some very ancient burying-place. Such a supposition justifies the explanation of Dr. Grey as to the alluding in these words to a sepulchral inscription, but would engage us to retain the English translation, as to the term *rock*, in contradistinction to monumental pillars, or grave-stones cut from the quarry. Be this as it may, it is certain that there are in Arabia several inscriptions in the natural rock, and that this way of writing is very durable; for these engravings, it seems, have outlived the knowledge of the characters made use of. The practice was for the same reason very ancient: and if these letters are not so ancient as the days of Moses, as the Bishop of Clogher thinks they are, yet these inscriptions might very well be the continuation of a practice in use in the days of Job, and may therefore be thought to be referred to in these words. But, however happy our translators have been in using the word *rock* in the 24th verse, it is certain that they have been far otherwise in the 23d, as to the word *printed*. It was absurd to employ a term which expresses what was invented but three or four hundred years ago; and especially as it does

25 For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.  
26 And though after my skin worms de-

does not, even by an improper expression, convey the idea of Job, which was, the perpetuating of his words, as is evident from the foregoing verse; *Records*, to which Job refers, being written, not printed, among us. These Written Arabian mountains very agreeably illustrate these words in part, and perhaps but in part; for it does not appear from the accounts of the Prefetto, with what view lead is mentioned here. Dr. Grey supposes that the letters, being hollowed in the rock with the iron pen, or chissel, were filled up with melted lead in order to be more legible; but it does not appear that any of these inscriptions are so filled up. Indeed, though some of them are engraven, most of those which Bishop Pococke observed near Mount Sinai were not cut, but stained, by making the granite of a lighter colour; which stain, he had an opportunity of being satisfied, sunk some depth into the stone: whether this was done with lead, let the curious determine. I shall only observe, that the LXX do not explain this at all, though the painting of granite rocks was anciently very common in Egypt, and those painting (stainings, or mere incrustations, as Norden took them to be) were extremely durable. "This sort of paintings," says Norden, "has neither shade nor gradation. The figures are incrustated like the cyphers on the dial-plates of watches; with this difference, that they cannot be detached. I must own, that this incrustated matter surpasses in strength all that I have seen of this kind. It is superior to the al-fresco and Mosaic work; and, indeed, has the advantage of lasting a longer time. It is something surprising to see how gold, ultra marine, and divers other colours, have preserved their lustre to the present age. Perhaps I shall be asked how all these lively colours could soften together; and I must own that it is a question which I am unable to decide." If Job, in this place, referred to the writing with these durable staining materials on the rocks, the LXX did not understand him so to do; they seem rather to have supposed that he meant the recording of things by engraving them on plates of lead. *Who will cause my words to be written, to be put in a book which shall last for ever? with an iron pen and lead, (i. e. upon lead) or to be engraven on the rocks?* which cutting of letters on lead marks out an ancient method indeed of perpetuating the memory of things, but is very different from that which Bishop Pococke saw had anciently obtained in Arabia, the country of Job, and to which, therefore, his words may possibly refer. See *Observations*, p. 300. I would just observe, that the original words rendered *and lead*, which give this ingenious author so much trouble, are marked with a cross to denote their being doubtful as to the reading, and accordingly Mr. Heath omits them in his translation: *That they were graven with an iron style; that they were cut in the rock to perpetuity!*

Ver. 25—27. *For I know that my Redeemer liveth, &c.* We are now come to the celebrated text which has so much divided interpreters, and which has been generally thought to express Job's strong faith in a future resurrection; and that so clearly, that some have imagined the passage an interpolation, as they conceive the declaration

too strong for the time and faith of Job: while others, and those especially who contend for the modern date of this Book, give the words a very different explication, and suppose them to contain nothing more than a strong persuasion, on Job's part, of a future restoration to God's favour, and felicity in this life: accordingly, they render the passage, *For I know that my Avenger liveth, and that he will at last stand on the earth; and although my skin be torn in this manner, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see on my side as mine eyes have beheld him, for he is no stranger. My reins within me are ready to faint with longing for him.* See Mr. Heath's note on the passage. Now, I. with respect to the interpolation, as there is not one reasonable and proper foundation whereupon to build such a suspicion; as we might with as good reason suppose any other passage which did not strike in with our opinions interpolated; and as the allowance of such an interpolation would break through all the rules of criticism, and all the faith of manuscripts, the opinion certainly deserves not the least attention. II. As to the supposition that the text refers to Job's hope of a temporal deliverance, it seems utterly groundless; as, from all that has gone before, we evidently see that Job had no such hope. His earnest prayer, his utmost wish, was, for a deliverance from his troubles by death. See what we have said, chap. xiv. 7, &c. And if the interpretation that has been given of the preceding verses be admitted,—and there does not seem the least doubt of its propriety,—then to understand these verses as referring to an expectation of temporal deliverance would be most absurd; while they connect in the aptest manner, as alluding to Job's hope of justification in a future life. Having given the most pathetic description of his afflictions, which might move any heart, he applies to his friends in the most affecting manner, to cease from persecuting him, and to pity his forlorn condition; a condition utterly irremediable, and from which while he had no hopes to be delivered, he wishes in the most earnest manner that *his words*, his justification of his own integrity, the account of his wonderful, and to him unaccountable sufferings, might be engraven on his sepulchral stone, might be written in the rock to last for ages, till the great day of his justification should come; for, "Though, in my present extremity of grief, I expect nothing but death, and to be laid in the grave; yet I am well persuaded that that day will come. *because* (ver. 25.) *I know that my Redeemer liveth;* יְהוָה גֹּאֲלִי; he who is to avenge me, and "see that I have right done me." See Levit. xxv. 25. This word, says Mr. Peters, is particularly apposite to Job's purpose, as it signifies one who vindicates the injuries of his friend, and does him justice after death: and moreover, in this view, it does not imply any necessity that this holy man should be acquainted with the whole mystery of our redemption, which is the great difficulty objected by learned men to the received interpretation of this passage. What knowledge of this matter Job, or the men of that age, might have conveyed down to them by tradition, is a point which we have no need to enquire into at present. It is sufficient to our purpose to under-

stroy this *body*, yet in my flesh shall I see God : eyes shall behold, and not another ; *though*  
 27 Whom I shall see for myself, and mine my reins be consumed within me.

understand the word here used in its plain and proper signification, that of a *vindicator*, or *avenger*. The next clause in the Hebrew, וְאַחֲרָיו עַל עַפְרָ יָקוּם, *weacharon al apar yakum*, is literally *and at last over the dust he shall arise* : i. e. over those who are reduced to dust, the dead. This is a very easy metonymy in the Hebrew poetry, and we have an example of it, Psalm xxx. 9. *What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? shall the dust praise thee* ; i. e. the dead : the same word, עֶפֶר *apar*, and the same beautiful figure as here. There seems to be a peculiar elegance and significance in the use of the word in this passage, as it brings to mind the sentence passed upon Adam, *Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return* ; from which sentence the good and just are now to be delivered ; and therefore the day of resurrection is called in Scripture *the day of their redemption* : יָקוּם *yakum*, rendered by our translators, *he shall stand*, signifies properly, *he shall arise or stand up* ; that is, he shall stand up to give sentence or execute judgment. It can scarcely have any other meaning ; and I believe this was the posture in which judges usually delivered their sentences in all ages and countries. The phrase of *God's arising to judgment* is very usual in the sacred Scripture. See Psalm lxxiv. 22. lxxxii. 8. and, very remarkably, in the 14th verse of the 31st chapter of this Book, the very same word is used in exactly the same sense, *What shall I do when God riseth up?* i. e. to judgment. The next verse in our translation runs thus ; *and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body ; yet in my flesh shall I see God*. Here are three words supplied to fill out the sense ; for in the Hebrew there is neither *though*, nor *worms*, nor *body* : the first and last, however, are rightly added ; but as for the second, *worms*, there is no need of it. *They have destroyed this*, being in the Hebrew idiom the same with *this be destroyed* ; and by *this*, must be meant *this body*, for there is plainly something wanting to fill up the sense, and there is no other word that we can think of so proper. I would just observe, that the Hebrew phrase is not *in*, but *from my flesh I shall see God* ; which Vatablus, a judicious commentator, takes to mean, *from, or after my flesh, thus consumed and destroyed*. The next verse is, *whom I shall see for myself, and mine eye shall behold, and not another, or a stranger*. Possibly by the word זָר *zar*, or *stranger*, Job, points at his mistaken friends and accusers ; who, as he intimates, would be struck with shame and remorse in the day of judgment, and not be able to bear the sight of that Judge whom he himself should behold with pleasure. This gives an easy sense of the words, and, if I mistake not, a beautiful one. Or, supposing that by זָר *zar*, a *stranger*, he meant, in general, one who is estranged from God and goodness, (for the word is often used in a bad sense) this will likewise render the passage easy. The next clause in our version is, *though my reins be consumed within me*. After this solemn declaration of his faith and hope in a resurrection, Job adds a few words more to close his speech, and they are very remarkable ones ; such as, I think, confirm this interpretation of this famous text, and cannot possibly be reconciled with the other. There is nothing for *though*

in the Hebrew ; Job says, *my reins are consumed within me* ; i. e. " I feel my very vitals fail me, and am hastening on " apace towards that death which shall consign me to " the future judgment." Here is a just coherence and agreement with what went before ; but what can we make of this text, if the foregoing passage is to be understood of a temporal deliverance ? Does he hope and despair in a breath ? He then desires his friends, ver. 28. not to persecute him any more, since the *root of the matter or argument*, that is, the strength of it, *was found in him* : and bids them beware that they were not convinced to their cost of the certainty of a righteous judgment hereafter, by the experience of some or other of those common plagues which God was oftentimes seen to distribute in this life. He mentions the *sword* particularly, which destroys promiscuously the good and the bad without distinction, and is sent, or suffered, by God with this design, that men may from thence infer there is a judgment. The expression in the Hebrew is remarkable : *For wrath, that is, the wrath of God, bringeth the iniquities of the sword, that ye may know there is a judgment* : ver. 29. intimating, that the violence and iniquity which always accompanies the ravages of the sword, the many unjust and cruel things that are done and suffered amidst the rage of war, and, in short, every dispensation of Providence which levels the good and bad in this life, is a demonstration of a righteous judgment to be expected hereafter. That this must be the meaning, seems plain ; nor can the passage be well understood of any other than a future judgment : for what other judgment was it which Job's friends wanted to know, or to be put in mind of ? Not God's judgment upon sinners in this life : it was their great error that they carried this point to an excess, and interpreted all the calamities sent by God in this world, even upon particular persons, as so many judgments : at least they considered Job's afflictions in this light. It was, therefore, quite foreign to his purpose to go about to persuade them of temporal judgments inflicted by God : but what he was most of all concerned to put them in mind of, was, that there was a future judgment to be expected after this life. Had they been as well assured of this as they should be, or had they well considered it, they would have seen less occasion for a strict retribution in this life ; and, consequently, would have been less forward to interpret God's inflictions upon Job as if they were a judgment on him for some secret wickedness. We conclude our note upon this passage with Houbigant's translation, Mr. Peters's paraphrase, and a short observation on part of Mr. Heath's version. Houbigant's rendering of ver. 25. is, *For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall hereafter arise over the dust* : ver. 26. *And that even I, after my skin is consumed, shall behold my God in my flesh* : ver. 27. *Yes, I shall behold him : my eyes, and not another's, shall see him*. *This my hope is reposed in my bosom* : ver. 28. *But if ye shall say, let us persecute him, and devise some cause of accusation against him* : ver. 29. *Then be afraid for yourselves, from the threatening sword ; for the sword will grow wroth against iniquities, that ye may know that*

28 But ye should say, Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in me?

29 Be ye afraid of the sword: for wrath bringeth the punishments of the sword, that ye may know *there is a judgment.*

*that a judgment hereafter is at hand.* Mr. Peters paraphrases the 25th, 26th, and 27th verses as follows: "For I know that the vindicator of my innocence and reputation, which you have thus inhumanly attacked, now liveth, and shall live for ever; and that in some grand future period he shall arise to judge the dead; and though, after my skin, which you see so miserably affected, this whole frame shall dissolve, and turn into dust; yet, I believe that I shall live again hereafter, as truly and certainly as I do now, and shall appear personally before my Judge; whom I shall see for myself, or in my own cause, prepared to do me justice; and, conscious of my innocence, shall look up to him with hope and joy; whilst others, my accusers, unable to behold him, shall look down with shame and confusion." The candid reader will immediately observe how natural and easy this interpretation is, and how strained is every expression upon the supposition that a temporal deliverance is meant. However, the latter clause of the 27th verse, as well as the 28th, I think may be admitted, even according to Mr. Heath's version, upon the interpretation we have given the passage: for Job surely might as well say, in hope of a future as of a present appearance of God for him, *my reins within me are ready to faint with longing for him.* See Bishop Sherlock on Prophecy, p. 225. dissent. ii.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Severe and cutting were these harsh censures which Bildad laid upon this man of sorrows. With just indignation therefore,

1. He complains of the cruel usage that he met with; *They vexed his soul*, added gall to his cup, attempted to rob him of his only remaining comfort, his integrity; and exasperated his spirit by provocations more than man could bear. *They brake him in pieces with words*, every one had a stone to throw at him: *they reproached him* as a wicked hypocrite; *they were not ashamed to make themselves strange to him*, however zealously attached to him before; his afflictions had made them shy of him, and they blushed not at the baseness of their conduct. *They magnified themselves against him*, looked down upon and insulted him: *they pleaded against him his reproach*, turned his sufferings into an argument of his hypocrisy and iniquity; and this they persisted in, notwithstanding all his remonstrances; and *ten times*, or several times, (a certain number for an uncertain) repeated their cruel reflections and unkindness. *Note;* (1.) Inward vexation is among the severest trials. (2.) Reproach has been the portion of many a good man. (3.) False friends discover themselves in adversity. (4.) They who are fallen, are generally trampled upon. (5.) It needs great patience to sustain repeated insult.

2. He makes a confession for argument's sake. *Be it indeed that I have erred*,—who is infallible? and errors of judgment deserved not such rough treatment. Besides, *mine error remaineth with myself*; if what I hold concerning God's dispensations be wrong, I only am chargeable with it, and answerable for it: or rather I must remain

in what you call an error, receiving not the least conviction from your discourses. *Note;* (1.) It were the height of folly to conceit ourselves infallible. (2.) Truth is not the less precious, because proud and worldly-wise men stamp it with the brand of error.

3. He warns them not rashly to impute to God motives for his conduct that he would disavow. His sufferings were from his hand alone; he was compassed with God's net of afflictions. He cried out for judgment against his plunderers, but was not yet heard: yea, though he cried aloud, and wished that the whole of his case might appear before God, no court was appointed for hearing it, nor judgment given. But God knew wherefore he withheld the answer to his prayer, without admitting their conclusion that he was a wicked man. *Note;* (1.) Though our prayers may seem to be repulsed, we must not faint. (2.) Sooner or later every man's cause will be heard, and the righteous sentence be passed thereon.

2dly, Job acknowledged the hand of God in his afflictions; and here,

1. Complains of the displeasure of God therein manifested. Like a benighted traveller in a wood, with briars and thorns God had hedged up his way, and he could see no path out of his troubles. As one seized by robbers, he had lost his all; stripped of his earthly comforts, children, honours, and estate; destroyed on every side, his hope was gone, as a tree rooted up and dry, which never can revive again: but, more bitter than any thing beside, God's wrath appeared kindled against him, and he seemed to treat him as an enemy, compassing him with legions of afflictions, and sore pressing him on every side, like a besieged city. *Note;* (1.) Many pious people are apt to write bitter things against themselves, and to mistake the rod of love for the scourge of ruin. (2.) Hope is the last support of the miserable; when that is gone, the case is deplorable indeed. (3.) Though we may see no way to escape out of temptation, he who laid the trial upon us knows how to bring us through it with safety.

2. He laments the unkindness of his friends and acquaintance, wherein also he sees God's afflicting hand, *His brethren he had put far from him.* It was their sin that they were so faithless to him, but God suffered them. His relations failed him, his acquaintance shunned him, his familiar friends forsook him; his very domestics slighted him, and would not vouchsafe him an answer, though he called and intreated: the wife of his bosom cared not to come near him, and shunned his breath as if infectious; and, though he besought her by every endearing tie of conjugal affection, she paid no regard to his intreaty. Even the children in the streets had learned of their ungodly parents to mock at him; and as he went, or arose, to correct and silence them, they continued to revile him; nay, his bosom-friends, whom he loved as his own soul, not only forsook but abhorred him; not only as loathsome but as a wicked hypocrite; and, to justify their own perfidy, turned against him with the most virulent abuse. *Note;* (1.) They who are under  
frowning

## C H A P. XX.

*Zophar sets forth at large the state and portion of the wicked.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**T**HEN answered Zophar the Naamathite, and said,

2 Therefore do my thoughts cause me to answer, and for *this* I make haste.

3 I have heard the check of my reproach, and the spirit of my understanding causeth me to answer.

frowning Providences will often see cause of complaint against man's baseness and ingratitude. (2.) The nearer the relation, the greater our love, and just expectations of due return, the bitterer will be the disappointment.

3. He bemoans the painful and diseased condition of his miserable body, reduced and emaciated by his sores and sorrows, till his bones appeared ready to start through his skin, and that all over ulcerated, except his gums or lips; Satan probably leaving him the use of speech, not out of compassion, but that he might curse God.

4. He intreats, on this representation of his case, the pity of his friends: if they would grant him nothing more, his very miseries deserved pity at least: and he upbraids them with the savage cruelty of thus persecuting him whom God had smitten, as if in his stead, and vested with his authority, not content with all the miseries that he had already suffered, and striving to fill to the brim the cup of his afflictions. *Note;* (1.) The least that we owe to human woe is pity; a friend will do more, he will partake in it, and labour to remove, or alleviate, the sorrows of the afflicted. (2.) It is doubly grievous where God hath wounded, instead of binding up the broken-hearted, to aggravate their pains.

3dly, We have here the glorious confession of Job's faith, as his great and only support, when all beside seemed desperate. His friends might be convinced hereby that he was neither infidel nor wicked; he believed in a Divine Redeemer, and expected with confidence a judgment-day; when, if not before, all their unjust accusations would be confuted and confounded: and this is, to all the pious who are unjustly aspersed by calumny, and oppressed by the world, a most encouraging expectation. Some have explained away this remarkable scripture, as relative only to a temporal restitution; but it is evident from ver. 10. that this he utterly despaired of; and from chap. xxiii. 8, 9. xxx. 23. it appears that he had not the least hope of prosperity returning in this world; and therefore he looked beyond the grave into a better, where his soul had cast anchor within the veil.

1. He prefaces his expectation with an earnest wish, that the words he was now about to say might be perpetuated to all ages, as a standing monument of his faith and hope, graven in the rock with an iron pen, and filled up with lead: perhaps, he wished that this inscription might be written on his tomb-stone, to testify, when he was dead, the sentiments which he entertained when alive. *Note;* It is for the glory of God, and the good of posterity, to leave behind us testimonies of our faith and hope; that in their works and writings, good men, like Job and Abel, (though dead) might still speak.

2. His confession deserves to be written, not merely in letters of lead on the rock, but on tables of gold, or rather on the fleshly tables of our hearts, for ever. *For, or namely,* this is what I would have inscribed on the rock, *I know*

*that my Redeemer liveth, my divine Goel, to whom the right of redemption belongs; he lives from everlasting to everlasting; and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth, when he appears incarnate for his people's salvation; or rather above the earth, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven to judgment, with power and great glory, and all nations shall be assembled before him to receive their final doom: and though after my skin, worms destroy this body in the grave, and corruption consume this mortal tabernacle, yet in my flesh shall I see God. In the resurrection-day, when rescued from the dust my flesh shall be restored, with my bodily eyes shall I behold God manifest in the person of my Redeemer, whom I shall see for myself, with joy unutterable; and mine eyes, these eyes now dim with tears, shall behold his glory, and not another, or a stranger; an ungodly man shall have no such delight or comfort in meeting him. Though my reins, (or better without the thought) my reins be consumed within me; my soul is consumed with eager longing for this day of my Redeemer's appearance and glory. Note;* (1.) The faith in a Redeemer was the only support of the faints of God in every age. (2.) The Lord Jesus hath offered himself to redeem for fallen man God's forfeited favour, and the heavenly inheritance; and in him our right to both is restored. (3.) A comfortable certainty of his interest in the Redeemer's regard is every believer's privilege: he may say, *He is mine*, and add, *I know it*, by blessed and delightful experience. (4.) The hope of a judgment-day is the support of God's suffering faints. (5.) Though our bodies return to the dust, they are not lost in the grave, but preserved against the resurrection-day. (6.) In the vision of the ever-blessed God consists the glorious happiness of the redeemed. (7.) Every day which brings us nearer to our last day, our desires should be more enlarged, and our longings for it more eager, while we cease not to pray, *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.*

3. He intimates the effect that his declaration should have upon them. Instead of using him as they did, they should rather say, *Why persecute we him, seeing the root of the matter is found in him?* He is found in the faith, and appears to be no hypocrite. At least, they ought to tremble for the consequences, if they persevered in using him ill. *Be ye afraid of the sword of divine justice, for wrath bringeth the punishments of the sword; an offended God will draw it from the scabbard, that ye may know there is a judgment; and woe unto you if he set his face against you. Note;* (1.) If a man have the root of the matter in him, and is found in fundamentals, lesser differences should be overlooked. (2.) All persecution for conscience sake is detestable; and how especially guilty must it be to oppress those who hold one faith, one hope, one God, one Redeemer with us, merely because they will not square every opinion to our own, or, however weak their objections, dislike our form of worship, dress, or ceremonies. (3.) In a day of judgment,



4 Knowest thou *not* this of old, since man was placed upon earth,

5 That the triumphing of the wicked is

short, and the joy of the hypocrite *but* for a moment?

6 Though his excellency mount up to

judgment, bigotry and censoriousness towards our brethren will be remembered; and if it destroy not our hope, it will tarnish our crown.

C H A P. XX.

*Ver. 2. Therefore do my thoughts]* Verily the emotions of my thoughts cause me to reply, even because there is some sensibility in me. This translation is agreeable to the Hebrew, and throws much light on the passage. Zophar means, that, as he had some modesty left, he could not bear to have so much reproach thrown on him without notice. Perhaps, too, he intends a reflection on Job, as if he was deficient in that virtue. Thus this adversary of Job, who, as we have before observed, seems to have been of the most violent temper of the three, instead of being convinced by his appeal in the foregoing chapter, immediately turns the argument upon him; as if he had said, "Since you have mentioned the future judgment, give me leave to put you in mind of what history informs us from the beginning of the world, that the triumphing of the wicked is but short, and the joy of the hypocrite (the sycophant, or false accuser) only for a moment; ver. 5. short, in respect of that swift destruction, which sometimes befalls them here; but shorter still, compared with that futurity which we all expect:" for he seems to have an eye to both in this speech. The words of the 4th verse seem plainly to refer to the history of the first man, whose joy was short indeed, for he was judged and sentenced soon after he had sinned. But the following part of the speech gives us, I think, a very lively description of the effect which the consideration of a future judgment usually has upon the minds of wicked men; filling them with the greatest horrors in the midst of their enjoyments. Though it may not always restrain men from oppression, yet it makes their children seek to please the poor, by restoring to them that whereof their fathers had unjustly spoiled them: nay, sometimes the wicked wretch himself shall be so touched in conscience, that his own hand shall restore what he had taken; ver. 10. *His children shall seek,* &c. He goes on in nearly the same strain to the end of the chapter; from a review of which we see that this speech of Zophar does not describe the punishment of the wicked to be just such a state as Job then laboured under, as some would have us think, meaning a state of outward calamity. Some strokes of this kind, indeed, appear to be mixed with it: but what he chiefly labours to describe is, a state of inward terror and perplexity, arising from a sense of guilt, and the apprehension of that future judgment which Job had mentioned in the conclusion of his speech. In short, he takes occasion from the mention of it to describe, with all the force of his eloquence, the anxiety and distraction which the thoughts of it do sometimes create in the bosom of a wicked man; and, as he still suspected Job for such, he tries, by this tragical description, if it were yet possible, to scare him into a confession. So that they who imagine that Job's friends in their following speeches take no notice of his famous protestation in the last chapter,

seem quite to have overlooked the plain drift of this speech of Zophar, which contains a very elegant description of the restless state of wicked men, and their inward horrors and anguish arising from this very persuasion of a future judgment. See Heath and Peters.

*Ver. 3. I have heard the check of my reproach]* I hear the ignominious reproof which is aimed at me; and the spirit within me causeth me to answer. Heath.

*Ver. 4—7. Knowest thou not, &c.]* The latter clause of ver. 4. might as well have been rendered, *Since Adam was placed on the earth.* There is no reason to doubt but that this passage refers to the fall, and the first sin of man; the date agrees; for the knowledge here taught is said to arise from facts as old as the first placing man upon earth: the sudden punishment of the iniquity corresponds to the Mosaic account; *the triumphing of the wicked is short, his joy but for a moment.* Above all, the nature of the crime, and of the punishment here described, are strong presumptions on this side: Adam's ambition was, *to be like God,* and he had the tempter's word to assure him that he should be so: how aptly is this ambition described in the passage before us: *Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds!* that is, as the Syriac and Arabic versions render the verse, "Though in his pride he ascend up to heaven, yet shall he perish for ever." Adam's punishment was death: *To dust shalt thou return.* The punishment, as described in this book, is, *He shall perish for ever:* but how, or in what manner? Why, *like his own dung;* i. e. by returning to earth again. That the Chaldee paraphrast understood this whole passage to relate to the fall, seems evident by his expression in the 4th verse, where he takes notice of the *accuser* or tempter, as well as of the offenders: *Gaudium impij sinitur cito, et latitia delatoris ad momentum; the joy of the impious finishes quickly; and the gladness of the accuser at the moment.* What *delator,* or *accuser,* do we read of at the time of Adam's being placed upon the earth, except the tempter? to whom the name of the *adversary,* or *accuser,* was afterwards appropriated; and it is the character, in this very book, of the spirit permitted to plague and torment Job: which is one evidence, by the bye, that the paraphrast understood the same person to have been concerned in both cases, in the tempting of Adam, and in the tormenting of Job. Our own version, the Vulgate, and Montanus's, agree in one sense; *the joy of the HYPOCRITE is but for a moment:* but who is this *hypocrite,* appearing at the very first placing upon earth? It was neither Eve nor Adam: they were bold and hardy, and distrustful of God, but shewed no guile or hypocrisy in the whole transaction. But the tempter's part was all *hypocrisy:* he shewed great concern for the prosperity of those whom he meant to destroy, and well deserves *this character;* and the Chaldee paraphrast has reason for fixing it upon him. See Bishop Sherlock's Use and Intent of Prophecy, Dissert. ii. p. 209.

*Ver. 6. Though his excellency]* His great honour; the Syriac. *His pride.* Houbigant.

*Ver.*



the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds;

7 Yet he shall perish for ever like his own dung: they which have seen him shall say, Where is he?

8 He shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found: yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night.

9 The eye also which saw him shall see him no more; neither shall his place any more behold him.

10 His children shall seek to please the poor, and his hands shall restore their goods.

11 His bones are full of the sin of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust.

12 Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue;

13 Though he spare it, and forsake it not; but keep it still within his mouth:

14 Yet his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him:

15 He hath swallowed down riches, and he shall vomit them up again: God shall cast them out of his belly.

16 He shall suck the poison of asps: the viper's tongue shall slay him.

17 He shall not see the rivers, the floods, the brooks of honey and butter.

18 That which he laboured for shall he restore, and shall not swallow it down; according to his substance shall the restitution be, and he shall not rejoice therein.

19 Because he hath oppressed, and hath forsaken the poor; because he hath violently taken away an house which he builded not;

20 Surely he shall not feel quietness in his belly; he shall not save of that which he desired.

21 There shall none of his meat be left; therefore shall no man look for his goods.

22 In the fulness of his sufficiency he shall be in straits: every hand of the wicked shall come upon him.

23 When he is about to fill his belly, God shall cast the fury of his wrath upon him, and shall rain it upon him while he is eating.

24 He shall flee from the iron weapon, and the bow of steel shall strike him through.

25 It is drawn, and cometh out of the body; yea the glittering sword cometh out of his gall: terrors are upon him.

26 All darkness shall be hid in his secret

Ver. 10. His children, &c.] Houbigant gives this verse a different turn from that proposed in the note on the 2d verse. He renders it; His children shall wander about in poverty: for his hands, &c. See Psalm xciv. 23.

Ver. 11. His bones are full of the sin of his youth.] The expression seems directly to allert that there is a punishment attending the wicked in a future state. His bones are full of the sin of his youth, or his secret sin, which shall lie down with him in the dust. There is a parallel expression, Ezek. xxxii. 27. of mighty warriors buried with great military pomp, and with their swords laid under their heads; but their iniquities shall be upon their bones, though they were the terror of the mighty in the land of the living. This passage puts me in mind of a contrary expression used by the prophet Isaiah, where he describes the happy state of the righteous at the resurrection; their hearts, says he, shall rejoice, and their bones shall flourish like an herb. Isai. lxxvi. 14. It was probably from hence that the author of the book of Ecclesiasticus borrowed his expression, chap. xlix. 10. Of the twelve prophets let the memorial be blessed, and let their bones flourish again out of their place; i. e. may they obtain a joyful resurrection. Peters.

Ver. 17. He shall not see the rivers, the floods, &c.] That is, he shall not see them with any pleasure. The most delightful things of this world, and the greatest affluence and plenty of them, shall afford him no enjoyment. Bishop Warburton thinks this to be a proverbial speech,

taken from the descriptions of the Holy Land, as a land flowing with milk and honey; but I think that proverbial speeches are usually conveyed in the same forms of words, and here is a great variation in the expression; for there is but one word the same, namely, שׁוֹבֵב *debaush*, honey: moreover, supposing *to flow with milk and honey*, or *rivers of honey and butter*, were proverbial expressions, to denote a fertile land, yet it might be used (for any thing which appears to the contrary) in Job's time and country before ever Moses wrote. Milk and honey were such delicacies with the ancients, that Pindar, who had none of the lowest opinion of his own performances, compares his song to them for its sweetness:

"Hail, friend! I send to thee this honey mix'd  
"With whitest milk." —

Μεθυμένον μετὰ γάλακτος  
Σὺν ἁλιμακτί.

Nem. γ.

See Peters.

Ver. 18. That which he laboured for, shall be restore.] He shall restore what he gained by his labour, and shall not consume it. His merchandize was abundant, but he shall not enjoy it. Houbigant.

Ver. 22. Every hand of the wicked, &c.] All kind of misery, &c.

Ver. 26. All darkness shall be hid in his secret place.] All manner of calamity is laid up in store for him: an unquenchable fire

places : a fire not blown shall consume him ; it shall go ill with him that is left in his tabernacle.

27 The heaven shall reveal his iniquity ; and the earth shall rise up against him.

28 The increase of his house shall depart,

and his goods shall flow away in the day of his wrath.

29 This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto him by God.

*fire shall consume him* : it shall devour all that remaineth in his stead. Heath ; see Joel ii. 3. Houbigant renders it ; *Every secret thing which lay hid in his treasures, though no one bloweth it, a fire shall devour. If any one remaineth in his tent, it shall go ill with him.* The beautiful images of the *store-houses*, or *magazines*, wherein are reserved distress and calamity for the wicked, is again repeated ; ch. p. xxxviii. 22, 23.

*Ver. 28. The increase of his house*] *The revenue of his house shall be taken away : in the day of wrath which abideth him, it shall be cut off.* Houbigant. Heath renders it, *the abundance of his house shall roll away like the torrents, in the day of his fury.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Zophar in haste rises to vindicate himself and his friends from the unjust aspersions, as he imagined, of cruelty and persecution, which Job cast upon them. Big with matter, his thoughts swelled in his bosom, and forced a vent at his lips. He interprets what he had heard as a high provocation ; and, confident that reason was on their side, and solid understanding only with them, he speaks as under the influence of the spirit of wisdom, and therefore demands attention. *Note* ; (1.) They who are most confident are seldom most in the right. (2.) Prejudice and pride make men interpret the kindest warning into an affront, and return it with insolence. (3.) The dictates of passion often pass for the voice of reason ; so partial is every man apt to be in his own cause.

2dly, He here opens his argument. The destruction of the wicked is speedy and certain ; and therefore, from Job's afflictions, this character must needs belong to him. He appeals to all antiquity, in proof of the doctrine that he was about to advance. Since the day when *man was placed on the earth*, the misery of the wicked had been uniform and perpetual ; witness Cain, the flood, the destruction of Sodom, &c. The triumphing of the wicked was ever short, and the hypocrite's joy momentary. Whether their character was abandoned wickedness or hypocritical profession, avowed irreligion or the form of godliness without the power of it, their damnation slumbered not. Though for a while, indeed, iniquity might be triumphant, and hypocrisy undetected, yet ruin final and eternal awaited them. Their prosperity shall be passing as the dream, unsubstantial as the forms of fancy in the visions of the night, and they shall be loathsome to the last degree. With surprise they who passed by them in their exaltation shall, at their return, enquire what is become of all their greatness, now buried with them in the grave, where no eye shall any more behold them. *Note* ; (1.) However long a wicked man's prosperity, or a hypocrite's profession, lasts in this world, it may well be counted short and momentary, compared with the eternity which

approaches. (2.) Sin and ruin, though not always in this life, shall, in the next, appear certainly inseparable. (3.) They who lift their heads to the clouds in sinful prosperity, or proud self-righteousness, only thus mount, in order to fall deeper into the pit of destruction, where, of all others, the hypocrite's portion will be the most terrible. See Mat. xxiv. 51.

3dly, In a variety of instances Zophar expatiates on the misery of the wicked in this world. *His children shall seek to please the poor, or, being poor, shall please.* Men will take pleasure to see them reduced, and the ill-gotten gain vanish, which by force their father shall be compelled to restore. Full of the sins of youth, his bones shall be rotten with diseases, and they shall not only bring him to the grave, but the curse of sin shall for ever rest upon him, dead as alive. Sweet as the draughts were of pleasurable iniquity, and delightful as was the indulgence of his appetites ; cherished as his lusts were in his bosom, and concealed to save his character and credit among men, yet shall those acts of sin, which seemed so sweet in the prospect, and so transporting in the enjoyment, afterwards breed loathing ; and pangs within shall succeed, bitter as gall to the conscience, and poisonous to the soul as the venom of the asp. The fruits of his insatiate covetousness, which he swallowed as a hungry man his food, he shall disgorge, either by his own terrified conscience compelling him to restitution, or by God's Providence restoring to the right owner the spoils of wickedness. Disease fatal as the poison of asps, and painful as the viper's bite, shall seize him, as the just wages of his iniquity. His affluence, in which he once gloried, and for which he laboured so long and unweariedly, shall fail him, like the streams of a brook dried up. When every one has got his own, nothing shall be left to comfort him. Because of his oppression he shall carry about with him a tormented conscience, and shall not save the smallest portion of his desirable acquisitions. He shall be reduced to pining hunger, and not the least pittance be left for his heirs : so universal shall be his desolations. *Note* ; (1.) Youthful sins, however lightly accounted of, have terrible consequences. (2.) God often makes men's iniquities their present plague ; and disease, deformity, pain, contempt, and loathing, are seen in this world to be the wages of sin. (3.) The sweetest sins produce the most bitter remembrances, both now in the pangs of conscience, and hereafter in hell, where the worm never dies. (4.) They dearly purchase present pleasure and greatness, who, for the sake of these, expose themselves to everlasting pain and contempt. (5.) The gains of covetousness and oppression are often short-lived : what is gotten by wickedness is very frequently squandered in profusion.

4thly, We have the wicked man brought to his final exit.

C H A P. XXI.

*Job observes, that the wicked sometimes live happily, and sometimes their destruction is manifest; yet, though some lead a prosperous, and others an afflicted life, all are cut off alike by death: whence it clearly follows, that the wicked are reserved to a day of wrath.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**B**UT Job answered and said,  
2 Hear diligently my speech, and let

In the midst of his sufficiency and abundance, the fears of want shall make him poor, and prevent him from the use of what he has; or his destruction shall then suddenly descend upon him, and the wicked shall spoil him, as the Chaldeans had done to Job. While the meat is yet in his mouth, and he is in the mid-pursuit of his lusts and covetousness, the wrath of an offended God, furious as the whirlwind, shall be hurled upon him, to crush him under the intolerable weight; and miseries, like a deluge of rain, shall beat upon him. When God pursues, flight will be vain: judgment upon judgment, terrible to feel, as unavoidable to escape, shall light upon him; the barbed arrow pierces him, the glittering sword strikes him through the liver; mortally wounded he falls; the terrors of death seize him, convulsive agonies of body, tormenting pangs of conscience; horrible the present anguish, but more intolerable the fears of futurity. Darkness utter and eternal awaits him, reserved for him among God's treasures of vengeance; the fire of hell unquenchable, which God himself hath kindled, shall consume him. Misery and ruin shall be entailed upon his posterity: his sins, however secret, shall be brought to light; or judgments immediately from God, as the burning of Sodom, shall proclaim his atrocious guilt, and all the powers of nature appear armed against him in God's quarrel. In this day of wrath his desolations shall be accomplished; and all that he hath shall finally perish with him. Such is the portion of the wicked man. *Note;* (1.) The wrath of God assuredly abides on the most joyous sinner, and he will shortly make him feel its fury. (2.) How terrible will be the hypocrite's disappointment who lies down dreaming of happiness, and awakes in hell! (3.) There is no escaping from God's pursuit: they who will not flee to him for mercy cannot fly from him in judgment. (4.) If wicked men would but consider their latter end, it would give a check to their revels, and awaken some salutary concern about escaping the wrath to come. (5.) The most secret sins cannot be long concealed; a judgment-day will unveil every man's heart and ways. (6.) The portion of the wicked is this certain, terrible, inevitable ruin; if not in time, yet, what is infinitely worse, in eternity.

The discourse of Zophar thus affords awakening truths; and though, as levelled against Job, it was grossly misapplied, yet it may minister abundant instruction, when considered as a warning against the ways and miserable end of the ungodly and the hypocrite.

C H A P. XXI.

*Ver. 1. But Job answered and said]* It has been urged, and thought strange, that Job should never resume the

this be your consolations.

3 Suffer me that I may speak; and after that I have spoken, mock on.

4 As for me, is my complaint to man? and if it were so, why should not my spirit be troubled?

5 Mark me, and be astonished, and lay your hand upon your mouth.

argument of a resurrection, which was so full of piety and conviction; but, when resuming the dispute with his friends, should stick to the argument that he first set out with. Now supposing it to be true, that Job never mentions the resurrection in his following speeches, nor any thing alluding to it, (which, whether it be true or not, we shall see in the course of our observations,) yet a very sufficient reason may be assigned for it: for, if one such appeal as this, made in the most solemn manner, would not convince them of his integrity, I suppose he had reason to think that it would be much the same if he had repeated it a second and a third time; and therefore he had no other resource left, than to follow the argument with which he had begun; i. e. to combat the false principle upon which they were so forward to condemn him: and this he does effectually throughout the present chapter, by shewing, that many wicked men live long and prosperous, and at last die in peace, and are buried with great pomp; which shews that this life is not the proper state of retribution, but that men shall be judged and recompensed hereafter. See Peters.

*Ver. 2. And let this be your consolations]* And let this be the consolation you administer. Heath. Schultens renders it, *And this shall be for your consolations.* "What I have to say, is in return for these wonderful consolations that you bring me;" understanding the passage ironically, which very well agrees with the next verse, the last clause whereof he renders, *And after I have pleaded my cause, let it be your mockery.*

*Ver. 4. And if it were so]* But, if it is not so, what cause is there why I should be troubled in mind? Houbigant.

*Ver. 5—15. Mark me, and be astonished, &c.]* The coldest reader cannot be insensible of the beauties of the poetry in this speech of Job. We will not, therefore, attempt to point them out, but attend to the thread of reasoning. As Job well knew that the account he was about to give of the prosperity of wicked men, however necessary to his argument, would have something shocking in it to the ears of those to whom it was addressed; the delicacy with which he introduces it is inimitable: *Mark me, &c.—wherefore do the wicked live, (ver. 7.)—become old, yea, are mighty in power?* As if he had said, "That thus it is, in fact, is plain: with awe and reverence I speak it; but, as for you, I am persuaded that you will never be able, upon your principles, to account for it." The description which follows, of a prosperous estate, is such as might indeed justly create envy, were a wicked man in any estate to be envied; for we have here the chief ingredients of human happiness, as it respects this life, brought together, and described in terms exactly suiting the simplicity

6 Even when I remember I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold on my flesh.

7 Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power?

8 Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes.

9 Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them.

10 Their bull gendereth, and faileth not; their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf.

11 They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance.

12 They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ.

13 They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave.

14 Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.

15 What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? and what profit should we have if we pray unto him?

16 Lo, their good is not in their hand: the counsel of the wicked is far from me.

17 How oft is the candle of the wicked put

plicity of manners, and the way of living in Job's time and country: as, first, security and safety to themselves and families; ver. 9. *Their houses are safe from fear*,—of the incursions of robbers, we may suppose, or the depredations of the neighbouring clans, so usual in those ancient times, and of which Job had felt the mischievous effects: next, health, or a freedom from diseases, called, in the language of that age, the *rod of God*. See 1 Sam. xxvi. 10. To this is added plenty of cattle, the riches of those times; ver. 10. Next comes a numerous and hopeful offspring; and what a rural picture has he drawn of them! ver. 11. *They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance*: one sees them, as it were, tripping upon the green, with the flush of health and joy in their looks: *They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ*; ver. 12. Lastly, and to crown all, after a prosperous and pleasant life, comes an easy death: *They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment go down to the grave*; according to Schultens, their days pass on in a continual flow of prosperity, till they drop into the grave without a groan. As every thing in this divine poem is wonderful, there is scarcely any thing more to be admired in it, than the variety of descriptions that are given us of human life, in its most exalted prosperity on the one hand, and its deepest distresses on the other; for this is what their subject leads them to enlarge upon on both sides; with this only difference, that the three friends were for limiting prosperity to the good, whereas Job insists upon a mixed distribution of things from the hand of Providence; but as all of them, in almost every speech, enlarge upon one or other of these topics, the variety of imagery and colouring in which they paint to us these different estates, all drawn from nature, and suiting the simplicity of those ancient times, is inexpressibly amusing and entertaining: then, the religious cast thrown over them, considered as the dispensations of Providence, that we can receive neither good nor evil, but from God, the Judge of all, a point acknowledged on both hands, is what renders these descriptions interesting and affecting to us in the highest degree; and the whole, if well considered, affords no contemptible argument of the antiquity of the book. See Peters, and the next note. Mr. Heath renders the 8th verse, *Their power is established on a firm footing; their people are in their presence, and their offspring before their eyes*.

Ver. 16—26. *Lo, their good is not in their hand*] After the foregoing elegant description of the prosperity of some wicked men, Job proceeds, on the other hand, to consider what was likewise apparent in the ways of Providence, that some of them were as remarkably distinguished by their wretchedness, being exposed to the most dreadful evils and calamities. He knew that, while he had been recounting the prosperity of the wicked, he had touched upon a tender point, to which his adversaries would be apt enough to give a wrong turn, as if he had been thereby pleading the cause of iniquity; and therefore he adds an apology for himself in the 16th verse, which is to this purpose: "I would not have you think, because I say the wicked sometimes prosper, that therefore I believe their prosperity to be owing to themselves, or *in their hand*, i. e. in their power; (the expression answers exactly to the Latin word *proprius*, as used by Terence for a thing to be truly a man's own, or in his power, as that he need not fear a change; and, therefore, the commentators explain it by *perpetual*;) God forbid that I should give such countenance to impiety! no; though they may thus presumptuously imagine with themselves, I am not of their opinion, nor yet of their society; *the counsel of the wicked is far from me*: I know that all the happiness which they can boast is merely by the will and favourance of Almighty God, and that sometimes He is pleased to make them terrible examples of his justice. For instance, (ver. 17.) *How often, &c.*"—to the 21st verse. It is strange to observe how some learned men have been perplexed in explaining these verses, for want of attending closely to the design of Job. The whole is nothing but a concession to his adversaries, that wicked men are sometimes thus severely punished, as they in their speeches had been fond of representing: but then he had before shewn, that they were sometimes as remarkably prosperous; and this made way for a third particular, which is, indeed, his general assertion all along, and the medium by which he endeavoured to convince them of the rashness of their censures and suspicions of him; namely, that things are dealt out here promiscuously, and without any strict regard to merit and demerit. As he had introduced the foregoing particular by an easy transition at ver. 16. so he does this by another as easy and natural at ver. 22. *Shall any teach God knowledge, seeing he judgeth those who are high? As if he had*

out? and *how oft* cometh their destruction upon them? *God* distributeth sorrows in his anger.

18 They are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away.

19 God layeth up his iniquity for his children: he rewardeth him, and he shall know *it*.

20 His eyes shall see his destruction, and he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty.

21 For what pleasure *hath* he in his house after him, when the number of his months is cut off in the midst?

22 Shall *any* teach God knowledge; seeing he judgeth those that are high.

23 One dieth in his full strength, being wholly at ease and quiet.

24 His breasts are full of milk, and his bones are moistened with marrow.

25 And another dieth in the bitterness of his soul, and never eateth with pleasure.

26 They shall lie down alike in the dust, and the worms shall cover them.

27 Behold, I know your thoughts, and the devices *which* ye wrongfully imagine against me.

had said, "You see then the method of God's providence, from what appears in part; and will you presume to censure or correct it? Will you say, 'He ought to take another method,' and prescribe laws to the Great Judge of the world? It is evident that the common observation is true, that good and evil are dispensed by Him, for the most part, without any exact regard to the good or ill deserts of persons; and this during the whole period of human life, from the cradle to the grave; for, ver. 23. *One dieth in his full strength, &c.* to ver. 26." Now one would think that the inference from all this could scarcely be missed either by Job or his friends, if we will allow them to reason at all; especially since, as Maimonides himself tells us, they all agree in these two undisputed points, that God sees and orders all things, and that there can be no iniquity with Him. If then the present irregular course of things be such as cannot possibly be reconciled with the equity of the Divine Nature, supposing this life to be the whole extent of our being, the consequence seems clear, that there must be some other state to be expected wherein these irregularities shall be fully adjusted. Had Job been silent as to this conclusion, the premises themselves would have enforced it; but, indeed, it is what himself expressly asserts in the following part of the chapter; namely, that these prosperous wicked men, who experience so much good at the hand of God, and in return disclaim, and even defy, their benefactor, and who yet, with all their impiety, are permitted to live and die like other men, shall receive a dreadful recompence in the day of future judgment; ver. 30. See Peters, and the following note. Houbigant renders the 24th verse, *When his bowels are laden with fatness, when his bones, &c.*

Ver. 27 - 34. *Behold, I know your thoughts*] By the *day of destruction*, and the *day of wrath*, mentioned in the 30th verse, I believe it will appear, from the context, can be meant no other than the future day of judgment; which, to the wicked and ungodly, is every where represented in Scripture as a day of wrath, a day of destruction and perdition. See 2 Theff. i. 9. 2 Pet. iii. 7. And it is remarkable, that Job, when he declares to his friends that he had been all along withheld from sinning by a pious awe of the Divine Justice, (meaning, as I apprehend, the thoughts of a future judgment) uses a like expression, chap. xxxi. 23.

*Destruction from God was a terror to me; 718. aid*, the very same word as is used here. To understand it of a temporal destruction, is to suppose Job to cut the neck of his own argument, and to fall in directly with the reasoning of his friends; for thus it would stand, (ver. 27.) *Behold, I know your thoughts, and the devices which you wrongfully imagine against me; i. e.* "I know what you would insinuate, by the speeches which you make; such as this which follows: (ver. 28.) *Where is the house of the prince, and where are the dwelling-places of the wicked?* As if you should say, What is become of the house of Job, who lived like a prince? or, what, in general, is the portion of the wicked? Does not a great and sure destruction overtake them?" This is evidently the meaning of the question: the answer follows immediately, ver. 29. *Ask those who go by the way, and do ye not know their tokens? that the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction, &c.*" Now, if this were meant of a temporal destruction, it directly confirms the insinuation of the friends, and the inference would be unavoidable; therefore Job must needs be wicked. The sense I contend for must, therefore, be the true one; in confirmation whereof I will shew how aptly it agrees with the context, and with Job's design in this speech. The great difficulty of the passage lies at the 29th verse; and commentators have been at a loss to give a satisfactory account, why the *travellers, those who go by the way*, should be consulted about the question here proposed, and what are the marks or *tokens* here referred to. The true key to it seems to be this: it was the custom of the ancients to bury near the high roads, in the most public and conspicuous places, and to erect a pillar or monument over the dead to preserve their memory. These pillars, if they had any inscription at all upon them, recorded, no doubt, the name and titles of the person, and, perhaps, some of the happiest circumstances of his life. Moreover, these inscriptions usually addressed the traveller with a *Siste, viator; Stop, traveller*, or to that purpose. These then, I apprehend, are the *marks or tokens* to which Job directs his friends, and which he would have them either to consult themselves, or to ask the travellers about; whence they would be naturally led to make the inference in the next verse. For, as they might observe several monuments among the rest, erected for such as had been notoriously wicked in their lives, yet had

28 For ye say, Where is the house of the prince? and where are the dwelling-places of the wicked?

29 Have ye not asked them that go by the way? and do ye not know their tokens,

30 That the wicked is reserved to the day

of destruction? they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath.

31 Who shall declare his way to his face? and who shall repay him *what* he hath done:

32 Yet shall he be brought to the grave, and shall remain in the tomb.

had run out a long course of prosperity, and been buried at last with great pomp; it was with reason he bids them infer from hence, that the punishment for such as these was reserved to a more solemn season, which was the proper time of retribution, and not the mixed uncertain state of this life: "Ask the traveller (says he,) who goes by the highway, or consult the tombs and monuments there; and from thence you may learn this important lesson, That *the wicked is reserved to a future day of judgment; they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath: reserved in the grave, and in שְׂאוֹל sheol, as in a prison, from whence they shall be brought forth like criminals, to receive their sentence, or be drawn to execution.*" The very terms plainly lead us to this sense. See Isa. liii. 7. and the note on chap. xix. 24. Job pursues the same way of reasoning in the following part of his speech, and shews that the wicked mighty man is so far from being punished in this world, that he does what he pleases without any to controul him, or so much as to open their lips against him, ver. 31. That, nevertheless, such a one shall at last go down to the grave in peace, and be buried with great pomp, ver. 32. The Hebrew is emphatical, *Even he shall be brought to the grave, and over the tomb he shall watch;* i. e. in his statue or effigy: "A stately monument (says Bishop Patrick) shall be raised to preserve his memory, and represent him as if he were still living." It follows, ver. 33. *The clods of the valley shall be sweet unto him; and every man shall draw after him, as there are innumerable before him;* i. e. according to Bishop Patrick's paraphrase, "There he lies quietly in the earth, and none disturb his ashes: he suffers nothing but what all men shall do after him, as innumerable have done before him." See then (continues he, in the 34th verse) how ill you discharge the office of comforters, whose answers have so little truth in them; for you maintain that prosperity is the inseparable companion of piety; when every body can tell you, that none flourish more than the wicked, and that calamities are common to all mankind." Thus this passage, clearly and satisfactorily explained, affords us another plain testimony of Job's belief of a future judgment, and another state of life. See Peters, p. 241. Houbigant renders the 33d verse, *He shall suck the turf of the valley; and after him all men shall be drawn, as innumerable have been before him.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Before Job enters on the point in hand, he begs,

1. An attentive hearing, and that pride and prejudice might not reject the conviction of the truths which he urged. *Hear diligently my speech,* as those who desire simply to investigate the truth, and wish, if mistaken, to be undeceived; and let this be your consolation; you will yourselves find the comfort of having used all proper means of

coming to the knowledge of the truth; or this is all the consolation I expect from you, a fair and candid hearing. *Suffer me that I may speak,* without interruption, and after that I have spoken, *mock on,* continue to insult me, if this be your resolution in spite of all my arguments. *Note;* A patient hearing, at least, is due to every man. It is high injustice to condemn without permitting the accused to speak in their own defence.

2. It was not to them that he at first complained, nor would they be his judges, and therefore they need not have taken up the matter so hardly against him. *Is my complaint to man?* no; but to God, who knew the bitterness of his sufferings, and from whom alone he could hope for redress; and if it were so, why should not my spirit be troubled? when all his prayers and tears had yet met no relief, but rather provoked the rash censures of his friends, who condemned him for hypocrisy. *Note;* If God were not kinder to us than our dearest friends, we should sometimes have hard measure.

3. He bids them behold his case; and surely it deserved their pity. *Mark me,* my words, my sufferings, and be astonished at the strangeness of my afflictions; and lay your hand upon your mouth, pretend not to fathom the ways of God's unsearchable providence, and forbear to judge of men's characters by their outward lot in this world. *Even when I remember the days that are past, the afflictions that had befallen himself, or the instances of the prosperity of the wicked that he was about to mention, I am afraid, and trembling taketh hold on my flesh.* What I feel, though it shakes not my confidence or my integrity, yet it greatly distresses me; and what I see of the ways of God's providence with the wicked, astonishes me. I wonder and adore, waiting in affecting suspense the awful issue. *Note;* (1.) There are mysterious dispensations of Providence, which sometimes stagger the faith and hope of good men. (2.) We must wait till the great day of God for the final vindication of his ways to man.

2dly, Job's friends had insisted upon it, that there was no such thing as prosperous iniquity; at least, that it was momentary. Experience, says Job, contradicts your assertion; the wicked live and die in ease and affluence, *yea,* are hardened by it; yet God often permits this, without being chargeable either with want of wisdom or justice in his government of the world.

1. He describes their prosperity, *Wherefore do the wicked live,* if it be as you say? how do they become old, and are not cut off with any remarkable judgments, *yea, are mighty in power?* so far from being destitute or desolate, they bear the sway in the world. How is this consistent with your assertions? yet there are undeniable instances of what I advance. Their families are built up, and they live to see them well settled. Their substance is protected, and no rod of affliction falls upon them. Their worldly affairs in the



33 The clouds of the valley shall be sweet unto him, and every man shall draw after him, as *there are* innumerable before him.

34 How then comfort ye me in vain, seeing in your answers there remaineth falsehood?

the minutest instances prosper. Their children are numerous as a flock, their houses are full of joy and mirth, and they devote to dance and song the jocund day. The hours pass along in pleasure and sensual indulgence, and without a groan they go down to the grave, *in a moment*, without any of the miseries that Zophar had described; or, *quietly* stupid and insensible, without apparent fear or terror. *Note;* (1.) No man is to be judged of by his outward prosperity; we must take in eternity to make a right estimate of man's estate. (2.) Worldly wealth abused, to gratify sensual appetite, is a curse instead of a blessing.

2. He suggests the ill effects of their prosperity; it hardened their hearts against God, and led them to infidelity. *Therefore*, because possessed of such wealth, and living, in consequence thereof, in a round of vanity and worldly lusts, *they say unto God, Depart from us*; they wish to leave him far above out of their sight, that no remembrance of him should disturb their conscience, and interrupt their joys; *for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways*. The paths of godliness appear forbidding and melancholy, compared with pleasure's flowery way; and they wish for no unwelcome interruption, from grave lessons and religion's needful restraints. Their lives make it their interest that God should not interfere with the concerns of men; and therefore, though perhaps not in words expressed, the sentiments of their hearts are, *What is the Almighty; or who is he, that we should serve him?* Perhaps there is no God; or, if there be, he cares not about the petty affairs of men: the terrors of his arm are but the bugbears of priests, to frighten the minds of the superstitious; *and what profit should we have if we pray unto him?* a talk useless and unnecessary, whence nothing can be gained. So thinks the blinded sinner, lost in indulgence, and enslaved by divers foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in perdition and destruction. *Note;* (1.) A pleasure-loving world is ever jealous of the incroachments of religion, and wishes to be ignorant, lest, coming for a moment to the light, they should not be able, with such quietness of conscience, to return to the pursuit of their vanities. (2.) Irreligion is the parent of infidelity: we easily persuade ourselves to believe what we desire. (3.) Though a wicked and careless world sees no profit in prayer, a child of God by blessed experience finds that his richest acquisitions are made upon his knees.

3. Job puts in a caveat, not to be misinterpreted, as if in this description of the wicked he concurred with, or approved of, their ways. No; he knew their slippery steps. *Lo, their good is not in their hand*. They have their portion in this life alone, and no hope hereafter; but *the counsel of the wicked is far from me*; I neither say as they say, nor do as they do. *Note;* When we are speaking with those whom we know to be captious, we had need be the more explicit, that we may not be misunderstood.

3dly, Having described the prosperity of the ungodly, he maintains,

1. The continuance of it. *How oft is the candle of the*

*wicked, his prosperity, put out?* does it not often burn to the last? *How oft cometh their destruction upon them?* is not this very contrary seen to be very frequently the case? Doth God distribute sorrows in his anger? no; he lives at ease, and knows no affliction. How oft, as his friends had suggested, *are they as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away?* experience shews the reverse to be true. *Note;* Though many instances of God's interposition against the wicked appear,—more commonly, perhaps, they live and die undisturbed in their possessions.

2. He answers an objection, that, though themselves do not suffer, *God layeth up iniquity for his children*; but admitting it, that would not at all prove the conclusions which Job's friends would draw; for they require that *God should reward him in this life, and he should know it*. *His eyes should see the destruction, and he should drink of the wrath of the Almighty*, in his own person, according to their principles; for else, *what pleasure, or what business hath he in his house after him?* after death, when their joys or sorrows cannot affect him, *when the number of his months is cut off in the midst*, and he goes down to the grave.

Perhaps this whole passage may bear a different view, as a concession, that oftentimes the wicked might suffer, but it was not always the case, and that were sufficient to invalidate their arguments. *Note;* (1.) A wicked parent entails the curse of God upon his family. (2.) There is a cup of trembling filled with the wine of the wrath of God, which will shortly be put into the hand of the ungodly.

3. He maintains the sovereignty of God in all these dispensations. *Shall any teach God knowledge?* pretend to direct his procedure, *seeing he judgeth those that are high*, who must shortly appear at his bar, when righteous judgment will be administered. Till then it were presumption to judge of men's characters by their outward circumstances; for here men equally wicked have very different ends: one goes down to the grave in the midst of prosperity, ease, and affluence; another, after lingering long in misery. Or it may intimate the different kinds of death that men meet; some by a sudden and unexpected stroke, others wasted by sickness and long decay: but in the dust all difference will be at an end, and the worms alike cover all. *Note;* (1.) God is not only sovereign but just; he doth indeed what he will; but what he wills is always holy, just, and good. (2.) The strongest health is no protection from the stroke of sudden death: it becomes us every moment to be prepared. (3.) If we have ease and appetite, while others groan in pain and loath their food, let us be thankful, and improve the mercy before the evil days come. (4.) However the wicked die, they will meet in one place; whether they go from the palace or the dung-hill, they will lie down in flames, and the worm that never dies shall alike prey upon them.

4thly,

1. Job intimates his thorough knowledge of his friends' design in their former speeches. He saw that they con-



## C H A P. XXII.

*Eliphaz asserts, that Job's justification of himself doth not please God, and that he is surrounded with snares, because he had been guilty of many iniquities. He exhorts him to repentance, with promises of mercy.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**T**HEN Eliphaz the Temanite answered and said,

2 Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself?

3 *Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?*

4 Will he reprove thee for fear of thee?

cluded him to be a hypocrite, though wrongfully, and that merely because his dwelling was desolate, as they argued was the constant case with the wicked. *Note;* Men's looks and inuendoes often speak as plainly as any language can.

2. He refers them to any traveller for confutation of their assertions, who could give them sure proofs and tokens that wicked men were very commonly in prosperity. This is not the place of recompence, but the next world; there they will receive according to their deeds; and every good man, a traveller to glory, would inform them, if they asked, *that the wicked is reserved to the day of destruction; they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath; certain and eternal wrath is their portion hereafter, though now they are great and prosper. Here they are too high to be reprov'd, and too mighty to be restrained by the arm of human justice; but there they will be convicted and condemned, without the power of resistance. Here, notwithstanding their wickedness, they go in pomp to the grave; a gorgeous sepulchral monument and attendant crowds do them honour even in the dust, to make the clods of the valley sweet unto them; but they shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt. And thus, in death at least, which is the common lot, the wicked will meet their desert, and every man must draw after him, as there are innumerable before him. Note;* Death is a beaten road, which, sooner or later, every man must tread. *Semel calcanda est via Lethi.*

3. He concludes from hence the futility and falsehood of their answers, and the vanity of their pretended consolations. They accused him as a hypocrite, and promised him comfort on his repentance, as if his sufferings, the effect of his sins, would be then removed; whereas he hath proved, that sufferings are not the necessary punishment of guilt here below, seeing that the wicked very commonly prosper; nor was he conscious of the least of those accusations which they suggested.

## C H A P. XXII.

*Ver. 1. Then Eliphaz the Temanite answered]* Eliphaz here, increasing in his indignation, charges Job home with particular facts of cruelty and oppression; to which he adds the atrocious crime of atheism, and a denial or disbelief of

will he enter with thee into judgment?

5 *Is not thy wickedness great? and thine iniquities infinite?*

6 For thou hast taken a pledge from thy brother for nought, and stripped the naked of their clothing.

7 Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink, and thou hast withholden bread from the hungry.

8 *But as for the mighty man, he had the earth; and the honourable man dwelt in it.*

9 Thou hast sent widows away empty, and the arms of the fatherless have been broken.

Providence; and this latter he assigns as the reason of Job's obstinacy in refusing to submit and acknowledge his guilt: ver. 2—14. He compares his wickedness with that of the mighty oppressors of the antediluvian world; with that of the inhabitants of Sodom, and the cities of the plain; intimating not obscurely, that his end would probably be the same as theirs, unless prevented by a speedy submission, and full restitution, ver. 15—20. to which he therefore earnestly presses him, and endeavours to allure him by placing full in his view the great advantages that he would probably reap from such a conduct: ver. 21. to the end. Heath.

*Ver. 3. Is it any pleasure? &c.] Is it any advantage?* Heath.

*Ver. 4. Will he reprove thee]* Will he dispute with thee concerning thy religion? Houbigant.

*Ver. 6. For thou hast taken a pledge]* See chap. xiv. 7. Who that sees this ranked among the greatest enormities, says Bishop Warbuton, but will reflect that it must have been written by one studied in the law of Moses; which says, *If thou at all take thy neighbour's raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down, &c.* But was this practice of taking a pledge peculiar to the Israelites? or rather, was it not absolutely necessary in those early times, before they had the use of money, at least in any great plenty? See on chap. xlii. 11. Now, when all commerce was in a manner transacted without money, and chiefly by an exchange of one commodity for another, the taking of a pledge must of necessity happen very frequently: a proper exchange not being to be had. This, therefore, would make the custom as common in Arabia as in Judea; and I conceive that any hard usage to the poor in this way was as much to be condemned in the one country as in the other. See Peters.

*Ver. 8. But as for the mighty man]* *But if any one had sown a field for himself, being in thy favour, he received the fruit of it.* Houbigant, in part after the Syriac. Heath renders it, *but as for the mighty man, the whole land was for him; and thy particular favourite he might dwell in it.* The meaning of Eliphaz seems to be, that while Job oppressed the poor, he courted and paid all adulating respect to the great and the rich.

*Ver.*

10 Therefore snares *are* round about thee, and sudden fear troubleth thee;

11 Or darkness, *that* thou canst not see; and abundance of waters cover thee.

12 *Is* not God in the height of heaven? and behold the height of the stars, how high they are!

13 And thou sayest, How doth God know? can he judge through the dark cloud?

14 Thick clouds *are* a covering to him, that he seeth not; and he walketh in the circuit of heaven.

15 Hast thou marked the old way which

wicked men have trodden?

16 Which were cut down out of time, whose foundation was overflown with a flood.

17 Which said unto God, Depart from us: and what can the Almighty do for them?

18 Yet he filled their houses with good *things*: but the counsel of the wicked is far from me.

19 The righteous see *it*, and are glad: and the innocent laugh them to scorn.

20 Whereas our substance is not cut down, but the remnant of them the fire consumeth.

*Ver. 11. Or darkness*] *Thou beholdest darkness, and not light.* Houbigant. Heath renders it, *Or is it dark, that thou canst not see?* Observing that the path of the wicked man is here represented as covered with darkness, so that he cannot see the snares which are laid for him, but falls into them: in antithesis to which, the path of the righteous man is represented in the 28th verse as all light; *The light shall shine upon thy ways?* Houbigant renders the last clause of the 9th verse, *and thou hast broken the arms of the fatherless.*

*Ver. 12. Is not God in the height of heaven?*] *Is not God high above the heavens?* *Yet, see the summit of the stars how high they are.* This verse is the answer which he supposes Job to make; the consequences of which he draws out at large in the following verses. He takes his handle from ver. 16. of the former chapter, as appears from his retorting the latter clause of it against Job in ver. 18. See Heath; who observes, that the particle rendered *and* at the beginning of the next verse, should be rendered *from whence*, as it is the inference drawn from the infinite distance at which he supposes God to be removed from human affairs.

*Ver. 15—20. Hast thou marked? &c.*] As the universal deluge was a most signal and memorable instance of God's displeasure against wickedness and wicked men, Eliphaz takes occasion to enlarge upon it for five or six verses together, as a proper lesson (so he thought it) for his friend; and then closes it with the mention of another destruction by fire, either past or to be expected, which is described to be as general and as fatal to the wicked: *and the remnant of them the fire consumeth, or shall consume:* ver. 20. This, indeed, some refer to the judgment of God upon Sodom and Gomorrah; but it is much more natural to understand it of the last general conflagration; for how could the destroying a little city or two be said with any propriety to *consume the remnant?*; i. e. the whole remainder of wicked men? when at the same time Chaldea, and perhaps the greatest part of the world, was overrun with idolatry. The dissolution of the world by fire, is what St. Peter calls expressly, *a day of judgment and perdition to ungodly men:* 2 Pet. iii. 7. And this St. Jude, ver. 14. seems to say was prophesied of by Enoch before the flood; and if so, must be known to Noah, and by him, no doubt, transmitted to posterity; and so might be well known to Job and his friends. The righteous Noah and his family,

who were so miraculously preserved, are very poetically introduced, ver. 19. as triumphing over the wicked generation whom they had called in vain to repentance, *and who had said unto God, depart from us:* ver. 17. *And what can the Almighty do for them?* defying him as it were, and contemning both his threatenings and his promises: ver. 19, 20. *The righteous see it* (i. e. see the destruction of this wicked race) *and the innocent man* וְיָנִי *naki*, (singular) *laugheth them to scorn; whereas our substance is not cut down.* There is some difficulty in this clause. The Hebrew is literally, *is not our rising cut off?* Are not we overwhelmed and sunk, never to rise more? Or, is not our insurrection and rebellion against God (for so impiety and wickedness is often styled in Scripture) justly punished by this terrible excision? They seem to be the words of those wicked men who *were cut down out of time*, ver. 16. but here put into the mouth of the innocent Noah and his family by way of derision; as it is common to repeat the words of another, or to make a speech for him upon such occasions; κατὰ μίμησιν, as the rhetoricians speak, and without naming those whose words they are supposed to be. This gives a good sense to the passage, which is scarcely intelligible any other way; and thus it will be the same as if it were said, "The innocent mock them, saying, Are not these "impious wretches justly punished? Is not our pride, "may they say, and insurrection against our Maker, sadly "humbled by this utter extirpation?" It follows, *and the remnant of them the fire shall consume:* which may be understood as the words of Eliphaz, or, perhaps, as a continuation of the speech of Noah; and then it will be as if he had said, "Though this judgment by water, extensive "as it is, may not so thoroughly have purged the world "but that wickedness and wicked men will again spring "up, spread widely, and abound; yet, know, there shall "come a time hereafter, when the world shall be con- "sumed by fire; and then, the whole race and remainder "of wicked men shall be delivered up, once for all, to such "an absolute destruction, as that none shall ever spring "from their ashes, nor shall the new world and its inha- "bitants know wickedness, or defection from God any "more." We see then, from this remarkable passage, that the doctrine of the future dissolution of the world by fire, so plainly taught us, and so immediately connected with the doctrine of the resurrection in the New Testa-

21 Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace; thereby good shall come unto thee.

22 Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart.

23 If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up, thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles.

24 Then shalt thou lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks.

25 Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence, and thou shalt have plenty of silver.

26 For then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty, and shalt lift up thy face unto God.

27 Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows.

28 Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee: and the light shall shine upon thy ways.

29 When men are cast down, then thou

ment, was not unknown in Job's time; and, consequently, is a further confirmation of the point which we have endeavoured to establish, chap. xix. 25. and elsewhere. The prophet Isaiah seems to handle this subject very copiously in the 24th and the two following chapters of his prophecy; and he uses an expression, chap. xxvi. 11. very like to this of Eliphaz, *The fire of thine enemies [which is prepared for thine enemies] shall consume them.* Such an expression, I own, may be used in a metaphorical sense, and therefore little stress can be laid upon it, except the context favours, as here: but it is to be observed, that as the 24th chapter is taken up with a lively description of that utter dissolution and destruction which shall be brought upon the earth for the wickedness of its inhabitants; so the two following chapters contain hymns of praise to God on this occasion, both for his judgments on the wicked, and his mercies to the righteous. See those chapters, and Peters, p. 409.

*Ver. 21. Acquaint now thyself, &c.] Humble thyself, I pray thee, before him, and make restitution.* Heath.

*Ver. 22. Receive, I pray thee, &c.]* This phrase, says Bishop Warburton, was taken from the verbal delivery of the Jewish law from Mount Sinai. He adds, "The rabbins were so sensible of the expressive peculiarity of this phrase, that they say the law of Moses is here spoken of by a kind of prophetic anticipation." It is of little moment, in the present case, what the rabbins say; the argument, if it carries any weight with it, must proceed upon this supposition, that men were under no divine law; had no precepts of their duty given them by God, before the law was published from Mount Sinai; or at least, whatever precepts might be given them, they were not distinguished by the term here used, of a law. But neither of these points can be allowed. God says to Isaac, Gen. xxvi. 5. *I will bless thee, because that Abraham kept my charge, and my law, or laws.* This, we are assured, was long before the law of Moses was given; and therefore means probably some divine precepts of religion, delivered down from Adam, or from Noah, to succeeding generations. These are what Job calls *the words of the holy One*, chap. vi. 10. and remarkably, chap. xxiii. 12. *the words of God's mouth, which he esteemed more than his necessary food.*

*Ver. 24. Then shalt thou lay up gold, &c.] And count the fine gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the*

*brooks: ver. 25. For, the Almighty shall be thy fine gold, &c.* Heath; who observes, that Grotius has given a right exposition of the 24th verse: *Value not the gold more than dust, nor the gold of Ophir than the stones of the torrent.*

*Ver. 29, 30. When men are cast down, &c.] For whoever humbleth himself shall be extolled and had in glory; he that hath lowly eyes shall be exalted: ver. 30. Whoever is innocent shall be safe, and delivered by the purity of his hands.* Houbigant, who understands the word *ai*, with Grotius, to be an Arabic pronoun, signifying *whosoever*.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, It is Job's hard case to have all that he can urge misunderstood, and some ill meaning constantly drawn from a distortion of his arguments. Because he maintained his integrity, as being no hypocrite, Eliphaz would infer that he pretended to make God his debtor, and thereupon he argues, that his goodness could never profit him, or his iniquity hurt him.

1. Our goodness cannot profit God, or merit any thing at his hands. *Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself?* no; though religion is our wisdom, and the advantages of it to us unspeakably great, in present possession, and future expectation; yet our goodness extendeth not to God. He is far exalted above all blessing and praise; we receive all from him, but can add nothing to him, completely happy in his own all-sufficient fulness. *Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him, that thou makest thy ways perfect?* No; though he takes pleasure in the prosperity of his servants, and is glorified in their services; yet, had there never been man or angel created, his infinite self-complacence, and the inexpressible riches of his glory, had been the same. It is his condescension that he accepts our services; the pleasure and the gain of them is our own alone, not his.

2. Our iniquity cannot hurt him. *Will he reprove thee for fear of thee? Will he enter with thee into judgment?* lest, if left to prosper, thou shouldst grow above his government? *Note;* None are too great for God to humble: if he spare the wicked, it is not for fear of them, but in patient pity towards them.

2dly, Job's friends had repeatedly condemned him by insinuations and inferences, and by comparing his case with that of wicked men; but as this had no effect, Eliphaz takes a large step farther, and, right or wrong, re-

solves

shalt say, *There is lifting up*; and he shall save the humble person.

30 He shall deliver the island of the inno-

cent: and it is delivered by the pureness of thine hands.

solves to lay on him crimes enough. If half of them could but be proved, Job would have been a bad man indeed. It is common in the world to say, Abuse confidently and abundantly, and some of the lies will be believed.

1. In general he charges him with great wickedness and astonishing crimes, as if what he was about to advance were but a small part of the black catalogue. *Note*; The best of men have been the most foully aspersed by lying tongues.

2. He proceeds to the particular accusations, and they are many and grievous. [1.] Great oppression. For a trifling loan he had secured a pledge of much superior value, or *thou hast taken thy brother for a pledge*, arrested him for an inconsiderable debt; and when the poor were almost naked, had stripped them of the little raiment they had left. [2.] Cruel uncharitableness. The hungry and thirsty were left to faint and famish, and a cup of cold water denied them, while he rioted in affluence; yea, even the afflicted widow, whose poverty swelled the measure of her griefs, was sent away empty from his door.

[3.] Vile partiality. Before him, as a magistrate, the greatest ever carried the cause: the mighty man, who oppressed the poor, was sure to have judgment in his favour, and be confirmed in the possession of what he had seized; while *the arms of the fatherless were broken*, ruined without redress by their richer neighbours. And, as no less destitute of piety towards God than charity towards man, he charges him, [4.] With avowed infidelity; as if God, in the height of heaven, either could not see through the dark cloud which interposed, or left men at large, while he paraded through his own superior mansions, careless about the insignificant concerns of little mortals. *Note*;

(1.) Though foolish and wicked men say that God hath forsaken the earth, yet he heareth the cry of oppression and wrong. Though heaven is his throne, he filleth all things, and is as much present beneath the thick clouds, as above them. (2.) Abominable in the sight of the righteous Judge is the acceptance of men's persons: he will quickly appear the patron and awful avenger of the injured.

3. He ascribes Job's present sufferings to his atrocious sins; for thus he reasoned: Because his sufferings are great, his sins must be great, and in exact proportion to them; therefore snares compassed him about; health, wealth, and children, were lost together; terrors had seized his conscience, which they interpreted as the signs of conscious guilt; and darkness had enveloped all his hopes; while, like a drowning man in the midst of boisterous waves, desperate and undone, he seemed ready to sink into eternal ruin, the just punishment of his supposed crimes. *Note*; (1.) He who wilfully condemneth the righteous, is an abomination to the Lord, (2.) We must not wonder if the most malignant interpretations are put on our providential afflictions: better men than we are have suffered more severely before us.

3dly, Job had pleaded the experience of all ages, to testify the prosperity of many wicked men. Eliphaz thinks that he has an irrefragable argument to confute him, in the flood brought on the world of the ungodly;

and while he insinuates that his sins were such as theirs he bids him take warning by their punishment.

1. He describes their wickedness, and uses the very words that Job had spoken concerning the wicked who prospered, chap. xxi. 14. as a confutation of what he there advanced. *They said unto the Almighty, Depart from us; we renounce his government, worship, and ways: and what can the Almighty do for them?* as if they neither expected any good, nor feared any evil at his hands. *Yet, which was a great aggravation of their wickedness, he filled their houses with good things.* *Note*; (1.) Impiety is the parent of infidelity. (2.) Ingratitude to God is among the sinner's blackest crimes. (3.) They are still poor in the worst sense, who, though their houses are full of goods, have their hearts empty of divine grace.

2. He professes his abhorrence of such principles and practice: *The counsel of the wicked is far from me.* So Job had declared, and Eliphaz thinks with much greater reason he may assert.

3. He relates their destruction. Though it was *the old way*, and the general way, it was not an iota the safer for that. *They were cut down* by the divine judgment, *out of time*, and removed into an eternity of misery, and this before they had filled the number of their years, surprised with sudden destruction; *whose foundation was overflowed with a flood*; all their confidences perished with them, and they sunk as lead in the mighty waters. *Note*; (1.) When we remember what the water hath once done, we should think what the more devouring element of fire will shortly do, consuming entirely the earth, and all that is therein. (2.) The hope of the hypocrite and of the sinner is on a sandy foundation: when the floods of wrath descend, ruin, terrible as inevitable, shall overwhelm them.

4. He testifies the joy of the righteous, either Noah and his family, or godly men in all ages, on seeing the vengeance: not that they take pleasure in men's misery, but they rejoice to see God glorified in his judgments. With these, Eliphaz and his friends joined; happy now, as those of old, to perceive themselves distinguished by God's protection, and therefore concluding the goodness of their state and cause, *whereas our substance is not cut down, but theirs was; and the remnant of them the fire consumed*; which some refer to the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, but it is more probably designed to point out Job's case, whose cattle and servants the lightning had consumed; and thence he would infer that *they were righteous, but he condemned and made to suffer, as one of the ungodly.*

4thly, On the supposition that Job was a wicked man, Eliphaz had warned him of the great danger to which he was exposed with the sinners of old: yet, not to reduce him to despair, but to lead him to repentance, he gives him excellent counsel and encouragement; which shews, mistaken as he was in Job's particular case, that he was well versed in the way of God, and, at bottom, a man of sound piety. There may be something, yea sometimes much, to condemn even in truly good men; to whom, notwithstanding, we cannot refuse our general approbation of their conduct.

## C H A P. XXIII.

*Job wishes that he might be allowed to plead his cause before God; but, wherever he turns himself, he cannot find or behold him. He acknowledges, however, that God observes his paths, and therefore he doth not despond.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**T**HEN Job answered and said,  
2 Even to-day is my complaint bitter:

1. His counsel is an humble and speedy return to God: *Acquaint thyself now with God: now*, while yet there is life and hope; without delay, acquaint thyself with his perfections and providences, and be at peace, silent and submissive before him, acquiescing in all his dispensations; and, instead of fighting against him, lay down thine arms and seek pardon and peace with him: *thereby good shall come unto thee*, his merciful favour shall be restored. *Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth*, submit to his government, yield thyself up to his holy will, and lay up his words in thine heart as the choicest treasure, and thy counsellor and guide in every time of difficulty. *Note*: (1.) Acquaintance with God is the way to be at peace with him: till we know his holiness whom we have offended, and his love whom we have slighted, we can never in real penitence return to him. (2.) Peace with God is the most invaluable of all blessings. (3.) If God, in our divine Redeemer Jesus, has been pleased to restore our souls to his favour, let it be our care henceforward, to yield up ourselves to be guided by his holy word and will. (4.) They who know the value of the Scriptures esteem them above mines of gold, and, daily labouring therein, store their hearts with the richest treasures of divine counsels and consolations.

2. He promises him the best of blessings, as the consequence of such an humble return to the Almighty, from his state of estrangement and rebellion against him; and these precious promises are frequently the most effectual means to engage the sinner's heart to God.

[1.] His evils should be removed, and his lost prosperity be restored. *If thou return to the Almighty, thou shalt be built up*, the desolations of thy house and family shall be repaired; *thou shalt put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles*, thou wilt be careful to remove every evil, and no more commit or connive at it; and then thy sufferings, which are the effects of thy iniquity, God will put far away from thee. *Thou shalt lay up gold as dust, and the gold of Ophir as the stones of the brooks*, in such abundance shall thy riches increase; secure also, as well as affluent, no robbers shall any more plunder, or judgments spread desolation, *Yea, the Almighty shall be thy defence*, He, on thy repentance, will become thy friend, and preserve thy goods in safety: or, *he shall be thy choice gold*, better to thee than all thy other riches, and *thou shalt have plenty of silver*. *Note*: The best riches are God's grace and love.

[2.] He should enjoy communion with God, and be happy in the sense of his favour: *for then shalt thou have thy delight in the Almighty*, he shall be thy happiness and joy, and *shalt lift up thy face unto God*, with holy confidence in him, and boldness to approach him. *Thou shalt make thy prayer unto him*, assured of a speedy answer of peace,

my stroke is heavier than my groaning.

3 Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat!

4 I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments.

5 I would know the words which he would answer me, and understand what he would say unto me.

and he shall hear thee, while thou art speaking, and grant thy requests; and in grateful acknowledgment of his mercies received, *thou shalt pay thy vows*, constant in praise as prayer. *Note*: (1.) They who have ever tasted the happiness of communion with God, and known the bitterness of distance from him, as Job had, will count the restoration to a sense of his love the most inestimable blessing. (2.) When we are at peace with God, we may approach him with confidence, knowing that we shall receive the favours which we require of him, as far as they be for our good. (3.) For the blessings received in prayer, we owe the constant grateful return of praise.

[3.] All his designs should succeed, and a blessing be upon all his labour: *Thou shalt decree a thing, resolve under the Divine assistance so to act, and it shall be established unto thee*, God will confirm thy purpose, and crown the issue with success: *and the light shall shine upon thy ways*, no such darkness as now surrounds thee shall remain; but thy path shall be clear as the day, and the sun of prosperity shine upon thee on every side. *Note*: (1.) The success of all our purposes, whether respecting spiritual or temporal good, comes from God alone. (2.) They who are at peace with God, will enjoy the light of his countenance as their present comfort, and look to the light of eternal glory as their expected happy portion.

[4.] His prayers should be heard in behalf of others, as well as himself. *When men are cast down, and under their distress apply to thee, thou shalt say, to encourage them, there is lifting up; or, in prayer to God for them, let there be lifting up, and he shall save the humble person, and lift him out of the pit of affliction at thy request. He shall deliver the island of the innocent, save them at thy desire; or the innocent, the one good man, shall deliver the island, or he shall deliver those who are not innocent; not only shall the humble receive a blessing from thy prayers, but even the wicked shall enjoy respite from them, and some temporal good. And it is (the Island) or he is (the person prayed for), delivered by the pureness of thine hands*, God having such respect to thy petitions, when thou stretchest forth thine hands to him in the heavens. *Note*: (1.) Great is the power of a good man's prayers, and we should earnestly desire to have an interest in them. (2.) Though God's praying people are often the ridicule of the world, it is through them that the island is preserved. (3.) There is one innocent and holy Intercessor in heaven, for whose sake God's humble people partake of his salvation.

## C H A P. XXIII.

*Ver. 1. Then Job answered and said*] Job, being tried to a high degree, by the freedom which Eliphaz had taken with him in his last speech, charging him directly with the

6 Will he plead against me with *his* great power? No; but he would put *strength* in me.

7 There the righteous might dispute with him; so should I be delivered for ever from my judge.

8 Behold, I go forward, but he *is* not *there*; and backward, but I cannot perceive him:

9 On the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold *him*: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see *him*.

10 But he knoweth the way that I take: *when* he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.

11 My foot hath held his steps, his way have I kept, and not declined.

12 Neither have I gone back from the com-

mandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food.

13 But he *is* in one *mind*, and who can turn him? and *what* his soul desireth, even *that* he doeth.

14 For he performeth *the thing that is* appointed for me: and many such *things* are with him.

15 Therefore am I troubled at his presence: when I consider, I am afraid of him.

16 For God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me:

17 Because I was not cut off before the darkness, *neither* hath he covered the darkness from my face.

most enormous sins, (see the 15th, and following verses) turns to God, according to his custom, and earnestly begs that he would bring him to his trial; that he would hear the matter fully, and determine between him and his friends. The passage from this to the end of the 10th verse is a very fine one; in which a candid reader can see nothing, I should suppose, but an earnest desire in Job to come before his judge, and take his trial, and be delivered, once for all, from the unjust suspicions of his friends. The word rendered *order*, in the 4th verse, is used for drawing up a speech, chap. xxxii. 14. or preparing a table for an entertainment, Isaiah xxi. 5. Moses uses the same word, Lev. vi. 9, for preparing a burnt offering; and David, Ps. v. 3. for addressing himself to his devotions. Our translators have rightly added the word *strength* in the 6th verse, *Will he plead against me with his great strength? no; but he will put strength into me.* Munster and Vatablus, two of the most judicious among the critics, follow this sense. Le Clerc gives another, not quite so natural, but a very good one, if the Hebrew will bear it; thus, *Will he strive with me with his great might? no; but he would attend to me:* that is, "he would give me a patient hearing, and attend to the reasonableness of my plea; which you do not." Heath, and some others, render the 2d verse, *Still must my complaint be rebellious obstinacy: his hand is heavier than my groaning.* The word rendered *seat*, in the 3d verse, denotes the throne or tribunal of God; the usual place for the administration of justice. *From my judge*, in the 7th verse, is rendered by Heath and Houbigant, *From my accusation*, or *judgment*: and in the 9th verse, instead of, *where he doth work*, Heath reads, *towards his brightness*; which makes a better sense, and is a proper antithesis to his *hiding himself* in the latter part of the verse. See Peters, p. 173.

Ver. 11, 12. *My foot hath held, &c.*] The division of this book into verses has obscured the sense: these two should be read thus, ver. 11. *My foot hath trodden in his steps; I have kept his way, and have not turned aside* (ver. 12.) *from the commandment of his lips; neither have I swerved from his statutes. I have esteemed, &c.* See Heath, and the note on ver. 22. of the last chapter.

Ver. 13. *But he is in one mind, and who can turn him?]* For when he is in the way, who shall turn him? whatever he desireth, that he doth. Job had said, in the preceding verses, that he had observed the steps, and trodden in the way of God; and he now adds, *when he is in the way, who shall turn him out?* i. e. "Who shall compel God to forsake that way of ruling human affairs which he hath once purposed, and to follow another." Houb.

Ver. 16. *For God maketh my heart soft, &c.]* For God causeth my heart to melt; the Almighty terrifieth me; ver. 17, *Yet so, that my mind doth not depend for that darkness, even that thick darkness, with which I am covered.* Houb. Heath observes, that the word *darkness* is used here, as it is frequently, to denote calamity; and the *thick darkness* to express death.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Job seems to think it in vain to reason with his friends, resolved as they were to condemn him so unreasonably and cruelly, and therefore rather turns to God in his answer to the accusations of Eliphaz.

1. He justifies his complaints from the bitterness of his anguish, which all their counsels tended nothing to alleviate; *even to-day is my complaint bitter, or rebellion*; so accounted by his censorious friends; but so far were his complaints from exceeding his sufferings, that his stroke was heavier than his groaning. Note; (1.) They who know not what others feel, are too apt, when at ease themselves, to condemn them for inordinate sorrow. (2.) Though God does not forbid us to complain, yet we need fear, lest we murmur under our afflictions, which were to rebel against his government.

2. He longs to appear before God, and plead his cause; *Oh that I knew where I might find him*, where at his tribunal I might stand, *I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments*, I would direct my prayer to him, and plead the prevailing arguments of his grace in a Redeemer; or I would produce the most unexceptionable evidences, how unjustly I am condemned by my friends. *I would know the words which he would answer me*; far from desiring the darkness to hide me, as suggested, chap. xxii.



## C H A P. XXIV.

*Job affirms, that wickedness often goes unpunished; but that there is a secret judgment remaining for the wicked.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**W**HY, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, do they that know him not see his days?

14. I should long for his sentence to come forth, and to understand what he would say unto me, who would judge according to truth, and not condemn me unjustly as you do. *Note;* (1.) A soul under desertion cries after God, O that I knew where I might find him, and such complaints shall not be long unanswered; he will be found in mercy of those who seek him. (2.) It is a comfort to the people of God, that whatever others answer them, or judge concerning them, they expect to appear before Him whose decisions will be according to truth.

3. He expresses his confidence in the issue of such a trial. *Would he, God, plead against me with his great power, to crush and oppress me as you do? No; he would put strength in me, encourage me to bear up under every pressure. There the righteous, such as in an evangelical sense, through the grace of God, he might be said to be, might dispute with him, not against him as an adversary, but before him as their judge, so should I be delivered for ever from my judge, from your censures, which, as judges of my case, you have so rashly pronounced; or rather he who is my judge would declare my integrity, and deliver me, through my Redeemer, from present and eternal condemnation.* *Note;* (1.) They who fly to God in their distress, to pray and plead with him, shall find their strength increase with every application to him. (2.) If God acquit us, we need neither fear nor care whose anathemas are upon us.

2dly. Job had said, O that I knew where I might find him; and his were not empty wishes, but earnest labours.

1. He laments his disappointment; on every side he turned his thoughts, deeply revolved in mind his sufferings, and sought to find out their cause, and to acquaint himself with God's designs in them; but darkness was in all his path, and he was as much as ever at a loss to account for the very singular circumstances of his afflictions, and wherefore God thus visited him. *Note;* The most beloved saints of God have been exercised with great afflictions and trials, which, however grievous for the time, work blessed fruits for the faithful in the end.

2. He was conscious of his own integrity, and satisfied in the divine Omniscience; and therefore concludes, that, when he had been tried, he should come forth from the furnace as gold, the brighter for the torture. *My foot hath held his steps, I have sought to conform step by step with his word and providences; his way have I kept, his worship have I maintained, and his will obeyed in simplicity, and not declined from it, in any known instance, or by allowed guile; neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips, as a backslider, or an apostate; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food, more delightful to my soul, and more necessary for it than even food for my body.* *Note;* (1.) It is a comfort that God knows our

2 Some remove the landmarks; they violently take away flocks, and feed thereof.

3 They drive away the ass of the fatherless, they take the widow's ox for a pledge.

4 They turn the needy out of the way: the poor of the earth hide themselves together.

5 Behold, as wild asses in the desert, go they

ways, and our simplicity before him. (2.) The trials of the faithful are sure to terminate to their honour and advantage. (3.) The word of God is the believer's daily bread, and he feeds upon it to the comforting and strengthening of his soul.

3dly. Though he was conscious of his uprightness, and hoped that the issue of his trials should be peace, they were hard to be borne, though bear them he must.

1. It was in vain to think of opposing God. *He is in one mind, always the same, and who can turn him from executing his will? and what his soul desireth, even that he doeth, without controul, or possibility of effective resistance. He performeth the thing that is appointed for me, according to his holy will; and many such things are with him, many dispensations of his providence, abstruse and unaccountable by mortal worms: or he feared more troubles were in his hand, as if his measure of suffering was not yet full.* *Note;* Though God doth what he will, he cannot but do what is right; and therefore we are ever bound to acquiesce, and, seeing his hand in our afflictions, to be dumb, and not to open our mouth.

2. Though Job quitted not his hope, yet at times his fears prevailed: *Therefore am I troubled at his presence; when I consider, I am afraid:* What he had already suffered, made him apprehensive lest worst was in store for him, the apprehension of which quite melted him down: *for God maketh my heart soft, and the Almighty troubleth me, the fear of his impending visitations, as well as the sense of present anguish; because I was not cut off before the darkness of affliction came, as if he was marked out to suffer; or it may be construed as an expostulation, Why was I not cut off before, or by darkness, by death, from beholding these miseries? neither hath he covered the darkness from my jaws, which, had I been hid in the grave, I had not seen: or without the word neither, He hath covered the darkness from my face, refuses me the comfort of departing, or suffers me not to see an end of my afflictions.* *Note;* (1.) The consideration of God's perfections, out of a Redeemer, is big with terror to the soul; but in him our fears remove. (2.) We should not be in such haste to be gone from our troubles into the darkness of death, when we know not how soon the scene may change, and the life which was our burden be made comfortable to ourselves, and serviceable to the cause of God.

## C H A P. XXIV.

*Ver. 1. Why, seeing times, &c.]* Job, having obviated in the foregoing chapter the charge of Eliphaz, as to a denial or disbelief of God's providence, goes on to express his wishes, that God, in his providence, would make a more visible distinction between the wicked and the righteous in this



forth to their work; rising betimes for a prey: the wilderness *yieldeth* food for them *and* for their children:

6 They reap *every one* his corn in the field: and they gather the vintage of the wicked.

7 They cause the naked to lodge without cloathing, that *they have* no covering in the cold.

8 They are wet with the showers of the mountains, and embrace the rock for want of a shelter.

9 They pluck the fatherless from the breast,

and take a pledge of the poor.

10 They cause *him* to go naked without cloathing, and they take away the sheaf *from* the hungry;

11 *Which* make oil within their walls, and tread *their* winepresses, and suffer thirst.

12 Men groan from out of the city, and the soul of the wounded crieth out: yet God layeth not folly *to them*.

13 They are of those that rebel against the light; they know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the paths thereof.

this world; that thus good men might not fall into such mistakes by censuring suffering innocence, ver. 1. And, whereas Eliphaz had compared him to the men of violence and oppression in the antediluvian world, he recites a long list of the crimes of those persons, which had justly drawn down the divine vengeance; placing it, as it were, in contrast with his own character, which he had sketched in the foregoing chapter, ver. 11, 12. thereby shewing the defect of the comparison, and, as it were, defying them to convict him of any of those crimes, ver. 2 to 18. He concludes with shewing what, according to their principles, ought to be the general course of Providence with regard to wicked men, which, however, was notoriously not the case; and since it was not, it was plain that he had proved his point: the falsity of their general maxim was apparent; and their censure of him, merely for his sufferings, was a behaviour by no means justifiable; ver. 19 to the end. Heath.

*Times—days*] These terms are in the Hebrew judicial: the former expresses seasons set apart for the public administration of justice; the latter seems rather to denote the time of such judgments being put in execution. Heath renders the verse, *Why are not stated seasons set apart by the Almighty? And why do not those who know him see his days?* Houbigant gives it a different interpretation, which, indeed, seems better to agree with the context: *What is the reason why, when times have not been hidden by the Almighty from men, they attend not to his day, which they know?* i. e. “Whence comes it to pass, that when God has not

“concealed the times or changes of human affairs, men should still act so blameably; as if God had hidden in “perpetual darkness both things present and things future?”  
Ver. 2. *And feed thereof*] *And him that feedeth them.* So Heath, after the LXX.

Ver. 4. *They turn the needy out of the way*] *They pervert justice in the cause of the poor; the meek of the land hide themselves with one consent.* See Amos ii. 7, v. 12. Heath.

Ver. 5. *Behold, as wild asses, &c.*] *See, like the wild asses in the desert, they go forth to their labour: they are up with the dawn for bare food: the common must find them meat for their children.* This, and the following verses, to the 13th, describe the extreme misery of the poor people under those oppressors. “They go out before day, in droves, like the “wild asses in the desert, to their labour, and that for bare “food only: for, as for their families, the wilderness must

“supply them. Obligated to lie in the open air, with “neither covering to keep them warm, nor a hut over “their heads to keep them dry, they must cling close to “the rock to shelter them from storms; their children are “torn from the breast to be sold into slavery. Ver. 9. *The “orphan is torn by violence from the breast; the garments of “the poor are taken for a pledge: ver. 10. They go about naked, “because they have no clothing; and those who are starving “for hunger carry the sheaves: ver. 11. They work during “the noon-tide heat in their vineyards: they tread their vine- “vats, but are athirst: a misery the more exquisite, as it “was heightened by the immediate presence of what would “relieve them; but they dared not stretch forth their “hands to take it;”* Heath: with whom Houbigant agrees, except in the 5th and 6th verses, which he renders thus, *Behold, like wild asses, which go forth into the desert for their food, ready for their prey, industrious to seek out food for their young; (ver. 6.) So they reap the corn in the field by night; they gather the vintage by wickedness; (ver. 7.) so that the naked lodge, &c.*

Ver. 6. *They reap every one his corn in the field*] *Mingled corn, or dredge.* Margin. Job apparently alludes to the provender, or heap of chopped straw or hay, lying mingled together in the field, after having passed under a threshing instrument; to which he compares the spoils that were taken from passengers, so early as his time, by those who lived somewhat after the present manner of the wild Arabs; which spoils are to them what the harvest and vintage were to others. With this agrees that other passage, chap. vi. 5. where this word occurs: *Will the ox low (in complaint) over his provender? or fodder,* as it is translated in our version; i. e. when he has not only *straw enough*, but mixed with barley. See Observations, p. 210, and Judg. xix. 19.

Ver. 12. *Men groan from out of the city*] Now follow the oppressions of the city, where the face of things is still worse; nothing to be heard but the groans of the dying, and the cries of the wounded. *In the city the dying groan, and the soul of the wounded crieth aloud; yet God maketh no distinction.* Heath.

Ver. 13. *They are of those that rebel, &c.*] Heath, supposing this to allude to the people who lived before the flood, whose violence and oppression are recorded in several parts of the sacred scriptures, renders this clause, *They are of those who were thrown headlong from the light.*

14 The murderer rising with the light killeth the poor and needy, and in the night is as a thief.

15 The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying, No eye shall see me: and disguiseth his face.

16 In the dark they dig through houses, which they had marked for themselves in the day-time: they know not the light.

17 For the morning is to them even as the shadow of death: if one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death.

18 He is swift as the waters; their portion is cursed in the earth: he beholdeth not the way of the vineyards.

19 Drought and heat consume the snow waters; so doth the grave those which have sinned.

20 The womb shall forget him; the worm shall feed sweetly on him; he shall be no more remembered; and wickedness shall be broken as a tree.

21 He evil entreateth the barren that beareth not: and doeth not good to the widow.

22 He draweth also the mighty with his power: he riseth up, and no man is sure of life.

23 Though it be given him to be in safety, whereon he resteth; yet his eyes are upon their ways.

24 They are exalted for a little while, but are gone and brought low; they are taken out of the way as all other, and cut off as the tops of the ears of corn.

25 And if it be not so now, who will make me a liar, and make my speech nothing worth?

*Ver. 14. The murderer rising with the light]* In broad day-light the murderer would arise, and slay the poor and the defenceless. See Micah, vii. 6. The two verbs arise and slay signify, by a common Hebraism, arise to slay.

*Ver. 15. The eye also of the adulterer]* The 16th verse appears to refer to the thief or house-breaker, mentioned ver. 14, in which case this verse must stand in a parenthesis. See Heath and Schultens. I would just observe, that the Syriac and Arabic render the 16th verse, *In the dark he seeketh out houses*: a translation which, if admitted, will very well connect the 15th and the 16th verses. The author of the *Observations* seems to be of this opinion, p. 97, where, speaking of the manner of building in the east, which was principally of bricks made of mud, he observes, that the architecture of the country of Job seems to have been of the same kind; for he speaks of the adulterer's digging through houses; and these walls of sun-burnt brick, when moistened with copious showers, must have been liable to accidents of this kind, at the same time that the thickness of them must have made the term digging peculiarly expressive.

*Ver. 17. For the morning, &c.]* Surely the morning was to him altogether the shadow of death; because he saw before his eyes the terrors of the shadow of death. In this and the next verse, says Mr. Heath, is a fine description of the terror and perplexity of the inhabitants of the old world, at the approach of the waters of the deluge. They run to and fro; neglect the only apparent means of saving themselves; they cannot find the way to the high grounds till their retreat is absolutely cut off, and they are destroyed, as at all events they must have been.

*Ver. 18. He is swift as the waters]* He curseth the coming day: his portion shall be cursed upon earth: he shall not enjoy the treading of his vineyards. Houb. But Heath renders it, *He was scared at the sight of the waters. Their portion was destroyed from the earth: he could not see the way that led to the high hills.* See the foregoing note. And he observes, that the argument from the 13th verse onward is, that, as the great oppressors before the flood were at once made a signal example of the divine vengeance; so (according to the principles of the friends at least) all impious men ought to

be, and to receive their punishment in this world in the sight of all men. But as notoriously this was not the case, therefore their inference of Job's being a bad man, from his sufferings, could have no foundation. See Heath and Mudge.

*Ver. 20. The worm shall feed sweetly on him]* His sweetness or vigour shall be corruption. See Schultens and Heath.

*Ver. 22. He draweth also the mighty with his power]* He oppresseth the poor: he trusteth in his own power; but he shall have no confidence of his own life. Houb. But Heath renders it, *Though he drew together the mighty for his support, yet should he be in perpetual alarms; he should scarcely think his life in safety.* ver. 23. *Though he should imagine himself to be in security, and should rely on it, yet should his eyes be on their ways.*

*Ver. 24. They are exalted for a little while, &c.]* His exaltation should be but for a short time, and he should be no more; yea, he shall be brought low; he shall be mowed down like the green fodder, or cropped off like the tops of the ears of corn. The comparison is between a man who is struck dead suddenly, and, falling, his mortal convulsions make him throw about his legs and feet; and the grass, which, as it is mowing, the lower part is cast upwards. Heath.

*Ver. 25. And if it be not so now]* But since this is by no means the case at present, who, &c. See Houb. and Heath.

REFLECTIONS.—1st. The argument in dispute is, whether the wicked were not always pursued with marks of the divine displeasure in this world. Job constantly denies the assertion.

1. He begins with an inference drawn from the close of the former chapter: *Why, seeing times are not hidden from the Almighty, whose all-capacious mind comprehends in one view the past, the present, and the future, and according to whose will all events are directed; Why, if, as you assert, the wicked are always miserable, do they that know him, who are acquainted with his will and ways, and favoured with his love, not see his days of executing judgment in this life on the ungodly? which they certainly would, if, as you affirm, they were always punished here, whereas the very contrary is evident.* Note; Whatever strange dispensations

## C H A P. XXV.

*Bildad observes, that the dominion of God is supreme; that his armies are innumerable; and that no man can be just, compared with God.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**T**HEN answered Bildad the Shuhite and said,

2 Dominion and fear *are* with him, he maketh peace in his high places.

3 Is there any number of his armies? and upon whom doth not his light arise.

4 How then can man be justified with God?

of Providence appear, we may be assured that God hath not forsaken the earth: he sees and orders all with infinite wisdom, and at last we shall adore, and wonder, and praise him, when we shall see his great designs laid open to our view.

2. He proves, in a variety of instances, the prosperity of the wicked; who, though the most unjust and cruel oppressors, go on with impunity. They rob men of their estates, and plunder them of their cattle. If the poor have but a single beast, they make a prey of it, and regard not the cries of the widow or fatherless: insolent and overbearing, it is dangerous but to stand in their way, and the poor are forced to hide themselves for safety. Intractable and wanton as the wild asses, they make plunder their trade, and, rising early, pursue their prey, living upon the fruits of their robbery. The corn which others sowed they reap, and gather the vintage of the wicked, devouring even one another; or *the wicked gather the vintage of the just*, oppressed by them. The almost naked are stripped of the few rags which covered them, and, merciless, they leave them in cold and hunger to pine and shiver on the barren mountain, or under the dreary rock. Even the fatherless babe they pluck from the breast, to sell as a slave, and take the pledge of the poor, or *the poor for a pledge*, seize them for debt, and make them their bondmen: they have no pity on the naked to cover them; and if he has gleaned but one sheaf of corn to satisfy his hunger, even that they violently take from him. Imprisoned within their walls, and doomed to hard servitude, the poor are compelled to make their oil, and tread their wine-presses, yet dare not quench their thirst with the juice of the grape. Under such oppression, even in the cities as well as the country, men groan without redress; and the soul of the wounded, struck and hurt for daring perhaps to complain, crieth out, but in vain; yet *God layeth not folly to them*, suffers all this sin of grievous rapine and cruelty, and interposes not with any distinguished judgments. *Note*: (1.) God takes notice of the sinner's wickedness, though he, from his success, promises himself impunity. (2.) It is doubly cruel to injure the fatherless and widow. (3.) They are wicked and hard-hearted masters, whose servants are scarcely suffered to live by their labour; and there is a master in heaven, who will right them shortly.

2dly, Like Ezekiel's chamber of imagery, Job goes on to describe greater abominations which pass in this world often with impunity. *They are of those that rebel against the light*, resist the remonstrances of conscience, and wilfully and deliberately plunge themselves into the grossest crimes; *they know not the ways thereof*, they refuse to know, and shun the light of truth, nor abide in the paths thereof, preferring the dark ways of wickedness before it: or, literally, the daylight is odious to them; they choose the darkness, if possible, to hide their guilty deeds. Vain attempt! while

God's eye, clearer than the sun, pierces the thickest shade, and the night to him is as bright as the day. We have

1. Their sins—murder, adultery, and house-breaking. Rising with the light, the murderer seizes the early traveller, and, though poor and needy, and there is little to be got from him, yet killeth him, as if thirsting for blood, and at night is as a thief, robbing whatever he can seize. The adulterer, ashamed to perpetrate his designs publicly, waiteth for the night, and still, in fear of discovery, disguiseth his face; and, tempted by the false hope of secrecy, rushes to the horrid deed. The robber, in the day, prowls in quest of prey, and, having marked the place and house, at night breaks through and steals. *Note*: (1.) Though blood in many instances be not discovered here, the day will come when it will cry for vengeance. (2.) However secret the adulterer's crime be kept, his shame shall not be covered when, on the day of judgment, the mask is plucked away.

2. Though they succeed in their enterprises, they carry about them continual terror. *They know not the light*, dare not be seen in it, are afraid of discovery. *The morning is to them as the shadow of death*, so unwelcome; if one know them, guilt flashes in their faces, and dread of deserved shame and punishment seizes them; *they are like men just expiring in the terrors of the shadow of death*. *Note*: A state of wickedness is a state of trembling: however pleasurable or profitable the sin, the continual alarm, through fear of discovery, embitters all.

3dly. We have,

1. The farther character of the wicked. He afflicts the barren with reproach, oppresses the widow, and not even the mighty are safe; so daring is he, that when he riseth up no man's life is secure.

2. Notwithstanding all his complicated sins, *it is given him to be in safety*; and, instead of being affected with God's patience, and becoming penitent, *he reflecteth thereon*, promising himself continual impunity. Yea, he is exalted; so far from undergoing any distinguished suffering, he rears his head high, and, if not beloved, is feared and obeyed. *Note*: Prosperity often hardens the sinner, but he is least safe when most secure. For,

3. The time of recompence will come, though not here, yet in death at least. Short-lived is his joy, though it endure to the last gasp; for swift as water his days are hurrying by; and, however happy he appears, the curse of God is upon him; and when he is gone, he shall no more behold the possessions in which he gloried. His remembrance shall be blotted from his parent earth. Broken down as a tree, the worms shall feed upon his carcase in the dust: secure as he is, God's eye still marked his winding way; and, as *men before him were*, he shall be swept away from earth, when the measure of his iniquities is full, as the ears of ripe corn are cut down. In the grave he shall be consumed, and there all his glory shall

or how can he be clean *that is* born of a woman?

5 Behold even to the moon, and it shineth

not; yea, the stars are not pure in his sight:

6 How much less man, *that is* a worm? and the son of man, *which* is a worm?

shall perish with him, as the snow is melted before the scorching sun. *Note;* Though vengeance be slow, it is sure: the longest period of a sinner's reign is a few short days, a fleeting moment of life.

4. He challenges them to confute the truths that he had advanced, to prove him a liar, or invalidate his arguments; else must they quit the field, and own the prosperity of the wicked; and that not here, but hereafter, their recompence from God awaited them; and, consequently, that their judgment, who concluded him a wicked man merely because of his afflictions, was rash and censorious.

#### CHAP. XXV.

*Ver. 1. Then answered Bildad*] The last weak effort against Job is made by Bildad. The three friends, finding themselves quite baffled in their purpose, which was, to make Job confess himself guilty of some enormous crimes, which they rashly supposed to have drawn this heavy judgment upon him; instead of ingenuously owning themselves in the wrong, which, if one may guess from the usual issue of disputes, is one of the hardest things in the world, this grave antagonist satisfies himself with an evasive answer to this purpose: namely, that no man, strictly speaking, can be justified before God; man being at best a frail and fallible creature, and God a Being of infinite purity and perfection: which is an argument that concerned Job no more than themselves, but must involve them all, without distinction, in the same class of sinners. As we here take our leave of the arguments urged by Job's friends, we may just observe in conclusion, that nothing could be more untoward than this conduct of theirs, to bring a charge against him which they could not prove, and from which his well-known virtue and integrity of life ought to have screened him. But, though Job very plainly shews them the injustice and inhumanity of this procedure, nay, though he confutes them so far that they had nothing to reply; yet, like modern disputants, they stood out to the last, and had not the grace to own their mistake, till God himself was pleased to thunder it in their ears. Here, then, we have a lively instance of the force of prejudice and prepossession.

*Ver. 2. Dominion and fear are with him*] *Dominion and terror are his attendants, while he distributeth perfect justice from the height of his exaltation.* Heath. See Hosea, ix. 7. Mic. vii. 3.

*Ver. 3. And upon whom doth not his light arise?*] *And who is there whom his brightness doth not surpass?* Heath and Schultens.

*Ver. 6. How much less man, that is a worm, &c.*] *How much less mortal man, who is corruption? and the son of man, who is a worm?* The Alexandrian edition of the LXX reads the 5th verse, *He saith to the sun, Arise not, and it doth not arise; He commandeth the moon, and it shineth not, nor are the stars pure in his sight.* In chap. xiv. 1, 2. Job represents the miserable condition of man in strong colours; and, upon this representation, expostulates on his case with God, *ver. 3, 4. Dost thou open thine eyes upon such a one, and bring-*

*est me into judgment with thee? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?* These last words shew the ground of the expostulations in this and the 15th chapter. The sense of Job's expostulation seems to be this: "Why art thou extreme to mark all my errors? Is it reasonable to expect purity of a man born of a woman, who is by the very condition of his birth unclean?" I shall be easily persuaded that Job had not entered into all the niceties relating to this point; but I shall not easily believe that he charged God foolishly, by imputing uncleanness to the works of his creation: for, tell me upon what ground this expostulation stands; *How shall man be clean, that is born of a woman? Why not clean? Did God make woman or man unclean at the beginning? If he did, the expostulation would have been more apposite, and much stronger, had the true cause been assigned, and Job had said, "How canst thou expect cleanness in man, whom thou createdst unclean?"* But as the case now stands, the expostulation has a plain reference to the introduction of vanity and corruption by the sin of the woman, and is an evidence that this ancient writer was sensible of the evil consequences of the fall, upon the whole race of man. Moses tells us, *Adam begat a son in his own likeness, after his own image;* and St. Paul, that *we have borne the image of the earthy.* The notion is the same as expressed by Job, *Can a clean thing come out of an unclean?* See Bishop Sherlock's *Use and Intent of Prophecy*, Dissert. ii. p. 221.

REFLECTIONS.—Bildad, either convinced by Job's arguments of the prosperity of the wicked, was unable to reply; or, seeing him unshaken in his opinion, thinks it useless to attempt his conviction. One thing, however, he cannot but urge; and therein he is right, the majesty and holiness of God, as an argument to deter Job from his repeated appeals to him, and eagerness to plead for himself at his bar.

1. He would have Job observe how great and glorious God is. *Dominion and fear are with him*, his kingdom is absolute and universal, and reverence and godly fear are the bounden duty of every creature before the eternal majesty. *He maketh peace in his high places*; no jarring discord disturbs the repose of that bright world where he dwells. *Is there any number of his armies?* when all the hosts of heaven and earth, the elements, and all the powers of nature, stand ready to execute his commands; *and upon whom doth not his light arise?* his providential care, extensive as the sun's bright beams, fills the earth with his goodness. Therefore Job's noisy clamour is as unreasonable as his desire to plead with such an almighty and holy God is presumptuous.

2. How vile man is! *How can man be justified with God, or how can he be clean that is born of a woman?* his nature is corrupt, his ways perverse; and therefore what folly, what madness, to pretend to appear at his righteous bar! *Behold even to the moon, and it shineth not; yea the stars are not pure in his sight;* his piercing eye can descry spots in the brightest luminaries of heaven; *how much less then can*

## C H A P. XXVI.

*Job, reproving the uncharitable spirit of Bildad, acknowledges the power of God to be infinite and unsearchable.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**B**UT Job answered and said,  
2 How hast thou helped *him that is* without power? *how* savest thou the arm *that bath* no strength?

3 How hast thou counselled *him that bath* no wisdom? and *how* hast thou plentifully declared the thing as it is?

4 To whom hast thou uttered words? and whose spirit came from thee?

5 Dead *things* are formed from under the waters, and the inhabitants thereof.

*man, that is a worm, dare stand in his presence as an appellant, or the son of man, the corrupted offspring of a fallen parent, which is a worm, a dying worm, and shortly to be food for worms, presume to vindicate himself? Note; (1.) A sense of our meanness as mortal worms, and our sinfulness as fallen creatures, should ever humble us low in the dust before God. (2.) Man is by nature as unfit for communion with God, through his corruption, as unable to stand before him by reason of his guilt; woe were unto us, if we should, unpardoned and unholy, be called to his bar. (3.) It is a mark of the amazing love and condescension of God, that, notwithstanding our vileness and sinfulness, he has in mercy had respect unto us, and sent his Son to wash us in his blood, and his Spirit to renew our hearts, that we might be enabled to appear righteous in his sight, and be made meet for the enjoyment of his blessed self.*

## C H A P. XXVI.

*Ver. 1. But Job answered and said]* Job, finding his friends quite driven from their strong hold, and reduced to give up the argument, now tells them, ver. 2, 3. if the business was to celebrate the power and wisdom of the Almighty, he could produce as many shining instances of it as they could; but at the same time he intimates, that their behaviour was mean, after so great a parade of wisdom as they had exhibited, to shelter themselves at last behind the power of God, rather than generously give up an argument which they were unable to maintain, and acquit him of a suspicion which they were not capable of supporting by a conviction. Heath.

*Ver. 2. How hast thou helped him, &c.]* Whom hast thou been helping? *him who bath no power: For whom hast thou gotten a victory? the arm which bath no strength.* ver. 3. *To whom hast thou been giving counsel? him who bath no wisdom: verily, thou hast been teaching learning to the master.* Heath. The latter clause of the 3d verse, which is literally rendered, was, most probably, a proverbial expression.

*Ver. 5. Dead things are formed from under the waters]* Shall the Rephaim be brought forth from under the waters; and their inhabitants, or their neighbours? It follows, ver. 6, *Sheol is naked before him, and destruction bath no covering.*

6 *Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering.*

7 He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing.

8 He bindeth up the waters in his thick clouds; and the cloud is not rent under them.

9 He holdeth back the face of *his* throne, and spreadeth his cloud upon it.

10 He hath compassed the waters with bounds, until the day and night come to an end.

11 The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof.

12 He divideth the sea with his power, and

Job is here giving instances of the almighty power of God. Our translators have been a little unhappy in their version. The word רֵפְאִים *Rephaim* never signifies *dead things*. It originally denotes those *giants* in impiety who were overwhelmed by the flood; and from thence it came afterwards to signify the *manes* of wicked men, or men of violence like them, who, as they died, were gathered to their assembly, to the lowest depths of שְׁאוֹל *sheol*. See Prov. ix. 18. The Chaldee paraphrast, LXX. and Vulgate, all translate *rephaim* here by a word which signifies *giants*; and from a view of their translations, compared with the Hebrew, the meaning of the verse seems to be, "Shall the Rephaim be brought forth again from under the waters, with which they were overwhelmed at the flood; or their neighbours, those wicked souls who have since been gathered to their assembly?" See Peters, Prov. xxi. 16, and Isaiah xiv. 9. Houbigant renders this verse, *Behold the giants tremble beneath the waters, in their habitations*: Job means those giants, says he, who were overwhelmed with the flood; having their overthrow as immediately present before his eyes, because the deluge at this time was fresh in the memory of men.

*Ver. 9. He holdeth back the face of his throne, &c.]* He covereth the place of his immediate presence, spreading his cloud over it. Heath.

*Ver. 10. He hath compassed the waters with bounds]* He hath set a circle as a boundary upon the face of the waters, even to the extremity of light with darkness; i. e. to the very edge where light and darkness meet. The horizontal circle is here meant. See Peters, and the note on chap. xxviii. 3.

*Ver. 12. He divideth the sea with his power]* He shaketh the sea. Schultens. *He appeaseth the sea by his power; by his wisdom he hath determined its extent.* Houbigant, who observes, that the sacred author here refers to God's creation of the sea, and his limitation of it by appointed bounds. Bishop Warburton, however, tells us, that the destruction of Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea is here plainly referred to, and that רַבָּב *rabab*, rendered *proud*, signifies *Egypt*. But perhaps, says Mr. Peters, others may see nothing more in it than the description of a storm or tempest. The Hebrew word רָבַע *ragac* translated *divide*, is not the same as is used

by his understanding he smiteth through the proud.

13 By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens; his hand hath formed the crooked serpent.

used Exod. xiv. of the Red Sea, but signifies a violent *breaking and tossing* of the waves, as in a storm. And if the former part of the sentence means that God sometimes by his power raises a violent storm at sea, the latter may well enough be understood of the pride and swelling of the sea itself, allayed again by the same divine power and will which raised it. Though I suspect, indeed, from the use of the phrase elsewhere, that some ancient piece of history, much older than that of Pharaoh's overthrow in the Red Sea, may be here alluded to. If Egypt, for its *pride*, or *strength*, be once or twice called רַבָּב *rabab*, in the scriptures, this is no argument that Egypt must be always meant, wherever the word *proud* or *reb* occurs.

*Ver. 13. By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens, &c.]* It may be well asked, how come these disagreeable ideas to be joined together? How comes the *forming of a crooked serpent* to be mentioned as an instance of Almighty power, and to be set as it were upon an equal foot with the creation of the heavens, and all the host of them? When you read the whole chapter, all the images in which are great and magnificent, can you possibly imagine that the forming of the crooked serpent, in this place, means no more than that God created snakes and adders? This surely cannot be the case. If we consider the state of religion in the world when this book was penned, it will help to clear this matter up. The oldest notion, in opposition to the supremacy of the creator, is, that of two independent principles; and the only kind of idolatry mentioned in the book of Job (and it was of all others the most ancient) is the worship of the sun and moon and heavenly host: from this Job vindicates himself, chap. xxxi. 26, &c. Suppose Job now to be acquainted with the fall of man, and the part ascribed to the serpent, of the introduction of evil; and see how aptly the parts cohere: In opposition to the idolatrous practice of his time, he asserts God to be the maker of all the host of heaven, *By his spirit he hath garnished the heavens.* In opposition to the false notion of two independent principles, he asserts God to be the maker of him who was the first author of evil: *His hand hath formed the crooked serpent.* You see how properly *the garnishing of the heavens* and the *forming of the serpent* are joined together. That this is the ancient traditionary explication of this place, we have undeniable evidence from the translation of the LXX, who render the latter part of this verse, which relates to the serpent, in this manner: *By a decree he destroyed the apostate dragon.* The Syriac and Arabic versions are to the same effect. These translators apply the place to the punishment inflicted on the serpent, and it comes to the same thing; for the punishing of the serpent is as clear an evidence of God's power over the author of evil, as the creating him. We need not wonder to see so much concern in this book of Job to maintain the supremacy of God, and to guard it against every false notion; for this was the theme, the business of the author. He gives as it were an epitome of his design in these remarkable words, delivered by Job, chap. ix. 4. *God is wise in heart, and mighty in strength: who hath*

14 Lo, these are parts of his ways; but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?

*hardened himself against him, and hath prospered?* The mention of the serpent in this manner, in the book of Job, is the more to be regarded, because this book being, as I conceive, older than the Mosaic history; it is an evident proof that the account of Moses is the ancient account of the fall, and not a story dressed up by himself to serve any particular ends or purposes. Bp. Sherlock on Prophecy, Dissert. ii. As this learned and able writer has in these last words expressed his opinion of the antiquity of this book, we will just set down, for the satisfaction of the reader, what he offers against the opinion of its being written for the consolation of the Jews at Babylon. "The patience of "Job," says he, "is much talked of, and we seldom look "further for any use of this book; but in truth the book "was written in opposition to the very ancient opinion "which introduced two independent principles; one of "good, the other of evil. For this reason Satan, the au- "thor of Job's misfortunes, has permission from God to "afflict Job; and the moral of the history lies in Job's "reflection, *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away:* "and again, *Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and "shall we not receive evil? In all which,* as the history ex- "pressly observes, *Job did not sin with his lips;* intimating "how prone men were to sin with their lips, when they "talked of the evils of life, and the author of them."

*Ver. 14. Lo, these are parts of his ways.]* Lo! these are but the outlines of his paths; yet what a series of noble acts have we heard of him! but of the thundering of his mightiness, who can even bear the contemplation? See Heath and Schulzens.

REFLECTIONS.—Ist, Pained as Job is, in every part, he cannot help rallying Bildad on the impertinence of his pompous oration.

*How hast thou helped him that is without power? how sawest thou the arm that hath no strength?* If this be referred to God, it is an ironical sarcasm on Bildad's pretending to lift his feeble arm in support of the Almighty and his cause; or if it be spoken of Job, as seems most likely, it expresses his contempt of a discourse so foreign to the purpose, and so little suited to minister to him strength or help. *How hast thou counselled him that hath no wisdom?* ridiculing the folly of his affecting the part of a counsellor, and of his regarding his opponent as if he was destitute of understanding: *And how hast thou plentifully declared the thing as it is?* set forth the matter in dispute in a copious and convincing manner, when in fact he had not spoken one word to the purpose, respecting the grand point in debate. *To whom hast thou uttered words,* as if I were ignorant of such knowledge, and words withal so foreign to the case? *And whose spirit came from thee?* in thy conceit, the spirit of wisdom and eloquence; in my apprehension, the spirit of error and affectation. Note; (1.) When persons conceited, and wedded to their own opinions, assume a superiority in dispute, without producing any just claim to it, they deserve the ridicule that they provoke. (2.) It is not sufficient that what we say is true; it must be pertin-



## C H A P. XXVII.

*Job protesteth his sincerity. The hypocrite is without hope. The blessings which the wicked have are turned into curses.*

[Before Christ †645.]

**M**OREOVER Job continued his parable, and said,

minent, and applicable to the case in hand, or else it is unprofitable and vain. (3.) Afflicted souls need not to have displays of majesty and terror set before them; but of mercy and grace in Christ, poured in as balm to their wounds.

2dly, The point in debate is dropped here; and, since Bildad seemed to triumph in setting forth the power and greatness of God; Job, so far from disputing it, heartily joins with him, yea, exceeds him. It were happy for us, in all our religious differences, if we would waive disputes about opinions allowedly not essential to salvation, and, content to differ about the more abstruse and minuter points of doctrine, unite in the great and glorious truths which both sides heartily embrace.

1. The power and glory of God appear among the inhabitants of hell beneath, sunk as stones in the mighty waters, and groaning in misery: the Rephaim, the giants of enormous size, swept away by the devouring deluge with all the multitude, are shut up in chains of darkness in the great abyss, unto the judgment of the great day, (for so the words may signify:) *Behold, the giants groan under the waters, with the inhabitants thereof*, the world of the ungodly. *Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering*; he sees each atom of the sleeping dead wherever dispersed in earth, fire, air, or water: yea, the place of the damned is open before him, hell itself excludes not his presence; how then should the sinner be hid, when even death and hell are without covering?

2. From things beneath, he ascends to things around us, in the earth and sea: *He hangs the earth upon nothing*, poised in the vast expanse, and held together by strange magnetic virtue. Shut up in the bosom of the vast abyss, the mighty waters know those bounds which they cannot pass till time shall be no more. The stormy billows roar, and lash the echoing shores; the waves lift up their heads, as if they had forsaken the deep, and threatened to mount the skies; the pillars of heaven, the strong mountains, tremble, and stand astonished at his reproof, when tempests and mighty thunders are stirred up round about them; then, at his word, *he smiteth through the proud waves*, the storm is hushed, billows subside, and creep in gentle murmurs to the shore.

3. From objects around us on earth, he rises to the visible glories above us, which bear the strong and legible characters of his eternal power and godhead who fashioned them. The vast expanse of firmament is stretched over us, where float those clouds, in which, by wonderful mechanism, the waters exhaled from the sea are suspended, nor, rent with the weight, pour down in torrents their collected stores, but with gentle showers refresh, instead of deluging the earth. Garnished by his Spirit, the æthærial sky, bright with sun, moon, and stars, displays the

2 *As God liveth, who hath taken away my judgment; and the Almighty, who hath vexed my soul;*

3 *All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils;*

4 *My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit.*

wonders of his transcendent greatness; and *his hand hath formed the crooked serpent*, either some bright constellation in the heavens, or that wonder of God's works upon earth, Leviathan, Isa. xxvii. 1.; yet, surpassing marvellous as these his works appear, *lo, these are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him?* how little do we know, compared with what is unseen; and even in what is visible, how small a part can we comprehend of the depths of the wisdom, knowledge, and glory of God therein manifested. *But the thunder of his power*, the amazing greatness of it, *who can understand?* it infinitely transcends all human faculties, and leaves us far behind, lost in wonder and admiration.

## C H A P. XXVII.

*Ver. 1. Moreover, Job continued his parable, and said*] Concerning the word *parable*, see Numb. xxi. 27. We add another criticism upon it from Mr. Peters. "The word *משל* *masbal*, is the same as is used in Scripture for a *proverb*, and is the very title given in the book of Proverbs. "If we refer to the etymology of the word from the verb *משל* *masbal*, to *rule*, we shall find that it means "no more than a powerful or commanding sentence or speech; and a good speaker in those ancient times had, "no doubt, a great command in their assemblies. The "Proverbs are called *משלים* *mesbalim* for no other reason, "than for the weight and authority that they carry with "them; for as to other things, we know that some are delivered in plain, some in figurative expressions; some in "families, and some without. A book of sentences of Epictetus, of so much authority with his followers that they "used to get it by heart, was for the same reason, as I take "it, called *κρίσεις* *doxai*, an expression exactly answering to "the Hebrew *mesbalim*, and rendered by Tully, *sententia maxime rate*. With the same regard to the original idea "of the word, a *taunting domineering speech*, or *by-word*, is "likewise called *masbal*: as Psalm xliv. 14. *Thou makest us a by-word among the Heathen*. And for the same "reason, a *song of victory*, or triumphal speech in a good "cause, is also called *masbal*; as Isai. xiv. 4. where our "translators read, *Thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, how hath the oppressor ceased!* " &c. But this proverb, as appears by what follows, "is no other than a triumphal song or speech, and "that as noble a one as ever was composed, from "ver. 4, to 23. of that chapter. And here we are "brought home:—by Job's *continuing his parable*, is only "meant that he went on in a triumphant way of speech, "like one who had got the better of the argument, as he "certainly had. For his antagonists, though they might "not be convinced, were put to silence at least, and had "nothing to reply." Commentators differ much concerning



5 God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove my integrity from me.

6 My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.

7 Let mine enemy be as the wicked, and he that riseth up against me as the unrighteous.

8 For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?

9 Will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him?

10 Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?

11 I will teach you by the hand of God:

that which is with the Almighty will I not conceal.

12 Behold, all ye yourselves have seen it; why then are ye thus altogether vain?

13 This is the portion of a wicked man with God, and the heritage of oppressors, which they shall receive of the Almighty.

14 If his children be multiplied, it is for the sword: and his offspring shall not be satisfied with bread.

15 Those that remain of him shall be buried in death: and his widows shall not weep.

16 Though he heap up silver as the dust, and prepare raiment as the clay;

17 He may prepare it, but the just shall put it on, and the innocent shall divide the silver.

cerning the argument of Job in this chapter. Mr. Heath seems to have placed it in its true light. "Job," says he, "having refuted thoroughly the principle on which his friends had argued, and having silenced them; he now, in this chapter, undertakes to prove to them on their own principles, that their reasoning was false; and, having first declared his purpose to maintain his innocence, he then desires them to consider how, on their own principles, they could suppose him a hypocrite; for, as he had given up all hopes of life, what end would it answer to play the hypocrite; a part which could not deceive the all-seeing eye of God? and what reliance could such an one have on the Almighty? Could he have the face to call upon him in the time of calamity? His own conscience must tell him that it would be in vain. 'But, to put the matter out of all dispute, I will prove to you (says he,) by arguments irrefragable, (at least to you, for they are your own) that it must be foolish to the last degree to play the hypocrite in my condition; for all that I could propose to gain by it, is the long catalogue of misery which I shall run over. This you must allow to be true, for you yourselves tell me that you have seen it;" referring to chap. iv. 8. xv. 17. xx. 4.

Ver. 2. *Who hath taken away my judgment? Who hath afflicted me so severely, without any notorious blame on my part.* Schultens.

Ver. 5—8. *God forbid that I should justify you*] See the note on chap. ii. 9. This and the three following verses afford us a proof of Job's faith, and contain the noble plea that he makes for himself against the reproachful insinuation of his mistaken friends; as if he must needs have been a wicked man and a hypocrite, under all the fair appearances of a strict piety and integrity. "Though I am quite cast down, (says he,) and as miserable almost as it is possible to be in this life, yet God forbid that I should justify your censures of me, by owning that I have played the hypocrite, or been secretly wicked! No; whatever shall befall me, I am resolved that I will still maintain and still hold fast my integrity: Let mine

*enemy be as wicked, let him flourish and prosper as much as his heart can wish here; (and he had before shewn that this is often the case with the wicked,) But, what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul? i. e. What can he think will become of him after death? What comfort can such a one possibly entertain in the prospect of futurity?" I have put no force upon the words, but rather softened the last branch of the sentence; for there is plainly a *meiosis*, as the rhetoricians call it; and by the hypocrite's having no hope, may very reasonably be understood, he has the most dreadful expectations. This evidently appears to have been Job's meaning, from the following part of the chapter: *Will God hear his cry, saith he, when trouble cometh upon him?* ver. 9. But particularly from the 20th and following verses, where he describes in a very lively manner the horror and distraction of a wicked man upon a death-bed. From this passage then it appears, that, in Job's opinion, the great difference between the righteous and the wicked, as to happiness and misery, consisted in their future expectations. Peters. Heath renders the 8th verse, *For what can be the hope of the hypocrite, when he is cut off? when God depriveth him of his life?**

Ver. 11. *By the hand of God*] i. e. By such arguments as are irresistible; by the arguments which you have all along dignified with that title; referring to chap. xviii. 21. and xx. 29. Heath. Houbigant renders it, *by the help of God.*

Ver. 15. *Those that remain of him, &c.*] The learned Schultens has, I think, given the true meaning of this passage, rendering it, *they shall have death itself for their sepulture; i. e. they shall be reduced to so great a degree of misery, that where they die there they shall rot, and no person shall bury them.* It is put in antithesis to the costly monuments of the rich. Heath; who renders it, *those that remain of him shall not be buried.*

Ver. 16. *Though he heap up silver, &c.*] See Zech. ix. 3. and 2 Kings, v. 5.

Ver.

18 He buildeth his house as a moth, and as a booth *that* the keeper maketh.

19 The rich man shall lie down, but he shall not be gathered: he openeth his eyes, and he is not.

20 Terrors take hold on him as waters, a tempest stealeth him away in the night.

21 The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth: and as a storm hurleth him out of his place.

22 For God shall cast upon him, and not spare: he would fain flee out of his hand.

23 Men shall clap their hands at him, and shall hiss him out of his place.

*Ver. 18. A booth that the keeper maketh*] Here is an omission of the word *vineyard*: these *booths* were little huts or arbours made by the keepers to watch in by night, to prevent the vineyard from being plundered: a practice still continued in the wine-countries. See Heath, and *Ijai. i. 8.*

*Ver. 19. The rich man shall lie down, &c.*] *He may lie down rich, but it is the last time*: a rendering which the latter part of the verse fully justifies. It describes the case of a tyrant, who lies down to rest in quiet; but those who conspire against him come upon him while he sleepeth: *he openeth his eyes, but it is but for a moment*; to see his own destruction. Heath; with whom Houbigant agrees. But Mr. Peters explains it thus: "The wicked rich man shall die, but shall not be gathered to the assembly of good and pious souls: he openeth his eyes in the other world, and finds himself quite lost and miserable;" for, that the word *אסף* *asap*, gathered was sometimes put for being gathered to their fathers, or their people, we have a plain example, *Numb. xxvii. 13.* where, of Aaron it is only said, that *he was gathered*; and yet the same, no doubt, was meant, by it, that he should be gathered to his people; i. e. to the assembly of good and pious souls.

*Ver. 20. Terrors take hold on him, &c.*] See *Prov. x. 25.* The meaning of the high metaphors in these verses is, that he dieth, as most wicked men do, in the utmost terror, tumult, and confusion.

*Ver. 22. For God shall cast upon him*] There is nothing for God in the Hebrew. Houbigant renders the 21st verse, *A burning wind shall carry him away, and he shall be gone; it shall hurt him out of his place*; and he connects it thus; *It shall urge him on, and not spare: driven into flight, he shall flee from its power: ver. 23. It shall clap with its hands against him, it shall hiss against him out of its place.* Heath renders the latter clause of the 22d verse, *he would fain fly out of its reach.* The poet here personifies the storm, who carries away, hurls down, claps his hands at, and hisses the wicked man off the stage.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Though his friends are silent, Job continues his discourse; a parable it is called, as being full of deep and weighty matter, or as abounding with metaphors and allegories.

He solemnly appeals to God, as the everliving God, and Almighty Governor of the world, to witness for his integrity, though he had afflicted his soul, and taken away his judgment, refused to appear to vindicate him, and continued his troubles (a rash expression, for which Elihu reproved him, chap. xxxiv. 3.). While life and breath endured, he resolved that nothing should make him wickedly and falsely

confess himself guilty, when his conscience bore him witness in the Holy Ghost that he was sincere before God. Far, therefore, from justifying them in their charges, by acknowledging the truth of them, he, with indignation, rejects the thought, resolved till death to maintain his past integrity, and, notwithstanding all he suffers, to cleave steadfastly to God, and never quit his plea of the justice of his cause, or suffer his heart to reproach him, by yielding to their cruel suggestions. *Note*; (1.) An oath is an appeal to the heart-searching God; and, as we must swear by no other, when we swear by him we cannot be too circumspect that we speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Prevarication, or concealment, is as much perjury in the eye of God, as direct falsehood. (2.) We are too apt to charge God foolishly, to faint under his corrections, and to call that his vexation, which flows only from our own impatience. (3.) Whatever circumstances we are in, it is a wise and holy purpose, to hold fast till death in our dependance on God, and unshaken steadiness in the profession of the true religion. (4.) While believers are careful to keep a conscience void of offence, they are in duty bound to turn a deaf ear to Satan's suggestions that they are hypocrites, and not children of God, and to be unmoved by any censures of perverse and uncharitable men. *If our conscience condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.*

2dly, It had been suggested by his friends, that he was a wicked man, or a hypocrite. No, says he, I know the evil and danger of their state too well. *Let mine enemy be as the wicked.* If it were permitted him to wish the greatest evil to his enemy, he could not think of any thing so terrible as his sharing with the wicked: not that a good man, like Job, would wish evil to any; but it is expressive of his sense of the dreadfully dangerous and ruinous estate of the ungodly. *For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, succeeding in his schemes of worldly advantage, and securing praise and honour among men? How vain and wretched! what a delusion will the whole appear, when God taketh away his soul? A dying hour, or, at farthest, a judgment-day, will terribly undeceive him, and all his professions and outward performances will stand him in no stead at God's bar. Will God bear his cry when trouble cometh upon him? (either the troubles of life, or the fearfulness which at death, or after death, will seize him)—will God then regard his prayer? No; while inward hypocrisy remains, prayer is an abomination; and in the day of vengeance inflexible justice can be prevailed upon by no importunity to reverse the sentence. Will he delight himself in the Almighty? No; his religion is a burden, a task; not a pleasure, or his choice. Will he always call upon God? No;*

## C H A P. XXVIII.

*Job observes, that man, though he can find out the hidden veins of silver, gold, iron, and brass, yet cannot find out wisdom: God hath taught him that wisdom consists in the fear of the Lord.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**S**URELY there is a vein for the silver, and a place for gold *where they find it.*

at best he prays only by fits and starts. When he can get nothing by it, or must sustain damage from his profession of religion, the mask is immediately removed. Now Job suggests, that the very contrary of this was his character, and therefore he was no hypocrite. *Note;* (1.) Miserable is the condition of the hypocrite: we ought to take especial heed that we deceive not ourselves, but prove our own selves, whether Jesus Christ indeed be formed in us. (2.) Many groan and cry under their troubles, whose prayer, as it proceeds not from an humbling sense of sin, but from mere anguish of pain, returns unanswered. (3.) They who have neglected prayer, or used it in mere formality, will shortly cry out in anguish of soul, when the door is shut, and it is too late to knock. (4.) The religion of hypocrites consists in profession, the performance of some outward ceremonies, and a desire to appear righteous before men; but the heart is unchanged. They know no delight in God; their task of formal duties is irksome; and an excuse for omitting them, or hurrying them hastily over, is easily admitted. Nor would they pray, or serve God at all, if the fear of hell, or their character in the world, did not more influence them, than any pleasure in his service, or real love to him in their souls.

3dly, That the wicked are certainly miserable, Job will readily allow; the question only is, Where? not always visibly in this life, though that may be sometimes the case; but assuredly after death the curse will overtake them. This he here undertakes to teach his friends, under the good hand of God, if they desire to learn; and these dispensations of the Almighty's providence he would unfold, which themselves must needs have observed and seen, and therefore the more blameable their censures in condemning him for a hypocrite. The portion of the ungodly and the oppressor then is sure destruction, descending to them as a heritage; and, though in this life they may prosper, they shall receive it from the hand of the Almighty in eternity.

1. Their families, whom they leave behind them, and in whom they hope to perpetuate their name and glory, shall be cut off by the sword, or by famine; and if any yet remain, the pestilence shall sweep them away, hurried to the grave, without a tear dropt over them: either they shall have no widows to lament them, or they shall be so odious to the wives of their bosoms, that they will rather rejoice at their departure.

2. The wealth of the sinner, which with such assiduous care and toil he collected, shall be dissipated through God's over-ruling providence. The just shall possess the wardrobes that he hath filled, and the innocent divide the silver that he hath accumulated, who will make a better use of

2 Iron is taken out of the earth, and brass is molten out of the stone.

3 He setteth an end to darkness, and searcheth out all perfection: the stones of darkness, and the shadow of death.

4 The flood breaketh out from the inhabitant; *even the waters* forgotten of the foot: they are dried up, they are gone away from men.

the unrighteous Mammon. His stately palace shall moulder into dust, as the feeble house which the moth erects, and be of as short continuance as the shepherd's booth. *Note;* (1.) When men are dead, frequently their riches strangely vanish: could they look out of their graves, their misery to see how they are disposed of would be greater even than the anxiety and care with which they scraped them together. (2.) The only durable house that we can build, is that not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

3. They themselves shall meet a miserable death, and a more terrible eternity. *The rich man shall lie down in the dust of death, but he shall not be gathered to the sepulchre of his fathers, or the congregation of the righteous. He openeth his eyes, which he closed upon his bed, and lo, he is not any longer numbered with the living, but cut off by a sudden stroke, and lifting up his eyes in torment. Terrors take hold on him, resistless as the torrent of waters; and a tempest of divine wrath, as little expected as the approach of the thief, stealeth him away in the night, just when he had been saying, Soul, take thine ease. The east wind carrieth him away, and he departeth into the regions of eternal darkness; and as a storm, the vengeance of God hurleth him out of his place, from his palace upon earth, down into the horrid caverns of Tophet; for God shall cast upon him the fierceness of his wrath, tribulation, and anguish, and not spare; his punishment will be without measure, and without end, where, though he would fain flee out of his hand, resistance is vain, and the great gulph fixed prevents all escape. Men shall clap their hands at him, or, hands shall clap at him, the righteous upon earth on being delivered from their oppressor, and saints and angels in heaven magnifying God for his righteous judgments, and shall hiss him out of his place, treating his memory with contempt on earth, or expressing their abhorrence of his crimes when he is driven from God's tribunal into everlasting punishment.* *Note;* (1.) They who lie down on their beds know not whether they shall ever awake again among the living. Are we ready then for a sudden summons? (2.) The death-bed of the rich is often a scene of tempest, when they must leave a beloved world, to go where dreadful darkness hides the prospect, and conscious guilt begets a fearful looking-for of judgment. (3.) If once the sinner be ingulphed in the belly of hell, then black despair will add the summit of misery to the intolerable and everlasting burnings.

## C H A P. XXVIII.

*Ver. 1. Surely there is a vein for the silver]* See the Reflections on the 28th verse, p. 806. This chapter, as it is one of

5 *As for the earth, out of it cometh bread: and under it is turned up as it were fire.*

6 The stones of it *are* the place of sapphires: and it hath dust of gold.

7 *There is a path which no fowl knoweth,*

and which the vulture's eye hath not seen:

8 The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it.

9 He putteth forth his hand upon the rock; he overturneth the mountains by the roots.

of the most beautiful and instructive, so perhaps we may add, it is the most obscure of the whole book. The subject of it is an inquiry after wisdom: not the wisdom of God, meaning the unsearchable depths of his counsels; but wisdom in general, or rather the wisdom proper to man; and, therefore, in the last verse, as the result of the inquiry, we are told what that wisdom is. The chapter begins with a fine description of the indefatigable industry and ardour of mankind, in searching after things which contribute either to the use or ornament of life; how they dig into the bowels of the earth for metals, gold, silver, iron, and brass; and though the great Creator hath set a boundary betwixt light and darkness, dividing the two hemispheres from each other, as by a line or circle, yet the industry or avarice of man is without bounds. He searcheth into the land of darkness itself for hidden treasures. See ver. 3. The word rendered *vein*, מוֹצָא *motza*, signifies properly a *going-forth*: *there is a going-forth for the silver*; that is, "man hath found where silver may be dug out of the earth." See Peters and Houbigant.

Ver. 2. *And brass is molten out of the stone*] *And stone, when it is melted, becometh brass.* Houbigant.

Ver. 3. *He setteth an end to darkness*] *He hath set, or, an end is set to darkness, and an extremity to all, or, to the universe.* He (meaning man, that audacious creature) searcheth out the stones of darkness, and the shadow of death. He digs into another world, as it were, for gold and precious stones. תְּכֵלֶת *taklith*, as well as קֵץ *ketz*, signifies the end, the border, and extremity of any thing; and the extremity of all, or the universe, I apprehend to mean the same horizontal circle which divides the light and darkness from each other; for what is above the horizon is, in effect, the universe to us; at least, it was so to the ancients, who considered all below it, as, to them, a region of perpetual darkness. It was this upper visible hemisphere which they called *the world*; see chap. xviii. 18. and 1 Sam. ii. 8. That this must be the meaning here, seems further confirmed by a parallel place in this speech of Job, chap. xxvi. 10. where he points out the same horizontal circle in almost the same words: *He hath set a circle as a boundary upon the face of the waters, even to the extremity of light and darkness*; i. e. to the very edge where light and darkness meet. This is evidently the sense of that passage, and we see that the expressions in both are much the same; only what is called *the extremity of light* in one, is in the other passage, called *the extremity of all, or the universe*, meaning the whole enlightened hemisphere. See Prov. xxvi. 10. Isa. xlv. 24. If this then be the true sense of this difficult passage, I believe the reader will agree with me, that the thought is very noble and sublime: it is as if we should say, in the language of Horace, *Nequicquam Deus abscedit*, &c. "In vain is it that God hath divided the light from the darkness, if men will dig into the land of darkness itself for gold and treasures." As he au-

thor of the Book of Job was, perhaps, the most brief writer that ever appeared in the world, and his language the most concise; he just gives you a glimpse of things, and leaves the rest to be supplied by the imagination of the reader. His thoughts are like the gold and jewels that he speaks of; precious in themselves, we must sometimes labour hard, and go deep for them. Peters. Heath understands the passage somewhat differently; and, supposing it to contain a description of the dreadful life of the miner, who descends into the bowels of the earth in search of ore, he renders it, *Maketh a league with darkness, and all destruction; who searcheth out the stones of darkness, and the shadow of death.*

Ver. 4. *The flood breaketh out*] The author here gives us another instance of the daring spirit and ingenuity of mankind; how they cross the broad rivers and arms of the sea for commerce, where there is no path for the foot of man; where they lessen to the sight, and are tossed upon the waves. The verse may be literally translated thus: *The flood interrupts from the stranger; forgotten of the foot, they appear less than men; they are tossed.* If we were to see such a passage in Pindar, I am persuaded, we should think that which I have given to be the sense of it, and admire the strong and lively images here set before us. There are but two places which I remember in the Book of Job, where there is any allusion to navigation, and both shew it to have been in its infancy: the one is chap. ix. 26. on which see the note; the other is this before us; where the sea is not so much as mentioned, but נַחַל *nachal*, a torrent, or flood; some arm of the sea, perhaps, of a few leagues over, which, dividing the several nations, must interrupt their hospitality and commerce with each other, except by the help of navigation. One would think that Job had the boat and mariners in his eye when he describes them so poetically in these three remarkable particulars; that they are *forgotten of the foot*; i. e. their feet forget them, and are no longer serviceable to them in this very different way of travelling; that they lessen to the sight; they look like crows instead of men, as they go further and further from the shore; and lastly, are tossed up and down upon the billows; נָעוּ *nau*. The word seems to denote any involuntary and irregular motion, and is used by the Psalmist for the staggering of a drunkard; to which he compares the unsteady motion of a ship's crew tossed in a storm, in that fine description, Ps. cvii. 27. Peters.

Ver. 5. *As for the earth, out of it, &c.*] *By means of it.* Heath; who thinks that the latter part of the verse refers to the bituminous sulphureous countries in the east; the subversion of which produced the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah; though it seems probable that the meaning is more general.

Ver. 7. *There is a path which no fowl knoweth*] *As for his path, the eagle knoweth it not; the eye of the vulture hath not pierced it.* Heath.

10 He cutteth out rivers among the rocks; and his eye seeth every precious thing.

11 He bindeth the floods from overflowing; and *the thing that is hid* bringeth he forth to light.

12 But where shall wisdom be found? and where *is* the place of understanding?

13 Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living.

14 The depth saith, *It is not in me*: and the sea saith, *It is not with me*.

15 It cannot be gotten for gold, neither shall silver be weighed *for* the price thereof.

16 It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire.

17 The gold and the crystal cannot equal it: and the exchange of it *shall not be for* jewels of fine gold.

18 No mention shall be made of coral, or of pearls: for the price of wisdom *is* above rubies.

19 The topaz of Ethiopia shall not equal it, neither shall it be valued with pure gold.

20 *Whence*, then cometh wisdom? and where *is* the place of understanding?

21 Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air.

22 Destruction and death say, We have heard the fame thereof with our ears.

*Ver. 12—21. But where shall wisdom be found?*] Job continues to give further instances of the daring and yet successful attempts of mankind, to provide themselves with every necessary and conveniency of life; such as corn for bread; (ver. 5.) fountains of water in the dry places, where they are wanted, cut out of the hard rock; (ver. 10.) and rapid rivers restrained within their channels to prevent the mischiefs of their overflow: ver. 11. To which he adds again gold and sapphires, and other precious stones, dug from the deep dark caverns of the earth, *where the lion's foot never trod, nor the vulture's eye hath reached*: in short, that there is scarcely any thing so concealed, but that the industry of man hath brought it to light; wisdom alone excepted; for all this is designed to introduce the great question, "*Where shall wisdom be found?*" ver. 12—20. The reader cannot but take notice of that beautiful repetition which is here made of several of the particulars before mentioned, and the fine turn which is given to each: *the depth saith, It is not in me; and the sea saith, It is not with me*: as if he had said, "Men may dig into the bowels of the earth, and find gold and treasures there; but they will have as far to seek for wisdom as ever: nay, could they traverse the great sea itself, as they now cross a river or a strait, yet they would find that wisdom is not to be had in the way of commerce and exchange." It follows, *It cannot be gotten for gold,—the onyx,—the sapphire,—the coral,—the pearl,—the topaz*. The *sapphire* was mentioned before, and, being itself a Hebrew word, there can be no doubt about the meaning of it; but for the other words, whether we translate them rightly is a controverted point among the learned; and the obscurity of the text in this, as well as in other places, affords no inconsiderable argument of the antiquity of the book. One thing we cannot but remark from this passage; namely, how early the race of men had learned to set a value on those precious trinkets which are here so lavishly and temptingly exposed to view, that we could scarcely have forgiven the speaker, but for the honesty of his declaration. It cannot, however, but give us a high idea of the splendor of Job's condition in the time of his prosperity, to see that he was so well acquainted with all

those rare and costly things which the world calls treasures, and of which, no doubt, he had his share; but it gives one still a higher idea of his integrity and good sense, to find him representing wisdom as beyond comparison more valuable than them all. "*But where then is this valuable thing to be found? Whence cometh wisdom? ver. 20. and where is the place of understanding?*" ver. 21. *Seeing it is hid from the eyes of all living, and kept close from the fowls of the air, or heavens.*" Had augury been practised in the days of Job, one would think that he had here alluded to it. But I cannot find that there is the least mention in this book (which is another mark of its antiquity) of divination of any sort, except what Tully calls, improperly, the natural divination *per somnia et vaticinationes*, by dreams and extacies, or prophetic raptures; and it is remarkable, that he says of those two sorts, that many of the philosophers who discarded all the rest allowed of these; I suppose because they were supported by unquestionable facts. See Tull. de Divin. lib. i. cap. 3. If one may take a hint from the old scholiast upon Homer, it should seem as if augury was introduced among the heathens together with their men-deities; for he tells us, "that Jupiter and the eagle, which of all the winged tribe gives the most certain omen, were born together." See Peters. Job, by mentioning the birds, appears to mean that wisdom was sealed up from all; from all beneath, ver. 14. from all in the midst, ver. 15. From all above; from all which walk the earth; from all which fly the heavens.

*Ver. 22. Destruction and death say, &c.*] In this and the following verses we have an answer to the great question, "*Whence cometh wisdom?*" But it opens to us by degrees. *Destruction and death say, we have heard the fame thereof with our ears.* Destruction and death mean the dead: the metonymy is easy, and gives a clear and natural sense to the passage. He had just before told us, that wisdom and her place were hid from the eyes of all the living, and, therefore, where should we go to seek for it, but among the dead? The synonymous words *Destruction and death* are used, probably, after the Hebrew manner, to increase the signification, and to denote a long

23 God understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof.

24 For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven ;

25 To make the weight for the winds ; and he weigheth the waters by measure.

26 When he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder :

race of their dead ancestors from the beginning of the world downward. " The generations of men (says Job,) " who have lived before us, and are now to the " regions of the dead, have told us, *We have heard the same " thereof with our ears ;* that is, we have had something " relating to this question about wisdom delivered down " to us by tradition from our forefathers." That this must be the meaning, can scarcely be doubted, when it is considered what a regard is paid, throughout this whole dispute, by every speaker and in every speech almost, to what was taught them by their ancestors ; from whom, in a manner, all their wisdom was derived, transmitted down, and received with a religious veneration ; so that the citing of their authority in favour of the point in question, was looked upon as an unanswerable argument : nor is this any wonder, considering what a short remove they were from the very fountain-head of their traditions, and that those, when traced to their beginning, carried with them a divine authority : for, whether derived from Adam or from Noah, as the first, in his state of innocence at least, was admitted to a free converse with his Maker ; so the other was a prophet, to whom God was pleased to reveal himself in a very singular manner ; and therefore the instructions conveyed down from these must needs have been esteemed as oracles ; and those who had the advantage of living nearest to them, and so were supposed to have received the greatest share of this traditional knowledge, must, of course, have been looked upon as the wisest men. See Peters, and the note on chap. viii. 8.

*Ver. 23—28. God understandeth the way thereof]* Job having observed, that the generations of men who had lived in former ages had said, concerning wisdom, *we have heard the same thereof with our ears,* adds, that tradition had delivered to them some further particulars respecting this important subject ; as, that *God alone (ver. 23.) understands the way thereof, and knoweth the place thereof ;* for his knowledge reacheth to all things and places, ver. 24. *For he looketh to the ends of the earth, and seeth under the whole heaven ;* and that with a wisdom so infallible, and a power so uncontrollable, as to give a certain weight and measure to things the most uncertain and inconstant with respect to us, the *winds and the waters,* ver. 25. *To make the weight for the winds, and he weigheth the waters by measure.* We have moreover had it delivered down to us, says Job, in the same traditionary way, that this infinitely wise and glorious Being, when he made the world, not only displayed his own wisdom in the admirable contrivance of it, but at the same time declared what was the wisdom proper to man, the best and truest wisdom that he could attain unto ; which was, to acknowledge and adore his Maker, and to pay all due obedience to his laws, ver. 28. *Unto man he said, &c.* The Hebrew is אדם *laadam*, which might be rendered as a proper name ; *And unto Adam he said ;* for it is plain, from the cir-

cumstance of time, that Adam is, and no other can be, meant. We have here then a record of something spoken by God to the first man, not to be met with in the Book of Genesis ; but whether spoken to him before or after his fall, is not so easy to determine. If after the fall, the words carry with them a reproof as well as instruction, highly seasonable, and suited to the circumstances of our unhappy progenitors ; and here again we may observe how aptly destruction and death are made the conveyers of this great truth, from Adam down through his posterity. Since it was the disobedience of our first parents which brought death into the world, every instance of mortality would naturally recall to the minds of them and their descendants the history of the fall, and read them a new lesson of obedience. We may observe further, that if the opinion of learned men be well grounded, that there was neither rain nor thunder before the sin and fall of our first parents, then here is another particular which seems to shew that this admonition to Adam must be given after the fall ; for God is said to give it, *when he made a decree for the rain, and a way for the lightning of the thunder,* ver. 26. And if he was pleased at the same time to accompany it with a display of his thunder in all its terrors, and that this was the first time Adam had heard those awful sounds, what an impression must it make upon his heart ! How could he choose but remember it himself, and transmit it with care to his posterity ? And we have some reason to think that this might be the case, as the law was afterwards delivered from Mount Sinai with the same solemnity. It is wonderful to observe in what a variety of natural and sublime expressions the *thunder* is described to us in this book, and in all of them with a reference to the Deity ; as, *the noise of his tabernacle,—the murmurs of his mouth,—* that by which he judgeth the people—and the like. See chap. xxxvi. 29. 31. xxxvii. 2. 5. If the *thunder*, therefore, be here considered as the instrument or token of God's wrath, and the *rain*, by which he usually blesteth the earth, as a token of his mercy (See Deut. xi. 14.), with what exquisite propriety are they here united to enforce that lesson of obedience which follows ! To which it may not be improper to add, that, though this admonition to Adam be here expressed in very general terms, there is reason to believe that God was pleased to give him at the same time a more distinct account of the particulars of his duty ; as seems plainly intimated in these words ; ver. 27. *Then did God see it, and declare it ; he prepared it ; yea, and searched it out : It ;* that is, *wisdom*, no doubt ; the great subject of inquiry throughout this chapter : but not *his own* wisdom surely : this was the same from all eternity ; but the wisdom *proper for man*, and which he now communicated to him, *declared*, or *numbered ; established*, and defined it ; for so the Hebrew words may be rendered ; words which seem to imply a full and elaborate system of religion and morality, briefly summed up in the following sentence : *The fear of the Lord*



27 Then did he see it, and declare it; he prepared it, yea, and searched it out.

28 And unto man he said, Behold, the fear

of the Lord, that *is* wisdom; and to depart from evil *is* understanding.

*Lord is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.*  
Peters.

REFLECTIONS ON THE TWENTY-EIGHTH  
VERSE, AND ON THE NECESSITY OF  
READING THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.

In this verse is contained what may be regarded as a good moral to the poem. Here we see the reason why this holy man, amid all his calamities, still persists in that well-weighed and generous resolution which he expresses in the foregoing chapter, ver. 5, 6: and which plainly points out the connexion between these two chapters: *Till I die, &c.* Well might Job thus reason and resolve, who had learned from the divine oracle this important lesson, that, be the circumstances or events of things what they may in this world, yet to *fear God is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.* This he was sure of, because God had said it; and here, therefore, he fixes his foot, where every wise man gladly will, (I was going to say where every man of sense and sobriety will, who, like Job, and his friends, have ever experienced the embarrassments of their own reasonings)—upon a *divine revelation.* What the *traditions* of their ancestors were to these men, even that the *Bible* is to us; and happy were it for us that we paid it the same pious regard: that we would give it its due weight in the determining of our religious controversies; be studious to enrich our minds with the knowledge of its awful truths, and to form our lives by the simplicity of its admirable precepts: that we would allow these sacred books the privilege, at least, which we so seldom deny to others of any merit; I mean, that of a serious and attentive reading; (a small favour, considering the character which they bear;) and we should find that they want nothing to recommend them but their being thoroughly understood.

It is true, that they require many helps to a full understanding of them; and so does every book in the world which was written at any great distance of time from us. But these helps are every where to be had: we abound with commentaries, and other treatises of divinity, well intended for this purpose, and very useful in their kind. But it is strange, that persons of a liberal education, whose curiosity often prompts them to take no small pains to learn a modern language, or to acquire so much skill in the Latin and Greek as may enable them to read with ease a classic author, though a heathen, should not be excited by the same curiosity, if by no other motive, to get a little insight into the Hebrew, and to study in their original language (I might call it perhaps, with some, the *original language*, as a further incentive to the curious) Books of so singular a nature, that in all the heathen world of learning there is scarcely any thing to be met with of the kind; certainly not any thing which will bear the least comparison.

It would make me happy to be in any degree instrumental to the promoting of a just esteem and reverence for the Holy Scriptures in general; or to recommend them to the serious regard of even a few of those who by the advantage

of education, or eminence of station; have it in their power to set the pattern to others; and especially persons of a politer turn, who seem in a more peculiar manner obliged to lend their assistance towards restoring to the Holy Scriptures the honour and authority which a *false politeness* has contributed more than any one thing else, perhaps, to rob them of. Let us banish it back again to the regions whence it came, and where it may well suit with a religion that will not bear the light of Holy Scripture. If we wish well to our own country, let us beware how we throw aside our Bibles, or treat them with a fashionable contempt and neglect; which, besides the danger of it to our constitution, must unavoidably be attended with a corruption of manners, widely spreading and increasing in proportion to it. For, as there can be no sufficient curb to the inordinate passions of men without religion, so there can be no religion of sufficient authority to influence mankind, without a revelation, real or supposed; nor is there any other *real* revelation of the will of God beside that contained in the Holy Scriptures: so that we may venture to affirm, that they are the only true supports of true religion in the world. Happy is that people who enjoy the light of these, with a free liberty of examining them, and of applying all the helps which learning can afford to a right understanding of them! May we ever enjoy this liberty, and make a diligent, as well as a sober and modest use of it! Nor, by our negligence or imprudence, incur the severe censure passed on those who have a *price in their hand to get wisdom, but have no heart or inclination to it.* Prov. xvii. 16.

The divine oracles contain every thing, in short, for which a book can be valuable. The oldest history, the best morality, the noblest poetry, the only true theology: in short, a treasure of wisdom not to be exhausted. If the vicious and the thoughtless know not how to value them, or a writer here and there has attempted to signalize himself by disparaging them;—men of piety, virtue, sense, and solidity of mind, have always loved, admired, and revered them. Among these, for the honour of our country, what a fair catalogue of illustrious names might be produced! I mean not of such whose profession may seem to have set a bias on their judgment; but others, persons of the most improved understanding, of the most elevated genius, as well as eminently lovers of truth and of mankind; the Boyles, the Lockes, the Newtons, the Addisons. So that, if human authority be of any consideration in the present case, we have the best, the most unexceptionable which the world affords, for the excellency of these sacred books. And if any one can doubt of their divine authority, after weighing the external evidence that God hath given us of it, let him but study them thoroughly, and without prejudice, and I may venture to promise him that he will feel it: I mean, that he will perceive so many internal marks of their truth, and experience so much of their efficacy to make him wiser, holier, and better, as will easily dispose him to acknowledge their divinity; that they were given by *inspiration of God: And* (why should I not proceed with the apostle's character of them, modest as it is, and just?)



C H A P. XXIX.

*Job sets forth, in a pathetic manner, the happiness of his former prosperous state.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**M**OREOVER Job continued his parable and said,

2 Oh, that I were as *in* months past, as *in* the days *when* God preserved me;

3 When his candle shined upon my head, and *when* by his light I walked *through* darkness.

4 As I was in the days of my youth, when

*are profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God, as well the teachers of religion as every other christian, may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. 2 Tim. iii. 16. See Mr. Peters's Dissertation.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Riches are the grand object that men covet: to obtain them, no labour, contrivance, or industry is spared. By indefatigable pursuit and toil the mine is exhausted of its store; but the secrets of heaven, with all our study, cannot be penetrated as the bowels of the earth. The silver from the vein, and gold from the mine or the sand, are collected and purified in the fire; and iron and brass are dug out of the earth, and molten in the furnace. The same spot which above produces bread for man's food, beneath contains the hidden treasures of gold and precious stones, sparkling as fire. Man, in pursuit of these, opens the mine, and introduces the light, where, from the creation, darkness reigned. He searcheth out all perfection, contrives a variety of instruments to extract these subterranean treasures, and brings to the surface the stores of ore which lay concealed as in the shadow of death. When gushing waters hid in the bowels of the earth break forth, waters which never foot before had touched, by levels cut through the rocks, or engines, he drains the overflowing flood. No rock, no mountain, can resist his researches. He carries on his projects, and brings forth to the light the precious things which were hidden. Secret paths are hollowed out, which neither the most sharp-sighted bird hath seen, nor the strongest beasts have trodden, which roam the wilderness in search of prey. *Note;* (1.) Shall gold thus engage man's incessant toil? and shall the riches of God's grace, infinitely more precious, be neglected? (2.) They who would be wise unto salvation, must dig in the mine of God's word for the sacred treasures there contained. The earth often disappoints men's researches; but those whom God, by his grace, engages to seek his true riches, never seek in vain. (3.) Deep is the mine; but deeper far, and more unsearchable, the dispensations of providence and grace: the keenest eye is here often at a loss, and the strongest reasoner, after all his researches, is forced to cry, *O the depth!*

2dly. Gold and precious stones are valuable acquisitions; but Job suggests a far more worthy pursuit, and which will more amply repay the pains; and that is the wisdom, the knowledge of, and acquaintance with, God and his ways.

1. This is the inestimable gain which man knoweth not how to value, and, while engrossed in earthly cares, and endeavours how to be rich, seldom concerns himself about. Yet, compared with this, all the most admired and precious stores which earth ever disclosed, are lighter in the balances than vanity itself. One grain of grace is a more substan-

tial good, than if the earth were one solid mass of gold and the whole property our own.

2. This is the hidden treasure which man knoweth not where to find. The miner saith, it is not in his dark cavern; the mariner saith, the merchandise of the sea cannot procure it; the deepest researches of the wisest philosophers are unsatisfactory, and they grope for the wall as the blind. *Where then shall wisdom be found?* nowhere, but in him who is the wisdom of God, and hath brought life and immortality to light in the gospel, and in his word hath bid us search after him that we may find him, and in him all the hidden treasures of wisdom and knowledge. *Note;* (1.) The truths of the gospel known and believed, make a man more truly wise than the deepest acquaintance with the arcana of nature, or the most distinct understanding of the abstrusest parts of the mathematics. (2.) Most people are eager enough, yea, too eager, after riches; here no pains discourage their pursuit; but the treasures of grace they despise and neglect, and count them not worth the seeking. Foolish preference! to be more solicitous about a perishing world than an immortal soul; and more anxious to secure a portion in time, than in eternity.

3dly. When we have begun to inquire, like Pilate, *John xviii. 38. What is truth?* we must not hastily depart without an answer. Job repeats the important question, *Whence then cometh wisdom?* he resolves the question by a twofold consideration of it, as *secret with God*, or as *revealed to man*.

1. Secret things belong unto God; known unto him are the springs and reasons of all his dispensations, whether of providence or grace. They who soar the highest cannot pry into them: and they who sink the deepest find the shallow line of human understanding unable to fathom the abyss of wisdom. Could even the dead come back to tell us what they know, they could report but the fame of it, that such wisdom is in God; but what it is, neither the spirits of men nor angels comprehend. *God alone understandeth the way thereof, and he knoweth the place thereof.* The residence of wisdom is in his own bosom. (1.) *His eye overlooks all;* at one view all nature is open to him; the past, the present, the future, know no succession in his all-comprehending mind. (2.) *His power doth all;* the very winds are poised in his balance, laid up in his treasures, directed to what point to blow, how long, how violent, and when to return. The waters are measured by him in exact proportion; the sea to reach its banks, and not to overflow; the rivers to run perpetually, while he maintains their inexhaustible source. *Note;* A real faith in God through Christ will reconcile us to every event of his gracious providence, and is sufficient to engage us in a perfect acquiescence in the wisdom, equity, and mercy of the dispensation.

2. Man's duty and wisdom are revealed to him. *And unto man, Adam, at first, and to all his sons, he said, Behold, attend*

the secret of God *was* upon my tabernacle.

5 When the Almighty *was* yet with me, *when* my children *were* about me ;

6 When I washed my steps with butter, and the rock poured me out rivers of oil ;

7 When I went out to the gate through the city, *when* I prepared my seat in the street !

8 The young men saw me, and hid themselves : and the aged arose *and* stood up.

9 The princes refrained talking, and laid *their* hand on their mouth.

10 The nobles held their peace, and their tongue cleaved to the roof of their mouth.

11 When the ear heard *me*, then it blessed me ; and when the eye saw *me*, it gave witness to me :

12 Because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and *him that had* none to help him.

13 The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me ; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy.

14 I put on righteousness, and it clothed me : my judgment *was* as a robe and a diadem.

15 I was eyes to the blind, and feet *was* I to the lame.

attend with solemn reverence the great and important lesson, *the fear of the Lord*, that filial fear which proceeds from the knowledge and love of him as revealed, *this is wisdom*, the most valuable acquisition, and infinitely surpassing the highest flights of philosophic attainments ; *and to depart from evil*, sin of every kind, the effect of such fear of God, is *understanding*. And with this Job suggests that his friends should have been satisfied, and not have pretended to dive into the secrets of God, and condemned him for a hypocrite, by misinterpreting the designs of Divine Providence.

#### CH A P. XXIX.

*Ver. 1. Moreover, Job continued his parable*] Job now goes on to finish his defence ; and, in order to it, he first sets out his condition in the time of his prosperity, in the present chapter ; against which he places, by way of contrast, in the next chapter, his present unhappy situation, describing both with great beauty and elegance. He then proceeds, in the 31st chapter, to purge himself of the several crimes laid to his charge ; imprecating on himself the divine vengeance, in various manners, in case he were guilty ; and at last concludes, ver. 35. 37. that this was his plea ; on this he would rest his defence : he was desirous that it might be recorded, and prays that his cause might be brought to a decision, declaring that he was under no manner of apprehension as to the consequences.

*Ver. 3. When his candle shined upon my head*] See the Reflections.

*Ver. 4. As I was in the days of my youth*] The word *חרפי* *chorpi*, signifies the *winter*, or rather, more precisely, the *wet season*, such as prevails in the eastern countries. *Oh that I were as in months past*, says Job, *as I was in the days of my winter* ; in the days of his *moist time* ; that is, *when*, as he expresses it in the 19th and 20th verses, *my root was spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch*, &c. Not as in the days of his disgrace then, the days in which he was stripped of all, as an herb of its leaves and flowers in the winter ; but like a plant in the latter part of the rainy season, before the violent heats and droughts come on, which scorch and burn up every thing. See Observations, p. 11. Heath, after Schultens, renders it, *The days of my prosperity, my autumnal state* ; when he was loaded with prosperity, as the trees are with ripe fruit in

autumn. The word *סוד*, *sod*, (*the secret*,) in Scripture, signifies two things ; either secret counsels, or the assembly where such consultations are held. In the former sense it is used Amos iii. 7. in the latter sense it is used more frequently, as in Psalm lxxxix. 7. Jer. vi. 10. and elsewhere. Agreeable to this account then, *סוד אלוה*, *sod eloha*, (*the secret of the Lord*,) and *סוד יהוה*, *sod iehovah*, in Scripture, may signify two things, either the counsels and decrees of God's providence (which are secret with respect to us, any further than he is pleased to reveal them), or the assembly where these consultations (speaking after the manner of men) are held : In this sense it is used in the 8th verse of the 15th chapter of this book ; where Eliphaz asks Job, *Hast thou heard the secret of God?* (the Hebrew is *בסוד אלוה* *b'esod eloha* in the secret counsel, or assembly of God ;) *And dost thou restrain*, rather, *hast thou drawn wisdom to thyself?* i. e. "Hast thou been admitted, as a hearer, in that great assembly where God's consultations are held, and hast thou drawn wisdom to thyself from thence?" Now, if we understand the phrase in the same sense here, we shall not only find the passage very intelligible, but an image rising to our view which is exceedingly sublime : *Oh that I were*, says Job, *as in months past! when the counsel of God was over my tabernacle* : i. e. when that august assembly where God's counsels and decrees are passed was held, as it were, over my habitation, and it seemed to be his peculiar care to prosper me and my family ! *When the Almighty was yet with me*, as he goes on, *and my children were about me!* The LXX and Symmachus both preserve the sense, or come very near it, but do not seem to have equalled the full beauty of the image. See the Reflections.

*Ver. 8. The young men saw me, and hid themselves*] Among the honours paid to Job in the time of his prosperity, though he was the greatest of all the men of the east, his cotemporaries, we do not find that prostration was ever used towards him, or so much as thought of. *The young men* when they saw him, through a rustical bashfulness, *hid themselves* ; *the aged stood up* ; *the nobles held their peace* ; they were all attention when he spoke. Their tokens of respect, in short, were natural and manly ; and one of the most convincing proofs of the high antiquity of the book, is this simplicity of manners, which is every where observable. Peters.

*Ver. 15. I was eyes to the blind, &c.*] The writer of the

Obser-

16 I *was* a father to the poor: and the cause *which* I knew not I searched out.

17 And I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth.

18 Then I said, I shall die in my nest, and I shall multiply *my* days as the sand.

19 My root *was* spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon my branch.

20 My glory *was* fresh in me, and my bow *was* renewed in my hand.

21 Unto me *men* gave ear, and waited and kept silence at my counsel.

22 After my words they spake not again; and my speech dropped upon them.

23 And they waited for me as for the rain; and they opened their mouth wide *as* for the latter rain.

24 *If* I laughed on them, they believed *it* not; and the light of my countenance they cast not down.

25 I chose out their way, and sat chief and dwelt as a king in the army, as one *that* comforteth the mourners.

*Observations* remarks, that when Job would express his readiness to bring forward on their journey those who were enfeebled by sickness, or hurt by accident, and to guide in their way those who were blind, or ignorant of it, he says, *I was eyes to the blind, and feet to the lame*; referring to the difficult journeyings in the wildernesses of that country. See Numb. x. 31.

*Ver. 20. My bow was renewed in my hand*] Gained strength in my hand. The word תַּלְפִּיחַ, *talphiḥ*, rendered *renewed* denotes all change, whether from worse to better, or the contrary. See Hai. xl. 31. Heath.

*Ver. 22. My speech dropped upon them*] *My speech dropped upon them like the dew.* Houb.

*Ver. 23. They waited for me as for the rain*] Among the Egyptians, the heavens pouring down rain or dew, was a hieroglyphic of learning and instruction. See Horapollo on Hieroglyph. l. i. sect. 35. and Heath.

*Ver. 24. If I laughed on them, &c.*] *If I was merry with them, they could scarce contain themselves; yet dropped they not their reverence for me.* The word rendered *they could scarce contain themselves*, signifies properly, to stand firm on the legs. The sense is, they could not restrain from bodily expressions of joy. The latter clause is rendered by Mr. Heath paraphrastically. It is literally, *and they caused not the light of my countenance to fall.* See Houb.

*Ver. 25. I chose out their way, &c.*] *But if, with them, I sought after serious things, I sat in the chief place: as a king when he cometh to comfort the mourners. so did I dwell in the midst of the company.* Houb.; who makes this and the foregoing verse correspond to each other. Heath translates it very differently. *If I chose to travel with them, I had the most honourable place: I pitched my tent also as a king among the troop, when he leadeth them to the plains.*

**REFLECTIONS.**—1st, Reflections upon Job's former prosperous state, contrasted with his present wretchedness, draw forth the deep sigh from his bosom, and, though no prospect of a change appears, he cannot but with the return of happier days. *Oh, that I were as in months past*, enjoying such outward blessings, or rather such communion with God, as even then was his greatest joy. *Note;* (1.) God does not forbid us to pray for the restoration of health, ease, and worldly good, while we in submission resign ourselves to his will. (2.) A godly man longs more for the light of God's countenance, than for any blessing that this world can afford.

VOL. II.

Job mentions two things especially, which made him wish for the months that were past: the comfort that he had in God and in his family.

1. In God; when *he preserved me* from all evil, when his candle shined upon my head, the bright communications of his favour were my delight and glory; and when by his light I walked through darkness, and every trouble was made easy by the presence, light, and love of God: *As I was in the days of my youth*, when he enjoyed a lively sense of the divine regard, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle, and he manifested himself to me, as he doth not to the world; when the Almighty was yet with me, showering down mercies spiritual and temporal upon me. *Note;* (1.) They are safe whom God preserves, and they only. (2.) The light of God's love will refresh the soul amid the darkest dispensations. (3.) It is a blessed thing, when in our youthful days we are acquainted with the secret of God.

2. In his family. When my children, those dearest and most valuable earthly blessings, were about me, my comfort and joy: when I washed my steps with butter, so plentifully did the kine supply him, and the rock poured me out rivers of oil; his olive yards so fruitful, that the streams of oil gushed out, as springs of water from beneath the rock. *Note;* Children are God's gifts: while we thankfully enjoy them, let us not by idolatrous affection tempt God to take them away.

2dly, Job's friends had treated him with insolence, and accused him of being an oppressive magistrate, as well as, in general, a bad man. But how differently had he used to be regarded, and what testimonies could he not produce of his integrity! He here declares,

1. What high respect had formerly been paid him from the least to the greatest. When, as a magistrate, he went to the place of judgment, which was usually held in the gate, or where the greatest concourse of people was, that all might hear and have free access, the young men with veneration gave way, and the aged rose up with deep respect, and stood till he was seated. The princes and nobles, the chief magistrates who were on the bench with him, conscious of his superior abilities, heard him as their oracle: they sealed up their lips before him, and waited for his opinion of the case, fully assured, from the depth of his penetration, and the integrity of his heart, that his decisions would be the voice of truth and justice. Every hearer applauded his sentence, and every beholder testified to the gravity, wisdom, and uprightness of his conduct.

5-L

*Note;*

## C H A P. XXX.

*Job goes on to lament the change of his former condition, and sets forth the contempt into which his adversity had brought him.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**B**UT now *they that are* younger than I have me in derision, whose fathers I would have disdained to have set with the dogs of my flock.

*Note;* (1.) Modesty in youth, and respect for the aged, are most amiable and becoming. (2.) A wise and upright judge is worthy to be had in honour, as one of the most useful members of the community. (3.) It is a mark of true wisdom to know when to be silent.

2. What did he do to deserve this respect? He was the friend of the poor and fatherless, espousing their cause, and redressing their complaints. Those who were ready to perish, through want or oppression, experienced his generous support; and the widow's hearts were made to exult in the kind care that he shewed for them and their interests. Blessings were showered down upon his head, the voice of gratitude; and daily prayers went up to God for him; the best recompence that the poor can make to their benevolent friends, and which Job esteemed the most valuable return. Clothed with righteousness, no respect of persons ever biased his determinations; and the ornament that he valued more than the purple robe, or the diadem, which as a magistrate, perhaps, he wore, was that judgment, that principle of equity and uprightness, which ever influenced him. The ignorant, who could not plead for themselves, and the helpless, who had neither friends nor money to prosecute their just rights, he freely and effectually assisted; and the poor found in him a father, ever ready to vindicate their wrongs. If difficulties occurred in any cause with close application he set himself to unravel the truth, which cunning, fraud, or falsehood had perplexed; and the wicked, convicted by his wisdom, and condemned by his righteous sentence, unable, as when the jaw-bone is broken, to hold their prey, were compelled by shame and grief, or by compulsion, to restore the fruits of their oppression. *Note;* (1.) They are truly great, whose will to do good is equal to their ability. (2.) Gratitude and prayer are returns which the poorest can make; these then should never be forgotten. (3.) A heart filled with the love of justice, seasoned with mercy, a head blessed with sound understanding, an ear patiently attentive to the longest evidence, and a hand firm in the execution of proper punishment on the wicked—these constitute a righteous judge.

3dly. From all appearances, and according to human foresight, no man's prosperity appeared of surer continuance than Job's; no wonder therefore,

1. That he promised himself good days. *Then I said,* when every thing without was so fair, and I felt within conscious integrity, *I shall die in my nest.* He knew that he must die; and never in his greatest prosperity forgot to prepare for his departure hence; but he hoped that it would be in peace, amid his kind friends surrounding his bed, and his children, the heirs of his virtue as well as affluence, with filial piety closing his dying eyes. *I shall multiply my days as the sand,* and late return unto the tomb, full of years,

2 *Yea,* whereto *might* the strength of their hands *profit* me, in whom old age was perished?

3 For want and famine *they were* solitary; fleeing into the wilderness in former time desolate and waste.

4 Who cut up mallows by the bushes, and juniper roots for their meat.

*Note;* (1.) When things go smoothly we are too apt to count upon their continuance; but how often do we see a quick transition, and our hopes disappointed! (2.) A long life is a desirable blessing, when employed for the glory of God, and the good of mankind.

2. He thought that he had great grounds for his hope. Rooted as a tree, his worldly prosperity seemed fixed on a durable basis, and his vital stamina sound and vigorous. Watered continually by providential care, he grew and increased; the dew of heavenly influences rested upon him, and all his concerns, spiritual and temporal, flourished. His glory was fresh, never withering, ever blooming; while each day added new lustre to his estate, and his bow was renewed in his hand; so that he appeared to have nothing to apprehend from any adversary. When he spoke, attention sat mute; and on his lips the audience hung; the ear, delighted, was never weary; and his discourse, as gentle showers descending to refresh the parched ground, sunk deep into the heart. All heard with silent wonder his words, as the voice of wisdom; and with submission received his counsels, as oracular. If he smiled graciously, so great they esteemed the honour, that they scarcely could believe themselves the objects of his regard; and, far from presuming on his familiar condescension, were awed by his Majesty, and paid him no less respect and reverence. As a counsellor, all who consulted him acquiesced in his advice. As a teacher of divine truth, he pointed out their way, and they followed him. In public assemblies he had the seat of honour; in the congregation of the faithful he presided, and led their devotions. As a king in his army, he was honoured and obeyed, and as one that comforteth the mourners, ready to fly to the relief of the afflicted, and to pour the balm of consolation into the wounded spirit.

*Note;* (1.) If we prosper in body or soul, be it ever remembered who it is that watereth us every moment; whose influences being withheld, we wither, droop, and die. (2.) Superiors should be condescending, and yet in their freedoms maintain their dignity. (3.) They who have comforted others, find themselves often unable to receive in their afflictions the consolations which they have administered.

## C H A P. XXX.

*Ver. 2. Yea, whereto might the strength, &c.]* For of what use was the labour of their hands to me, since all life was destroyed in them? Heath. Houbigant renders the last clause, *When all their health or strength was worn out:* and he renders the next verse, *They led a solitary life in hunger and thirst: they fled into the desert: they sought out waste jaidades.*

*Ver. 4. Who cut up mallows, &c.]* Or, *Sea-purslane.* The word rendered *juniper* signifies the broom, or birch-tree. See

5 They were driven forth from among men, (they cried after them as *after* a thief;)

6 To dwell in the cliffs of the vallies, in caves of the earth, and in the rocks.

7 Among the bushes they brayed; under the nettles they were gathered together.

8 *They were* children of fools, yea, children of base men: they were viler than the earth.

9 And now am I their song, yea, I am their byword.

10 They abhor me, they flee far from me, and spare not to spit in my face.

11 Because he hath loosed my cord, and afflicted me, they have also let loose the bridle before me.

12 Upon my right hand rise the youth; they push away my feet, and they raise up against me the ways of their destruction.

13 They mar my path, they set forward my calamity, they have no helper.

14 They came upon me as a wide breaking in of waters: in the desolation they rolled themselves upon me.

15 Terrors are turned upon me: they pursue my soul as the wind: and my welfare passeth away as a cloud.

16 And now my soul is poured out upon me; the days of affliction have taken hold upon me.

17 My bones are pierced in me in the night season: and my sinews take no rest.

18 By the great force of my disease is my garment changed: it bindeth me about as the collar of my coat.

19 He hath cast me into the mire, and I am become like dust and ashes.

20 I cry unto thee and thou dost not hear me: I stand up, and thou regardest me not.

21 Thou art become cruel to me: with thy strong hand thou opposedst thyself against me.

See 1 Kings, xix. 4. These were, without doubt, the meanest kinds of food, and made use of only when no other could be procured.

Ver. 7. *They brayed*] *They made their moan, or cried out.* Heath and Houbigant. The latter part of the verse may be rendered,

Among the nettles were they }  
tormented, Hiller, par.ii. p.196.  
con.  
burned, Noldius, 919.

See the Observations, p. 85.

Ver. 8. *They were children of fools*] *Foolish men and inglorious, they were driven out of the country in which they lived.* Ver. 9. *But now, I am become their song, &c.* Houb.

Ver. 10. *They abhor me, &c.*] *They abominate me: they hold me in the utmost abhorrence, and fear not to spit in my face.* Houb. Heath reads, *They hold me in abhorrence; they go out at a distance from me; nay, they refrain not from spitting in my face:* ver. 11. *Because he hath stripped me of my glory, and hath afflicted me; therefore they have thrown off the bridle in my presence.* See Schultens.

Ver. 12. *Upon my right hand rise the youth*] *On my right hand their brood start up: they trip up my heels. Their troops of destruction throw up an intrenchment round me:* Heath: who, instead of, *they set forward my calamity,* in the next verse, reads, *they triumph in my calamity: there is none who helpeth me against them.*

Ver. 14. *They came upon me, &c.*] *They come on, as to a wide breach; they roll themselves on against me, like desolation.*

Ver. 16. *And now my soul is poured out upon me*] *For now my soul melteth within me.* Houb. See Pf. xlii. 4.

Ver. 17. *My bones are pierced in me, &c.*] *My bones are pierced through with pain in the night, and my veins have no rest.* Ver. 18. *With great force he layeth hold of my garment,*

and enfolds me by the collar of my robe. ver. 19. *He hath cast me into the mire, &c.* Houb.; who observes, that the idea is taken from a man struggling with another, laying hold of his garment, casting him to the earth, and rolling him in the mire. Job compares the disease and affliction which laid hold of him with such a struggle.

Ver. 21. *Thou art become cruel to me, &c.*] This appears to be one of the most exceptionable passages in all Job's speeches. There seems to be a great want of decency, or of delicacy at least, in the expression, if the Hebrew words carry the same force with the English. But the turn of the sentence in the original is somewhat different, תהפך לאכזר לי בעצם ירך השטמני *tebapek laakzar li beotsem yadeka tistemeni* which is literally thus: *Thou art become cruel to me; with thy strong hand thou hatest me: to hate with the hand,* is something very different from hating with the heart, and is a plain direction to us how the passage ought to be understood; namely, *Thou hast dealt with me as if thou hatest me;* or as men use to deal with those whom they hate. As for the other expression, *thou art become cruel to me,* it is remarkable that the same word is used Jeremiah, xxx. 14. where God himself declares how he had dealt with his own people, and expresses it in the following terms: *I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one.* What shall we say? Does the Hebrew word carry a softer sense than the English? Or have we softer ears than the ancients? Or is there a mixture of both in the case? It is not my purpose to vindicate every daring thought or ardent expression which occurs in the speeches of this afflicted man; but we shall certainly judge amiss, if we think every thing wrong which will not suit with the politeness of our manners. If we flatter ourselves that we excel in this respect, it is certain that we fall short in others; and it were happy for us if, with Job's simplicity,

22 Thou liftest me up to the wind; thou causest me to ride upon it, and dissolvest my substance.

23 For I know that thou wilt bring me to death, and to the house appointed for all living.

24 Howbeit he will not stretch out his hand to the grave, though they cry in his destruction.

25 Did not I weep for him that was in trouble? was not my soul grieved for the poor?

26 When I looked for good, then evil came

unto me: and when I waited for light there came darkness.

27 My bowels boiled, and rested not: the days of affliction prevented me.

28 I went mourning without the sun: I stood up, and I cried in the congregation.

29 I am a brother to dragons, and a companion to owls.

30 My skin is black upon me, and my bones are burned with heat.

31 My harp also is turned to mourning, and my organ into the voice of them that weep.

we could reach those noble heights of piety which are so conspicuous in his speeches and his character throughout. Some of his commentators have fallen very hard upon him, and given him little better quarter than his three friends. It is well for him that he had a better advocate to plead his cause than any of them; for as to any thing highly criminal in Job's speeches, it is what the infallible judge himself acquits him of. See chap. xlii. 7, 8. Peters.

*Ver. 22. Thou liftest me up to the wind]* *Thou liftest me up: thou causest me to ride upon the wind; nay, thou dissolvest my very existence.* Heath. Houbigant renders the last clause, *But salvation shall not forsake me;* which seems to connect well with the next verse, where he says, *For I know that thou wilt place me in the state of the dead, in the house to which all the living hasten:* the *sheol*, or general receptacle both of good and bad souls. See Peters, p. 401.

*Ver. 24. Howbeit, he will not stretch out, &c.]* Houbigant renders this verse, *Howbeit death shall not extend his hand to my sepulchre; but if to my dissolution, even that shall be for my salvation.* See his note. Heath reads it differently thus: *Howbeit, he will not stretch forth his hand in its might, though they shout ever so loud when he afflicteth me.* The author, says he, with great elegance, makes death and the grave two persons (see the former verse), who shout at every stroke laid upon the sufferer, as if it brought him nearer to their hands: a shout of triumph, as for a victory gained.

*Ver. 26. When I looked for good, &c.]* See the note on chap. iii. 25, 26.

*Ver. 28. I went mourning without the sun]* *I go mourning, as if the sun did not shine.* Houb.

*Ver. 29. I am a brother to dragons, &c.]* *I am a brother to jackals, and a companion to ostriches.* See Bochart Hieroz. lib. ii. cap. 14. The jackal and the female ostrich are both remarkable for their mournful cry, and for their inhabiting desolate places.

*Ver. 30. My bones are burned with heat]* *My bones are dried up with heat or drought:* Heath and Houb. *Organ,* in the next verse, should be read *pipe.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, We have here a long account of Job's distresses; among the chief of which he reckons the insults that he sustained from the vilest objects around him.

1. He describes them as younger than himself, persons of the meanest extraction, whose parents were so despicable, that they were unworthy to be set over the dogs of his

flock; yea, scarcely fit company for them: so slothful, that they were useless cumberers of the ground: so battered with vices, that they never reached old age: or so foolish, that all the wisdom which usually attends long life was perished in them. Poor as idle, famine came upon them; and while they refused to work, to such sturdy beggars none cared to give; so that their distresses drove them to the deserts, to live upon roots and fruits which grew wild among the bushes. Vagabonds on the earth, and plagues of their country, for their crimes they were driven from the society of men, and every one was glad to be rid of them. Under the rocks and in caves they hid themselves; like wild asses famished, they brayed for hunger; and under the nettles, or thorn hedges, were gathered together, a generation of folly and infamy, the very scum of the earth. *Note;* (1.) They who can work and will not, have no right to eat. (2.) It is a relief to society, when the idle vagrants, the pests of the public, are driven from the hive. (3.) This beggarly world is full of the devil's poor, whose vices and sloth concur to make their being as miserable to themselves, as their sins make them odious to God and man.

2. Even these dared to shew their insolence and abuse to this afflicted man. They derided him; made him the subject of their ballads; perhaps turned his name into a proverb for hypocrisy and wickedness; they abhorred him for the vigilance with which, as a magistrate, he had animadverted upon them; and shunned him as a plague, or, if they came near, it was but to add the vilest insults to him, to spit in his face, or trip up his heels, that they might sport themselves at his fall. Because God had afflicted him, and loosed his cord (his power as a magistrate to punish them), they cast off all reverence and restraint. The very children, taught by their ungodly parents, rose up to mock at his calamities. They imputed to him the cause of all their sufferings, and sought to revenge themselves upon him in his destruction. They obstructed him in the exercises of devotion, or treated his holy walk with contempt, they added bitterness to his affliction, and they have no helper, or no helper is against them, none to take my part. Like the waters when the mound is broken down, or a besieging army when the breach is opened in the wall, they came rolling themselves as if to overwhelm him in his present desolations, taking advantage of his weakness, and eager to make an utter end of him. *Note;* (1.) Inult is what generous spirits can with the greatest difficulty brook. (2.) The best of men have suffered the most contempt and ridicule



## C H A P. XXXI.

*Job makes a solemn protestation of his integrity, and concludes with a prayer that his defence might be heard and recorded.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**I** Made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?

2 For what portion of God *is there* from above? and *what* inheritance of the Almighty from on high?

3 *Is not* destruction to the wicked? and a strange *punishment* to the workers of iniquity?

4 Doth not he see my ways, and count' all my steps?

ridicule from an ungodly world: we must not think it strange, therefore, if we share with them. (3.) They who in their prosperity were almost adored, in adversity will often be trampled upon by every foot.

3. Thus was the "greater than Job" treated in his distresses, mocked, spat upon, pushed at in sport, and abhorred; yet he never appeared greater in the eyes of God than when most despised and rejected of men.

2dly, Many and grievous were the tribulations that Job endured both in body and mind, of which he here feelingly complains.

Internal terrors fixed on his spirit, from the apprehension of God as an enemy: and, as the wind, swift in succession and resistless, they pursued him. His *welfare* or *salvation*, his prosperity, passed away as the cloud vanishes. Dissolved with anguish, his soul melted within him, and affliction had seized on him as its prey. His body tortured with pains, his bones aching, and his sinews as if stretched upon the rack, prevented sleep from closing his weary eyes. The discharge from his boils discoloured and stiffened his very garments, so that they were not only noisome, but pressed hard and painfully on his inflamed ulcers. Like one cast in the mire, so loathsome he appeared; and as more than half dead, his flesh seemed already turned to corruption, and fit only for the grave. Vain, as it appeared to him, were his prayers, his tears; God gave him no answer, as if disregarding his request. Yea, worse, God seemed to deal with him as a cruel enemy; and, as if armed with omnipotence, opposed him on every side. Caught up as the stubble before the wind, he thought that God sported with his misery, and by the blasts of his displeasure dissipated all his substance. No prospect of relief appeared; but, wretched as he was, he expected to be brought to the grave, the house appointed for all the living since sin entered and death followed at his heels. Yea, even the death unto which he was appointed was delayed, and he was kept in torment; or God would not rescue him from going down to the pit, notwithstanding the prayers and pleadings of those who interested themselves for him, in his present ruinous and miserable estate. His compassions to the poor and afflicted had been tender and constant; and he might have hoped to have met with like compassion from God; but how greatly was he disappointed, when, instead of the good he looked for, evil came upon him; and, instead of light and comfort in his troubles, darkness, and despair of their end, had compassed him about. A burning fever scorched him up within, and days of anguish rushed on him as an enemy, and surprised him as a thief in the night. No gleam of sunshine lightened up the dark valley of affliction: even amid the greatest

concourse of those who assembled for worship, or gathered round him, he roared out in his pains, desolate and wailing, as the dragons and the owls, and finding none to pity him. His skin was black with his disease, and it burnt to the very bones and marrow. The voice of joy was fled, his harp and organ lay neglected by, unable now to relish the swelling notes, when weeping and mourning were the melancholy discordant sounds that ever grated in his ears. *Note;* (1.) They who dwell in corruptible bodies, must expect often to feel sickness and pain, the preludes of death. (2.) It is a folly, as well as a sin, to be proud of that body which the stroke of disease can make so loathsome. (3.) Whatever houses men build for themselves, let them remember that there is one dwelling prepared for them, where they must make their longest abode. (4.) Bodily trials are heavy; but a sense of God's displeasure, and a wounded spirit, are the bitterest of all our burdens. (5.) Music is a pleasing entertainment; but disease untunes the nerves, and loosens the silver cord, and then the sounds of harmony can delight no longer.

## C H A P. XXXI.

*Ver. 1. Why then should I think upon a maid?*] This has been generally understood to mean the great care and circumspection which Job had used to avoid all temptations and occasions of sin; and he subjoins in the following verses the high and reasonable motives which had urged him, and should urge every man, to such a circumspection: *ver. 2. For what is the portion which God distributeth from above, and the inheritance of the Almighty from the place of his exaltation? Is it not destruction to the wicked, and a rejection of the workers of iniquity?* *ver. 4. Doth he not see my ways, and numbereth he not all my steps?* Which passage is a further proof that his prospects were to *another* life; for this very thing, had he meant it of a temporal destruction, was what his antagonists had repeated over and over to him, and had urged it as an argument of his guilt, that he was thus miserably destroyed. When Job, therefore, says the same thing, namely, that a sure destruction attends the wicked, it is their *portion*, an *inheritance* from God; it is plain that he must understand it in another sense than his antagonists did; namely, of their final retribution in a future state. See Peters, and the note on verses 13, 24. Mr. Heath, however, is of opinion, that the word rendered *a maid* is improperly translated. The passage throughout, says he, has no relation to adultery or fornication, but to idolatry. This the following verses evidently demonstrate: *בְּתוּלָה* *bethulah*, therefore is certainly an idol; and what that idol was we are informed by Eusebius, who, from Sanchoniathan's history, tells us, that Ou-



5 If I have walked with vanity, or if my foot hath hastened to deceit;

6 Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity.

7 If my step hath turned out of the way, and mine heart walked after mine eyes, and if any blot hath cleaved to my hands;

8 *Then* let me sow, and let another eat; yea, let my offspring be rooted out.

9 If mine heart have been deceived by a woman, or *if* I have laid wait at my neighbour's door;

10 *Then* let my wife grind unto another, and let others bow down upon her.

11 For this *is* an heinous crime; yea, it *is* an iniquity *to be punished* by the judges.

12 For it *is* a fire *that* consumeth to destruction, and would root out all mine increase.

13 If I did despise the cause of my manservant, or of my maidservant, when they contended with me;

14 What then shall I do when God riseth up? and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him?

15 Did not he that made me in the womb make him? and did not one fashion us in the womb?

16 If I have withheld the poor from *their* desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail;

17 Or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless hath not eaten thereof;

18 (For from my youth he was brought up with me, as *with* a father, and I have guided her from my mother's womb;)

19 If I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering;

20 If his loins have not blessed me, and *if* he were *not* warmed with the fleece of my sheep;

21 If I have lifted up my hand against the fatherless, when I saw my help in the gate:

ranos was the first introducer of *Baitulia*, when he erected animated stones. Bochart supposes that the original word, rendered *animated stones*, signifies rather *anointed stones*. The custom, indeed, of anointing pillars was very ancient. So Jacob set up a pillar and had anointed it, and the stone itself was called by him, *בֵּית אֱלֹהִים* *beth elohim*. These pillars were afterwards turned to idolatrous uses; and it is one of the commands to the children of Israel to break them in pieces on their entrance into the land of Canaan. Exod. xxxiv. 13. Photius says, that he saw many of them in Mount Libanus. At first, these idols were only rude stones or pillars; afterwards they were made in human and brutal forms. For more concerning these *betulia*, see Boch. Geogr. Sacr. lib. ii. cap. 2.

*Ver. 5. If I have walked with vanity*] *If I have followed after a lie, or my foot hath hastened to fraud.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 7. And mine heart walked after mine eyes*] The expression is strong and beautiful. The meaning of this latter clause is, "If my eyes have seduced my heart, or any corruption have defiled my hands."

*Ver. 10. Then let my wife grind unto another*] *May my wife be defiled by another.*

*Ver. 13, 14. If I did despise, &c.*] See on chap. xix. 25. The 14th verse should be rendered in the future, agreeably to the Hebrew; *what shall I do, when God shall arise; and when he shall visit, what shall I answer him?* Job here plainly speaks of something which he was infallibly to expect, had he behaved unjustly to his slave: but could we suppose him to mean it of any temporal judgment or visitation of God, what is it that he had to expect? He seems to think his condition so miserable already, that it was scarcely possible for him to fall lower; and therefore he often and earnestly wishes for death, as the happiest thing that could befall him. We need not question,

therefore, but he had an eye to the future judgment; and it is remarkable, that he expresses himself in the same phrase here as he does in chap. xix. 25. *When God shall arise.* See Peters, and the note on that place.

*Ver. 17. Or have eaten my morsel myself alone*] This is agreeable to the early ideas of hospitality, and is as strong an expression of benevolence as can be conceived. The Arabs practise it to this very day in its greatest extent. On a journey, after they have prepared their food, they go to the highest ground in the neighbourhood, and call out thrice with a loud voice to all their brethren, *the sons of the faithful*, to come and partake of it: Dr. Shaw tells us, that they did so when he travelled in that country, though none of those brethren were in view, or perhaps within a hundred miles of them. This custom, however, they maintain to be a token at least of their great benevolence, as indeed it would have been of their hospitality, provided they had had an opportunity to have shewn it. See the Preface to his Travels, p. 12. Schultens observes, very agreeably, that this verse affords us a beautiful picture of liberality and tender charity; which would not suffer Job to eat even the least morsel of bread without imparting some little portion to the poor and needy.

*Ver. 18. For from my youth, &c.*] Houbigant renders this most beautifully: how far it may be agreeable to the Hebrew, I take not upon me to determine. *For compassion educated me from a child; she brought me up, even from my mother's womb.* Heath reads the passage thus; *If from his youth I brought him not up as a father; yea I guided her from her mother's womb;* referring to both the male and female orphan.

*Ver. 21. When I saw my help in the gate*] *When I saw myself superior in the gate.* Houbigant. That is, superior in authority, sufficient to influence those judges, whose usual place

22 *Then* let mine arm fall from my shoulder-blade, and mine arm be broken from the bone.

23 For destruction *from* God *was* a terror to me, and by reason of his highness I could not endure.

24 If I have made gold my hope, or have said to the fine gold *Thou art* my confidence ;

25 If I rejoiced because my wealth *was* great, and because mine hand had gotten much ;

26 If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking *in* brightness ;

27 And my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath kissed my hand :

28 This also *were* an iniquity *to be punished* by the judge : for I should have denied the God *that is* above.

29 If I rejoiced at the destruction of him that hated me, or lifted up myself when evil

found him ;

30 Neither have I suffered my mouth to sin by wishing a curse to his soul.

31 If the men of my tabernacle said not, Oh that we had of his flesh ! we cannot be satisfied.

32 The stranger did not lodge in the street ; *but* I opened my doors to the traveller.

33 If I covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding mine iniquity in my bosom :

34 Did I fear a great multitude, or did the contempt of families terrify me, that I kept silence, *and* went not out of the door ?

35 Oh that one would hear me ! behold my desire *is*, *that* the Almighty would answer me, and *that* mine adversary had written a book.

36 Surely I would take it upon my shoulder, *and* bind it *as* a crown to me.

37 I would declare unto him the number

place of hearing causes was in the gates of cities, as we have often had occasion to observe.

Ver. 22. *Then let mine arm fall from my shoulder-blade*] *May my shoulder-blade fall from my shoulder, and my arm be broken from my elbow.* Heath and Houbigant.

Ver. 23. *For destruction from God, &c.*] See on chap. xxi. 27. Job here declares, that he had been all along withheld from sinning by a pious awe of the divine justice, and by a dread of future destruction from the Lord. Houbigant renders the last clause, *I could not support his majesty.*

Ver. 28. *This also were an iniquity to be punished by the judge*] The Hebrew of this passage is only two words, פלילי און *avon pelili*, which Schultens renders *iniquitas arbitratoria* ; meaning, as he explains it, such an iniquity as any one must judge to be so ; and he confirms his interpretation by the use of the word פלילים *pelilim*, Deut. xxxii. 31. *Their rock is not as our rock, even our enemies themselves being judges* ; i. e. in the judgment or opinion even of our very enemies ; so that here is nothing intimated of a judicial trial or punishment ; but only the notoriety of the sin observed ; and thus it is that the Chaldee paraphrase, as well as the Greek and Latin versions, interpret it ; *a great or heinous iniquity.* But, supposing that it were rightly rendered *an iniquity to be punished by the judge* ; as this may be well understood of the Supreme Judge of all, who shall say that it does not belong to him, as the lord and sovereign of the world, to punish those who in effect deny him to be such, and transfer his honour to another ? Peters. Houbigant renders it, *This also is a wickedness worthy of judgment* ; and the next clause seems plainly to prove, that it was the divine judgment whereof Job thought it worthy. The phrase may be rendered in the same manner in the 11th verse, *This is a heinous crime, yea, an iniquity worthy of judgment.*

Ver. 31. *If the men of my tabernacle said not*] *If the men of my dwelling had not said, Who can shew the man who hath not filled himself with his victuals?* Heath and Schultens.

Ver. 33. *If I covered my transgressions as Adam*] This passage contains an allusion to one circumstance in the history of the fall. Among the particulars wherein Job vindicates his integrity, one is, that he was ever ready to acknowledge his errors. The allusion to Adam's hiding himself is proper and apposite ; but if you render the passage agreeably to the marginal reading of our English Bible, *after the manner of men*, it becomes an accusation of others ; and the vindication of himself has in it a mixture of pride which does not suit the character of the speaker. See Sherlock on Prophecy, p. 212.

Ver. 34. *Did I fear a great multitude*] *Then may I be afraid of the great multitude, and may the contempt of kindred terrify me. May I even be silent, and not go out of my door.* Heath.

Ver. 35—37. *Oh that one would hear me, &c.*] The clause, *behold, my desire is, &c.* might be better rendered, *Lo, here my sign or pledge ; let the Almighty question me : for the Hebrew word signifies equally, let him answer me, or let him make me to answer.* Job here, as in other places, shews a great earnestness to come upon his trial : they were his friends, and not God, who were his accusers : for God, he was well persuaded, would soon clear him if he were but once admitted to come in judgment before him. The meaning of the verse, therefore, seems plainly to be this : “ O that I had but a hearing granted me ! “ See there my mark or gage ;” תַּוִּי *tavi* : (something as a pledge or earnest that he would stand the trial) “ Let “ the Almighty interrogate me ; and let any of you, my “ accusers, write a bill of indictment against me.” It follows, ver. 36. *Surely I would take it upon my shoulder, and bind it as a crown to me : that is, “ I would be so far “ from*

of my steps; as a prince would I go near unto him.

38 If my land cry against me, or that the furrows likewise thereof complain;

“from being ashamed, or terrified, that I should rejoice and triumph in it; as knowing well that so impotent an accusation would only serve the more to clear my innocence.” He adds, ver. 37. *I would declare unto him* [to the Almighty, my Judge] *the number of my steps, as a prince I would approach him*: i. e. “I would give him a full and free narration of my whole life, and would stand before him with a look as upright and assured as a prince.” Nothing can be plainer than that the book or libel here supposed to be written by Job’s adversary, cannot be meant of one drawn up by God. For how was it possible for him to triumph in this? If it was a bill of accusation, coming from the God of truth, he had surely more reason to tremble than to triumph. If it was a bill without an accusation, or without any crime alleged, what sort of an indictment was this? We must therefore conclude, that by the *adversary* must be meant Job’s friends, who were his only accusers that we know of; and God is here appealed to as a hearer or judge between them. In this it is that Job with reason triumphs, as being conscious of a well-spent life; and therefore he says, that he would approach his judge with a look as upright and assured as a prince. Peters.

REFLECTIONS—1st, Two of the most common and most besetting sins are, lewdness, and an inordinate love of the world; of both these Job protests his innocence.

1. Of lewdness. So far was he from every grosser indulgence, that his eyes, the inlets of beauty’s beams, through which, like the rays collected in the burning-glass, the fire of impure desires is kindled in the heart; these were kept from wandering on forbidden objects: nor in his secret thoughts did he ever harbour or cherish the fancies of an unchaste imagination. Nor was he thus circumspect, because of the shame or inconvenience which might ensue from indulgence; no; it was the fear of God which restrained him: he knew that uncleanness must exclude him from the regard and favour of God; must expose him to the terrors of divine vengeance, to strange diseases here, and eternal sufferings hereafter. Nor could he hope for concealment in his most secret sins, even in thought, fully persuaded of God’s all-seeing eye, from which nothing is hid, nothing is secret. *Note*; (1.) Fleishly lusts are most dangerous enemies of the soul, and call for especial watchfulness. (2.) They who would keep their hearts pure, must keep their eye single: the least impure indulgencies allowed, lay open the soul to a deluge of iniquity. None who once slacken the rein know where they shall stop. (3.) However unexceptionable our outward conduct appear, there is a God who marks our secret steps, is with us amidst the darkness, and sees the hidden thoughts of our minds; let us remember then continually, that his eye is upon us. (4.) Impurity of temper, and the enjoyment of God, are incompatible: into the new Jerusalem the defiled and unclean cannot enter. (5.) It should deter us from the thought of sin, to look forward to its punishment; the highest indulgence

of corrupt appetite will miserably repay us for devouring fire and everlasting burnings.

2. Of an inordinate love of the world. No vanity or deceit was in his walk or conversation: he never told a lie to make a good bargain; unreasonably commended his own goods, or decried his neighbour’s as they scruple not to do who are in haste to be rich. His step turned not from the path of justice, warped by self-love and partiality from the rule of truth and uprightness; nor did he covet what he saw, or use any illicit method to procure, as Achan did, the tempting bait. No blot cleaved to him, not merely of outward crimes, for which men could accuse him, but his heart was restrained from the desires of inordinate concupiscence; so that he could be content that God should weigh him in the balance, conscious of his integrity, and readily resting his all upon the trial; content, if guilty, to suffer the loss of substance, family, children and all, as the just punishment of his transgression. *Note*; (1.) A truly honest man is a great character. (2.) They who are full of talk in their worldly dealings, are generally to be suspected as full of fraud. *Honestly* needs no varnish. (3.) The gain of covetousness, however fair our character, will leave a blot in the sight of God, which nothing but atoning blood can wash away. (4.) The fruits of injustice must be restored, or in the day of judgment they will be cast into the opposite scale; and when we are weighed, we shall be found wanting. (5.) They who are conscious of integrity, never shun a scrutiny. But (6.) all our genuine virtue and integrity are through grace, and our holiest things need the washing of the atoning blood.

2dly, Two other instances of Job’s integrity are produced.

1. He abhorred adultery. His neighbour’s wife never enticed his heart: he yielded neither to her solicitations nor allurements, or spread the net of seduction, or watched the unguarded moment, to rob her of her honour. He imprecates the most dreadful of evils, acknowledges himself worthy to suffer the deepest shame and dishonour, and deserving to be punished in kind, if such guilt were found in him. But a variety of considerations made him detest the thought. [1.] The heinous nature of the crime; an injury to his neighbour the most irreparable, and to his own soul, the most destructive. [2.] The just judgment that he might expect from man, even death, to which in the earliest ages adulterers were doomed; and, indeed, how much more deserving is he of death, who steals from a man that most precious jewel his wife, his honour, than he who robs his house, or takes his purse! [3.] It would now kindle a fire in his conscience to torment him, of God’s wrath to punish him, through eternity, and of present judgments, such as fell on Solomon, to mark God’s abhorrence of such hateful deeds. *Note*; (1.) Adultery is among the most crying sins. (2.) The deceitfulness of sin is great: they who think to take some undue liberties and to rest there, know not how unable they are to refrain from the greatest lengths of lewdness, if once they

39 If I have eaten the fruits thereof without money, or have caused the owners thereof to lose their life.

40 Let thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley. The words of Job are ended.

they enter into temptation. (3.) Though our laws have no longer numbered adultery among the capital crimes, and so secret may the sin be kept that human suspicion may never reach it, yet whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

2. He shewed to his servants the greatest equity and tenderness. He did not condemn them unheard, or, if they complained, slight their expostulations; but examined their remonstrances without being offended, and gave them whatever redress their just grievances called for: and this on these great considerations: [1.] he considered that he had a Master in heaven, with whom was no respect of persons, and to whom he must give an account; [2.] that, however exalted his station was above them, they were made of the same clay, partakers of the same human nature, and fashioned by the same hand. *Note;* (1.) A good man will be a kind master, and *not a lion in his house and frantic among his servants.* (2.) If our servants are perverse or faulty, it becomes us not to be harsh or inexorable, lest we should find as little mercy and kindness from our Master in heaven, as we shew to them. (3.) It should serve to humble the highest, and keep them from valuing themselves as if creatures of a different species from their inferiors, to remember the common womb from whence they came, and the same grave to which they go.

3dly, Accused as Job had been of cruel unmercifulness, it not only appears that the charge was utterly groundless, but that his character had been the very reverse from his earliest days.

1. He describes the attention and regard that he ever paid the poor, the fatherless, and the widow. The poor never presented his supplication unheard, or was grieved with the denial of any reasonable request. The widow's eyes did not fail, either through the delay of her petition, or through inattention to her speaking looks, when she knew not how to ask. Alone he had never eaten his morsel; the fatherless was not only fed at his table, but honoured with his presence. From his youth he was the father of the orphan, and the husband of the widow to counsel, guide, and protect them. Never did the poor want covering, or the naked go shivering from his door; his fleece clothed them, and, warned by his charitable gifts, they blessed his bounty, and prayed to God to reward him. In the gate, no frowns or menace discouraged the fatherless; not a finger was ever lifted against them, though, had he been disposed to oppression, so great was his influence, that he might have done it with impunity. *Note;* (1.) Kindness to the poor is not only highly acceptable to God, but brings with it, in the secret satisfaction it ministers, an abundant reward. (2.) The poor need clothes as much as meat, and we must not forget any of their wants. (3.) Respect shewn to those who, through poverty, are too commonly despised, is a cheap, yet most grateful kindness. (4.) The more power we have to do ill, the more careful should we be never to abuse it.

VOL. II.

2. He imprecates vengeance upon himself, if ever he had done as Eliphaz suggested, chap. xxii. 9. even that his arm might drop from his shoulder, or be broken from the bone. *Note;* Though the use of imprecations upon ourselves in general, is sinful and evil; yet in a solemn clearing of ourselves, like an oath, they may be used to God's glory.

3. He mentions the restraints which withheld him from all uncharitableness and unkindness. He feared to provoke that holy God, who is the avenger of the injured, and the guardian of the poor. He knew the terror of the Most High, and how little he could endure his judgments, should he provoke him by such displeasing conduct. *Note;* (1.) The highest must remember that there is one higher than they, to whom they must give an account. (2.) Holy fear of God is a needful restraint from sin.

4thly, Compelled to commend himself, in vindication of his character from the most unjust aspersions, Job proceeds to other instances of his simplicity before God and man.

1. This world never engaged his heart with idolatrous affection; he never placed his hope in the pursuit of gold, or his confidence on what he possessed; his gain gave him no joy comparable with his God; he received it as God's gift, and employed it to God's glory. *Note;* (1.) Covetousness is idolatry. The affection of the heart set on gold, and our joy and confidence placed on the creature, are equally criminal with the knee bent to the stock or stone, and frequently more so. (2.) Riches are very apt to steal away the soul into inordinate love of them; hence so few rich men enter the kingdom of heaven.

2. He renounces all idolatrous worship paid to the luminaries of heaven. These, probably, were the first of all the Pagan deities that obtained divine honours. In the time of Job, this worship began to grow in vogue; but far, very far, was he from joining in the abominable service, either openly or secretly. When he went forth, and beheld the sun in its meridian splendour, or in the clear night saw in her silver orb the moon diffusing grateful light to the benighted earth, his heart was never seduced to adoration; or, bowing, kissed he his hand before them, the usual method of worship in token of divine honours. He regarded idolatry as a crime deserving the most ignominious punishment from the magistrate; and more detested it as the highest affront to God, who will not give his glory to another, and who regards the worship of other gods as the denial of himself.

3. No revenge, even against his bitterest enemy when in his power, found a place in his bosom; so far from doing him an injury, he never rejoiced when misfortune befel him: he never suffered his lips to speak a word of imprecation, or his heart to harbour a wish of malevolence against him; nay, when those of his house, his friends, or servants, urged him to resent the wrongs done him, and

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## C H A P. XXXII.

*Elihu is angry with Job and his three friends; with the one for justifying himself; with the others for not answering satisfactorily. He apologises for his youth and zeal to speak.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**S**O these three men ceased to answer Job, because he *was* righteous in his own eyes.

wished for the flesh of those who hated him, that they might avenge their master's cause, he neither attended to their insinuations, nor suffered them to shew their resentment. *Note;* (1.) Among the first of graces are, the forgiveness of injuries, and the love of our enemies. (2.) Joy in the fall of an enemy, is malice and murder in the heart. (3.) The greatest provocation will never justify our revenge. (4.) There are seldom wanting those who are ready to blow the coals of contention; to such the wise will turn a deaf ear.

4. He mentions the hospitable entertainment that every traveller met with from him; which, when there were yet no public inns, was more especially needful. His door was ever open to the traveller, or *to the way*, his house by the way-side, that the weary might turn in thither and find refreshment, repose in safety under his roof, and not lodge in the street, exposed to the inclemencies of the weather.

5thly, We have Job reiterating the protestations of his sincerity, and concluding with his appeal to God.

1. He protests his sincerity.

(1.) He never concealed his iniquity, as Adam did, or as men in general do, desiring to find excuse, and to lay the blame on others. He acknowledged himself a sinner; many transgressions he was chargeable with; for, who liveth and hath not sinned? but no wickedness, no hypocrisy, contradictory to his profession as a good man, were chargeable upon him; all that he knew he freely owned, and desired to be humbled for before God. *Note;* (1.) Hypocritically to excuse, palliate, or conceal our sins, is only to deceive and destroy our own souls. (2.) Humble confession to God, through Christ, is the sure way to instant pardon.

(2.) No fear of man intimidated him from his duty as a professor or a magistrate; he was not ashamed of his religion, nor feared any ridicule to which it might expose him; he paid no regard to persons in judgment; the quality of the party never influenced his decisions, nor could he ever be prevailed upon to sit silent by while truth and justice were oppressed; but he openly remonstrated against it, unconcerned as to who were displeased or offended; alike indifferent to the clamours of the vulgar, as unmoved by the contempt of the great. *Note;* (1.) The fear of man is a great snare; it requires much Christian fortitude to get above it. (2.) They who hear a good cause run down, or see injustice committed, without vindicating the one, and remonstrating against the other, become criminal by their silence and connivance.

(3.) His possessions were honestly come by; his land had no accusation against him for oppression; the wages of the labourer kept back, never cried against him; nor did his hard hand squeeze his tenants, or his unreasonable de-

2 Then was kindled the wrath of Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the kindred of Ram: against Job was his wrath kindled, because he justified himself rather than God.

3 Also against his three friends was his wrath kindled, because they had found no answer, and yet had condemned Job.

mands of work beyond their strength endanger the lives of his servants; land, tenants, or labourers, never had reason to complain. With solemn imprecations he binds his judgment upon him, if he falsified in his evidence; and wishes that barrenness and the curse might desolate his fields, instead of plenty crowning the year with increase. *Note;* Ill gotten estates are often untoward possessions, and disappoint the hopes of the unjust.

2. He once more renews his appeal to God, and his eager desire to have his cause heard at his bar. *O that one would hear me*, that he might have a judge appointed, before whom he could plead his cause. *Behold*, let it stand upon record, as the thing which, so far from fearing as a hypocrite, I long for, *my desire is that the Almighty would answer me*; a rash wish, if he meant that God would enter the lists in judgment against him, but allowable if he desired only to plead his cause, in opposition to his friends before him; and that *mine adversary had written a book*, a bill of indictment, containing the charges to be heard at the bar of God. *Surely I would take it upon my shoulder*, so confident was he that he could vindicate his cause from every accusation of his unkind friends; far from fearing to be crushed by it, he would carry it off in triumph; and *bind it as a crown to me*, his righteousness should shine the brighter, the more it was examined; and the impeachment of his integrity should issue to his more distinguished honour. *I would declare unto him the number of my steps*; truth needs no disguise; he would lay bare his bosom and every secret step, nor dread the strictest scrutiny; and *as a prince would I go near unto him*, not trembling as a criminal, and keeping at a distance; but with confidence and majesty boldly advancing to the judgment-seat, without a fear that his cause should miscarry. *Note;* (1.) Consciousness of innocence longs for the trial. (2.) They who have now God's verdict in their favour, will in a judgment-day surround his throne as princes, yea, as assessors with him.

Thus the words of Job are ended. If this be not thought by his friends convincing, it would be vain to multiply arguments; and in self-vindication he will add no more.

## C H A P. XXXII.

*Ver. 1. Because he was righteous, &c.]* Wherefore he was righteous. Job had given in his plea, to which the three friends made no reply: the consequence was, that he accounted himself acquitted from the accusation. Heath.

*Ver. 2. Elihu, the son of Barachel, &c.]* Elihu, a new personage, here makes his appearance. Attentive all the time to the debate between Job and his friends, he utters not a word till both sides have done speaking; and then shews, that a stander-by, though of less abilities and penetration, may sometimes see farther into a dispute than those who

4 Now Elihu had waited till Job had spoken, because they *were* elder than he.

5 When Elihu saw that *there was* no answer in the mouth of *these* three men, then his wrath was kindled.

6 And Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite answered and said, I *am* young, and ye *are* very old; wherefore I was afraid, and durst not shew you mine opinion.

7 I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom.

8 But *there is* a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.

9 Great men are not *always* wise: neither do the aged understand judgment.

10 Therefore I said, Harken to me, I also will shew mine opinion.

11 Behold, I waited for your words; I gave ear to your reasons, whilst ye searched out what to say.

12 Yea, I attended unto you, and, behold,

who are eagerly engaged therein; and who, by having their passions raised to an undue height, are very apt to carry things to an extreme. This useful moral presents itself to us, in the strongest light, from the description here given of Elihu, a young man, of little knowledge and experience in comparison of the other speakers, who were famous for wisdom, and venerable for their years. Elihu is said to be *the son of Barachel the Buzite*, but of the family of Ram: he also was descended from Nahor, (see the note on chap. ii. 11.) and, taking up his habitation in the country of the Buzites, had thence his denomination; but he is very carefully distinguished by the author from the posterity of Buz; being described as a descendant from *Ram*, or *Aram*, who was the grandson of Nahor, by his son Kemuel. The land of Buz was, doubtless, somewhere in the neighbourhood of Job, as the posterity of Nahor settled in this country. It is mentioned in Jer. xxv. 23. and joined with *Dedan* and *Temah*; and therefore, like them, was most probably a city of Edom. Elihu was provoked at the behaviour of Job, as well as that of the three friends: at Job, for attempting so to vindicate himself, as to leave an imputation of injustice on God's providence; at the three friends, for charging Job with such atrocious crimes, and falling so miserably short when they should have come to the proof, as not to be able to convict him of one of them. Elihu therefore, having waited awhile for the reply of the friends, and finding that they had no intention of making any, begins with a modest apology, drawn from his youth, for his engaging in the dispute at all;—for old age in those days was so highly honoured, that a young man scarcely dared to open his mouth before his elders: ver. 6—10. He tells them, that he has waited a long time to hear what they would offer; but, finding that they do not design to reply, he desires their leave to speak his opinion; a liberty, however, in which he would not indulge himself if they were willing to make answer, or could any way convict Job of what they had laid to his charge: he adds, that his intention was, to attack him in a manner quite different from what they had done; for which reason he should not think himself at all obliged to answer the arguments that he had urged against them: ver. 11—14. But at the same time he declares that it was not his intention to speak partially in his favour; since the acceptance of persons was a crime which, he was sensible, would be severely punished by the Almighty: ver. 21, 22. He therefore addresses Job, and gives him to

understand, that the manner in which he had urged his defence, and the representation that he had made of the treatment which he had received at the hands of the Almighty, were very unbecoming: chap. xxxiii, 1—9. He had represented himself as perfectly innocent, and God as inflicting punishment upon him without a cause; but he ought to consider that he was a man, and consequently liable to many infirmities, and therefore should readily acknowledge the justice of God's providence, ver. 9—13. That God had, by revelation, declared the manner of behaviour which was acceptable to him; which was, to put away the evil of his doings, and to cast off all pride; hinting, that this last was, at the bottom, the real motive to his stubborn behaviour: ver. 14—19. That, if he would conform himself to this rule, he might expect, though he was even at death's door, that God would restore him to his health and vigour; more especially if he had a prophet near him (intimating that he himself was such a one) who would represent his past righteousness in his behalf before God; in which case, he would have an opportunity in the face of all his people: ver. 20—28. This, however, must be attended with a confession of his faults, a public acknowledgement of God's justice, and a sincere purpose of amendment. If he had any objection to make to this, he desires him to make it; if not, to have patience with him, while he shewed him the course which, he was persuaded, it was his wisest method to pursue, ver. 29. to the end. See Peters and Heath. But we shall not be just to the argument, if we omit to mention here, that Dr. Hodges, in a work intitled *Elihu*, has advanced a very peculiar opinion respecting that personage, and with regard to the principal scope and design of the Book of Job. He supposes Elihu to have been no other than the second person in the Divine Trinity, *the Son of the blessed God*, who assumes the office of mediator, and speaks the same language with Jehovah: see the 38th and following chapters. And he conceives, that the chief scope of the book, and the principal intention of Elihu, was, to convict Job of self-righteousness; and to instruct him, and all mankind, in the great doctrine of justification by faith: see Rom. iii. 21, &c. We refer such of our readers as are desirous of knowing more respecting this opinion, to the work which is written in support of it. See also the Reflections.

Ver. 3. *Because they had found no answer, &c.*] Because they had found no answer whereby they might convict Job.

Ver. 9. *Great men* רבנים rabbim, teachers. Heath and Houb.



there was none of you that convinced Job, or that answered his words :

13 Lest ye should say, We have found out wisdom : God thrusteth him down, not man.

14 Now he hath not directed *his* words against me ; neither will I answer him with your speeches.

15 They were amazed, they answered no more : they left off speaking.

16 When I had waited, (for they spake not, but stood still, *and* answered no more ;)

17 I *said*, I will answer also my part, I also will shew mine opinion.

18 For I am full of matter ; the spirit within me constraineth me.

19 Behold, my belly *is* as wine *which* hath no vent ; it is ready to burst like new bottles.

20 I will speak, that I may be refreshed : I will open my lips and answer.

21 Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man.

22 For I know not to give flattering titles ; *in so doing* my Maker would soon take me away.

*Ver. 13. Lest ye should say] Say ye not, therefore, we have found out wisdom? It is God must confute him, and not man. "God only can sift him to the bottom, and know whether his pretences to piety have any thing real in them, or are only hypocritical."*

*Ver. 18. For I am full of matter ; the spirit, &c.] As he was a young man, he dares not claim much authority from his own sayings ; but he claims it from the inspiration of the Almighty, by whose Spirit he was actuated, and whose oracles he was delivering. Heath.*

*Ver. 19. It is ready to burst like new bottles] Bottles of new wine. The epithet new belongs more properly to the wine, as it is in the LXX ; in our Saviour's parabolical expression of, putting new wine into old bottles ; and as it is more consistent with the nature of things ; for, the bottles being made of leather, an old bottle was more liable to be burst by the fermentation of new wine, than a new one.*

*Ver. 21. Let me not, I pray you] Elihu's apology for himself is, that he would not presume to interpose in the debate till they who were his elders had done speaking : I said, Days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom, ver. 7. But however, as God had given to every one their share of understanding, and as he then found in himself a strong impulse to speak, he would deliver his opinion with all freedom, and without flattery, or a partial inclination to either side. Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person. Let me not be partial to any man ; for know I not, if I should be partial, that my Maker would destroy me in a moment? Heath and Peters.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The warm dispute was closed. A silent pause ensued : Job's friends ceased to answer ; counting him obstinate against conviction, and righteous in his own eyes, they forebore to reply : but now a new personage appears. With silence he had listened to the knotty controversy, perceives the fallacy and falsehood of the arguments on the one side, and the rashness and impatience on the other ; and therefore, rising with warmth, he prepares to reprove both for their perverseness ; Job's friends, that they condemned him without evidence ; and Job himself, that he justified himself rather than God ; was more careful about his own reputation than God's glory, and seemed more solicitous to vindicate himself than

to justify God in the dispensations of his providence. *Note ;* (1.) In angry disputes there is usually much to reprove on both sides. (2.) When we have a fault to find, it should be done to men's faces, and not behind their backs. (3.) A gracious heart is jealous for the honour of God, and cannot, unmoved, see him slighted. (4.) A holy indignation against evil, and a temperate warmth in the cause of truth, are so far from being to be condemned, that they are highly commendable. We have,

1. The name and family of this moderator, Elihu, *My God is he.* Hence some have supposed him to be Christ, the son of Barachel, *Blessed of God*, of the kindred of Ram, the *High and lofty One*, the Buzite, *despised and rejected* of men ; and to him other things in his speech and character may be applicable : but more generally he is supposed to be a descendant of Buz, the son of Nahor, Abraham's brother, Gen. xxii. 21.

2. He was a young man ; had sat silent till his elders had spoken ; and waited till none made any further reply. *Note ;* Young men owe their elders deference ; and, though they must not yield implicit faith, or sacrifice truth to any difference of years, yet they should wait respectfully till with propriety they may state their objections.

2dly, Elihu, having taken up the cause,

1. With great humility and modesty prefaces his discourse. He speaks of himself as diffident because of his youth, and afraid to speak before his elders. He had attentively heard them out, in hopes that every new speech would throw light on the argument, and rectify the mistakes of the former ; but he owns that he was disappointed, and therefore hopes that he may, without presumption, beg an audience, and venture to speak his opinion on the subject. *Note ;* (1.) In matters of doubtful disputation, it becomes us to be diffident of our own opinion, and more ready to hear the sentiments of our elders than forward to broach our own. (2.) By-standers, who hear, cool and unprejudiced, often see farther than those, who, in the heat of dispute, have their judgment blinded by passion. (3.) If we have given others a long and patient hearing, it is but reasonable that we should be heard in our turn.

2. He mentions several reasons that emboldened him now to speak. [1.] Because there is a spirit in man, a rational spirit, capable of judging and thinking ; or rather God



C H A P. XXXIII.

*Elihu offereth himself in God's stead to reason with Job, in meekness and sincerity. He excuseth God from giving man an account of his ways, by his greatness; and inciteth Job to attention.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**W**HEREFORE, Job, I pray thee, hear my speeches, and hearken to all my words.

2 Behold, now I have opened my mouth, my tongue hath spoken in my mouth.

3 My words *shall be of* the uprightness of my heart: and my lips shall utter knowledge clearly.

4 The Spirit of God hath made me, and

the breath of the Almighty hath given me life.

5 If thou canst answer me, set *thy words* in order before me; stand up.

6 Behold I *am* according to thy wish in God's stead: I also am formed out of the clay.

7 Behold, my terror shall not make thee afraid, neither shall my hand be heavy upon thee.

8 Surely thou hast spoken in mine hearing, and I have heard the voice of *thy words, saying,*

9 I am clean without transgression, I *am* innocent; neither *is there* iniquity in me.

10 Behold he findeth occasions against me, he counteth me for his enemy,

God puts his Spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding; and then the youngest may be wiser than the aged. *Note;* (1.) Since we have rational souls, the greater obligation lies on us to cultivate this distinguishing privilege. (2.) The wisdom of fallen man in spiritual matters is darkness, till the Spirit of God enlightens his understanding. [2.] Because neither greatness nor grey hairs are always repositories of wisdom; it is right that they should be, but we frequently see that they are not. [3.] Because, as the matter stood, the dispute was as far as ever from being settled; and their conceit of their wise arguments was groundless; for, though what they pleaded was allowed to be true, *God thrusteth him down, not man;* yet it would not be at all evident from thence, that Job was a wicked man, or a hypocrite, as they inferred. *Note;* They who call God to sanction the conclusions of their folly, or censoriousness, deserve a sharp rebuke. [4.] Because he came cool and unprejudiced to the dispute: Job's speeches were not directed against him, neither was he partial to either party, but spake simply, with a view to the glory of God, and the elucidation of the truth. In order to which, he would not answer Job with their inconclusive arguments, accusing him as wicked, or pleading his sufferings as a proof of guilt; but, admitting his claim, and presuming his integrity, he intended to shew how unbecomingly he had spoken of God, and how unjustifiable were his complaints and hard speeches, which reflected upon the mercy, justice, and providence of God. *Note;* They have a right to speak, who can set the cause of truth in a light more convincing and striking than those who have gone before. Be it our care, that, like Elihu, we act up to the expectations that we have raised.

3dly, Silent with amaze, Job's friends attempted not to speak; attentive to what so young an orator could offer, when their store of argument was exhausted; while he, after waiting a while, proceeded

1. To declare how full he was of the subject; as wine fermenting, he must speak or burst. Much he had to say; it was a burden to him to be longer silent; and, for relief of his own spirit, as well as their conviction, he was com-

pelled to open his mouth. *Note;* They who speak for God should be earnest in their discourses, out of a heart big with zeal for God's glory, and the good of men's souls.

2. He professes to speak with impartial freedom, not sacrificing truth to compliment; neither because of Job's distress, through false compassion dealing unfaithfully with him; nor because of his friend's greatness, fearing to blame what was blameworthy in them: and thus he resolves to speak with an eye to God, who hates falsehood and flattery. *Note;* (1.) The fear of God will set us above the fear of man. (2.) Compassion for the poor must no more influence us to be partial to them, than respect for the rich. Truth and justice must ever be the great considerations.

C H A P. XXXIII.

*Ver. 1. Wherefore, Job, I pray thee]* See the note on the first verse of the preceding chapter.

*Ver. 3. My words shall be of the uprightness of my heart]* My heart is integrity; my words are knowledge; my lips speak that which is pure. Houb. who renders the second verse in the future: *I will open my mouth; my tongue shall speak eloquently.*

*Ver. 5. Set thy words in order before me, &c.]* Set thy arguments in array against me; stand thy ground. - This is a metaphor taken from the drawing up of an army with the purpose of giving battle.

*Ver. 6. I also am formed out of the clay]* Houbigant renders this passage, *I, I say, who am formed out of the same clay:* ver. 7. *Therefore my terror shall not, &c.* These, and the 4th verse, seem to contain Elihu's apology for assuming the character of a mediator between Job and his friends, of presuming to represent the Deity, and of reasoning with Job in that character.

*Ver. 10. Behold he findeth occasions against me]* The first branch of this passage, *Behold he findeth occasions against me;* or, as Heath and others render it, *He inventeth cruelties against me,* is not to be found in Job's speeches; and as for the other branch, which occurs, chap. xiii. 24. we have there observed, that though there may be something faulty

11 He putteth my feet in the stocks, he marketh all my paths.

12 Behold, *in* this thou art not just: I will answer thee that God is greater than man.

13 Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters.

14 For God speaketh once, yea twice, *yet man* perceiveth it not.

15 In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed;

16 Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction,

17 That he may withdraw man *from his* purpose, and hide pride from man.

18 He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword.

19 He is chastened also with pain upon his bed, and the multitude of his bones with strong *pain*:

20 So that his life abhorreth bread, and his soul dainty meat.

21 His flesh is consumed away, that it cannot be seen; and his bones *that* were not seen sicken out.

22 Yea, his soul draweth near unto the grave, and his life to the destroyers.

23 If there be a messenger with him, an interpreter, one among a thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness:

24 Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom.

25 His flesh shall be fresher than a child's: he shall return to the days of his youth:

26 He shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable unto him: and he shall see his face with joy: for he will render unto man his righteousness.

27 He looketh upon men, and *if any say*, I have sinned, and perverted *that which was* right; and it profited me not;

28 He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, and his life shall see the light.

in the expostulation; yet it is much alleviated by the expressions of humility which precede and follow it. See the note on that place.

*Ver. 12. Behold, in this thou art not just*] *Lo, this I will answer thee, thou art not perfect: therefore, let God be justified, rather than mortal man;* ver. 13. *Why dost thou contend against him, since he will not give account of any of his matters?* The word צדק *tzdek*, signifies not only *just*, but *perfect*; a signification which it hath also transmitted to the Greek word δικαιοσ. The argument is, "Notwithstanding all thy pretences to purity and innocence, thou art far from perfection. There is human frailty enough in thee and all mankind, to justify the dealings of God with thee or them, however severe they are. Give him, therefore, the glory, acknowledge the justice of his proceedings." See Josh. vii. 9. and Heath.

*Ver. 14—18. For God speaketh once, &c.]* When God hath spoken once, verily he will not repeat it. Houb. Elihu, blaming Job for some intemperate expressions that he had used, and for the manner of his offence, which he thought liable to great exception, ver. 9—11. observes, that while he pleaded his innocence so much, and called so earnestly upon God to bring him to his trial, he did not well consider the infinite distance betwixt God and man; that his own unerring wisdom was the sole guide of his actions, and that he was not obliged to give account of them to any of his creatures: ver. 12, 13. He then proceeds to observe in this verse, that though God be thus high, yet he condescends to instruct men by the secret whispers of his grace, sometimes by extraordinary dreams and visions, and sometimes by afflictions that he may withdraw them from such courses as are mischievous and sinful, and bring them

to an humble dependance on himself, ver. 17. *That he may withdraw man, &c.* which should rather be rendered, *Let man put away his sins, and let pride be hid from him:* ver. 18. *So shall he preserve his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the dart.* For Schultens has well observed, that from the 17th verse onwards is that divine instruction mentioned in the 16th verse. See Peters and Heath.

*Ver. 19. He is chastened also with pain*] Or if he is chastened with great pains on his bed, and he crieth out aloud, through great pain in his bones; ver. 20. *And his life abhorreth*—ver. 21. *his flesh wasteth visibly away*—ver. 22. *and his life draweth to those that are slain*—ver. 23. *If there is nigh him a Messenger, one that is eloquent, one among a thousand, to represent to man the righteousness of God*—ver. 24. *Then he is gracious unto him, &c.* ver. 27. *He shall utter his song before men, and shall say, I sinned, I perverted that which is right; I acted a wrong part:* ver. 28. *He hath delivered my soul from going down into the pit; my life also shall behold the light.* Heath and Houb. Bp. Warburton says, that this passage, to the end of the 30th verse, "contains the most circumstantial account of God's dealing with Hezekiah, as it is told in the books of Chronicles and Kings." That there is a likeness in circumstances may be allowed; but then we say, that it is a most circumstantial account of the way of curing diseases in those ancient times; and so may be reckoned as a mark, and no inconsiderable one, of the antiquity of the book. For it shews the book to have been written, or at least the history of it to bear date, before physic was studied so as to become a distinct profession, and when distempers, according to the simplicity of the first ages, were looked upon as inflictions from the hand of God for the sins of men; and therefore the messenger of

29 Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man,

30 To bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living.

of God, the interpreter of his will, or the prophet, was to be applied to for the cure of them. And in this view, it is no wonder if the circumstances fall in very naturally with the history of Hezekiah, who was so remarkably restored by the prophet Isaiah. However, that there can be no allusion here intended to the recovery of Hezekiah, which was a single and extraordinary instance, seems plain; for Elihu tells us in the following verses, that this way of recovering from diseases was then common and usual; ver. 29, 30. *Lo! all these things God worketh oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living.* Instead of *oftentimes*, the Hebrew indeed is *three times*, a certain number for an uncertain; and it is said to be God's usual way of dealing with the same person, to raise him once, twice, and thrice, perhaps, or oftener, from the bed of sickness. But, though we read of many extraordinary cures in the Bible, yet I think there is no one instance of the same person's having received this special favour above once. There is a passage in the 107th Psalm not very unlike to this of Job; and yet I suppose no one will think that it has any respect to the sickness and recovery of Hezekiah, especially if the psalm be David's, as seems not improbable. The whole of it is an admirable composition, not unworthy of the pen of the royal prophet: see ver. 17—20. where the description, I think, suits Hezekiah's case nearly as well as the other: and yet that the Psalmist, whoever he was, could not have Hezekiah's case in his thoughts, seems plain; because, if he had, he would no doubt, for decency's sake, have avoided the first word in the description: *Fools, because, &c.* That he had this very passage of Job in his thoughts, seems highly probable; since he has borrowed from this same chapter of Job the 40th verse of the Psalm, word for word, as Bishop Hare observes upon the place.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Elihu opens his discourse with an application to Job by name, whom his friends had never thus addressed. He begs a favourable hearing, and that he would weigh his arguments entire. They were the product of mature deliberation, and flowed from the sincerity of his soul: he hoped to speak clearly to his understanding, and convincingly to his conscience. Endued with a reasonable soul as a man, and renewed in the spirit of his mind as a gracious man, he might expect attention; and was ready to hear, in return, whatever Job could farther say for himself. He had desired one on the behalf of God, that he might plead with him: Lo! he is here; one in his own nature, fashioned from the same clay, whose terror would not terrify him as if God himself appeared, nor his hand be heavy on him: he would bring no such railing accusation as his friends had done: he proposes to convince him by the weight of his arguments, not run him down by the violence of his words. *Note;* (1.) We are bound to hear a discourse intire, before we form a judgment upon it. (2.) They who speak for God have need of deep and serious deliberation; and should be more solicitous to speak plain, so as to be understood, than fine, that they may be admired.

2dly, Job had boasted, chap. xxxi. 36. how easily he would bear on his shoulders every charge that could be brought against him; but Elihu will convince him that the burden is heavier than he is aware.

1. He opens his charge against Job for words spoken openly and publicly to the dishonour of God, and reflecting on his adorable perfections; and against such every hearer is ever bound to bear a public testimony.

[1.] He had said, *I am clean without transgression, I am innocent, neither is there iniquity in me;* this might be collected from chap. x. 6, 7. xiii. 2, 3. xvii. 5, 6. or, perhaps, Job might in express words have asserted it, though not recorded in the controversy; not that he pleaded he was not a sinner, but he had too high an opinion of his own integrity, insisted upon it too much, and thereby drew unjust reflections on God, for afflicting a person so righteous as he conceived himself to be.

[2.] He had represented God as severe and cruel, seeking occasion to quarrel with him, and without cause treating him as an enemy—expressions highly irreverent, and deserving just censure. See chap. xiii. 24, 27. xiv. 16, 17. xix. 11.; for these things, therefore,

2. Elihu proposes to plead with Job. *Behold, take notice of it as an important truth, in this thou art not just;* however upright in general he allowed his conduct to have been, here it was indefensibly culpable. Therefore, *I will answer thee*, confute these bold assertions, and this on the clearest principles. (1.) *That God is greater than man;* and therefore it is both foolish and arrogant to find fault with him; *why dost thou strive against him?* whose wisdom, power, justice, and truth, are not only above comparison, but above our comprehension? *Note;* This one consideration should for ever silence every murmur against God's ways and providences. (2.) He is sovereign in his dispensations, *for he giveth not account of any of his matters:* Who shall question the eternal Majesty, and say to him what dost thou? or, as others interpret the words, *he giveth not an account of all his matters;* there are secrets of Providence which he reserves to himself, and into which it were presumption to pretend to pry.

3dly, Though God is not obliged to give any account of his matters, yet he never deals with men so unreasonably as Job suggested; but if we attend to his notices, we may perceive his designs towards us. *For God speaketh once, yea, twice repeats his admonitions, and in a variety of ways, by secret remonstrances with our consciences from his word and spirit, by his afflictive providences, and by his ministers; yet man perceiveth it not:* negligent or perverse, he regards not the inward admonition, nor adverts to the chastening rod, nor hears the voice of the wife: or the words may be rendered, *a second time he doth not revive it,* the words yet man being not in the original: his counsels need not a second thought. All is planned with perfection of wisdom and justice, and therefore to be submitted to with implicit resignation.

1. He speaks to men *in a dream*, which, before there was any written word, was frequently the method that God took to convey the notices of his will. See Gen. xx. 3.

31 Mark well, O Job, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I will speak.

32 If thou hast any thing to say, answer me: speak, for I desire to justify thee.

33 If not, hearken unto me: hold thy peace, and I shall teach thee wisdom.

xxxii. 24. *in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed: Then, when the senses are locked up in repose, he openeth the ears of men, not of the body, but of the soul, and sealeth their instruction or chastisement; conveys admonitions to their conscience, and assures them of the certainty of his chastisements, if they take not warning: and when they awake the dream is not forgotten; but the lively traces of it remain, as wax bears the impression of the seal.*

2. He hath designs of mercy in these notices that he gives. [1.] *That he may withdraw man from his purpose, prevent him from the sin into which he was ready to rush, and work a divine change on his temper and disposition.* [2.] *And hide pride from man by restraining the proud from their purposes; or that he may humble and subdue the spirit of his believing people, too reluctant in their submission to his providential will.* [3.] *He keepeth back his soul from the pit, and his life from perishing by the sword, when he is on the brink of present and eternal ruin, he is warned, and, if he take the warning, is plucked as a brand from the burning.* *Note; (1.) Proud resistance against the secret admonitions of God, is wilful rebellion, and will end in reprobacy. (2.) It is an unspeakable mercy to be visited with notices of our danger, and to have a faithful monitor within. (3.) The soul which perishes, will only have itself to blame; for God can say, I would have gathered you, and ye would not.*

4thly. Various ways hath God to speak to the souls of men by his word and providences.

1. He inflicts man with disease; pain universal as acute, seizes the body. The appetite is lost. Pining waste consumes him to a skeleton. Death appears in full view, and the grave opens to receive him. *Note; (1.) How soon may the softest pillow cease to afford repose to the throbbing head! (2.) If we be able to relish our food, let us acknowledge the mercy, and not abuse it to luxury, lest God, as a just punishment, should bring us to loath even dainty meat. (3.) The strongest constitution is a feeble barrier against the wastes that disease will make. Let not the strong man glory in his strength.*

2. When affliction is laid on the body, God sends instruction to the soul, *if there be a messenger with him, a godly minister, or rather that divine Messenger sent from heaven, on purpose to teach men the way of salvation; an interpreter, able to expound the design of dark providences, and to open the Scriptures with clearness and conviction to the conscience; one among a thousand, as an able minister may justly be reckoned; or it peculiarly refers to the Great Prophet, the chief of ten thousand, to shew unto man his uprightness; either the uprightness of God in afflicting him, or the path of duty proper for his present condition, in order to the right improvement of the affliction; or the infinite merit of the great Messiah, the antetype of all the sacrifices, whom Job had already acknowledged as his Redeemer, and who, to the believer who lives by faith in him is the most solid support against all the fears of death,*

and the living fountain of comfort and safety. *Note; (1.) Most people in sickness are much readier to send for the physician for their body, than the minister of God for their soul. (2.) The great endeavour of a wise interpreter is, to lead the afflicted to an humbling acknowledgement of the righteousness of God in their sufferings, and to point the troubled soul to the infinite merit of Jesus as its only hope against the condemnation of sin.*

3. The gracious effects are set forth, which thereupon ensue. [1.] *To the soul, pardon and redemption; Then he is gracious unto him, and saith, Deliver him from going down to the pit, the pit of death, and hell the wages of sin, for I have found a ransom, have accepted the offering of the Redeemer in the sinner's stead.* [2.] *To the body, the restoration of health and ease; his flesh shall be fresher than a child's, as if his life were again renewed; he shall return to the days of his youth; become healthy, vigorous, and strong.* *Note; (1.) There is a ransom paid and accepted for all who will be saved by grace, with which God declares himself well pleased and satisfied. (2.) When God's chastisements have answered their end, he is pleased often in mercy to remove them, and give health of body, as well as health of soul, to the believer.*

4. The grateful returns that such a person makes for the mercies he has received are, [1.] *Prayer and thanksgiving. He shall pray unto God for the continuance of his mercy and grace, and praise him for what he has experienced, and he will be favourable unto him; will hear and answer him; and he shall see his face with joy, God will lift up the light of his countenance, and fill the soul with divine consolations, for he will render unto man his righteousness, will deal with the person recovered according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, and accept of his person and of his works through the merit of the Redeemer.* [2.] *He will give glory to God, by humble confession of his sins. He looketh upon men, and will justify God's afflicting hand upon him, and will say, I have sinned, and perverted that which was right, have justly offended the eternal majesty, and it profited me not, I found no advantage or comfort in the way of evil; therefore I will return to him from whom I have so greatly departed.* *Note; (1.) Sin is not only rebellion against God, but an offence against sound reason, as tending to our eternal ruin. (2.) Every sinner will find the ways of iniquity utterly unprofitable; they neither bring him present peace, nor can secure for him the least support against a day of evil. [3.] He encourages others, by his own experience, to make their application to God, and expect the like mercy: He will deliver his soul from going into the pit, or, He hath delivered my soul from going down to the pit, hath saved from death and hell, and his life, or my life, shall see the light; present prosperity and comfort, and eternal blessedness and glory, await the faithful. (1.) We are bound, for other's good, as well as in gratitude to God, to speak of the things that he hath done for our souls. (2.) They who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, cannot but become*

## C H A P. XXXIV.

*Elihu accuseth Job of charging God with injustice: he avers, that the Almighty can never act unjustly; and that humility and submission were required from man towards so great a Being.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**F**URTHERMORE Elihu answered and said,

2 Hear my words. O ye wise men; and give ear unto me, ye that have knowledge.

3 For the ear trieth words as the mouth tasteth meat.

4 Let us chuse to us judgment: let us know among ourselves what is good.

5 For Job hath said, I am righteous: and God hath taken away my judgment.

6 Should I lie against my right? my wound is incurable without transgression.

7 What man is like Job, who drinketh up scorning like water.

8 Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity, and walketh with wicked men.

9 For he hath said, It profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God.

10 Therefore hearken unto me, ye men of understanding: far be it from God, that he should do wickedness; and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity.

11 For the work of a man shall he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways.

12 Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment.

13 Who hath given him a charge over the earth? or who hath disposed the whole world?

become advocates for him with others, to come and experience, with them, how good the Lord is, and how blessed the man who putteth his trust in him.

The 27th and 28th verses may also be interpreted of God's regard to other sinners in a like state of affliction, who on their humble confession are restored, and made to partake of his favour and regard.

5thly; Elihu, having shewn how God speaks to man, here sums up the great purpose of all these dispensations.

1. They are designed for man's good, to bring back his soul from the paths of sin and ignorance, and thereby to rescue him from the pit of eternal misery; to be enlightened with the light of the living, to partake of the present blessings of divine teaching and grace, in order to the better and more valuable possessions of the eternal inheritance among the saints in light. *Note;* (1.) Departure from God necessarily ends in eternal ruin, if we be not recovered. (2.) God leaves no man without admonition; if men perish, their ruin lies at their own door. (3.) If any sinner's soul be recovered from the paths of the destroyer, he will wholly ascribe it to the free and saving grace of God.

2. He concludes with a desire that Job would mark well what he had said. He is ready to hear, if Job has aught to reply, and would take more pleasure in justifying than condemning him; but if he acknowledged the truth of what he had urged, he would proceed with his discourse, and doubted not but Job's attention to it would be repaid with wisdom and instruction. *Note;* (1.) A faithful friend never loves to find fault, and is happy to be undeceived, if he has been mistaken or misinformed. (2.) The wisest men are always the most willing to learn. Superficial attainments puff up, but solid wisdom humbles.

## C H A P. XXXIV.

*Ver. 1. Furthermore Elihu answered and said*] Elihu goes on with his impeachment of Job. He accuses him of having charged the Almighty with a denial of justice, and with having punished him beyond his deserts, ver. 2—6.

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This is a language, he tells him, which could be used only by the profligate and abandoned, among whose party he seemed willing to enrol himself; otherwise he would never have said, that God makes no difference between the righteous and the wicked; referring to chap. ix. 22, 23. That it was impossible to suppose God could act unjustly; for, were he so disposed, what could hinder him from annihilating the whole human race at once? He needed only to withdraw his preserving power, and they would instantly fall into dust. ver. 7—15. Since then he did not act in this manner, but his ways were perfectly agreeable to righteousness, he was not to be addressed in so rude a manner as Job had made use of. Reverence and respect were due to earthly princes; how much more to him in whose sight the prince and the beggar were the same: for he was the maker of them all. ver. 16—19. That though God would look with a merciful eye on the infirmities of human nature, when accompanied with humility; yet the arrogant were sure to find no favour at his hands; he would not fail to execute his vengeance on them, that they might be an example to others. ver. 23—30. That submission and resignation was the behaviour fit for man in the presence of God; and that were he really a man of that knowledge which he pretended, he would not act in this manner: but it was apparent that he was not so, by his acting the part of a wicked man, and adding contumacy to his sin. ver. 31—37.

*Ver. 5. God hath taken away my judgment*] This refers to the words of Job, chap. xxvii. 2. and the force of the exception lies in a misinterpretation. Job had said, *God hath respited my judgment*: this Elihu turns to, *God hath refused me justice*.

*Ver. 6. Should I lie against my right?*] *As to my accusation, I am belied: my wound is mortal, though I have not transgressed.* Heath and Houb.

*Ver. 13. Who hath given him a charge?*] *Who, on earth, can be his overseer?* The meaning is, "Who on earth hath authority to examine into and controul his proceedings?" See Schultens and Heath.

5 N

*Ver.*

14 If he set his heart upon man, *if* he gather unto himself his spirit and his breath;

15 All flesh shall perish together, and man shall turn again unto dust.

16 If now *thou hast* understanding, hear this: hearken to the voice of my words.

17 Shall even he that hateth right govern? and wilt thou condemn him that is most just?

18 *Is it fit* to say to a king, *Thou art* wicked? and to princes, *Ye are* ungodly?

19 *How much less* to him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor? for they all *are* the work of his hands.

20 In a moment shall they die, and the people shall be troubled at midnight, and pass away: and the mighty shall be taken away without hand.

21 For his eyes *are* upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings.

22 *There is* no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.

23 For he will not lay upon man more *than right*; that he should enter into judgment with God.

24 He shall break in pieces mighty men

without number, and set others in their stead.

25 Therefore he knoweth their works, and he overturneth *them* in the night, so that they are destroyed.

26 He striketh them as wicked men in the open sight of others;

27 Because they turned back from him, and would not consider any of his ways:

28 So that they cause the cry of the poor to come unto him, and he heareth the cry of the afflicted.

29 When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble? and when he hideth *his* face, who then can behold him? whether *it be* done against a nation, or against a man only.

30 That the hypocrite reign not, lest the people be ensnared.

31 Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne *chastisement*, I will not offend *any more*:

32 *That which* I see not teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more.

33 *Should it be* according to thy mind? he will recompense it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose; and not I: therefore speak what thou knowest.

*Ver. 17. Shall even he that hateth right? Would he that hateth judgment reign in his fury?* The sense is, "Since he can so easily destroy all the human race, would he, if he was not a lover of justice, restrain his fury from destroying them?" Schult. and Heath.

*Ver. 22. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death* i. e. "Not death itself shall conceal the workers of iniquity from the eye of God, or withdraw them from his justice: Men may flatter themselves with the hope of annihilation, if they please; but they will find themselves sadly disappointed when they come to make trial of the other state." Peters. Instead of *that he should enter*, in the latter clause of the next verse, Heath reads, *When he shall enter*.

*Ver. 26. In the open sight of others*] This is a metaphor taken from executions, which are performed in public places amid a croud of spectators, for the sake of example.

*Ver. 30. That the hypocrite reign not*] *That a profligate man may not reign; that there may be no squares for the people.* Heath.

*Ver. 31. I have borne chastisement, &c.*] *I lift up my hands; let me not be utterly destroyed.* Heath. See Houb.

*Ver. 33. Should it be according to thy mind? &c.*] *It is He will recompense that which proceedeth from thee; whether thou refusest, or whether thou choosest; and not I.* The latter clause is an invitation to a confession of his crimes; and includes an argument, that it was God who was to punish them, and not man: as he, therefore, was perfectly ac-

quainted with them, there was no reason why he should not make an ample confession. Heath.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Elihu, encouraged by Job's silence to proceed, resumes his discourse.

1. He addresses the audience. Perhaps the important debate had been attended by others, besides Job's friends; or, though in the present case they erred greatly, yet they were probably, in the general, both wise and good men. He desired to be judged by their wisdom, persuaded that his arguments would bear the test; and those whose taste was most correct would best relish his discourse.

He proposes, therefore, to proceed with the subject, that they might come to a right judgment of Job's case, and consult as to what would be the best advice to give him under his present distress. *Note*; Mutual assistance is the means of mutual improvement.

2. He recites the charge which he draws from Job's assertion. *Job hath said, I am righteous*, so as not to deserve (he thought) so heavy visitations, chap. xxvii. 6. *And God hath taken away my judgment*, chap. xxvii. 2. because he had not appeared to remove his afflictions, or silence the accusations of his friends. *Should I lie against my right? my wound is incurable without transgression*, chap. ix. 17-xvi. 17—20. *he hath said, it profiteth a man nothing that he should delight himself with God*: Not expressly indeed; but Elihu infers this as the consequence of his reasoning; chap. ix. 22. xxi. 14, 15. not that Job really thought so; but, in the  
rassness

34 Let men of understanding tell me, and let a wife man hearken unto me.

35 Job hath spoken without knowledge, and his words were without wisdom.

36 My desire is that Job may be tried unto

the end, because of his answers for wicked men.

37 For he addeth rebellion unto his sin, he clappeth his hands amongst us, and multiplieth his words against God.

rashness of dispute, unguarded expressions give a just handle for rebuke.

3. He expresses his astonishment, that so good a man as Job should say or insinuate such improper things. *What man is like Job, who drinketh up scorning like water?* either lays himself open by such words to scorn and contempt of the enemies of religion, or is so free in his reflections upon God, and so liberal of ridicule and contempt on his friends. See chap. xi. 3. *Which goeth in company with the workers of iniquity, and walketh with wicked men,* not in his conduct indeed, but by uttering such speeches as seemed to countenance and encourage them in their iniquities. *Note;* it is a grief to good men, when the conduct or conversation of professors gives occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully, or to the wicked an argument to harden themselves in sin.

2dly, Elihu had proved, that God, in afflicting men, designed their good. Here he vindicates him from the charge of wrong, directing his discourse to the company, who, if Job would not hear, might bear testimony to the truth of what he advanced.

1. He asserts, that God neither can nor will do any injury to any man, nor, though Sovereign and Almighty, abuse his power by a capricious use of it; but with infinite justice deal with all men, giving them according to their works; and he rejects, with the greatest abhorrence, the very suggestion of the contrary. *Note;* (1.) As long as a sinner is out of hell, he is bound to lay his hand on his mouth before a righteous God, and own that he has received less than his iniquity deserves. (2.) Though God's justice does not always evidently appear here, the day is at hand when he shall be acknowledged just in all his judgments.

2. He proves this by arguments drawn from the sovereign dominion and irresistible power of God. *Who hath given him a charge over the earth?* He hath no superior whom he should fear, and be influenced by to do iniquity: Or, *who hath given man a charge over the earth?* hath not God? And can it be supposed that, after being so beneficent, he would become unjust? assuredly not: Or, *who hath disposed the whole world with such order and regularity, and filled it with such a variety of blessings?* How absurd then the thought, that he should do wickedly, who filleth the whole earth with his goodness. *If he set his heart upon man, in strict justice to enter into judgment with him;* if, as he might, he should gather unto himself his spirit and his breath, which once he gave, the consequence would be, that *all flesh shall perish together, and man, even the whole human race, shall turn again unto dust.* As we are creatures, he who made us may unmake us when he pleases; it is but to withdraw his support, and we breathe our last; and, as we are sinners, he would appear righteous if he consumed the earth. But he spares us, and thereby shews how far he is from doing man any injustice, when daily we hold our all, though forfeited, through his mercy.

3dly, Elihu appeals to Job, if, or seeing, he was a man of understanding, for the absurdity of his positions: he admitted God's government, yet complained that he was oppressed: condemning thereby the most just. Even to man that is a worm, if placed on a throne, it were insolent and highly improper, though there were foundation for the charge, to call him son of Belial, or wicked. How much more then must it appear presumptuous to lay such a charge against the King of Kings, who regardeth no man's person; but, with the strictest justice and impartiality, considering all men alike the work of his hands, pronounces sentence and executes judgment upon them. *Note;* Great and poor must shortly stand before the same judge where the greatness of the one, and the poverty of the other, will be no plea for favour or compassion; but every man shall receive according as his work is: to beget therefore in Job higher and more worthy thoughts of God, and a more humble and lowly sense of his own deserts, Elihu suggests the following considerations:

1. God's omnipotence. The mightiest men are unable to stand before him; death, sudden as terrible, shall overtake them: At midnight there shall be a cry of destruction, and with strokes of judgment, invincible but irresistible, they fall. Let the loftiest tremble; they are as easily brought down, and as unable to grapple with the arm of death, as the meanest creature that they may despise.

2. His omniscience. As none are above his judgment, neither can any escape his notice. Naked and open before him are all the ways of men; he observes and minutes even the secrets of their souls. Though darkness, thick as the shadow of death, be fought to conceal their sins from his all-seeing eye, they are not hid; or, though wrapped up within the closest cells of a corrupted heart, there is not a thought passes there but he knoweth it altogether. As, therefore, he will not be unjust through want of power; so neither can he be so through error or mistake. *Note;* (1.) It is the folly of sinners, that they think to hide their sins, as if, by concealing them from the eyes of men, they could elude the scrutiny of God. (2.) There is not a more awakening consideration, which should affect the sinner's soul, than that the eye of God is constantly observing his heart and all his ways.

3. His justice. He never will give any man cause to complain of him. When he visits for iniquity, he will not lay a heavier burden than the sin deserves. And, therefore, as there is no appeal from his bar, nor possibility of altering the sentence of the most just, it were the highest folly to demand a fresh trial, when the result must necessarily be on that plan in disfavour of the sinner.

4. He illustrates this justice, power, and omniscience of God, in his dealings with men. The wicked, though never so numerous or great, are broken in pieces, and better men rise up in their stead. He knows their works, and brings their destruction upon them unawares, when, in the night, asleep and secure, they dream of no danger near.



## C H A P. XXXV.

*Comparison is not to be made with God, because our good or evil cannot extend unto him. Many cry in their afflictions; but are not heard, for want of faith.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**E**LIHU spake moreover, and said,  
2 Thinkest thou this to be right, *that*

He makes his vengeance visible, that others may see and take warning by the ruin of these sinners, whose iniquities always justify God in his punishments. Because they rejected his government, and would pay no regard to his will and ways, but by oppression extorted the cries of the afflicted and needy; therefore doth vengeance, terrible as righteous, come upon them. *Note;* (1.) They who will not be guided by God's word, will assuredly be smitten with his rod of judgment, and broken in pieces as a potter's vessel. (2.) Rejection of God's warnings, and obstinate disregard of his will and ways, fill up the measure of men's iniquities. (3.) The groanings of the poor against the hard-hearted, and of the oppressed against the unjust, are heard by the righteous and compassionate God, and he will shortly recompence them.

5. God's dealings are not to be controlled by weak man. *When he giveth quietness, whether to communities in peace and safety protecting them from their enemies; or to individuals, prospering their worldly affairs, especially filling their souls with spiritual peace and joy in believing; who then can make trouble? and interrupt or disturb them in the enjoyment of the quietness that he bestows? and when he hideth his face in anger, who then can behold him, or appear before an offended God, whether it be done against a nation, or against a man only? None can rescue a devoted people from their destruction; nor can any bear up under a sense of God's wrath, or relieve the distresses of the soul that he hath wounded but himself.* *Note;* (1.) National peace and security are from God alone. (2.) If a soul enjoy a sense of the divine favour through faith in Jesus, no accusations of sin, or fears of death or hell, need disturb it. (3.) When God is our enemy, the whole world, and all that is in it, cannot procure us one helper to protect us from the frowns of his displeasure.

6. He watcheth over the welfare of kingdoms, *that the hypocrite reign not*, who by craft and fraud sought to step into the throne, and tyrannise over the people whom he had deluded. God disappoints his devices, *lest the people be ensnared.* *Note;* (1.) Ambition often creeps in order to climb. (2.) When religion has been made the usurper's pretext, good men have been ready to fall into the snare.

4thly, Elihu means not to leave the conviction of what is wrong to grieve the afflicted Job, without direction how to behave, that he may be extricated from his distresses.

1. He suggests to him what in his case was proper to be said and done. *Surely it is meet to be said unto God, I have borne chastisement, and desire to submit cheerfully and patiently, and wait the Lord's leisure for its removal. I will not offend any more, by charging God foolishly, as severe and unjust. That which I see not, teach thou me: I see much evil which deserves punishment, yet I see but a part: Who*

thou saidst, My righteousness is more than God's?

3 For thou saidst, What advantage will it be unto thee? *and*, What profit shall I have if I be cleansed from my sin?

4 I will answer thee, and thy companions with thee.

can understand his errors? Open my eyes, and make my conscience tender and sensible. *If I have done iniquity, I will do no more; the past sufficeth: henceforward, through divine grace, I hope to walk more holily and humbly than I have hitherto done.* *Note;* (1.) They who are truly humbled for sin, will never complain against God for what they suffer. (2.) When we are afflicted, we are especially called upon to inquire after the cause. (3.) When we turn to God, we must resolutely turn from sin: Christ and Belial cannot agree.

2. He reproves him for his waywardness. *Should it be according to thy mind? It were highly unreasonable that the creature's will should prevail against his creator and governor: Beside, He will recompence it, whether thou refuse, or whether thou choose: And therefore it is in vain to struggle against his will. But if thou shouldst persist, thou must bear the blame, and not I: never will I object to any of his dispensations, which are all holy, and just, and good: Therefore speak what thou knowest, if it appear a wiser method of proceeding than that which I have suggested.* *Note;* (1.) He who knows what is most for our good, and designs that in all he doth, must needs do well; and it is the height of folly to object. (2.) To struggle against God, or find fault with him, is as useless as it is foolish and sinful.

3. He appeals, for the reasonableness of what he had advanced, to all men of wisdom and godliness. However, wise Job might be, in the present case he apprehends that he had betrayed some want of understanding, as well as some defect in piety. And he wished heartily that the company would weigh Job's words, as well as his answer, as he disputed not for victory, but truth. Three reasons he gives for wishing Job's case to be thoroughly tried. [1.] Because he apprehended that his speeches had a tendency to strengthen the hands of the wicked. [2.] Because he had appeared hastily to triumph in his defence, when, in fact, he was justly to be blamed, though clear of some particulars which his friends had suggested. [3.] Because to his impatience under reproof, he had added rebellion against God; and, by continued self-vindication, accused him as unrighteous. *Note;* (1.) Great men, and good men, are still but men, and will see daily cause to say, "Forgive us our trespasses." (2.) The kindest office of christian friendship is, to improve and lead us to a right and humbling view of ourselves.

## C H A P. XXXV.

*Ver. 1. Elihu spake moreover]* Elihu puts it to Job's conscience, whether he thought it could be right to gain his acquittal by an impeachment of God's justice; yet, he tells him, he must have thought after this manner, otherwise he would never have made use of such an atheistical expression, as, "that he had no profit by doing his duty," more

5 Look unto the heavens, and see; and behold the clouds *which* are higher than thou.

6 If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him? or *if* thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him?

7 If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand?

8 Thy wickedness *may hurt* a man as thou art; and thy righteousness *may profit* the son of man.

9 By reason of the multitude of oppressions they make *the oppressed* to cry: they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty.

10 But none saith, Where *is* God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night;

11 Who teacheth us more than the beasts of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the fowls of heaven?

12 There they cry, but none giveth answer, because of the pride of evil men.

13 Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it.

14 Although thou sayest thou shalt not see him, *yet* judgment *is* before him; therefore trust thou in him.

15 But now, because *it is* not *so*, he hath visited in his anger; yet he knoweth *it* not in great extremity:

16 Therefore doth Job open his mouth in vain; he multiplieth words without knowledge.

“more than if he had sinned;” referring, probably, to chap. xxiii. 11. 5. That he ought to consider that God was so far above the influence of all human actions, that neither could their good deeds be of any advantage to him, nor could their evil deeds affect him; ver. 2—7. They might, indeed, affect themselves or their neighbours: they might suffer from the oppressions of men, and cry aloud to God to relieve them; but if this cry was not made with an entire dependance on, and a perfect resignation to the will of God, it would be quite fruitless: God would not give the least ear to it; ver. 8—14. Much less ought they in every affliction to be flying in the face of the Almighty, and shaking off his sovereignty; that they ought rather to wait his leisure with patience; and that Job himself would not have acted in this manner had he not been hurried away by too great a self-confidence; ver. 15, 16. Heath.

Ver. 9. *By reason of the multitude of oppressions*] See chap. xix. 7.

Ver. 10. *Who giveth songs in the night?*] *Who appointeth guards over me in the night-season?* Heath; following the LXX. See Psalm xci. 11. But Houbigant, after the Syriac, renders it, *Who giveth thoughts in the night?* which seems best to agree with the next verse.

Ver. 12. *There they cry, &c.*] *There they may cry aloud: but there is no deliverance from the pride of evil men.* Heath, after Le Clerc.

Ver. 14. *Although thou sayest, &c.*] *How much less ought it to be said, thou shalt not bear rule over us? Judgment is not before him; wait thou therefore patiently his leisure.* Heath.

Ver. 15. *But now, because it is not so, &c.*] *But now, because he visiteth not in his anger, and because Job is deprived of knowledge by immoderate self-conceit; ver. 16. Therefore openeth he his mouth rashly, &c.* Heath. Houbigant renders the latter clause of the 15th verse, *Because he doth not severely animadvert against sin.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Job had laid himself open to reproof; and Elihu fails not to point out to him various particulars in which he had erred; and he seems to have had

so good an opinion of him, as to expect that when he had reconsidered them, he would own that he had spoken amiss. *Note;* A good man may err, but he is open to conviction, and not ashamed to own either his ignorance or his sin. *Errare possum, hereticus esse nolo.*

1. The accusation here laid is, [1.] His presumption in saying *My righteousness is more than God's*. Not that he pretended that his moral righteousness was greater than God's; but that he seemed more solicitous to justify himself than God, and complained as if his goodness had made God his debtor, and that he was not rewarded as he had a right to expect; and this most justly deserved rebuke. [2.] The dishonoured idea that he had given of true religion, chap. ix. 22. x. 15. as if it were of no advantage to serve God, and that he had cleansed his hands from iniquity in vain, while his troubles were so uncommon, and his judgment taken away. *Note;* (1.) God never can be our debtor; the best that we do is unworthy of him, and he ever chastises us less than we deserve. (2.) Though we may find no present outward advantage, yea, much loss and suffering for the sake of God and his cause, we shall find religion no unprofitable service at last.

2. The confutation of Job's assertions is drawn from the greatness and glory of God; and this Job, and all who joined him, might be convinced of, if they looked to the heavens, for they would teach them how transcendantly God is exalted above man: our sins may hurt worms like ourselves, and our goodness extend to our fellow-mortals: but with respect to him the malice of the most daring sinners is impotent: they cannot destroy his government, disturb his peace, or tarnish his glory; any more than they can blot out the sun. Though they oppose him, and break his law, they cannot fly from his arm, and must, at least, glorify him in their punishment. On the other hand, our goodness extendeth not to him; he needeth not our service; we can add nothing to his self-sufficient blessedness; nay, all that we render to him, we must first receive from him; and, so far from making him our debtor, the obligation is our own, that we are permitted and enabled to serve him, and that he condescends to accept

## C H A P. XXXVI.

*Elihu sets forth the justice of God in all his ways, and extols the greatness of his power and providence.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**E**LIHU also proceeded, and said,  
2 Suffer me a little, and I will shew

thee that I *have* yet to speak on God's behalf.

3 I will fetch my knowledge from afar, and will ascribe righteousness to my Maker.

4 For truly my words *shall* not be false; he that is perfect in knowledge *is* with thee.

cept the worship that we offer, and the bounden duty which we desire to pay him.

2dly, We have another complaint of Job's silence.

1. He had reflected upon God, as not hearing and relieving the prayers of the afflicted and oppressed, chap. xix. 7. xxiv. 12. xxx. 20. Hereto Elihu answers,

2. That if they receive not an answer of mercy, it is because themselves are to blame, [1.] as only anxious to be delivered from their sufferings, and making no spiritual improvement of them to their humiliation, and greater acquaintance with God their Maker or *Makers*, as in the original, expressive of the Persons in the Godhead, who said, *Let us make man.* *Note;* (1.) Many groan under trouble, and complain of their miseries, who never shew any humiliation for sin, or desire after God. (2.) Irreligious poverty and suffering is, of all estates of human misery, the most miserable. (3.) Selfish prayers, the cries of mere distrefs, without any regard to God's glory or our soul's good, can obtain no help from God. [2.] As being impatient under their sufferings, and unthankful for the mercies they enjoy. They look not for support from inward consolations, desiring to wait God's leisure, who, under the severest pressures of affliction, can make the heart glad, *and giveth songs in the night*, when the darkest troubles surround his faithful people. Nor, though endowed with understanding, and a capacity to know God above the beasts, do they make any use of it under their sufferings, or differ in their prayers from the mere cry of brutes, who roar because of their anguish. *Note;* (1.) They who are insensible of the undeserved and distinguishing mercies which they enjoy, have no reason to expect deliverance from the evils that they feel. (2.) God can give joys which will overbalance all our sorrows; and, when our tribulations most abound, make our consolations, through Christ, the more abundant also. (3.) The distinguishing difference between a man and a beast, lies not so much in reason as religion. The chief dignity of man lies in his capacity for the knowledge, service, and enjoyment of God. [3.] Their cry is the cry of vanity; they are only solicitous about the perishing things of time; for their bodies not their souls, merely because of the oppressions that they suffer under the proud: or this is given as the reason why God giveth them no answer; not only because their prayers are vain or insincere, but also because of the unhumbed pride of their hearts. They are evil men; their sufferings are the effects of their sins, and yet they do not repent of the one, while they cry to be delivered from the other. *Note;* (1.) While the design of our afflictions is not answered, it is mercy in God to deny our prayers for their removal. (2.) An unhumbed heart may howl upon the bed, but cannot offer that sacrifice

which, through the Mediator, is as the grateful incense, and returns fraught with blessings from above.

3dly, We have the last charge that Elihu brings against Job for his hasty expressions; and this is,

1. That he despaired of God's ever appearing for him, either to vindicate him from the unjust aspersions cast upon him, or to deliver him from the miseries that he suffered, chap. ix. 32—35. xxiii. 4—7. xxxi. 35—37. *Note;* When God corrects us for our humiliation, Satan is ever ready to drive us to despair.

2. Elihu rebukes his despondence, and shews him both the path of duty, and the reason why his deliverance was delayed. *Judgment is before him;* he will certainly appear to vindicate the cause of his people, and then every dark dispensation shall be unfolded: *Therefore trust thou in him, or wait upon him;* trust in his promises; and patiently expect their fulfilment. Had this been the case, ere this his anguish had been relieved. *But now, because it is not so,* because this faith, patience, hope, and resignation, have not been exercised, *he hath visited in his anger,* displeased with Job for his misimprovement of the mercy intended him in his affliction. *Yet he knoweth it not in great extremity:* the greatness of his sufferings made him overlook his unbelief, impatience, and rashness; and thereby he both lost the comfort, and deferred the removal of them. *Note;* (1.) Despair of relief is a high reflection upon God's power and grace, as impatience is on his goodness and wisdom. (2.) Faith in God is the only clue which can guide us through every labyrinth of temptation. (3.) If our troubles be not removed, but increased, it becomes us to examine closely whether we have not provoked God by our behaviour under them.

3. He concludes from the whole, *Therefore doth Job open his mouth in vain*, in undue complaints of his sufferings, in unjust reflections upon the Lord, and in too eager a vindication of himself. *He multiplieth words without knowledge,* appears in the present instance in some degree unacquainted with the desert of sin, the perfections of God, and the path of duty. Nevertheless, we may add, that great allowances should be made for Job on account of the darkness of his dispensations.

## C H A P. XXXVI.

*Ver. 1. Elihu also proceeded*] Elihu goes on to lay before Job the impropriety of his behaviour towards God, and desires him to consider how vain it will prove; that God is Almighty, and will never yield the point, that he will administer impartial justice to all men: ver. 2—6.; that the general course of his providence is, to favour the righteous; and that, though he may sometimes correct them in love, yet, if they submit patiently to his fatherly correction, and

5 Behold, God *is* mighty, and despiseth not *any*: *he is* mighty in strength and wisdom.

6 He preserveth not the life of the wicked: but giveth right to the poor.

7 He withdraweth not his eyes from the righteous: but with kings *are they* on the throne; yea, he doth establish them for ever, and they are exalted.

8 And if *they be* bound in fetters, *and be* holden in cords of affliction;

9 Then he sheweth them their work, and their transgressions that they have exceeded.

10 He openeth also their ear to discipline, and commandeth that they return from iniquity:

11 If they obey and serve *him*, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures:

12 But if they obey not, they shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge.

13 But the hypocrites in heart heap up wrath: they cry not when he bindeth them.

14 They die in youth, and their life *is* among the unclean.

15 He delivereth the poor in his affliction, and openeth their ears in oppression.

16 Even so would he have removed thee out of the strait *into* a broad place, where

*there is* no straitness; and that which should be set on thy table *should be* full of fatness.

17 But thou hast fulfilled the judgment of the wicked: judgment and justice take hold on thee.

18 Because *there is* wrath, beware lest he take thee away with *his* stroke: then a great ransom cannot deliver thee.

19 Will he esteem thy riches? *no*, not gold, nor all the forces of strength.

20 Desire not the night, when people are cut off in their place.

21 Take heed, regard not iniquity: for this hast thou chosen rather than affliction.

22 Behold, God exalteth by his power: who teacheth like him?

23 Who hath enjoined him his way? or who can say, Thou hast wrought iniquity?

24 Remember that thou magnify his work which men behold.

25 Every man may see it; man may behold *it* afar off.

26 Behold God *is* great, and we know *him* not, neither can the number of his years be searched out.

27 For he maketh small the drops of water; they pour down rain according to the vapour thereof:

28 Which the clouds do drop *and* distil upon man abundantly.

and amend their ways, they shall enjoy all manner of prosperity. But if they are stubborn, and will not submit, they only draw down greater degrees of his vengeance on themselves; ver. 7—16. He tells him, that had he followed the former course, he had probably before now been restored to his former condition; whereas, by persisting in the latter, he was in a fair way of becoming a signal example of the divine vengeance: ver. 17, 18. He warns him, therefore, to make use of the present opportunity, lest God should cut him off while in a state of rebellion: for that, with God, neither wealth, power, nor any other argument that he could use, would be of any avail: ver. 18—26. God was infinitely powerful; there was, therefore, no resisting him; and infinitely wise, as sufficiently appeared by his works; there was, therefore, no escaping out of his hands. His purity was so great, that the sun in his presence was more dim than the smallest ray when compared with that bright luminary; his holiness was manifest, from his aversion to iniquity; and his goodness, in supplying the wants of his creatures: ver. 26. to chap. xxxvi. 23. Man was utterly unable to account for the least of his works; how then dared he to attempt to penetrate the

secrets of his providence, and to call him to an account for his dealings with men? This could proceed only from an unjustifiable self-conceit: ver. 24. a crime which the Almighty would not fail severely to punish. Heath.

Ver. 4. *He that is perfect in knowledge*] *Though the perfection of knowledge be with thee*: Heath; who thinks that this alludes to Job's sarcasm, chap. xiii. 2.

Ver. 5. *Despiseth not any*] *Will not yield to any*. Heath.

Ver. 9. *That they have exceeded*] *How they have set him at defiance*. Heath.

Ver. 15. *He delivereth the poor in his affliction*] *Whilst, or, but he delivereth, &c.*

Ver. 16. *Even so would he have removed thee, &c.*] *He would have also screened thee from the edge of the broad sword, against which nothing can make resistance; and the provision of thy table should have been full.*

Ver. 20. *Desire not the night*] *Desire not the night that thou mayest oppress the afflicted, expecting nothing less*: Houbigant. But Heath renders it, *Wish not earnestly for the night, to descend to the lower regions; and the 21st verse, Beware, look not upon iniquity, so as to choose it rather than affliction.*

Ver. 27. *For he maketh small, &c.*] *Who causeth the exhalations*

29 Also can *any* understand the spreadings of the clouds, or the noise of his tabernacle?

30 Behold, he spreadeth his light upon it, and covereth the bottom of the sea.

31 For by them judgeth he the people; he giveth meat in abundance.

32 With clouds he covereth the light; and commandeth it *not to shine* by the cloud that cometh betwixt.

33 The noise thereof sheweth concerning it, the cattle also concerning the vapour.

*halations of the waters to mount on high, which form the rain in his clouds, (ver. 28.) when the heavens-pour down.*

*Ver. 29. Also, can any understand, &c.] How much more when he manifesteth the burblings of the clouds; the crash of the thunder of his pavilion! ver. 30. See his lightning flasheth around him! he turneth up the bottom of the sea: ver. 31. Verily by them he executeth judgment on the nations, &c.; ver. 32. He covereth the sun as it were with his hands, and commandeth it, &c.; ver. 33. His thunder maketh proclamation before him. Wrath is treasured up against iniquity. This is one of the noblest images in the whole book, and has been finely illustrated by Schultens; to whom we refer, and Heath.*

REFLECTIONS.—1st, As the general silence seemed to give approbation to what was said, Elihu, after a short pause, resumes his discourse, with an apology for trespassing a little longer on their patience; for what he had now to say would be short, yet important. He was speaking in God's behalf, therefore might claim attention. It was no common subject that he treated; but his knowledge was fetched from afar, the result of long researches, and concerning the deep things of God. His design was, to vindicate the ways of God to man, and ascribe righteousness to his Maker in all the dispensations of his providence. And in doing this he resolved to use the greatest impartiality and sincerity, speaking the truth in love; and he presumed that he was so thoroughly acquainted with his subject, and his intention was so upright, that they would acknowledge their regard justly due to his disquisition. *Note;* (1.) They who speak for God in simplicity, will, by the importance of their discourse, engage attention. (2.) A faithful soul is jealous of God's honour, and rises up to vindicate his dispensations from the foolish and sinful aspersions of those murmurers and complainers who charge God foolishly. (3.) Truth, and plainness of speech, especially become those who profess themselves teachers of the good ways of God.

2dly, Elihu, in the behalf of God, proceeds, as he proposed, to vindicate God's righteous government.

1. The meanest of his subjects are not despised by him. He is mighty to redress their grievances, and wise in all his dispensations towards them. *Note;* If God despiseth not any, surely much less ought we to despise a fellow-creature!

2. He ministers impartial justice. The greatest, if wicked, feel his vengeance; cut off even here oftentimes by his righteous judgment; or, if their lives be prolonged, they are only reserved for the wrath to come: while the cause of the poor that were wronged, God espouses; and his eyes are upon them for good; they are exalted to honour in this world, or, what is infinitely better, they are established in his grace and love. *Note;* (1.) The day is

near, when the oppressor and the oppressed will meet at the righteous bar of God. (2.) However low God's faithful people may be reduced, there is a kingdom prepared for them.

3. If God afflicts his believing people, it is purely with a design to do them good; to humble them under the views of past iniquities, and to open their ears to that instruction, to which, except under the rod, they would have been inattentive; and to shew them the path of duty, as the sure way of deliverance from the cords of affliction. *Note;* (1.) A sense of God's purpose in our chastisements should make us not only resigned but thankful. (2.) Whatever brings us to humbler views of ourselves, and more unreserved dependance on God, is to be reckoned among our chief mercies. Afflictions only answer their design, when the ear and the heart are open to discipline; else they but harden instead of humbling. (3.) It is a blessed fruit of afflictions, when we leave the dross of sin in the furnace, and come forth purified as silver from the fire.

4. When the end of the correction is answered, the rod will not only be removed, but the blessedness of it appear. *If they obey and serve him,* in consequence of his gracious chastisement, then *they shall spend their days in prosperity and their years in pleasures;* for godliness hath the promise of the life which now is, and ever brings that best portion, contentment; but especially in their souls they shall prosper, and taste the more substantial pleasures of religion.

5. Where hypocrites suffer, far different is the issue. As they obey not the divine admonitions, but by their impatient and unhumiliated spirit heap up wrath, and, instead of crying to God in their distress, are stupid and hardened under it; destruction awaits them; they shall perish under the judgment, and, what is far worse, shall die impenitent. In youth they shall be cut off, and their portion in eternity be appointed them among the unclean, whose worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. *Note;* (1.) Hypocrites in heart will be detected: however fair a show they make in the flesh, there is one that seeth and judgeth. (2.) Many now proudly despise the open sinner, the profane and unclean, and say to them, "Stand by thyself," I am more holy than you, who yet shall have their portion with them in the burning lake.

3dly, Elihu applies what he had said, to Job's case.

1. Had he been humbled, God would have removed the affliction; but his conduct under it continued the scourge upon him. It is God's constant method of procedure, to deliver the poor in spirit, to support, comfort, and strengthen him, and, when it is fit, to open a door of escape for him. Meantime, he conveys his instructive lessons, and whispers his kind consolations to the soul, amidst all its sorrows; and this Job would, ere now, have experienced,

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*Elihu goes on to set forth the greatness and wisdom of the works of God.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**A**T this also my heart trembleth, and is moved out of his place.

2 Hear attentively the noise of his voice, and the sound *that* goeth out of his mouth.

3 He directeth it under the whole heaven, and his lightning unto the ends of the earth.

4 After it a voice roareth: he thundereth

experienced, had he been patiently submissive; his path had not been then, as now, straitened, or his wants so distressing; he would have been freed from his troubles, and his table crowned with plenty: but since, by a behaviour like that of wicked men, and pleas which gave them countenance in their iniquities, he had offended, therefore in just judgment his corrections were continued, till his heart should be brought to bow in silent humiliation, and to give God his due glory in the acknowledgment of his righteousness. *Note;* (1.) When chastisements have answered their end, they will assuredly be removed; for God doth not willingly afflict the children of men. (2.) They who plead the cause of the wicked, must not wonder if they suffer with them.

2. He warns him of the danger of persevering in obstinate self-vindication. There was danger lest God, in wrath, should resent his injurious aspersions on his government; and if he should rise up to avenge his own quarrel, woe to the man against whom he lifts up the sword. No ransom can redeem him, no might rescue him, no darkness conceal him; no, not even the grave, which Job had so impatiently desired. The darkness hath no covering before God; and in death, their appointed place, the wrath of God pursues the sinners.

3. He cautions him to regard iniquity no longer, to persevere no longer in his charges against God, or so impatiently to desire death, to be rid of his afflictions, rather than humbly resigned to wait God's leisure and time for his deliverance. *Note;* The greatest sufferings are preferable to the least sins.

4. He bids him observe God's power, wisdom, and righteousness, to engage his unreserved submission to his will. He *exalteth by his power*, himself the source of all power, and, according to his own will, exalting whom he pleases. None teaches like him, so wise or able to direct: he needs no adviser; his ways, word, and providences, are all perfect in wisdom; and it were as false as foolish to charge him with iniquity, whose bosom is the seat of justice; and whose glorious prerogative it is, from the essential rectitude of his nature, that he can do no wrong. *Note;* The more we know of God, the more shall we be silenced and confounded before him, nor dare compare our wisdom, power, and righteousness with his, or complain of any thing that he appoints, which must be always wise as righteous.

4thly, From this view of the glorious works of God, his unsearchable perfections, and wonders in the administration of the kingdom of providence, Elihu would affect Job with humble thoughts of himself, and higher apprehensions of God and his ways.

1. He is worthy to be magnified for the works that he hath wrought, visible to every eye: the heavens above,  
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the earth around us, proclaim the glory of the Creator; and since, in them, his universal goodness as well as greatness appears, we may assuredly conclude, that in his works of providence, respecting us in particular, *he* deserves equally to be magnified and adored.

2. Though we see and know a part of his excellence, yet his perfections are unsearchable, and the mysteries of his works past finding out. If then we cannot comprehend his surpassing greatness, it were a folly to arraign his proceedings, and to speak evil of what we know not; and if we cannot account for the division of the drops of rain, or for the most common appearances in nature, it were highly absurd to quarrel with his providences, because we do not clearly see the reasons of his conduct.

[1.] *God is great, and we know him not*, cannot fathom his immensity, or comprehend his eternity; *neither can the number of his years be searched out*, who is from everlasting to everlasting; and here all our ideas are lost.

[2.] As unsearchable are his works. That the drops of dew descend, and from the clouds the rain pours down, we see; but how this wonder is performed, is yet a mystery, if we ascend to first principles. A little we know; but in a thousand inquiries into the nature and causes of things, we are enveloped with darkness; for who *can understand the spreadings of the clouds?* how poised in air they float? how from the smallest appearances they quickly darken the sky? how they collect their stores, or dispense them? *or the noise of his tabernacle*, the stormy winds which blow under heaven, or the thunders which utter their voices from the clouds? *Behold, he spreadeth his light upon it*, on the clouds his tabernacle; the light of the sun, which shines when the rain is blown over; or the lightning which flashes: *and covereth the bottom of the sea with waters*, thence to be raised, by the action of the sun and wind, into the clouds, as the vapour in the alembic. *For by them judgeth he the people:* he can when he pleases make them instruments of his vengeance, as in the flood, or, when in season and measure they gently water the earth, *he giveth meat in abundance.* *With clouds he covereth the light*, either shading the sultry beams of the sun, or with thick tempest in the sky turning the day into night; *and commandeth it not to shine, by the cloud*, or without this supplement to the text, *by that which cometh betwixt*, as in eclipses, when, by the interposition of the moon the sun is darkened, or the earth intercepts the sun-beams, while the moon passes through her shadow. *The noise thereof sheweth concerning it*, the whistling wind, or thunder, prognosticates the approaching rain; *the cattle also*, furnished with strange instinct, give tokens *concerning the vapour*, when the gathering storm approaches. In all which we see God's wondrous working, and are bound to magnify and praise him, whose wisdom is infinite, and his ways past find-

with the voice of his excellency; and he will not stay them when his voice is heard.

5 God thundereth marvellously with his voice; great things doeth he, which we cannot comprehend.

6 For he saith to the snow, Be thou *on* the earth; likewise to the small rain, and to the great rain of his strength.

7 He sealeth up the hand of every man; that all men may know his work.

8 Then the beasts go into dens, and remain in their places.

9 Out of the south cometh the whirlwind: and cold out of the north.

10 By the breath of God frost is given: and the breadth of the waters is straitened.

11 Also by watering he wearieth the thick cloud: he scattereth his bright cloud:

12 And it is turned round about by his counsels: that they may do whatsoever he

commandeth them upon the face of the world in the earth.

13 He causeth it to come, whether for correction, or for his land, or for mercy.

14 Hearken unto this, O Job: stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God.

15 Dost thou know when God disposed them, and caused the light of his cloud to shine?

16 Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, the wondrous works of him which is perfect in knowledge?

17 How thy garments *are* warm when he quieteth the earth by the south wind?

18 Hast thou with him spread out the sky, *which is* strong, and as a molten looking-glass?

19 Teach us what we shall say unto him; *for* we cannot order *our* speech by reason of darkness.

20 Shall it be told him that I speak? if a

ing out; and therefore in all his providences silent submission becomes our bounden duty.

#### CHAP. XXXVII.

*Ver. 3. He directeth it under the whole heaven] Its flash is beneath the whole heavens, and its blaze unto the ends of the earth.* Schultens and Heath.

*Ver. 6. Likewise to the small rain] And to the rain dropped plentifully, and to the storms of rain, Be ye violent.* The meaning of the next verse is, that, through the violent storm here mentioned, a stop is put to all the labours of man. By the same storm, ver. 8. the wild beasts are driven into their dens.

*Ver. 10. By the breath of God frost is given] By the breath of God he giveth ice, and he swelleth the waters by the thaw:*

*ver. 11. Fair weather also disperseth the cloud; his sun scattereth the cloud abroad; ver. 12. This also [the sun] by his wisdom performeth its revolution, that men may execute whatever he commandeth them upon the face of the earth.*

*Ver. 13. He causeth it to come] See chap. xxxviii. 23. It seems to me not improbable, says Bp. Sherlock, that these reflections arose from the methods made use of by Providence (not worn out of memory in the time of the writer of this book) in punishing the old world, in consequence of the curse laid upon the ground. Such methods they are, by which the ground may at any time be cursed, and the toil and labour of men increased to what degree God thinks fit. And it is to be noted, that the blessing promised to Noah, upon the restoration of the earth, is expressed by the regular successions which should continue from that time, of seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter; which is but a promise, in other words, that the hail and snow, and the waters of heaven, should be no longer instruments of judgment, but of mercy. In the 38th chapter God is introduced as setting forth his*

own great works of wisdom and power; *He laid the foundations of the earth; he shut up the sea with doors; he commanded the morning and the day-spring: after which it follows, from the wicked, their light is withholden.* This passage might be thought to allude to the Egyptian darkness, did it not refer to a much older date, and stand among the earliest of God's works, as an instance of his power from the beginning. The same reflection occurs in this writer more than once; it is mentioned again, chap. ix. and numbered among the judgments of God: *He commandeth the sun, and it riseth not, and sealeth up the stars.* Again, chap. xxxvi after mention made of the clouds, and of light, it follows, *By these judgements he the people.* To what ancient piece of history do all these allusions refer? We have nothing remaining upon record to which the application may be made. This only I find, that when God restored the earth, and gave his blessing to Noah, one promise is, *day and night shall not cease:* a strong intimation that clouds and darkness, storms and tempests, had greatly prevailed before for the punishment of the old world. See Bp. Sherlock on the Use and Intent of Prophecy, p. 218.

*Ver. 15. Dost thou know when God disposed them] Dost thou know when God fixed his curb upon them, and caused, &c.? See Schultens and Heath. This passage is by Grotius, and many other learned commentators, supposed to refer to the rainbow; when God laid his commands on the elements that they should no more destroy the world by water, and set his bow in the cloud as a sign to man.*

*Ver. 16. Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds, &c.] Art thou acquainted with the balance of the atmosphere, the wonders of perfect wisdom? Heath.*

*Ver. 19. Teach us what we shall say] The author here gives us an evident proof of his great skill in the management of the drama, as he by degrees prepares us for the appearance of the Almighty. His awful harbingers, the thunder*



man speak, surely he shall be swallowed up.

21 And now *men* see not the bright light which *is* in the clouds: but the wind passeth, and cleanseth them.

22 Fair weather cometh out of the north: with God *is* terrible majesty.

23 *Touching* the Almighty, we cannot find him out: *he is* excellent in power, and in judgment, and in plenty of justice: he will not afflict.

24 Men do therefore fear him: he respecteth not any *that are* wise of heart.

thunder and lightning, at a distance had announced his coming. Elihu then trembled, and his heart was ready to leap out of his breast, ver. 1. But at his nearer approach, he is in the utmost hurry and confusion: he is afraid to open his mouth; he is lost in amazement. The glory of God is too dazzling for mortal eyes to bear. The 20th and 21st verses may be rendered, *Could what I say be reported to him? Can a man speak, when he is swallowed up in amazement?* ver. 21. *Even now men cannot behold the bright light when the wind passeth over, and scowereth them clean;* ver. 22. *And fair weather cometh from the north.—As to God, terrible is the majesty of the Almighty: we cannot, &c.* The argument in the 21st verse is to this effect: "Man cannot bear to look at the sun when he shineth in his lustre; how much less on that tremendous blaze of glory which surrounds the throne of the Almighty!" See Schulzens and Heath.

Ver. 23. *He will not afflict*] *He oppresseth not.* Heath. *He will not be controuled.* Houb. The words *wise of heart*, at the end of the next verse, may be rendered, *wise in their own conceit.* It is a sarcasm of the same kind with that in the 4th verse of the former chapter. Mr. Peters thinks that our translation, *He will not afflict*, is right. The expression is absolute, and wants some little explication. The prophet Jeremiah gives it us, and that a very just and beautiful one, by the addition of a word; Lam. iii. 22. *God doth not afflict willingly, or from his heart:* he takes no pleasure in the doing of it: it is his work indeed, but a *strange work*, as Isaiah elegantly terms it, chap. xxviii. 21. It seems extremely plain, that Jeremiah borrowed his expression from Job.

And now Elihu, having set forth God's omnipotence in the strongest colours that he was able, concludes with an observation very applicable to the subject of dispute before them; that God and his ways are incomprehensible by us; that, nevertheless, as he is infinitely powerful and just, we are to conclude that he never sends affliction without cause; and that our duty, therefore, is to fear him, and to submit implicitly to his will; for that all human wisdom is nothing in respect to the wisdom of God. As this speaker performs the part of a moderator, he seems to have observed the errors on both sides, and have hit upon the point where the controversy ought to rest; namely, the unsearchable depth of the divine wisdom; with a persuasion, that God, who is acknowledged on all hands to be infinitely powerful and just, will certainly find a way to clear up all the irregularities, as they now appear to us, in the methods of his providence, and bring this intricate and perplexed scene at last to a beautiful and regular close. The great fault of the speech seems to be this; that he bears too hard upon Job; and his reproofs, though there were some grounds for them, are nevertheless too harsh

and severe. Nay, where he endeavours to repeat what Job had said, he gives it for the most part a wrong turn, or sets it in some very disadvantageous light. The silence of this good man, therefore, during this long speech of Elihu, may be considered as none of the least remarkable instances of his patience; but as he was convinced that one part of the charge brought against him was but too true, (namely, that he had been now and then too hasty and intemperate in his expressions,) he was resolved not to increase the fault by entering anew into the controversy: but by his silence and attention here, and suffering his passions to subside, he was the better prepared to receive the following speech from Jehovah, with that profound humility and that absolute submission which became him.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, If, as is by some suggested, at this time the rolling thunders were at a distance heard, with lightnings flashing round, and thickening clouds portending the approaching storm, there will be something more peculiarly beautiful and applicable in this description of Elihu.

1. He professes his own reverential fear at the awful scene, and addresses Job to pay attention to the voice which these mighty thunders uttered. *Note;* There is something in thunder inexpressibly awful, and it should ever remind us of that glorious God who maketh the thunder.

2. He describes the tremendous appearance. God himself directs the storm, bids the lightnings flash, the thunders roll, and points the mark against which these instruments of destruction are levelled; and in every nation this voice is heard. The flash precedes, and gives the warning of the terrible explosion; and the interval is, according to the distance of the cloud, proportionably longer or shorter, the motion of light being so much swifter than of sound. *And he will not stay them when his voice is heard*, torrents of rain usually succeeding. Thus doth God speak to the astonished world, marvellous in his works and above our comprehension; how little need we wonder then, if in his providence mysteries appear which we cannot fathom!

2dly, Elihu recounts other instances of the deep and unsearchable wonders which God works. At his word the snow covers the earth; the rain, obedient to his will, descends in gentle dews, or like dreadful cataracts. Driven from the plough, and the road, the traveller seeks the covert, and the labourer retires. Yea, the very beasts fly to their dens, till the tempest be overpast. *From the south*, or *from his chamber*, the restless whirlwind rushes, and bleak northern blasts bring winter's cold. The straitened waters feel the freezing breath of God, and, bound in crystal fetters, cease to flow. Thick clouds arise, when the dissolving frost emits more copious vapours; and in

## C H A P. XXXVIII.

*The Lord speaks to Job out of a whirlwind, and challenges him to answer. He convinces him of ignorance and weakness, by an enumeration of some of his mighty works.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**T**HEN the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said,

vast bodies the collected waters float on air till, wearied with watering, exhausted of their stores in wintry showers, they are dissipated before the vernal sun. Then bright clouds appear, not charged with storm or rain, but scattered light over the blue expanse. All things are ordered by his counsels, and come and go at his pleasure; sometimes as instruments of mercy; and sometimes as instruments of judgment, sent for correction, when inclement seasons, black with famine, spread their baneful influence, and inundations rising threaten a returning deluge: Again, they are sent on errands of mercy to the land, when sun and clouds, and rain and snow, conspire to fertilize the soil, and crown the happy spot on which his favour rests, with overflowing vats of wine and oil, or vallies thick with corn. *Note;* (1.) Since every kind of weather comes from a Divine providence and from unerring wisdom, it is sinful to complain. (2.) Shall beasts be wise to fly for shelter against the storm, and shall not man, a sinner, more provident, seek under the shadow of Jesus a covert from the deluge of divine wrath? (3.) Do all the creatures, thus obedient to the will of God, fulfil his pleasure, and shall we be the only rebels in the creation, and refuse his government and guidance? (4.) If fruitful seasons glad the year, may we never abuse the plenty; but in the gifts behold the giver! If for correction the heavens are made as brass over us; and the earth as iron beneath us refuse to yield its increase, *let us bear the rod, and who hath appointed it.* Elihu calls upon Job to attend diligently to his speech, and with solemn consideration to weigh well what he had spoken of these wondrous works of God, as an argument for submission to every dispensation; which, however strange to us, is ordered by him whose understanding is infinite. God alone is all-wise, and perfect in knowledge; but as to us, even the wisest, how small a part of his ways can we understand? Dost thou know how God fills the air with his stores of rain, or snow, or vapours? when or where they shall descend? how the rays of light became so beautifully painted on the cloud in the rainbow by the refrangibility of their colours, and by other secondary causes? by what mechanism these floating bodies are suspended, nor rush at once in cataracts to the earth? how our garments are warm, when, after winter's cold, the milder breath of summer stills the earth? These, with innumerable other things, however obvious in their effects, have mysteries in them which no human wisdom can unfold; and, as none can comprehend these wonders, none can pretend to have shared with God in any of his works. *Hast thou with him spread out the sky, which is strong, firm, and permanent; and as a molten looking-glass, bright and clear, without a flaw, reflecting the glory of the great Creator. Lo! in the immensity and unfathomable abyss of God's won-*

2 Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?

3 Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me.

4 Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare if thou hast understanding.

drous work, he bids Job speak, if he dared pretend to fathom these mysteries, where the wisdom of man gropes for the wall as blind, and *we cannot order our speech by reason of darkness.* Both darkness of the fallen mind within, and darkness in the mysterious subject without, prevent our conceiving or expressing ourselves with any precision or clearness on the subject. Far, therefore, from wishing that God should be told how well he had spoken, he trembles for himself, conscious how insufficient the best that he could say must appear, where the depth of the matter swallowed up the speaker. Or this last verse declares his disclaiming all attempt to vindicate Job's cause, where the wisest advocate must be immediately confounded. *Note;* When we speak of God, his being and perfections, we are all lost in astonishment: if we contemplate his works of creation or providence, our shallow line is quickly run out; if we look into his mysteries of grace, and attempt to speak of them, we find a height and length, and breadth and depth, which passeth created knowledge.

3dly, Perceiving probably the appearance of the glorious God, enveloped with dark clouds of the sky, and clothed with the whirlwind, Elihu hastens to conclude.

1. He observes, that the sun is darkened with clouds, but the wind disperses them, and from the north cometh fair weather. So, though God approached in terrible majesty, the storm would blow over, and Job's afflictions issue in the sun-shine of prosperity.

2. He closes his discourse with some short but weighty considerations. God's glory is infinite: his perfections unsearchable; his power almighty; his judgments righteous; and all his dispensations display infinite justice; so that none has the least reason of complaint. He delights not in man's sufferings, will never afflict him beyond his deserts, and ever with a design to do him good, where good can be done. Most justly therefore do good men reverence, fear, and submit to him. *He respecteth not any that are wise of heart,* who, instead of humble submission, indulge their proud reasonings: their censures he disregards, and, instead of altering his procedure, they may expect to be continued under the marks of his displeasure.

## C H A P. XXXVIII.

*Ver. 1. Then the Lord answered Job, &c.]* The Chaldee paraphrast, by the addition of a word, has given a very bold exposition of this text thus, *Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind of grief;* taking the word *סערה* rendered *whirlwind*, not in a literal, but a metaphorical sense. As if the meaning were only this: That amidst the tumult of Job's sorrows, God suggested to him the following thoughts, to bring him to a sense of his condition. But the generality of expositors agree to understand it of a sensible and miraculous

5 Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it?

6 Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner-stone thereof?

7 When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?

8 Or *who* shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, *as if* it had issued out of the womb?

9 When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling-band for it,

10 And brake up for it my decreed *place*, and set bars and doors,

11 And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed;

12 Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; *and* caused the day-spring to know his place;

13 That it might take hold of the ends of the earth, that the wicked might be shaken out of it?

14 It is turned as clay to the seal; and they stand as a garment.

miraculous interposition of the Deity, appearing in a cloud, the symbol of his presence, not to dispute, but absolutely to decide the controversy. It is, perhaps, of no great moment to inquire into the manner of the revelation: supposing the appearance and speech to have been nothing more than a prophetic vision; yet, if we allow that speech to be divine, its authority will be the same, whichever way we may suppose it to have been impressed on the mind of Job; whether by an immediate voice from the Deity, or in a prophetic trance. It is certain, that God, who formed our minds, can enlighten them to what degree he pleases; and whenever he inspired his prophets or holy men in an extraordinary way, with an intent of conveying through their hands some useful truths to mankind, there can be no doubt but that they in some way or other a certainty of the inspiration, and perhaps as clear a perception of the things suggested, as if they had been delivered to them by an audible and external voice. But whatever was the way of communicating, if it be possible to discover the divinity or inspiration of a writing by its own light, I think we cannot hesitate to pronounce this speech to be divine. The subject of it is, "God's omnipotence, as displayed in the works of creation." Many are the pens which have adorned this noble argument; philosophers, poets, and divines, have laid out all their eloquence upon it; and seemed raised above themselves whenever they have been led to touch upon this agreeable topic; but as the Holy Scriptures far surpass all human compositions in those sublime descriptions which they give us of the majesty of God, and of the wisdom and magnificence of his works; so, if we may be allowed to make the comparison, it will be difficult to find any thing in the sacred writings themselves that comes up to this speech. *Who is this that darkeneth counsel, &c.?*—It proceeds all along in this majestic strain; and every step that we advance, there is still presented to the imagination something new, and something great and wonderful. The descriptions scattered here and there are pictures drawn in such a lively manner, and withal so just, that they might instruct a Phidias or a Raphael. But what is most observable in this speech, as it gives a life and energy to the whole, is, the distribution of it for the most part into short questions, falling thick upon each other, and darting conviction, each like a flash of lightning, with a suddenness and force impossible to be refuted. Peters. See Longinus on the Sublime, sect. xviii. *de Interrog.*

*Ver. 2. Who is this that darkeneth counsel, &c.]* Nothing can be conceived more awful, than this appearance of Jehovah; nothing more sublime, than the manner in which his speech is introduced. Thunders, lightnings, and a whirlwind, announce his approach: All creation trembles at his presence: At the blaze of his all-piercing eye, every disguise falls off; the stateliness of human pride, the vanity of human knowledge, sink into their original nothing. The man of understanding, the man of age and experience; he who desired nothing more than to argue the point with God; he that would maintain his ways to his face, confounded and struck dumb at his presence, is ready to drop into dissolution, and repents in dust and ashes. With a single question the Almighty shews the absolute emptiness of human abilities, and puts an end to the dispute: "Canst thou give account of any one of my works? How then, presumptuous creature, darest thou attempt to censure my conduct in the government of the world; with the various relations of all whose parts thou art so far from being acquainted, that thou art not able to account for any one of them?" The present verse might be rendered, *Who is this that maketh a great display of wisdom about reasoning above his comprehension?* See Heath.

*Ver. 5. Who hath laid the measures thereof]* See 2 Sam. viii. 2.

*Ver. 7. When the morning stars sang together]* It is observable from many passages in the prophets, that the angels are compared to, or spoken of, under the metaphor of stars: See particularly Isai. xiv. 12. The beauty and propriety of these allusions of the prophets will appear with greater lustre, when it is considered that the hosts of heaven were the objects of heathen idolatry; both the visible and invisible host, as well the angels as the light of heaven; for the superstition seems to have been originally the same, as the worship of the heavenly bodies terminated in the worship of those angels or intelligences who were believed to animate or conduct them; and hence we see a reason why the angels are called stars, and morning stars in Scripture. Peters.

*Ver. 8. When it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb]* *When it burst forth as an infant, that cometh out of the womb.* Heath.

*Ver. 10. And brake up for it my decreed place]* *When I fixed my boundary against it; when I placed a bar and gates.*

15 And from the wicked their light is withholden, and the high arm shall be broken.

16 Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth?

17 Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death?

18 Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? declare, if thou knowest it all.

19 Where is the way where light dwelleth?

*Ver. 16. Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? Hast thou been at the sources of the sea? Hast thou traversed the depths of the abyss? Heath.*

*Ver. 17. Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? It has been objected against the famous passage in the 19th chapter, which we have interpreted of the doctrine of a resurrection, that neither Elihu nor Jehovah, in their determination of the debate, mention any thing of that doctrine; the mention of which, say the objectors, would have rendered every thing plain and easy. Now, in answer to this, let it be observed, that the great question in debate between Job and his friends was, whether this miserably-afflicted man were innocent or guilty. In the conclusion, God himself pronounces him innocent. Here then is a decision made in Job's favour, and, moreover, the question of a providence satisfactorily determined; namely, that great sufferings are not always an argument of great sins; but that a very good man may sometimes be extremely wretched in this life: and what other solution could possibly have been expected? As to God's not mentioning the doctrine of a resurrection, we may ask, for what should it be mentioned? It appears from the text above referred to, that Job firmly believed it; and whether his friends believed it or not, yet they understood what he meant when he urged it, and would not allow it to be decisive of the point in dispute between them; namely, whether Job were innocent or not. But God's pronouncing him innocent, was certainly instead of all other arguments, and must put an end to the controversy at once. It may be proper, however, to observe a few things much to our present purpose, from this speech of the Deity; and, first, that the divine omnipotence as displayed in the works of creation, which is here set down with astonishing sublimity, was an argument, if duly attended to, sufficient to remove all the doubts and perplexities into which these over-warm reasoners had fallen: for if God created all things, he must have a concern for all his creatures; and if he can do all things, he can have no temptation to do wrong; and, therefore, his infinite power gives a certain assurance that he must and will set every thing to rights at one time or another. If he does not do it in this life, he will certainly do it hereafter. And this, no doubt, is the inference which they have left to draw for themselves. But farther yet; the divine omnipotence is likewise a full answer, in particular, to all the objections which have been, or can be made, I think, to the doctrine of the resurrection; and therefore was extremely apposite and proper to confirm Job in the*

and *as for* darkness, where is the place thereof,

20 That thou shouldest take it to the bound thereof, and that thou shouldest know the paths to the house thereof?

21 Knowest thou *it*, because thou wast then born? or, *because* the number of thy days is great?

22 Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail?

23 Which I have reserved against the time

belief of it, and to convince the others, if they doubted or disbelieved it. For the wonders of God's creation, which this speech describes in the most lively colours, is a visible proof and demonstration, how easy such a new creation, as we may term it, (the restoring man again out of the dust, from whence he was taken, and into which he is resolved) must needs be to God. This therefore is an argument which we find very much insisted on by the first apologists for christianity; Minutius Felix, Tertullian, Athenagoras, and others; and with which they answer all the cavils of their heathen adversaries: and I am persuaded that it is an argument which will stand all trials. The next thing in order we shall observe from this speech at present is, that God, by his display of his omnipotence, not only shews Job what large amends he could make good men for all their sufferings in the great day of the resurrection; but hints to him by the question in this verse, that he could as easily do it before; and admit them to what degree of happiness he pleased, immediately upon their dissolution: *Have the gates, &c. i. e. "Hast thou looked into Sheol, the intermediate state, the region of departed spirits?"* Hast thou seen, says God, how the souls of men are disposed of after death, and how amply the afflictions of good men may be made up to them there? What room then for such complaints as you have now been uttering? This seems apparently the drift of the question. In short, the great lesson that we are to learn from this divine speech, and the decision here put to the controversy, is, that our disputes about the providence of God proceed from ignorance and folly: that the first duty of a creature is to resign himself to the will of his creator; to do his commands with pleasure; receive his dispensations with submission; be thankful to him for the good, and patient under the evil which he sends; to consider life, with its appendages, as the free gift of God; which therefore we should employ in his service, be ready to give freely when he calls for it, and trust him for a future happy state. Peters.

*Ver. 20. That thou shouldest take it to the bound thereof? Surely thou canst guide us to its border: yea, certainly thou canst show the roads which lead to its dwelling.*

*Ver. 23. Against the day of battle and war?]* Though the expression here is general; and means only that the Almighty reserves these powers in nature as the instruments of destruction on wicked men; yet particular cases may well be referred to as explanatory hereof. See therefore Exod. ix. 23. and Josh. x. 11. Respecting the treasures of snow and hail, the philosophical reader will find great satisfaction

of trouble, against the day of battle and war?

24 By what way is the light parted, *which* scattereth the east wind upon the earth?

25 Who hath divided a watercourse for the overflowing of waters, or a way for the lightning of thunder;

26 To cause it to rain on the earth, *where* no man is; on the wilderness, wherein *there is* no man;

27 To satisfy the desolate and waste ground; and to cause the bud of the tender herb to spring forth?

28 Hath the rain a father? or who hath begotten the drops of the dew?

29 Out of whose womb came the ice? and the hoary frost of heaven, who hath gendered it?

30 The waters are hid as *with* a stone, and the face of the deep is frozen.

31 Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion?

32 Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season? or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons?

33 Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth?

34 Canst thou lift up thy voice to the clouds, that abundance of waters may cover thee?

35 Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are?

36 Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts? or who hath given understanding to the heart?

37 Who can number the clouds in wisdom? or who can stay the bottles of heaven.

38 When the dust groweth into hardness, and the clods cleave fast together?

39 Wilt thou hunt the prey for the lion? or fill the appetite of the young lions,

40 When they couch in *their* dens, and abide in the covert to lie in wait?

41 Who provideth for the raven his food? when his young ones cry unto God, they wander for lack of meat.

satisfaction by referring to Scheuchzer on the place; who, with much care and labour, has enlarged on the principal topics of natural enquiry in this book, in a manner which must give pleasure to all who read him.

*Ver. 30. The waters are hid as with a stone.] How do the waters harden like a stone? and the face of the waters, how is it congealed? Houb.*

*Ver. 31. Canst thou bind the sweet influences of Pleiades? See the note on chap. ix. 9.*

*Ver. 33. Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? Doth thou know the laws of the heavens? hast thou appointed their dominion over the earth? Houb.*

*Ver. 35. Canst thou send lightnings that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are?]* Nothing can be more elevated and sublime than this verse. How strong the image! how simple the expression! We read of winged lightnings in the heathen poets; but where do they live, and act, and speak, and wait for orders with impatience, as here? See Peters, and Longinus on the Sublime, sect. 9. and Dr. Smith's notes on sect. 18.

*Ver. 36. Or who hath given understanding to the heart? Or who hath given discernment to the eyes? Heath: who renders the last clause of the next verse, Who can cause the bottles of heaven to pour down abundantly? which seems to connect much better with verse 38.*

*Ver. 41. Who provideth for the raven his food?]* The reason given why the raven is particularly mentioned as an object of the care of Providence, is, because by his clamorous and importunate voice he particularly seems always calling upon him; thence *νεβελος* from *corax*, a raven, signifies to ask earnestly, Ælian, lib. ii. c. 48. See Dr. Young's Notes on his Paraphrase of the Book of Job.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Behold the present Deity! what mortal but must tremble before him, with deep silence bow into the dust, and hear with solemn attention what GOD is about to speak!

1. The person who appears is the Almighty Jehovah, probably the eternal Son, visible in human form. See chap. xlii. 5. Out of the whirlwind, in terrible majesty, he utters his voice, and, as Job had so earnestly requested, directs his speech to him. *Note;* (1.) God hath various ways of speaking to the souls of men: sometimes in the small still voice of secret consolations, sometimes in the awfully distressing thunders of heart-rending convictions; yet in both it is alike the voice of mercy. (2.) They who contend against God, must be made to know, at last, how vain their struggle against him, who, when he judgeth, will overcome.

2. The charge laid against Job. *Who is this that darkeneth counsel, by words without knowledge? Shall a worm dare presume to judge of God's perfections? Shall Job, the righteous Job, object to his wisdom and goodness? Shall he by speeches of folly darken and misrepresent the counsels of providence? How insolent, as well as ignorant, the attempt!*

3. God challenges him to answer, since that was what he had so eagerly desired; bids him gird up his loins as a man of war, and produce his strong reasons; or answer his questions concerning things natural and obvious, before he dared pretend to fathom the secrets of Providence.

2dly, With what majesty! with what unutterable dignity, doth God describe his own glorious works! and how can Job pretend to dispute with him, when he is unable to answer one of a thousand of his enquiries.

1. Where

## C H A P. XXXIX.

*Of the wild goats and hinds; of the wild ass; the unicorn, the peacock, stork, and ostrich; the horse, the hawk, and the eagle.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**K**NOWEST thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth? or canst

thou mark when the hinds do calve?

2 Canst thou number the months that they fulfil? or knowest thou the time when they bring forth?

3 They bow themselves, they bring forth their young ones, they cast out their sorrows.

4 Their young ones are in good liking,

1. Where was he, when God, alone existing from eternity, began his wonders of creation, and laid the strong foundations of the earth? Was he present, or his wisdom consulted, in proportioning the quantity of matter to be consolidated; or sitting in exact proportion the several parts, to compose the exquisite machine? Could he explain the causes of attraction and gravitation; how the parts cohere? by what basis supported; or by what cornerstone the glorious fabric was held together? How unthought of, without a being, was he, when on the rising glories of creation, the morning stars, spoke into being at God's word, shone forth his praises; or rather bright angelic hosts beheld with enraptured admiration the teeming womb of nature, and heaven's high arch resounded with shouts of joy, and songs of seraphic spirits, adoring the great creator. *Note;* (1.) God alone is the great author of all; and he who made all with such consummate wisdom, must needs best know how to govern. (2.) If angels in heaven are adoring, should man be silent, to whom the earth is given, and for whose sake it was formed? (3.) In heaven no discord is heard; there they all unite in the great congregation. When shall the sons of God on earth resemble them; divided no more by schisms, sects, and parties; but with one heart, and one mouth, unite together in universal love, and worship God in the same beauty of holiness!

2. He knew no more concerning the limiting of the sea with bounds, than about the creation of the earth. It was God alone, without his help or consultation, who from the embryo of matter first separated the swelling floods, that burst forth at his word, as waters from the travailing womb. Then by his spirit moving on the face of the deep, the separation first was made, and the dry land arose; the ocean retired to its appointed place, laid as a babe in a cradle, and wrapped with swaddling bands of darkness. There, though the billows rage, and lift their curling heads on high, his decree hath fixed their limits, more firm than bars of adamant; *Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed.*

3dly, God proceeds to confound Job with questions infinitely above mortal understanding; and thereby to teach him his folly in arraigning any of his works and ways.

1. Respecting the light of the morning. *Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days? to break sooner, or retard the dawn beyond its appointed moment; and caused the day-spring to know its place? when or where to arise? Never: how then could he pretend to alter the dispensations of providence? Swift the morning beam darts to earth's farthest verge, bringing unwelcome light to the deeds of darkness; then the wicked are discovered and seized, and shaken out of the world. Turning to the sun, as clay to the seal, the enlightened hemisphere, which before was darkness and confusion, now appears beautifully*

illuminated with the beams of day; and all its verdant beauties, trees, plants, herbs, and flowers, like garments clothe and adorn it on every side. But though the light of day returns, spiritual darkness is still spread upon the sinner's soul, and eternal darkness awaits him; or, confined for his crimes in dungeons, he sees no cheering beam; and the arm that he lifted high in iniquity is broken by just judgment. *Note;* Like the morning-light did Christ, the day-star, arise, and his bright truth has been diffused to the ends of the earth; and though wicked men choose darkness rather, and hate this gospel-day, they shall be seized, convicted, condemned, and executed, doomed to that outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.

2. As ignorant was he, [1.] Of the springs of the sea; what fed it in such exact proportion, that it should not be exhausted by the vapour arising from it, or swollen beyond its limits by the rivers which flow into it; as ignorant also was he of its depth, which is unfathomable; and of its treasures, which are unsearchable. [2.] Of the state of the dead, by what diseases or accidents men shall come to the grave; how the union of body and soul is dissolved; by what path we go into the unseen world; in what place the soul remains; who in that world are happy or miserable; and what is there transacted. *Note;* In awful curiosity the soul now steps sometimes to the verge of time, and casts an eye into the boundless ocean of eternity; but "shadows, clouds, and darkness rest upon it." Yet, though sight fails, and reason is lost, faith can pierce through the thick cloud, and dare, unterrified, launch forth with confidence and comfort into the untried abysses. [3.] Of the dimensions of the earth. Who ever made the survey of all its kingdoms, provinces, hills, dales, with the several measures and extent of each? How much is yet unknown after all human researches; and of what is discovered, how small a part can any one man know by actual survey? and how much less of the breadth and length of the divine counsels?

[4.] Where light dwells, and where darkness has its place; and how in succession they go and return, till day and night shall have an end? Secrets these, into which the deepest philosophic inquiries can never adequately penetrate.

[5.] Of the snow, hail, and wind. Where the treasures for each are placed; how they are sent forth in measure and duration; in what manner marshalled, when God employs them as instruments of vengeance to punish guilty mortals? In all which points, a worm of yesterday, as Job was, must confess his ignorance, and therefore ought in silence to adore, without a murmur against any thing that God doth, all of whose works far exceed his understanding.

4thly, How impotent, as well as ignorant, is man, when compared with his Maker! Who can do as God doth? Therefore how dare we contend with him?

1. From



they grow up with corn ; they go forth, and return not unto them.

5 Who hath sent out the wild asfs free ? or who hath loosed the bands of the wild asfs ?

6 Whose house I have made the wilderness, and the barren land his dwellings.

7 He scorneth the multitude of the city,

neither regardeth he the crying of the driver.

8 The range of the mountains is his pasture, and he searcheth after every green thing.

9 Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib ?

10 Canst thou bind the unicorn with his

1. From him alone cometh the rain; each drop falls from the clouds in its appointed place, and in the exact channel formed for it through the air. The lightning flashes not uncircumscribed, but in the way, extent, and order that he prescribes. The desolate wilderness partakes of the divine care, and herbs and flowers arise where no human footsteps tread, and the beasts of the forest alone maintain their empire. Great parent of all, the rain calls him Father, and the smallest drop of dew distinctly acknowledges him the Maker. The hoary frost that whitens the earth, he only can produce; and when he sends forth his ice, the waters are congealed as the rock, and the face of the deep is solid as the marble pavement. *Note:* Our hearts are like the desolate and parched ground, till watered with the dew of heavenly grace, but then bring forth fruit unto God.

2. God appeals to him for his weakness. He can do nothing: the clouds will not drop at his bidding, nor the lightnings execute his commands; much less can he reach the higher regions of the stars. He cannot bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades, which usher in the general spring, to retard or hasten it; nor loose the bands of Orion, whose constellation reigns during the cold of winter, that the stormy winds should not blow, nor the frost harden the earth. The southern stars own not his government, nor do the constellations of the north move by his direction. So far from guiding them, he knew not by what laws they were governed; and if their dominion were left to him confusion would soon ensue, and he be at a loss to direct the vast machine. The understanding that man possesses, of whatever kind, in things natural and spiritual, is all derived from him, and therefore it were folly to pretend to be wiser above him, from whom all our wisdom comes. We know little, and can do less. Who can number the clouds, or stay the bottles of heaven, when by profuse rain the dust becomes mire, and cleaves fast together in clods? Therefore, with humble acknowledgments of our weakness and ignorance, it becomes us to resign ourselves and our all to his government, who alone is the all-wise Director. *Note:* (1.) If some pretend to judge of men's fortune by the knowledge of the stars, and others credit their astrological predictions, we may safely conclude the knavery or impudence of the one, and the folly of the other. (2.) Since God is the author of our rational soul, let us improve the measure of knowledge that he hath bestowed upon us, not in endless researches, or vain questions, much less in finding fault with his ways; but in meditation on his glory, and reflecting on the arguments for perfect submission under all his dispensations; and this shall be indeed our wisdom.

3. God proceeds, from the works of his glory above, to his care and providence over the brute creation, in

which the next chapter is entirely occupied, and might properly begin here. The lion, as the king of beasts, is first mentioned: man neither can nor durst provide the lions' prey, nor approach them in their hiding-places; but God feeds and fills them. The ravens likewise prove his providential care: useless as they may appear in the creation, their young ones are not suffered to perish for want; but God hears their cry of hunger, and provides for their support. *Note:* (1.) Doth the providence of God extend to the fierce lion, and the unclean raven? shall they share his kindness; and can his own children have cause to complain of his neglect? No, in no wise. (2.) If the cry of the young raven is heard, surely the prayers of the poor shall not be disregarded. While on our knees we beg for daily bread, we shall not want it.

CHAP. XXXIX.

*Ver. 2. Canst thou number the months, &c.]* The meaning of these questions is, "Knowest thou the time and circumstances of their bringing forth?" For, to know the time only was easy, and had nothing in it extraordinary; but the circumstances had something peculiarly expressive of God's providence, which makes the question proper in this place. Pliny observes, that the hind with young is by instinct directed to a certain herb called *seselis*, which facilitates the birth. Thunder also, which looks like the more immediate hand of Providence, has the same effect. Dr. Young.

*Ver. 3. They bow themselves]* The manuscripts mark the two last verbs with a circle. Houbigant's version runs thus: *They bow themselves; they burst with their pains; they cast forth their young.* But I cannot help disagreeing with the learned father of the Oratory; as the passage, according to our version, appears to me much more emphatical. Every reader of taste must discern peculiar strength and beauty in the expression, *They cast out their fetters.* Houbigant renders the 4th verse, [*Knowest thou how their young ones grow up, increase in the fields, and, once departing, return to them no more?*—*Whose house,* in the 6th verse, would more properly be rendered *whose habitation*; and the *barren land* might be better rendered *the thicket*. The word מלכא *melach*, signifies a kind of *shrub*; the *goat*, probably, in which these animals delight. See Parkhurst on the word מלכא *melach*, 4.

*Ver. 7. The multitude of the city]* Or, *The thronged city.*

*Ver. 9. Will the unicorn, &c.]* See Numb. xxiv. 8. Schultens is of opinion, that the animal here mentioned is the Arabian *buffaloe*, of the bull species, but absolutely untameable, and which the Arabians frequently hunt. See the authorities which this learned writer has produced, in his note on the place.



band in the furrow? or will he harrow the vallies after thee?

11 Wilt thou trust him, because his strength is great? or wilt thou leave thy labour to him?

12 Wilt thou believe him, that he will bring home thy feed, and gather it into thy barn?

13 Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks? or wings and feathers unto the ostrich?

14 Which leaveth her eggs in the earth,

and warmeth them in the dust.

15 And forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them.

16 She is hardened against her young ones, as though *they were* not hers: her labour is in vain without fear;

17 Because God hath deprived her of wisdom, neither hath he imparted to her understanding.

18 What time she lifteth up herself on high, she scorneth the horse and his rider.

Ver. 13—18. Goodly wings unto the peacocks] Bochart seems to have proved, beyond all dispute, that the word rendered *peacocks* signifies *ostriches*; and the following description entirely agrees with that opinion. Mr. Heath renders the verse, *The wing of the ostrich is triumphantly expanded, though the strong pinion be the portion of the stork and the falcon; ver. 14. though she leaves her eggs, &c.* Dr. Shaw renders the verse *The wing of the ostrich is quivering or expanded, the very feathers and plumage of the stork; and he observes, that the warming of the eggs in the dust or sand, is by incubation; and that the beginning of the 14th verse might be more properly rendered, When she raiseth herself up to run away, namely, from her pursuers.* In commenting on these verses, it may be observed, says the Doctor, that when the *ostrich* is full grown, the neck, particularly of the male, which before was almost naked, is now very beautifully covered with red feathers. The plumage likewise upon the shoulders, the back, and some parts of the wings, from being hitherto of a dark greyish colour, becomes now as black as jet, while the rest of the feathers retain an exquisite whiteness: *They are,* described at ver. 13. *the very feathers and plumage of the stork; i. e. they consist of such black and white feathers as the stork, called from thence  $\pi\epsilon\tau\alpha\sigma\tau\omicron\varsigma$ , is known to have.* But the belly, the thighs, and the breast, do not partake of this covering, being usually naked, and when touched are found to be of the same warmth as the flesh of *quadrupeds*. Under the joint of the great pinion, and sometimes upon the lesser, there is a strong pointed excrescence like a cock's spur, with which it is said to prick and stimulate itself, and thereby acquire fresh strength and vigour when it is pursued. When these birds are surprized, by coming upon them while feeding in some valley, or behind some rocky or sandy eminence in the desarts, they will not stay to be curiously viewed and examined. Neither are the Arabs ever dexterous enough to overtake them, even when they are mounted upon their jinn, or horses. *They, when they raise themselves up for flight, ver. 18. laugh at the horse and his rider.* They afford him an opportunity only of admiring at a distance their extraordinary agility, and the stateliness likewise of their motions, the richness of their plumage, and the great propriety there was of ascribing to them, ver. 13. *an expanded quivering wing.* Nothing certainly can be more beautiful and entertaining than such a sight! the wings, by their repeated, though unwearied vibrations, equally

erving them for sails and oars; while their feet, no less assisting in conveying them out of sight, are no less insensible of fatigue. The ostrich lays from thirty to fifty eggs. *Ælian* mentions more than eighty; but I never heard of so large a number. The first egg is deposited in the centre; the rest are placed as conveniently as possible round about it. In this manner she is said to lay, deposit, or trust her eggs in the earth, and to warm them in the sand; ver. 14. *and forget* (as they are not placed, like those of some other birds, upon trees, or in the clefts of rocks, &c.) *that the foot of the traveller may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them.* Yet, notwithstanding the ample provision which is hereby made for a numerous offspring, scarcely one quarter of these eggs are ever supposed to be hatched; and of those which are, no small share of the young ones may perish with hunger, from being left too early by their dams to shift for themselves; for in these, the most barren and desolate recesses of the *Sabara*, where the *ostrich* chooses to make her nest, it would not be enough to lay eggs and hatch them, unless some proper food was near at hand, and already prepared for their nourishment; and accordingly we are not to consider this large collection of eggs as if they were all intended for a brood: they are the greatest part of them reserved for food, which the dam breaks and disposes of, according to the number and the cravings of her young ones. But for all this, a very little share of that *care*, or natural affection, which so strongly exerts itself in most other creatures, is observable in the ostrich: for, upon the least distant noise or trivial occasion, she forsakes her eggs or her young ones; to which, perhaps, she never returns; or if she does, it may be too late, either to restore life to the one, or preserve the lives of the others. Agreeably to this account, the Arabs meet sometimes with whole nests of these eggs undisturbed: some of which are sweet and good; others are addle and corrupted; others, again, have their young ones of different growths, according to the time that it may be presumed they have been forsaken by the dam. They oftener meet a few of the little ones, no bigger than well-grown pullets, half-starved, straggling and moaning about, like so many distressed orphans for their mother. And in this manner the ostrich may be said, ver. 16. *to be hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers: her labour, in hatching and attending them so far, being in vain, with-*  
cut

19 Hast thou given the horse strength? hast thou clothed his neck with thunder?

20 Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper? the glory of his nostrils is terrible.

21 He paweth in the valley, and rejoiceth in his strength: he goeth on to meet the armed men.

22 He mocketh at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turneth he back from the sword.

23 The quiver rattleth against him, the glittering spear and the shield.

24 He swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage: neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet.

out fear, or the least concern of what becomes of them afterwards. This want of affection is also recorded, Lam. iv. 3. *The daughter of my people, says the prophet, is cruel, like the ostriches in the wilderness.* Nor is this the only reproach that may be due to the ostrich; she is likewise inconsiderate and foolish in her private capacity; particularly in her choice of food, which is frequently highly detrimental and pernicious to her; for she swallows every thing greedily and indiscriminately, whether it be pieces of rags, leather, wood, stone, or iron. When I was at Oran, I saw one of these birds swallow, without any seeming uneasiness or inconveniency, several leaden bullets, as they were thrown upon the floor, scorching hot from the mold: *the divine providence in these*, as well as in other respects, *having deprived them of wisdom, neither hath it imparted to them understanding.* Those parts of the Sabara which these birds chiefly frequent are destitute of all manner of food and herbage, except it be some few turfs of coarse grass, or a few solitary plants of the *laureola*, *apocynum*, and some other kinds; each of which is equally destitute of nourishment, and in the Psalmist's phrase, (cxxxix. 6.) *even withereth before it is plucked up.* Yet these herbs, notwithstanding this want of moisture in their temperature, will sometimes have both their leaves and stalks studded all over with land-snails, which may afford them some little refreshment. It is very probable likewise that they may sometimes seize upon lizards and serpents, together with insects and reptiles of various kinds. Yet still, considering the great voracity and size of this camel-bird, it is wonderful, not only how the little ones, after they are weaned from the provisions before mentioned; should be brought up, but even how those of fuller growth, and much better qualified to look out for themselves, are able to subsist. Their organs of digestion, and particularly the gizzards, which by their strong friction will wear away even iron itself, shew them indeed to be granivorous; but yet they have scarcely ever an opportunity to exercise them in this way, unless when they chance to stray towards those parts of the country that are sown and cultivated, which is very seldom. For these, as they are much frequented by the Arabs at the several seasons of grazing, plowing, and gathering in the harvest, are little visited by, as indeed they would be an improper abode for, this shy timorous bird, a (φίλις) lover of the deserts. This last circumstance in the behaviour of the ostrich is frequently alluded to in the Holy Scriptures: particularly Isa. xlii. 21. xxxiv. 13. xliiii. 20. and Jer. l. 39. where the word יענב *iaanab*, instead of being rendered the ostrich, as it is rightly put in the margin, is called the owl, a word used likewise instead of יענב *iaanab*, or the ostrich, Lev. xi. 16. and Deut. xiv. 15. While I was abroad I had

several opportunities of amusing myself with the actions of the ostrich. It was very diverting to observe with what dexterity and *equipose* of body it would play and frisk about on all occasions. In the heat of the day particularly, it would strut along the sunny side of the house with great majesty, perpetually fanning and priding itself with its *quivering expanded wings*, and seeming, at every turn, to admire and be in love with its shadow. Even at other times, whether walking about or resting upon the ground, the wings would continue these fanning vibratory motions, as if designed to mitigate and assuage the extraordinary heat wherewith their bodies seem to be naturally affected. They are often very rude and fierce to strangers; and are apt to be very mischievous, by striking violently with their feet; for the inward claw, or rather the hoof as we should call it, of this *avis bifurca*, being exceedingly strong-pointed and angular, I once saw an unfortunate person who had his belly ripped up by one of these strokes. While they are engaged in such assaults, they sometimes make a fierce, angry, and hissing noise, with their throats inflated and their mouths open: at other times, when less resistance is made, they have a chucking or cackling voice, as in the poultry kind, and thereby seem to rejoice and laugh as it were at the timorousness of their adversary. But during the lonesome part of the night, (as if their organs of voice had then attained a quite different tone,) they often make a very doleful and hideous noise, which would sometimes be like the roaring of a lion; at other times it would bear a nearer resemblance to the hoarser voices of other quadrupeds, particularly the bull and the ox. I have often heard them groan as if they were in the greatest agonies; an action beautifully alluded to by the prophet Micah, i. 8. where it is said, *I will make a mourning like the יענב iaanab, or ostrich.* יענב *iaanab* therefore, and רננים *renanim*, the names by which the ostrich is known in the Holy Scriptures, may very properly be deduced from יענב *iaanab*, and רנן *renen*; words which the lexicographers explain by *exclamare*, or *clamare fortiter*, to cry out, or to cry strongly: for the noise made by the ostrich being loud and sonorous, *exclamare*, or *clamare fortiter*, may with propriety enough be attributed to it; especially as those words do not seem to denote any certain or determined mode of voice or sound peculiar to any particular species of animals, but such as may be applicable to them all; to birds as well as quadrupeds and other creatures. See Travels, p. 430. &c.

Ver. 19—25. *Hast thou given the horse strength, &c.]* It is difficult to express violent motions, which are fleeting and transitory, either in colours or words. In poetry, it requires great spirit in thought, and energy in style, of which we find more in the eastern poetry than in either the Greek or Roman. The great Creator, who accommodated

25 He faith among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smelleth the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains, and the shouting.

26 Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom, and stretch her wings toward the south?

27 Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, and make her nest on high?

28 She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place.

29 From thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off.

30 Her young ones also suck up blood; and where the slain *are*, there *is* she.

dated himself to those to whom he vouchsafed to speak, has put into the mouths of his prophets such sublime sentiments and exalted language as must abash the pride and wit of man. In this book of Job, *the most ancient poem in the world*, we have great variety of such paintings and descriptions. The description before us, of the horse, is one of these. Homer has a fine similitude of a horse, which Virgil has copied from him, and which is thus admirably translated:

The fiery courser, when he hears from far,  
The sprightly trumpets, and the shouts of war,  
Pricks up his ears; and, trembling with delight,  
Shifts pace, and paws; and hopes the promis'd fight.  
On his right shoulder his thick mane reclin'd,  
Ruffles at speed, and dances in the wind.  
His horny hoofs are jetty black, and round;  
His chine is double; starting, with a bound  
He turns the turf, and shakes the solid ground. }  
Fire from his eyes, clouds from his nostrils flow;  
He bears his rider headlong on the foe.

Now compare this with the present passage, which, under all the disadvantages of having been written in a language little understood; of being expressed in phrases peculiar to a part of the world whose manner of thinking and speaking seems strange to us; and, above all, of appearing in a prose translation, is nevertheless so transcendantly above the heathen description, that hereby we may perceive how faint and languid are the images which are formed by mortal authors, when compared with that which is figured as it were just as it appears in the eye of the Creator. All the great and sprightly images which thought can form of this generous beast, are here expressed in such force and vigour of style, as would have given the great wits of antiquity new laws for the sublime, had they been acquainted with these writings. I cannot but particularly observe, that whereas the classic poets chiefly endeavour to paint the outward figure, lineaments, and motions, the sacred poet makes all the beauties to flow from an inward principle in the creature he describes, and thereby gives great spirit and vivacity to his description. *Haft thou clothed his neck with thunder?* Homer and Virgil mention nothing about the neck of the horse but his mane; the sacred author, by the bold figure of *thunder*, not only expresses the shaking of that remarkable beauty in the horse, and the flakes of hair which naturally suggest the idea of lightning; but likewise the violent agitation and force of the neck, which in the oriental tongues had been flatly expressed by a metaphor no less bold than this. *Canst thou make him afraid as a grasshopper?* ver. 20. an expression which contains a twofold beauty, as it not only marks the courage of the beast, by asking him if he

can be affrighted; but likewise raises a noble image of his swiftness, insinuating, that if that were possible, he would bound away with the nimbleness of the grasshopper. *The glory of his nostrils is terrible.* This is more strong and concise than that of Virgil, which is one at least of the noblest lines that was ever written without inspiration.

Collectumque premens volvit sub naribus ignem.

Georg. iii. ver. 85.

And in his nostrils rolls collected fire.

*He rejoiceth in his strength—He mocketh at fear—Neither believeth he that it is the sound of the trumpet.—He faith among the trumpets, ha! ha!*—are signs of courage, as I said before, flowing from an inward principle. There is a peculiar beauty in his *not believing that it is the sound of the trumpet*; i. e. he cannot believe it for joy. But when he is sure of it, and is *among the trumpets*, he faith *ha! ha!* he neighs; he rejoices [of which the Hebrew word *הִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה* *heach*, is strongly expressive]. His docility is elegantly painted, in his being unmoved at the *rattling quiver*, the *glittering spear*, and the *shield*. *He swalloweth the ground*, is an expression for prodigious swiftness, in use among the Arabians, Job's countrymen, at this day: it is the boldest and noblest of all images for swiftness. The Latins have something like it: but I have not met with any thing which comes so near it as Mr. Pope's lines in his *Windsor Forest*:

Th' impatient courser pants in every vein,  
And, pawing, seems to beat the distant plain;  
Hills, vales, and floods, appear already crost,  
And ere he starts, a thousand steps are lost.

*He smelleth the battle afar off*—and what follows, is a circumstance expressed with great spirit by Lucan:

So when this ring with joyful shouts rebounds,  
With rage and pride th'imprison'd courser bounds;  
He frets, he foams, he rends his idle rein,  
Springs o'er the fence, and headlong seeks the plain.

See Guardian, No. 86. and Lowth's Prel. 34.

It is but justice to our translators to observe, that their version appears greatly superior to all others, both in accuracy and elegance.

*Ver. 26. Doth the hawk fly by thy wisdom? &c.*] Thuanus, *De Re Accip.* mentions a hawk which flew from London to Paris in a night; and it was on account of its remarkable swiftness that the Egyptians made it their hieroglyphic for the *wind*.

*Ver. 29. Her eyes behold afar off*] Dr. Young paraphrases this well:

Thence [from the rock] wide o'er nature takes her dread survey,  
And, with 3 glance, predestinates her prey.

And

## C H A P. XL.

*Job humbleth himself before God; who further challengeth him by a display of the works of his power. A description of the Behemoth.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**M**OREOVER the LORD answered Job, and said,

2 Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? he that reproveth God; let him answer it.

3 ¶ Then Job answered the LORD, and said,

4 Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.

And he observes, that the eagle is said to be of so acute a sight, that when she is so high in the air that man cannot see her, she can discern the smallest fish under water. The author of this book accurately understood the nature of the creatures which he describes, and seems to have been as great a naturalist as a poet. The classical reader will have a fine comment on this passage in the 4th book of Horace, Ode 4.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, How little Job's knowledge was, and how infinite that of God, is here most beautifully manifested; and while his tender mercies are seen over all his works, how unreasonable were Job's complaints against God, as cruel or unkind?

1. Who knows, but God alone, when the wild goats and hinds bring forth, how long they bear their burden, and the hour and moment in which they shall be delivered? Though their travelling pangs are sharp, they are safely preserved. Their young ones grow up by their sides, till able to seek their own sustenance; and then they quit their dam, forgetting and forgotten.

2. Who gave the wild ass liberty, and that untameable spirit which rejects restraint? God gives each beast its peculiar qualities, and provides for each a suitable provision and abode. The wilderness and barren mountain are his dwelling: far from the haunts of men, preferring liberty, though with poverty, to slavery with plenty; he despises the multitude that would seize him, and no driver urges him on with his cries. From place to place he roams in search of food, and finds pasture even in the wilderness. *Note;* (1.) Liberty is a precious jewel; and they who are free should, with noble spirit, maintain their happy independence. (2.) Shall man, who cannot give law to the wild ass's colt, presume to direct his Maker?

3. God bids him try to bind the *רִימ* *riim*, which we translate *unicorn*; though it is much doubted whether there be any such creature as we represent him. It is therefore frequently rendered the *wild bull*, which comes in appositely after what had been spoken of the wild ass. The tame ox might be brought to the yoke and crib; but who could make the wild bull servicable, or break him to the plough or harrow? Great as his strength is, he is too unruly to be trusted with any labour of the field, and can neither be led nor driven. If Job then was not able to govern one creature, much more unfit was he to preside over the world, and direct the ways of Providence. *Note;* It is not ability, but the willingness to do good, which makes a man truly valuable.

2dly, The ostrich is next produced, as among the wondrous works of God. *Gavest thou the goodly wings unto the peacocks, or rather ostriches, as others translate the word, to which alone the following verses relate, and*

whose wings are beautiful, while the peacocks have nothing singular. She layeth her eggs on the earth; not that, as some have suggested, they are dropped at random, and left to be hatched by the sun; for she has a nest where her eggs are deposited, yet on the earth, where every foot may crush them; and so forgetful is she, that when she lights on another nest, she will sit and hatch there, leaving her eggs, and hardened against her real young, as though they were not her own. Thus her labour is frequently for another, without fear of what will happen to her own; and this because God, from whom alone the different instincts of beasts, as well as reason in man, are derived, hath deprived her of wisdom. But, though so stupid and unnatural in danger, her speed is most rapid: raising herself (though unable to fly) by the assistance of her wings, she leaves the fleetest horse and its rider far behind. *Note;* (1.) How many ungodly parents, like the cruel ostrich, insensible to the fruit of their womb, expose their children to want by their extravagancies, or their souls to ruin by their neglect! (2.) Thus careless ministers desert their flocks, indifferent as to what becomes of them: if deceivers seduce them, or they perish for lack of knowledge, they are hardened against the loss. One thing, however, they forget not; though they refuse to feed their young, they are abundantly careful to feed themselves, and will have the fleece, though the devil seize the fold.

3dly, How inimitably beautiful is the description of the Horse! Behold the horse trained for war; strength is in every motion; his rising neck is clothed with thunder; from his wide nostrils issues the copious stream; pawing in the valley, he seems to glory in his might; the armed host and glittering spear cannot intimidate him: eager to engage, he scarce can bear restraint, and, prancing fierce, his ears erect, catch with delight the martial trumpet's sound; he snuffs the smell of battle from afar, and, animated by the shout or signal for engagement, fearless of death or danger, on he rushes, defies the sharp sword and rattling quiver, and tramples with resistless fury on whatever opposes him in his course: *Note;* such is the sinner: Jer. viii. 6. hurried on by inordinate appetite, he rushes to the gratification of his lusts; no danger, loss, or suffering can restrain him; yea, the very terrors of God's wrath he scorns, and runs on the thick bosses of his buckler; till, smitten through with the sword of death, he falls, and plunges into that gulph of perdition which he would not be warned to avoid.

4thly, The hawk and eagle are produced, among birds, in proof of the power and providence of God: the hawk, which with such sagacity pursues her prey, swift and strong, and from the colder climes at winter's approach, follows

5 Once have I spoken; but I will not answer: yea, twice; but I will proceed no further.

6 ¶ Then answered the LORD unto Job out of the whirlwind, and said,

7 Gird up thy loins now like a man: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.

8 Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?

9 Hast thou an arm like God? or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?

10 Deck thyself now *with* majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and

beauty.

11 Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath; and behold every one *that is* proud, and abase him.

12 Look on every one *that is* proud, and bring him low; and tread down the wicked in their place.

13 Hide them in the dust together; and bind their faces in secret.

14 Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee.

15 ¶ Behold now behemoth, which I made with thee; he eateth grass as an ox.

16 Lo now, his strength *is* in his loins, and his force *is* in the navel of his belly.

follows the southern sun: the eagle, which mounts to such a towering height, fixes her nest on the craggy rock, and makes it her abode; thence darting on her prey, descends from afar, she feeds her young with the raw flesh of slaughtered beasts; or, at the battle, waits for the carcases of the slain. Who taught such wisdom to the feathered fowl, or who directs their flight? not Job: and if he pretended not to challenge these, much less ought he to claim a right to direct the providence of God. *Note;* (1.) Though the sinner, like the eagle, builds his nest on the rock, Jer. xlv. 16. he that set him up on high can also cast him down. (2.) The greedy eye, sharp as the eagle's, ever attentive on gain, little cares how it be obtained, whether by sucking the blood of the oppressed, or by practices corrupt as the corpses of the dead.

#### C H A P. XL.

*Ver. 1. Moreover the Lord answered Job, and said*] Houbigant subjoins the first five verses of this chapter to the 39th, after the Hebrew, and many of the versions. See the Polyglot.

*Ver. 2. Shall he that contendeth, &c.*] *He who disputeth with the Almighty shall be chastised; he that will argue the point with God ought to answer for it:* Heath: who, subjoining this after Job's confession, chap. xliii. takes the argument to be this: "It is not sufficient that thou repentest in dust and ashes: the contending with God is a crime which deserves chastisement; and, according to strict justice, thou oughtest to answer for it." The latter clause of the verse refers to chap. xliii. 3.

*Ver. 13. And bind their faces in secret*] *Shut up their faces in the secret place.* Heath. *Overwhelm their faces with darkness.*

*Ver. 15. Behemoth*] The Hebrew word *בהמות* *behemoth* expresses that animal which eminently partakes of the bestial or brutish nature. Bochart seems to have proved to a demonstration, that the *behemoth* is the hippopotamus, the sea-horse, or, more properly, the river-horse. The Sicur Thevenot, saw one of these animals at Cairo. "This animal," says he, "was of a tan colour; its hind parts resemble those of an ox or buffalo, excepting that its feet were

"shorter and thicker; in size it is equal to a camel; its snout, or nose, is like that of an ox, and its body twice as big; its head resembles that of a horse, and is of the same size; its eyes are small; its crest is very thick; its ears are small; its nostrils very wide and open; its feet are very thick, pretty large, and have each four toes, like those of a crocodile; its tail is small, without any hair, like that of an elephant; its lower jaw has four large teeth, about half a foot long, two of them crooked, and as thick as the horns of an ox, one of which is on each side of the throat; besides these, it has two others, which are straight, of the same thickness as those which are crooked, and project forwards." The river-horse shelters himself among the reeds; and the *behemoth* is said to be *in the covert* of the reeds and fens, and to be compassed about with the willows of the brook. The river-horse feeds upon the herbage of the Nile; and the *behemoth* is said to eat grass as an ox. No creature is known to have stronger ribs than the river-horse; and the bones of the *behemoth* are as strong pieces of brass, like bars of iron. See Lowth's Notes on his 6th Prelection, 8vo. Edit.

*Ver. 19. He that made him can make his sword to approach unto him*] *He who made him, hath furnished him with his scythe.* Heath. The Hebrew word here rendered *sword*, or *scythe*, denotes the instrument by which this animal gathers his food.

*Ver. 23. Behold, he drinketh up a river*] *Should an inundation of the river suddenly overtake him, he would not be in the least fear: he trusteth that he can spout forth Jordan through his mouth.* Bochart and others say, that Jordan is here put by a figure for any river; but Houbigant is of opinion, that the Jordan itself is meant, which was not far from the land of Uz, and in which, no doubt, there were hippopotami, as well as in the Nile.

*Ver. 24. He taketh it with his eyes*] *Who can take him in his streams? Can cords be drawn through his nose? Heath. Can his nose be perforated with hooks?* Houbigant. The way of taking these animals, as related by an ancient writer, Achilles Tatius, will explain this passage. "The hunters, having found the places where they haunt, dig a trench,

17 He moveth his tail like a cedar: the sinews of his stones are wrapped together.

18 His bones *are as* strong pieces of brass; his bones *are* like bars of iron.

19 He *is* the chief of the ways of God: he that made him can make his sword to approach *unto him*.

20 Surely the mountains bring him forth food, where all the beasts of the field play.

21 He lieth under the shady trees, in the

covert of the reed, and fens.

22 The shady trees cover him *with* their shadow; the willows of the brook compass him about.

23 Behold, he drinketh up a river, *and* hasteeth not: he trusteth that he can draw up Jordan into his mouth.

24 He taketh it with his eyes: *his* nose pierceth through snares.

“ or ditch, which they cover with reeds and earth, having placed underneath a wooden chest, whose lids are open like a folding door on each side, to the height of the cavity; after this they conceal themselves, watching till the beast is taken; for as soon as ever it treads on the surface of the hole it is sure to fall to the bottom. The huntsmen run up immediately to the cavity, and shut down the lids, and by these means catch the beast, which could not be taken by any other method, on account of its prodigious strength.” The latter clause of the verse signifies literally, *Canst thou bore his nose with cords?* but this kind of boring is made with a hook, in order to insert a cord to lead the creature about at pleasure. It is very remarkable, that this cord in the ox’s nose serves instead of a bit to guide him. This Thevenot confirms in his voyage to Indostan, where having mentioned that oxen are used instead of horses for travelling, he adds, “ These creatures are managed like our horses, and have no other bits or bridles than a cord, which passes through the tendon of their nose or nostrils.” So that this boring of his nose, and introducing a cord, was not to take, but to keep him in order, and to make him serviceable when taken. Heath. I would just observe upon this and the following description, that, nervous and excellent as they are, they do not strike us with the same degree of admiration as the foregoing description of the horse, because we are not so well acquainted with the nature of the animals described. Dr. Young renders the two last verses of this chapter thus:

His eye drinks Jordan up; when fir’d with drought,  
He trusts to turn its current down his throat;  
In lessen’d waves it creeps along the plain:  
He sinks a river, and he thirsts again.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, Confounded in silence, Job dares not reply. When, after a short pause,

1. God farther expostulates with him; and, from a view of what he had spoken, demands an answer. *Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty* (an attempt how insolent!) *instruct him?* can he be taught knowledge? or, is every fretful murmurer a proper judge how God ought to direct his providences? surely not. Yet this had Job attempted; yea, and he had blamed God for his dispensations, as unjust and severe. *He that reproveth God let him answer it*, maintain, if he can, his charge, or confess his folly and sin for having done so.

2. Job confesses his error, and submits. *He answered the*

*Lord, and said, Behold, I am vile, I acknowledge my sin, I renounce my former opinion of myself, I am abominable in my own eyes, and how much more in thine? What shall I answer thee? I am unable to support the least charge that I have advanced against thee. I will lay mine hand upon my mouth in silence, and my mouth in the dust of humiliation. Once have I spoken in self-vindication; but I will not answer any more, convinced that I played the fool, and erred exceedingly; yea twice; repeatedly have urged my rash plea; but I will proceed no further; I own myself mistaken, and desire to take shame for my perverseness. Note; (1.) However high our former apprehension of our own goodness was, when the Spirit of God convinces the soul of sin, we shall not have a word to say to justify ourselves, but cry for mercy only from our offended God. (2.) The erroneous doctrines which they have maintained, or sinful practices which they indulged, are the shame and grief of true penitents; and they desire henceforward to retract, disclaim, and oppose them.*

2dly, To fix more deeply and permanently on Job’s mind the conviction which was begun, God proceeds to renew out of the whirlwind his awful challenges. *Note; When our consciences are first alarmed, it is most dangerous to heal the hurt slightly: we should look further and deeper, that the discovery of greater abominations may produce abiding humiliation.*

1. *Wilt thou disannul my judgment, alter my designs, or frustrate their execution? Wilt thou condemn me, that thou mayest be righteous?* accuse me of injustice or severity, in order to support thy character, and maintain thy righteousness before men? how wicked and insolent must such a charge appear! *Note; If we murmur, the fault is in ourselves; God’s ways are equal, it is our way which is unequal.*

2. *Hast thou an arm like God? able to contend with the Almighty; or canst thou thunder with a voice like him?* alas! man is but a worm, his whispers cannot be heard amid the thunders of God’s mighty voice. *Note; The sinner who looks biggest and talks loudest must be brought low, either here in repentance, or hereafter in ruin everlasting.*

3. *Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency, If thou canst vie with me, and array thyself with glory and beauty; how despicable will it appear? not so much as the glow-worm’s light compared with the meridian sun. Or it may be spoken ironically; take my throne, and try how thou canst govern the world; that thou mayst feel how unequal thou art to the task.*

4. Show

## C H A P. XLI.

*God's great power in the Leviathan.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**C**ANST thou draw out Leviathan with an hook? or his tongue with a cord *which* thou lettest down?

4. Shew thy universal dominion. Put on the monarch's rage and frown: look sternly at the proud, if thou canst abase him; tread down the wicked from their height, lay them in the dust of death, lead them forth, with their faces covered, to execution as malefactors, or hide them in the grave as slain. Then, when in these acts of justice, power, majesty, and dominion, he can vie with God, he may be allowed to contend with him, and trust in his own right hand for salvation. But when the contrary was so evident, he must submit entirely to God's sovereignty, and expect his salvation temporal, spiritual, and eternal, from his grace and strength alone.

3dly, To prove his own infinite superiority, God bids him regard Behemoth and Leviathan, those wonders of creation; if he cannot contend with them, much less can he with their maker.

As to what beast is meant by Behemoth, the learned are divided in opinion. It signifies *Beasts* in general, but must here mean some particular species: two have been suggested, to which the description may be applicable; the hippopotamus, or river horse, and the elephant. He is described as feeding on the grass as the ox; and amazingly strong and large. The mountains provide him food, and harmless around him the other beasts feed without molestation. Under spreading trees near rivers' banks, is his abode. Thirsty, the river scarce affords a draught, and in his greedy eye he thinks he can drain it to its source. No fear interrupts him, he hasteth not away: no snares can bind him: and yet, great and mighty as he is, God made him: his creature he is, as well as man; the work of the same hand, and on the same day: and, terrible as he may appear to us, he is crushed as the worm when God causes his sword to approach him. Let man then own his own littleness, and humbly yield up himself to his Almighty Creator.

## C H A P. XLI.

*Ver. 1. Canst thou draw out Leviathan* לוֹיָתָן *leviathan, is derived from לָוָה lavah, coupled, and תָּן ten, a dragon, i. e. a large serpent, or fish: as the word תַּנִּין tanin, is used both for a land serpent, and a kind of fish; so that, after comparing what Bochart and others have written on the subject, it appears to me, says Parkhurst, that the compound לוֹיָתָן leviathan, the coupled dragon, denotes some animal partaking of the nature both of land serpents and fishes, and in this place signifies the crocodile, which lives as well under water as on shore. See Boch. tom. ii. p. 769, who seems to have proved, by arguments strictly conclusive, that the crocodile must be meant in this chapter. I would just observe, of the word occurring in the Margin to chap. iii. 8. of this book, that Parkhurst thinks it contains an al-*

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2 Canst thou put an hook into his nose? or bore his jaw through with a thorn?

3 Will he make many supplications unto thee? will he speak soft *words* unto thee?

4 Will he make a covenant with thee; wilt thou take him for a servant for ever?

lusion to the punishment of some kind of criminals, who were cast to the crocodiles to be devoured by them. Johnson, in his *Natural History of Quadrupeds*, p. 143, says, that among some of the Indians these animals were formerly kept for this purpose. And I would just remark, that as these animals are found in many of the eastern rivers; as well as in the Nile, it does not follow at all from this description, either that Moses was the writer of this Book, or any other person who drew his ideas immediately from Egypt and the Nile. This first verse relates to the manner of taking the crocodile; and therefore the best commentary on it will be to give an authentic account how it is done. The difficulty of this enterprise will appear from Diodorus Siculus, who says, that they cannot be secured but in iron nets. When Augustus conquered Egypt, he struck a medal, the impress of which was a crocodile chained to a palm-tree, with this inscription: "None ever bound him before."—"In order to take these animals," says Thevenot, "they make a number of holes or ditches on the banks of the river, which they cover with sticks, and things of the like kind: afterwards, when the crocodiles pass over these cavities, especially, when the waters rise in the river, which is the season of catching them, on account of their going further off from the river at that time, they fall into the holes, and cannot get out again: in this confinement they are suffered to continue without food for several days; after which they let down certain nooses with running knots, wherewith they fasten their jaws, and then draw them out." These nooses are the חֶבֶל *chebel*, the cord here mentioned, and this shews that the word לַשָּׁן *lashon*, is not to be understood of the tongue only, but of the whole jaws. The clause should be rendered, *Canst thou bind his jaws with a cord?* Maillet, speaking of these animals, says, that the manner of taking them is very difficult, and sometimes very remarkable: the most common method is, to dig great trenches or ditches along the Nile, which are covered with straw, and into which the creatures fall unawares. They are sometimes taken with hooks, baited with the quarter of a pig, or bacon, which they are very fond of. See Heath and Dr. Young. Hasselquist, speaking of the difficulty of taking this animal, says, "He frequently breaks the nets of fishermen, if they come in his way, and they are exposed to great danger. I found a fishing-hook in the palate of the crocodile which I dissected." See his voyages, p. 216.

*Ver. 2. Canst thou put an hook into his nose?* Canst thou put a baulage about his nose? Heath. The word אַגְמוֹן *agmon*, rendered *bandage* signifies a rope of rushes. This was to tie his mouth fast, as the thorn was to prevent his getting off the bandage. It is usual to this day, to fasten the jaws of the crocodile when taken.

*Ver.*



5 Wilt thou play with him as *with* a bird? or wilt thou bind him for thy maidens?

6 Shall the companions make a banquet of him? shall they part him among the merchants?

7 Canst thou fill his skin with barbed irons? or his head with fish spears?

8 Lay thine hand upon him, remember the battle, do no more.

9 Behold, the hope of him is in vain: shall not *one* be cast down even at the sight of him?

10 None *is so* fierce that dare stir him up: who then is able to stand before me?

11 Who hath prevented me, that I should repay him? *whatsoever is* under the whole heaven is mine.

12 I will not conceal his parts, nor his power, nor his comely proportion.

13 Who can discover the face of his garment? or who can come to him with his double bridle?

14 Who can open the doors of his face? his teeth *are* terrible round about.

15 *His scales are his pride*, shut up together as *with* a close seal.

16 One is so near to another, that no air can come between them.

17 They are joined one to another, they stick together, that they cannot be Sundered.

18 By his sneezings a light doth shine, and his eyes *are* like the eyelids of the morning.

19 Out of his mouth go burning lamps, and sparks of fire leap out.

20 Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as out of a seething pot or caldron.

21 His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth.

22 In his neck remaineth strength, and sorrow is turned into joy before him.

23 The flakes of his flesh are joined together: they are firm in themselves; they cannot be moved.

24 His heart is as firm as a stone; yea, as hard as a piece of the nether millstone.

25 When he raiseth up himself, the mighty

*Ver. 6. Shall the companions make a banquet of him, &c.] Will the companies of merchants drive a bargain for him? shall he be divided among the merchants? Heath. Houbigant follows our translation: see the next note. See also Dr. Shaw's travels, p. 426.*

*Ver. 8, 9. Lay thine hand upon him, &c.] Be sure thou strikest home; mind thy blow; rely not on a second stroke. ver. 9. See, he is deceived in his expectation: will he also faint away at the sight of them? Heath. But Houbigant translates it according to his own reading, thus: Whoever shall lay his hand upon him, shall not hereafter be nourished from his flesh: ver. 9. Behold, his hope is made vain; shall he therefore take away his gall? He observes, that the flesh of the crocodile was esteemed excellent food, and that his gall was much used in medicine. Hasselquist says, that the gall of the crocodile is good for the eyes: The Egyptians make use of it as a certain remedy for barrenness in women, taking about six grains internally; and outwardly they apply a *pellus*, made of cotton, with the gall of a crocodile. They use the fat against the rheumatism, and a stiffness of the tendons; esteeming it a powerful remedy, outwardly applied; there is a *folliculus* of the bigness of a hazle-nut, under the shoulders of the old crocodile, containing a thick matter which smells like musk. The Egyptians are very anxious to get it when they kill a crocodile, it being a perfume much esteemed by the grandees.*

*Ver. 11. Who hath prevented me? Who hath made me any present, that I may requite him? Heath. See Micah, vi. 6.*

*Ver. 12. I will not conceal his parts, &c.] I will not pass over in silence his limbs, nor any thing of his bravery, nor the gracefulness of his proportion. Heath. I will not on account of him hold silence, I will declare his fortitude, and the strength of his nerves. Houb.*

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*Ver. 13. Who can discover the face of his garment, &c.] Who can strip off his outer robe? Who can come within his double row of teeth? Heath. See the next verse. The crocodile's mouth is exceedingly wide. Pliny says, strongly, "When he gapes, fit totum os, he becomes all mouth."*

*Ver. 15. His scales are his pride] Strong scales cover his back. Heath.*

*Ver. 18. By his sneezings a light doth shine] Literally, His sneezings cause the light to sparkle. The next clause gives as great an image of the thing it would express, says Dr. Young, as can enter the thought of man. His eyes are like the eyelids of the morning. The eyes of the crocodile were used as a hieroglyphick by the ancient Egyptians, to denote the rising of the sun; because, says Horapollo, when it emerges from the river, its eyes are the first part of the body which becomes visible.*

*Ver. 19—21. Out of his mouth go burning lamps, &c.] This is nearer the truth, says Dr. Young, than at first view may be imagined. The crocodile, according to the naturalists, lying long under water, and being there forced to hold its breath; when it emerges, the breath, long repressed, is hot, and bursts out so violently, that it resembles fire and smoke. The horse suppresseth not his breath by any means so long; neither is he so fierce and animated, yet the most correct of poets ventures to use the same metaphor concerning him. By this I would caution against a false opinion of the boldness of the eastern metaphors from passages ill understood.*

*Ver. 22. In his neck remaineth strength, &c.] Houbigant renders this admirably; Strength has its dwelling on his neck; before him marches destruction. See his note.*

*Ver. 25. When he raiseth up himself, &c.] When he raiseth up himself, the mighty fly; the princes quit their pur-*

are afraid: by reason of breakings they purify themselves.

26 The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold: the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon.

27 He esteemeth iron as straw, and brags as rotten wood.

28 The arrow cannot make him flee: sling-stones are turned with him into stubble.

29 Darts are counted as stubble: he laugheth at the shaking of a spear.

30 Sharp stones *are* under him: he spreadeth sharp pointed things upon the mire.

31 He maketh the deep to boil like a pot: he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment.

32 He maketh a path to shine after him; one would think the deep *to be* hoary.

33 Upon earth there is not his like, who is made without fear.

34 He beholdeth all high *things*: he is a king over all the children of pride.

*posed journey.* Houb. Heath renders the last clause; *for very terror they fall to the ground*; and he observes very well, that the word שֶׁבֶר *sheber*, here used, strongly expresses the idea of *terror*: our English word *shiver* seems derived from it.

*Ver. 26. The habergeon*] *The pike.* Heath and Houb. It certainly means some missile weapon.

*Ver. 28. Sling-stones are turned with him into stubble*] *He throweth about sling-stones like stubble.* Heath. *Sling-stones are no more to him than stubble.* Houb. An extraordinary instance of the strength of a crocodile is related by Maillet. "I saw one," says he, "twelve feet long, which had not eaten any thing for thirty-five days (having had its mouth tied close during that interval), which with a single blow from its tail overturned five or six men together with a bale of coffee, as easily as I could overturn six men at a game of draughts." What force then must one of *twenty* feet long have, in its full strength and not weakened by such a fast? Thevenot also speaks of one which he had stripped of its skin, and says, that it was so strong, though but eight feet in length, that after they had turned him upon his back, and four persons stood upon him with both their feet, while they were cutting open his belly, he moved himself with so much force as to throw them off him with violence. See Maillet's *Descrript. of Egypt*, p. 33, and Thevenot, part. ii. p. 72.

*Ver. 30. Sharp stones are under him*] *His nether parts are like sharp postberds.* *He dasheth himself on the mud like a threshing cart.* Heath. חַרְטוּץ *charutz*, is rightly rendered by Bochart *tribula*, an instrument used in threshing of corn, a kind of sledge, furnished with sharp iron wheels. This was drawn over the straw by oxen, and at the same time thrashed out the corn, and cut the straw into small pieces, reducing it to chaff. An instrument of this kind is still used in the east for the same purpose. See Parkhurst on the word, and *Observations*, p. 142.

*Ver. 32. One would think the deep to be hoary*] *He accounteth the deep as his habitation.* Heath. Houbigant renders the verse, *He leaves behind him a shining path; he esteems the deep to be dry land.*—*Rutilantia post se vestigia relinquit; abyssum reputat ut aridum tellurem.*

*Ver. 33. Upon earth there is not his like*] Houbigant renders this, *His dwelling is not upon the dust; He who made him, made him to be without law.* This he supposes to express the amphibious nature of the crocodile; which, though living under the waters, yet is observed almost every day at morning and evening to come from thence, and

continue awhile on the land. This learned critic also gives a turn to the next verse very different from that in which it is generally understood. Heath renders the verse, and with great seeming propriety, as referring to, and closing the description of, the crocodile. *He will look upon any thing with contempt, he is ever so high: he is king over all the sons of rapine; i. e. the most ravenous beasts, according to the Syriac and Arabic.* "But," says Houbigant, "I am persuaded that these words do not refer to the crocodile; but close the parable here taken from the beasts: God openly declaring who he is of whom he spoke in the 10th verse (*who then is able to stand before me?*), and that he meant that *Leviathan*, or old serpent, who raised his proud look even to the highest, and who possesses great power, though received from God, and so moderated, that whomsoever he shall oppress, as he had oppressed Job, God, when he pleased, could wholly deliver from his power and tyranny." Dr. Young very well paraphrases these last verses, agreeably to the common interpretation, as follows:

His like earth bears not on her spacious face,  
Alone in nature stands his dauntless race,  
For utter ignorance of fear renown'd:  
In wrath he rolls his baleful eye around,  
Makes every swol'n disdainful heart subside,  
And holds dominion o'er the sons of pride.

REFLECTIONS.—1st, The learned are divided in opinion about Leviathan, whether the whale or crocodile be meant; some parts of the description seeming most adapted to the one, and some more peculiar to the other. Whatever animal be designed, the intention is evidently to shew Job's weakness and God's power. He is represented here as not to be caught with a hook or bait: not to be terrified or tamed: his flesh unfit for food: not to be taken with barbed irons and spears. It was at his peril who approached him; he would rouse himself for battle; therefore it were wise not to meddle with him. To hope to take him as a fish in a net, were vain; the very sight of him was terrible. The boldest dared not provoke him; and if a creature thus intimidate us from approaching him, and so surpass our strength, *who then is able to stand before God*, to contend with the Almighty, and to impeach his proceedings, or awaken his wrath?

2dly, 1. God challenges the universal property of all things; none ever made him their debtor, whilst every creature receives from him life and breath, and every thing conducive to the comfort or preservation of it. *Note: (1.)*

## C H A P. XLII.

*Job humbleth himself before God, who, preferring Job's cause, accepteth him, and commands his friends to make due submission. He blesses the latter end of Job, doubling all his fortunes.*

[Before Christ 1645.]

**T**HEN Job answered the LORD and said,  
 2 I know that thou canst do every *thing*,  
 and *that* no thought can be withholden from  
 thee.

3 Who *is* he that hideth counsel without

The best services that we can render God, lay no obligation on him; the favour is done to us, that he enables us to serve him, or accepts our humble duty. (2.) If God giveth not an account to us of his matters, have we the shadow of right to question him? may he not do what he will with his own?

2. He describes the several parts of this terrible animal Leviathan. None dare approach him, to slay his skin, or open those devouring jaws, to look on which only, were enough to make the beholder tremble. His scales, which are his strength and pride, like a coat of mail, shut close over each other, to defend him; and are so near each other, that even the air cannot come between. When he sneezes, a light shines, and his eyes are bright and sparkling as the eyelids of the morning. His breath is like the smoke of the furnace; and hot, like the steam of the boiling caldron; coals are ready to kindle from his nostrils. Strong and fierce, he fears no sorrow. His flesh, firm as a rock, defies all the instruments of death. When he lifts up himself in terrors, the mighty purify themselves, as dying men fly to their prayers. He makes his bed on the hard sharp-pointed stones. Before him the boiling deep smokes; behind him, the white foam marks his shining path, as if the deep was hoary-headed grown. Upon earth there is not his equal, fearless of danger. With contempt he beholds the vessels sailing-by; and is a king over the children of pride, greater than the greatest of them, in magnitude and bodily strength. Or this is spoken of God, who beholdeth all these stupendous creatures: and all the children of pride, whether devils, men, or the most lawless animals, must submit to his government. Highly then it becomes Job to bow, to humble himself under God's mighty hand, and own the transcendent glory, greatness, and unsearchableness of all his works and ways.

## C H A P. XLII.

*Ver. 2. I know that thou canst do every thing*] *I know that thou art able to do every thing, and that wisdom cannot be attained without thee.* Heath. *And that there is no design which thou canst not accomplish.* Houbigant.

*Ver. 3. Who is he that hideth counsel, &c.*] *Who is he that pretends to disclose the wisdom which is incomprehensible? Surely I spoke what I did not understand; wonders beyond my reach, which I could not know.* Heath. The recollection of Job in this and the two following verses is inimitably fine, and begins the catastrophe of the poem, which is truly worthy of what precedes. The interrogatory clauses, in the beginning of this and the next verses, are repetitions of what Jehovah had said; the latter of this verse, and the 5th and 6th verses, are Job's conclusions.

knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not.

4 Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me.

5 I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee.

6 Wherefore I abhor *myself*, and repent in dust and ashes.

7 ¶ And it was *so*, that after the LORD had

*Ver. 5. I have heard of thee, &c.*] It is plain that here is some privilege intended, which Job had never enjoyed before, and which he calls a sight of God. He had heard of him by the *hearing of the ear*, or the tradition delivered down from his forefathers: but he had now a clear and sensible perception of his being and divine perfections: some light thrown in upon the mind, which carried its own evidence with it, and of which, perhaps, we can form no notion; but which to him had all the certainty and clearness even of light itself: In short, some manifestation of the Deity made to him in vision, such as the prophets had, and from whence they derived their very name of Seers. There is a pleasure in observing the accomplishment of that wish of Job's, chap. xix. 23. when we peruse this book; an accomplishment in a higher and better sense than he himself could possibly have hoped for when he made it, *Oh, that my words were now written, &c.* Had they been graven on a rock, they might have remained for some few ages; but in this divine poem they will live for ever. Peters.

*Ver. 6. Wherefore I abhor myself*] *Wherefore I am ready to drop into dissolution.* Heath. See the note on chap. iii. 24. As a supplement to which, we add here, that the Chaldee paraphrast had such a sense of the greatness of Job's affliction, with respect to the loss of his children, that he thinks of it sometimes where Job did not. His paraphrase on the present verse is this, "Now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I have cast away my riches, and am comforted for my sons, which are as dust and ashes." Nevertheless, at ver. 13. to make amends to Job for this part of his suffering in the happy turn of his condition, he bestows upon him no less than *fourteen sons*, and perhaps would have doubled the number of his daughters too, had not their names, expressly mentioned, set bounds to his liberality. The reader will see from what is here represented to him as a specimen, that these Targums, to which the Jews attribute the same authority, in a manner, as to the Hebrew Scriptures, are not without their errors and reveries. However there are two things for which they are greatly valuable; as they help to ascertain the meaning of the Hebrew text; and, as they give us, interspersed, the common opinions of the Jews of those times wherein the paraphrases were made. Peters.

*Ver. 7. For ye have not spoken of me, &c.*] Mr. Peters has proved, beyond contradiction, that this is properly translated, *ye have not spoken of me that which is right.* See also ver. 8. in which there is a repetition of the same declaration in express terms by God himself, that Eliphaz and his companions had not spoken of him the thing which

spoken these words unto Job, the LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me *the thing that is right*, as my servant Job *hath*.

8 Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt-offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you *after your folly*, in that ye have not spoken of me

*the thing which is right*, like my servant Job.

9 ¶ So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went, and did according as the LORD commanded them: the LORD also accepted Job.

10 And the LORD turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the LORD gave Job twice as much as he had before.

11 Then came there unto him all his bre-

was right, and that Job had. Now, it will be difficult to find any thing in their speeches which should make the difference here supposed, if we set aside the doctrine of a future state; for in this view the others would speak more worthily of God than Job, by endeavouring to vindicate his Providence in the exact distribution of good and evil here in this life. Whereas Job's assertion, chap. ix. 22. *This is one thing, therefore I said it; he destroyeth the perfect and the wicked*, (which is the argument upon which he all along insists,) would upon this supposition be directly charging God in the same reproachful terms which Achilles uses to Agamemnon in Homer; that with him,

Ἐν δὲ τῇ τιμῇ ἡμῖν κακός ἢ δὲ καὶ ἐσθλός. Iliad. ix. 399.

that he made no distinction between the good and bad, the coward and the brave; which, in a ruler, is an error that reflects both upon his wisdom and his justice. But now, take into the account the life to come, and the thing will appear in a quite contrary light; and we shall easily see the reason why God approves of the sentiments of Job, and condemns those of his friends. For, suppose the friends of Job to argue (as seems to be the general tendency of their reasoning) that the righteous are never afflicted without remedy here, nor the wicked prosperous upon the whole in this life, (which is a wrong representation of God's Providence;) and Job to argue on the other hand, that the righteous are sometimes afflicted here, and that without remedy, but shall be rewarded in a life to come; and that the wicked prosper here, but shall be punished hereafter, which is the true representation of the divine proceedings; and here is a very apparent difference in the drift of the one's discourse, and of the other's; for Job, in this view, speaks worthily of God; the rest unworthily. The best moral argument which mankind have ever had to believe a *life to come*, is this which Job insists upon, that good and evil are for the most part dealt out here promiscuously. On the contrary, the topic urged by his friends, and which they push a great deal too far, that God rewards and punishes in this world, tends in its consequence (like that other opinion which was held by the stoics in after-times, that virtue is its own reward) to sap the very foundation of that proof which we have from reason, of another life. No wonder, therefore, that the sentiments of the one are approved, and those of the other condemned. And, taking the matter in this light, I am almost led to conclude, that as God bestowed upon Solomon all other temporal advantages in reward for his asking wisdom, so he restored

Job to his temporal prosperity and happiness, and gave him a long enjoyment and increase of it, as a recompense for his having so well defended the doctrine of a future state. Peters.

Ver. 10. *The Lord turned the captivity of Job*] This phrase *turning*, or *causing to return the captivity*, seems to have been overlooked, at least not thoroughly considered by the greater part of the commentators; some, however, have seen the whole force of the expression. The restitution was probably after this manner: Job, having been plundered, by the Sabæans and Chaldeans, of his oxen, asses, and camels, was soon after so terribly afflicted in his person as to be utterly incapable of pursuing any measures in order to recover what had been violently taken from him. But on his miraculous recovery from his distemper, and his restoration to health and strength, he undoubtedly armed the servants of his family, and endeavoured to recover his own. His enemies, having heard of the terrible afflictions which had befallen him, in his person as well as in his possessions, were in full security, and under no apprehensions from him. His restoration therefore being instantaneous, as well as miraculous, he was enabled to fall unexpectedly on his enemies, and by God's particular blessing, not only to recover his own; but also, as a reparation for the injury they had done him, to take their stock of cattle likewise, by which means he was possessed of double the substance that he had before: so that not only his captivity returned, but Jehovah doubled his former riches. It was always esteemed among all nations just and honourable in war, for the injured person not only to recover his own from the persons who had injured him, but also to take whatever he could find belonging to the plunderer, by way of satisfaction for the injury. This appears clearly in the case of Abraham; See Gen. xiv. That Job had a very large household, is plain from chap. i. 3. and that a great part of his household continued with him in the time of his affliction, though they treated him with great disrespect, is plain from several passages in chap. xix. And it is not improbable, that the men of the city, of whom he was principal in the time of his prosperity, (see chap. xxix.) might on his restoration assist him in the recovery of his property, and in executing vengeance on his plunderers. Heath's Life of Job.

Ver. 11. *Then came there unto him all his brethren, &c.*] Job being restored to his former health and possessions, the author presents us with a striking view of human friendship. His brethren, who in the time of his affliction kept at a distance

thren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they be-moaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the LORD had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an ear-ring of gold.

12 So the LORD blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she-asses.

distance from him; his kinsfolks, who ceased to know him; his familiar friends, who had forgotten him; and his acquaintance, who had made themselves perfect strangers to him; those to whom he had shewn kindness, and who yet had ungratefully neglected him; on the return of his prosperity, now come and condole with him, desirous of renewing their former familiarity; and, according to the custom of the eastern countries, where there is no approaching a great man without a present, each brings him a *קֶשֶׁט* *kesitah*, and each a *נֶזֶם* *nezem*, which is commonly worn in the east to this day. See Herbert's Travels, p. 124. where a Drawing of them will be found. The word *קֶשֶׁט* *kesitah* has much divided the commentators. See Gen. xxxiii. 19. There seems to be no doubt that it was a *piece of money* with the stamp or impress of a *lamb* upon it, as the original word signifies. Mr. Peters observes, that as Job's friends presented him only with a single piece of money, we may conclude that money was in those days a great rarity; and therefore we find no mention of it where the wealth of Job is reckoned up, but only of *oxen, sheep, camels, &c.* agreeable to the simplicity of those very ancient times. See Spanheim's Hist. Jobi, c. 11.

Ver. 14. *He called the name of the first Jemima*] Job, being restored to his family and friends, is afterwards blessed with a numerous issue, *seven sons and three daughters*. Of the former nothing remarkable is recorded; but the names of the daughters are preserved, and they are said to have been the most beautiful women of their time. Their names are certainly of Arabic extraction: the eldest was named *יְמִימָה* *Jemima*, which in the Arabic signifies a *dove*. This name was given to women of the greatest beauty in the east. So Semiramis had her name from *Semir-jenama* two Arabic words, signifying *the brown dove*. For the same reason the *dove* was made the bird of Venus; and we find it placed on the head of the Syrian goddess, whom the Orientals imagine to be the same as Semiramis. The second takes her name *קֶזִיבָה* *Keziab* from the *Cassia aromatica*, a spice in great reputation in early times, as may be seen Psal. xlv. 8. This was likewise agreeable to the Arabian customs, of naming their women from the products of the earth, as flowers, fruits, gums, and the like. The third was named *קֶרֶן הַפָּוֶחַ* *Keren-happuch*, rightly rendered, *Cornu-sibii*, the *horn of stibium*: the stibium was an ornamental colouring used by the women to make their eyebrows or eyelids black, which they esteemed very beautiful. See our

13 ¶ He had also seven sons and three daughters.

14 And he called the name of the first Jemima; and the name of the second Kezia; and the name of the third Keren-happuch.

15 And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job: and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren.

16 After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations.

17 So Job died, being old and full of days.

note on 2 Kings ix. 30. This daughter of Job had her name, probably, from the beautiful black colour of her eyelids and eyebrows. See Costard's Dissert. on the Mythological Astron. of the Ancients, and Heath's Life of Job.

Ver. 15. *In all the land were no women found so fair*] Bishop Warburton, upon his allegorical plan, supposes, that as Job's wife was to represent the idolatrous wives, so the daughters in the allegory are to stand for the daughters of Israel; and to this end are described as beauties; nay, and fortunes too, for their father gave them inheritance among their brethren. "In short, the writer's desire was to recommend them as the most desirable parties; that so the men for the future might be induced to match at home, and not wander abroad for strange wives." This is the learned writer's notion. "Now," says Mr. Peters, "I would here desire to be allowed only one reasonable postulatam; namely, that the sons of Job may be supposed to represent the sons of Israel, as well as the daughters their sex; and then let him tell us why there is so wide a disproportion between them; for the sons of Israel *seven*, and the daughters *three*, does not amount to half a wife a-piece; and, I doubt, their beauty and their fortunes would scarcely be thought consideration enough to make amends for that deficiency. The men would still have but too good an excuse to look out for strange wives."

Ver. 16. *After this Job lived an hundred and forty years*] Mr. Le Clerc has urged, as an argument that this book is parabolical, that Job, according to this account, must have lived above two hundred years, and that this length of life will suit no time assigned for Job's existence. If, with Grotius, we say he lived while the Israelites wandered in the desert, the lives of men were then much shorter than two hundred years: if with others, that he lived soon after the Flood, the lives of men were then much longer: but now, if the life of man after the Flood shortened by degrees, I hope we may suppose a time between the other two points, which will agree very well with the life of Job; or, should we say that God lengthened out his life beyond the common term as an extraordinary favour, there can be nothing unlikely in this: nay, it is highly correspondent with the other instances of the divine bounty shewn to him. Peters. In the version of the LXX there is a considerable addition to the last verse of this chapter, a translation of which Mr. Wall has given us in his critical notes: It is as follows:—"Full of days: and it is written

written, that he shall rise again among those whom the Lord shall raise. He is signified in the Syriac book to have dwelt in the land of *Aufitis*, (*Uz*), upon the confines of Edom and Arabia; and his name was *Jobab*: taking an Arabian woman to his wife, he had a son, whose name was *Ennon*; but his father was *Zareh*, or *Zareth*, a son of the sons of Esau. His mother's name was *Bosfortah*; so that he was in the fifth generation from Abraham. And these were the kings who reigned in Edom, in which country he also bore rule: The first was Balak the son of Beor, and the name of his city was Dennaba: after Balak Jobab, who is also called Job: and after him Asom, who was governor over the country of the Temanites. After him was Adad, the son of Barad, who slew Midian in the field of Moab; and the name of his city was *Getbaim*. The friends who came to him were *Eliphaz*, of the sons of Esau, the king of the Temanites; *Bildad*, the king of the *Saucheites*; and *Sopbar*, the king of the *Minaites*." We will close our observations on this celebrated book, with a short view from Mr. Peters, of the

### CHARACTER OF JOB.

The character of Job affords us such a spectacle, as Seneca, alluding to the shews of gladiators so common among the Romans, says, was worthy of the Deity himself to look upon; viz. that of a *pious and good man, combating adversity*; and, among other miseries of an extraordinary kind, vexed with the unjust suspicions and peevish accusations of his mistaken friends.

And here we find him using every argument that could be thought of in his own defence; to cure them, if possible, of their mistake, and to persuade them of his innocence; appealing to the general course of Providence, which, for the most part, deals out things promiscuously, and often involves the good and bad in the same common calamity; directing them to instances, within their own knowledge, of those who had been as wicked as they were great, and yet had lived a long course of years in prosperity, and died at last in peace, and been buried with great pomp; so that no visible judgment had overtaken them, in their lives, or in their deaths.

When this view of Providence, so true and evident to experience, still wanted force to remove an obstinate error, he puts them in mind of the *future judgment*, which was the proper season for reward and punishment; and declares, in the most solemn manner, his hopes of being acquitted there.

When all this would not do, but they still disbelieve and persecute him, he is driven to the last argument which a modest man would make use of, and appeals to his own public and private behaviour in the whole course of his life: and upon this occasion he displays such a set of admirable virtues, and shews the piety, the prudence, the humanity of his conduct, in so amiable a light, with such a noble freedom, and, at the same time, such an air of truth, that I question whether there be any thing of the kind more beautiful or instructive in all antiquity; perhaps a finer picture of a wife and good man was never drawn. How prudent and upright in his decisions, as a magistrate or judge! How just and benevolent in his domestic character, as a father of a family! How untractable to all the allurements of pleasure, in the height of his prosperity,

and how sensible to the complaints and miseries of others! And, above all, how remarkably pious in his principles! How careful to build his virtue upon its own solid basis, religion, or the fear of God! If I were to produce the proofs of this, I must transcribe the whole 29th and 31st chapters. But with all these great and excellent qualities, we cannot but take notice of some little mixture of alloy and imperfection. For, a perfect character, however it may have existed in idea, it is certain, never yet appeared above once upon the real stage of the world.

We must forgive this good man, therefore, the little excursions and passionate complaints which the extremity of his sufferings now and then forced from him. His despair and weariness of life; his often wishing for death; his eagerness to come upon his trial; his earnest requests, and even expostulations with his judge, to bring him to it, or, at least, to acquaint him with the reasons of these severe inflictions. These and the like, it must be owned, appear as shades and blemishes in the character of this great man, and may argue somewhat of impatience, even in this heroic pattern of patience.

A great deal, however, might be said in his excuse: as that his afflictions had something in them very astonishing, and beyond the common measure; that the distempers of the body have oftentimes a natural tendency to produce black thoughts, and a despondency of mind: to which may be added, the rash censures and suspicions of his friends, as they affected his reputation, which, to a generous mind, is the most valuable thing in the world, next to his integrity: it is no wonder that a treatment so inhuman, so undeserved, so unexpected, should provoke to an extremity a person borne down already with the weight of his misfortunes.

These things might certainly be offered in excuse for the little blemishes which appear in the speeches and conduct of this great man. But, after all, the best thing that can be pleaded in his behalf, and that which covers all his imperfections, is his own behaviour upon this occasion, and his making no excuse at all for them; but as soon as he was brought to recollect his errors, immediately confessing them with great simplicity, and the most profound humility and contrition. Chap. xl. 3, 4. *Then Job answered the Lord, and said, Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth.*—And again, chap. xlii. 3, &c. *I have uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. But now mine eyes see thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.*

The complacency and favour with which this humble acknowledgment was accepted by the Supreme Judge, and the bountiful reward bestowed upon this good man, as a present earnest of a still greater to be expected by him hereafter, will teach us this very acceptable and important truth: how ready God is to pass by the little weaknesses of human nature in one in whom there is a tried and resolute integrity still bent upon the doing of his duty, and determined, whatever may befall him, to adhere to God in all his trials and temptations.

REFLECTIONS.—Ist, Job had begun his humbling acknowledgments, chap. xl. 4, 5; but now his convictions, much deeper and stronger, produce lowlier abasement before God.



1. He submits himself entirely to God. *I know that thou canst do every thing*; these wondrous instances of thy power convince me, that it is madness to contend with the Almighty, and folly to despair of what his power can do: none are so high that he cannot abase, none so low that he cannot restore and exalt them; and that no thought can be withholden from thee; the secrets of the soul are known to him; not a corrupt, fretful, or unbelieving thought rises without his notice.

2. He confesses his ignorance, sin, and folly. *Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge?* pretends to be wise above God. Let him take warning, and be admonished by me; it has been my case, with shame I acknowledge it: *therefore have I uttered that I understood not.* I have not had a right knowledge either of God's purity, or my own pollution; of his power, or my own weakness; of his wisdom, or my own ignorance: *things too wonderful for me, which I knew not,* have I spoken concerning the dispensations of his providence, and the mysteries of his government, mistaking his designs, and finding fault with God foolishly; in which my presumption, wilfulness, and pride, have appeared to my guilt and confusion.

3. He resolves now to change his tone, and turn the voice of contention into the language of prayer, as his only proper method of approaching God. *Hear, I beseech thee,* though I own myself undeserving of thy notice and regard, and *I will speak*; not in self-defence, but in humbling confession; *I will demand of thee or make my request to thee; and declare thou unto me,* answer my petition in pardoning my sin, and instruct me in the right way, that I may not err again.

4. He feels and owns the deep sense he had of his sinfulness. *I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear*; his parents and teachers had given him good instructions concerning the perfections of God; and he had probably received revelations from him; *but now mine eye seeth thee*; never before was such a discovery made to his mind, of the sovereignty, power, wisdom, and justice of God, in all his providential dispensations. Probably now also in the human form God appeared visible, while he opened Job's understanding to a clear view of his nature, glory, and infinite perfections, and manifested them to him in the appearance or figure of an incarnate Redeemer. *Wherefore, I abhor myself,* and all the hard speeches that I have spoken, and *repent in dust and ashes,* desiring to testify my grief and shame, and renounce henceforward every thought and deed contrary to thy holy will. Thus must every real penitent return to God, (1.) under a divine conviction, which no human arguments can produce without the spirit of God. (2.) This sense of sin will be deep and lasting, yea, increasing with clearer views of God's purity. (3.) We must come with heart-felt anguish for the dishonour we have brought on God, and heart-felt shame and self-loathing, which are the genuine expressions of true repentance. (4.) With an humble hope, that, vile and loathsome as we are, God will not reject us, but pity and pardon us, through the Redeemer of lost souls.

2dly, We must not think, because Job is first rebuked, that the cause is given against him, and his accusers justified. No. Though he deserved reproof, they deserved it more. God, while he brings Job to acknowledge what he had spoken amiss, will justify him from their unjust aspersions, and cover them with confusion.

1. Job is exalted. *After the Lord had spoken these words unto Job,* convinced and humbled him, pardoned and accepted him, then he appears to justify and honour him. [1.] He acknowledges him his servant, repeatedly calling him by this respectable title, as a testimony of his fidelity in the main, though through temptation and infirmity he had erred, and spoken unadvisedly. [2.] He declares, that in the controversy Job had come nearest to the truth, and spoken more wisely and honourably of him and his providences, than his friends; in denying that prosperity was the criterion of godliness, or affliction in this world of hypocrisy and wickedness; and extending his views to a future state, where the retribution of every man's work was to be expected. [3.] He appoints him to be their advocate; putting this honour upon him, well knowing the spirit of charity in his heart, and how ready he would be to pray for his persecutors. *Note;* (1.) Whom God pardons, he delights to honour. (2.) A faithful servant of Christ may err, or be overtaken with a fault; but God, who sees the heart, and the root of the matter in him, will not disclaim his relation to him. (3.) Where there is much wrong mixed with what is right, we must not condemn the whole for a part, any more than we should cast away the ore, because it comes from the earth mixed with dross. (4.) They who have tasted God's pardoning love to their own souls, will think no injury too great to be forgiven or forgotten; or refuse to open the arms of love to their bitterest enemy. (5.) Job was herein a lively figure of the Saviour of sinners, who alone could offer the sacrifice that God would accept, in his deepest distresses prayed for his murderers, and ever lives to intercede for the transgressors.

2. Job's friends are cast down, and brought to his feet in abasement. Perhaps while they heard God's address to Job alone, they thought the verdict was for them; but now God would make them know, that, though Job had offended, they had exceeded in offence. He had spoken some things wrong, but they many more; laying down false hypotheses of his general dealings with men; condemning the righteous unjustly, and misinterpreting the rod of love into the stroke of judgment; making him sad; whom they should have comforted. For this, God's wrath was kindled against them; and, though they were good men, in this they had deserved to be punished; and therefore they must bring a sacrifice of atonement, as the expiation of their guilt. They must humble themselves, not only before God, but before Job, acknowledging their evil, desiring his prayers, and bringing their sacrifices to him, whose prayers for them should be accepted. *Note;* (1.) It is a dangerous thing to judge rashly of men's spiritual state, except in cases of open vice; and a high provocation against God, as well as an injury to our brethren. (2.) The best of God's saints are exposed to the severest censures, and even good men will be sometimes criminally severe. (3.) We must not expect forgiveness from God, unless we have, to the uttermost, made our brother satisfaction for the injuries that we have done him. (4.) It is a mercy that we have one Advocate to go to, who, highly as we have offended him, never rejects the suit of the humbled soul.

3. We see all happily reconciled. Job's friends, without delay, submit to the divine injunction: he heartily forgives.



forgives them, and prays for them. They who were lately so sharp in contention, now lift up together the voice of humble supplication, and, united in love, surround a throne of grace. God, well pleased, accepts the offering, and perfect reconciliation ensues on every side. *Note;* (1.) It is a blessed thing to see differences thus ended, and friends, separated by mistakes or folly, forgetting, forgiving, and embracing. (2.) How much more agreeable were it, instead of warmth of theological dispute about opinions allowedly not essential to salvation, to unite in love, where all true Christians are agreed, in prayer and praise, and to labour to walk more holily and humbly before God! (3.) There is but one way of reconciliation for the sinner, the Blood of Atonement: unless we plead that, we must be undone. (4.) While we are waiting on God in his instituted ways, we may take the comfort of our services, and rejoice in our acceptance, through the sacrifice and intercession of our adored Jesus.

3dly, *Better*, says Solomon, *is the end of a thing than the beginning*; and we see it in Job's case abundantly verified. The restoration and increase of his prosperity were as astonishing as the suddenness and depth of his afflictions.

1. God eminently appeared for him. When he prayed for his friends, blessings came upon his own head; the Lord turned his captivity, restored his body from Satan's bands, and his mind from the terrors and distress with which it had been agitated; and, withal, doubled the possessions of which he had been deprived. Thus his fidelity was rewarded in this life, his credit restored in the eyes of men, and his comforts secured on a more solid basis than before. *Note;* Though this life, to a faithful believer, may in temporal matters sometimes be compared with Job's situation in his afflictions, at least in some degree, yet he may expect a deliverance from his captivity, where his prosperity will be beyond even Job's here, unspeakable and eternal.

2. His friends and acquaintance, who had been estranged from him, returned to visit and to comfort him, sympathizing in his affliction; and, not content with empty pity, each, according to their ability, made him handsome presents. God now inclined their hearts to assist him: probably, the approbation that God had given of his character removed their suspicions of his integrity, which had led

them to neglect him; and the fear of God's displeasure, testified against his three friends who had been so severe upon him, made them desirous of an interest in Job's prayers for themselves also. *Note;* (1.) God has all men's hearts in his hands, and can strangely incline them to execute his designs. (2.) True charity and friendship will not merely bring the kind wish, but the ready generous assistance.

3. A remarkable increase attended him. His cattle, from the stock with which his friends furnished him, soon doubled the number that he had lost; and, above all his riches, the blessing of God upon them made them especially valuable. And thus his latter end was greater than his beginning; more wealthy, more respected, and more happy. *Note;* (1.) God's blessing upon honest endeavours will make a little to afford great increase. (2.) Respecting outward prosperity, a good man often finds a provision made for him in his aged days beyond the most sanguine expectations of his youth; while his soul also, fraught with the riches of divine grace, which are the best portion, shines brighter as he draws to his end; till his glorious inheritance comes, and he leaves a perishing world for an everlasting kingdom.

4. His family was wonderfully restored; he had the same number of sons and daughters as before. The names of the latter are recorded: Jemima, the dove; Kezia, a fragrant spice; Kerenhappuch, the horn of paint. It is remarked of them, that they were persons of singular beauty, like their names; fair as the day, fragrant as Cassia, and blooming brighter in their native hue than the tint of vermilion. And we may presume, that their mental accomplishments, and the exemplariness of their piety, were equal to the exquisiteness of their form, from the honourable distinction shewn them, in appointing them an inheritance with their brethren.

5. He enjoyed a long life, crowned with mercies. He saw his children to the fourth generation; an hundred and forty years he lived in a course of uninterrupted prosperity; and then gently bending to the grave, as the ripe corn in the time of harvest, he departed full of days, satisfied with life, and willing to exchange his possessions on earth for more enduring riches in the better world of glory.

THE END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.









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