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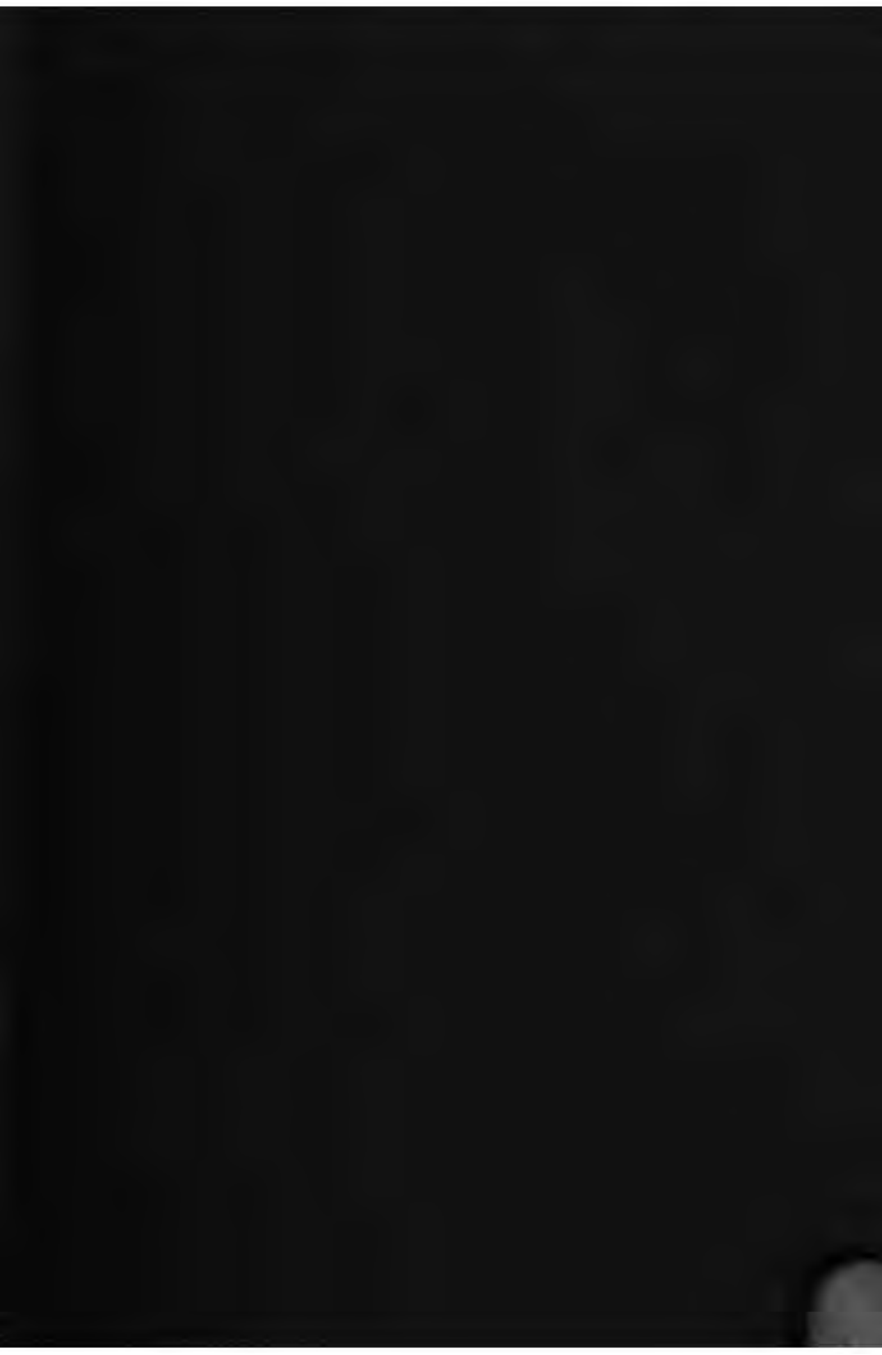
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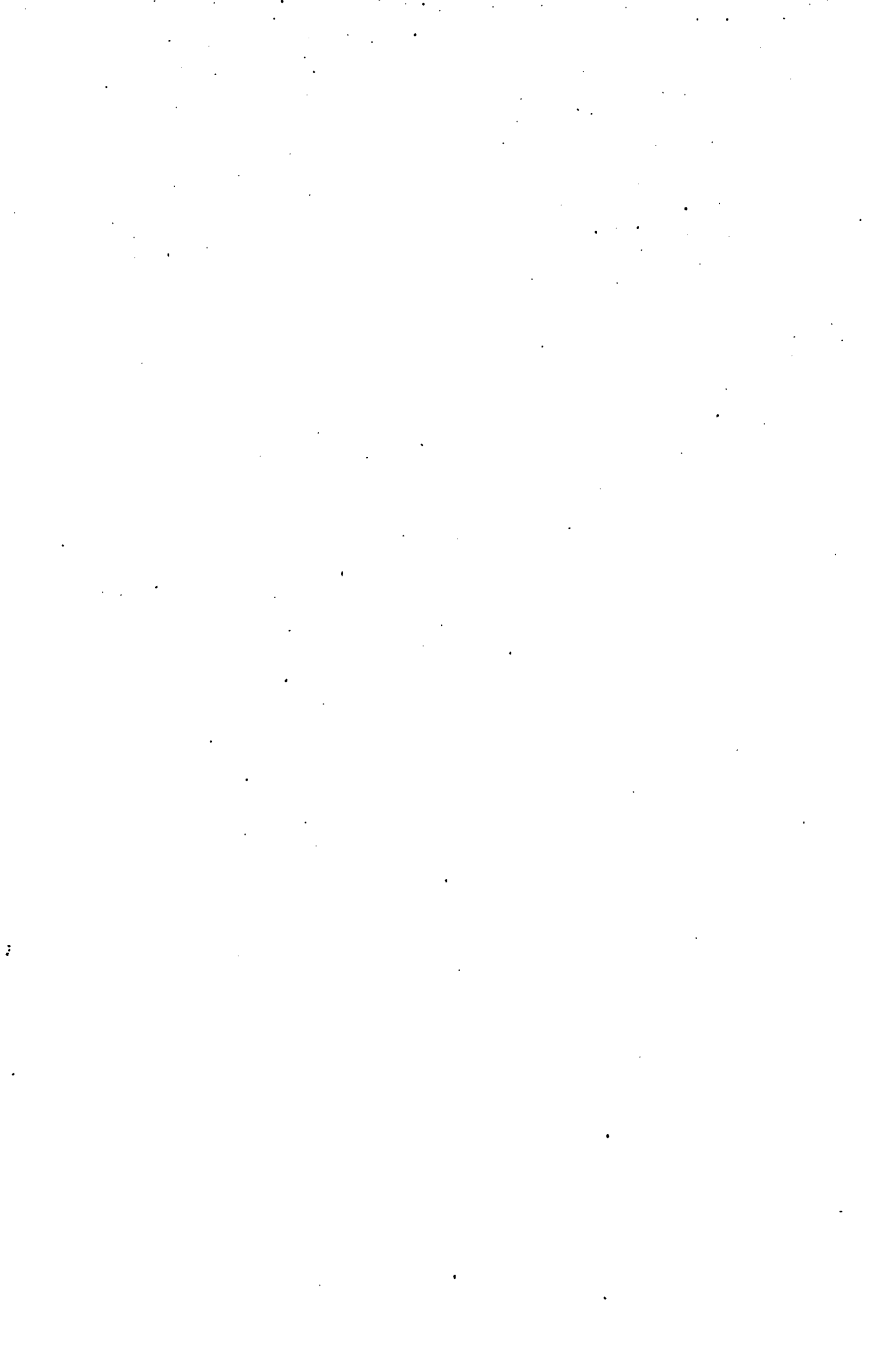
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# God's Witness in Prophecy and History :

## BIBLE STUDIES

ON THE HISTORICAL FULFILMENTS OF JACOB'S  
PROPHETIC BLESSINGS ON

### THE TWELVE TRIBES

CONTAINED IN GEN. XLIX.

With a Supplementary Enquiry into  
THE HISTORY OF THE LOST TRIBES.

BY

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"Fulfilling in Providence what He had promised in Prophecy."

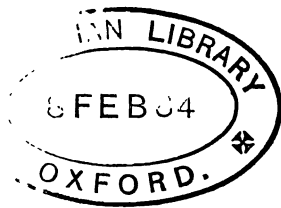
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## PREFACE.

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THE witness which fulfilled Prophecy bears to God, is that to which He Himself in Scripture most frequently appeals as a proof that He has revealed Himself to man : (see, e.g. Isa. xli. 23 ; xlii. 9 ; xliii. 10, 12 ; xliv. 7, 8 ; xlv. 21 ; xlv. 9, 10, &c.) It is the plainest, the most convincing, of all miracles, for it is one which all can see. "He who reads a prophecy and perceives a corresponding event, is *himself* the witness of the miracle;" we do well then to give heed to that which GOD Himself regards as His special witness to man. And if every fulfilled prophecy is thus regarded in Scripture as GOD'S witness, this is essentially true of a chapter which is nothing less than a prophetic history of the Jewish people, for the right interpretation of it leads us through a large portion of Scripture itself. Those whose "unbelief is antecedent to criticism," who assume that there cannot be such a thing as supernatural prophecy, who do not *wish* to see GOD in prophecy and history, cannot be made to see Him thus ; but those who in a child-like spirit study this chapter, its prophecies and

fulfilments, whether at present believers or unbelievers, will not do so in vain. We may expect it, when prayerfully studied, not only to reveal GOD more fully to the believer, but to heal the unbelief of those who thus "diligently seek Him;" for it not only predicted the coming events of Jewish history, but the coming into the world of our LORD and SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST, and the salvation which He was to bring both to Jews and Gentiles.

Though, then, the present volume is not intended to be what is commonly called a Book on the evidences of the inspiration of Scripture, it is hoped that it will prove a useful addition to such books; for Holy Scripture is its own best evidence,—it "has the witness in itself" of its own inspiration. In the language of Dr. Pusey, "No book can be written in behalf of the Bible like the Bible itself: man's defences are man's word, they may draw out some portion of its meaning; the Bible is GOD'S Word, and through it GOD the HOLY GHOST Who spake it, speaks to the soul which closes not itself against it." (Pusey's Daniel, p. xxv.) And in the following pages an attempt is made to let these great prophecies of Jacob,—with all the accumulative evidence of their ever-unwinding chains of continuous fulfilments, their surprising accuracies of language, their undesigned Scriptural and historical coincidences,—speak for themselves to the reader. They will thus, it is hoped, carry fresh conviction to his mind of the supernatural inspiration of Scripture, with its hopes and promises of "the life of the world to come," and will be for the greater confirmation of his faith.

That some such attempt, as is here made, to bring out

the supernatural origin of Scripture is needed at the present day, none will deny; the evidences from the monuments, &c., are establishing the historical accuracy of the inspired records with a force unknown in any past age; but even here there is a danger. While our knowledge of sacred Jewish history is being verified and increased by extended knowledge of the history of contemporary nations, there is a danger of Scripture being regarded much as any other history; and this is the tendency of the present age, a tendency which may unintentionally be encouraged even by books written in defence of Christianity. That this is so is proved by the fact that while faith in the Bible as a true historical record of the past was never more strong, faith in it as a supernatural revelation of GOD was never more weak in the world at large.

The subject now presented to the reader for his meditation has not, it is believed, been so fully worked out before by English or foreign writers. No chapter is perhaps a greater favourite with the early Fathers than this 49th chapter of Genesis, but their interpretations of it are mostly mystical, not historical; and while every modern commentary contains some exposition of Gen. xlix. and Deut. xxxiii., this great death-bed prophecy of Jacob, with its manifold historical fulfilments, has perhaps not received the attention it deserves as one of the most far-reaching prophecies which Scripture contains; as one, the fulfilment of which casts its shadow over the whole history of the Old Testament Church. And though of course its mystical and spiritual teaching is that which has most value and interest for us as Christians, the value of all such edifying teaching will depend on the

strength of the historical foundation on which that spiritual superstructure rests.

The authorities referred to in the interpretation of this chapter, and of Deut. xxxiii. are mostly the inspired text itself, with the Bible Dictionary, and the best available ancient and modern commentaries ; and a critical and exegetical exposition of the Prophecy of Jacob, by the Rev. A. N. Obbard, apparently the work of a good Hebrew scholar ;<sup>1</sup> Dr. Pusey's brief, but valuable, summary of the chapter is quoted at full in the text.

It is hoped that the map, though necessarily a small one, will prove an accurate guide so far as it goes. In a map of this size it was not possible that all the names could be inserted, and no attempt has been made in it, or in the text, to decide modern controversial questions about sites of places in the Holy Land, except in one or two cases where the exposition of this Scripture required it. The map, taken, with some slight corrections, from the Scriptural Cabinet Atlas, agrees in all important points as to boundaries, &c., with that prefixed to "The Land and the Book," and, it is believed, with (what is only of real importance) Holy Scripture itself. For information as to the sites and bearings of the different towns apportioned to the different tribes, with all the intricate questions involved in the study, the reader is referred to Dr. Maclear's valuable exposition of the Book of Joshua, and to its copious index. The chapter on the "Lost Tribes" was added to this volume at the

<sup>1</sup> This last work was chiefly valuable as confirming interpretations already made : for unfortunately the writer did not see it till the present work was finished.

special request of a friend. The writer feels in this matter he is treading on delicate ground, and the result of his labours on such a subject is submitted with all humility to the reader. In connexion with this subject, the map illustrating Ezekiel's Vision (from Bp. Wordsworth's Commentary) will, with the help of the Explanatory Note, place before the reader what Ezekiel actually saw, though no interpretation is attempted. Some Magazine Articles on the subject of the Lost Tribes have recently appeared, one in the "Church Quarterly Review" for July, 1880, and another in "The Day of Rest" for November, 1880; and a pamphlet has since been published at the Operative Jewish Converts' Institution in Palestine Place, entitled "The Ten Tribes; Where are they? by one who has been among them"; these have been freely used, and to these such as wish to pursue the subject further may be referred.

It is believed that the Appendix, containing a literal translation of the Septuagint version of Gen. xlix. and Deut. xxxiii., together with the most important Targums, will prove a valuable commentary on the meaning of the original. In the arrangement of the verses of the chapter Jahn's Edition of the Hebrew Bible has been chiefly followed, that the attention of the reader might be directed to the poetical structure of the sentences.

For the convenience of any teachers using this volume for schools, Bible-classes, &c., it may be remarked that each chapter gives (1) all that is told us in Scripture of each particular tribe, the chief personages, towns, events, &c., connected with it; (2) the exact meaning of the words in which the prophetic blessing is pronounced; (3) the

ways in which the prophecy was fulfilled in history ; (4) some spiritual application of the subject : on questions arising out of each of these divisions it will be easy for any teacher to base catechetical instruction, involving a large amount of Scriptural research.

KENSINGTON :

*S. Luke's Day, 1883.*

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## INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER ON THE LIFE OF JACOB.

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IT is taken for granted that the reader is acquainted with the main outlines of Jacob's life : but it may not be unacceptable to him to be reminded of them here : for that wondrous life was a fitting preparation for its wondrous close, when, on the borders of another world, the dying patriarch was permitted to behold such a far-reaching vision of the future as no other man before or after him ever beheld.

As Cornelius à Lapidè remarks, we have the epitaph of Jacob in Wisdom x. 10—12, "When the righteous fled from his brother's wrath, She [Wisdom] guided him in right paths, showed him the kingdom of GOD, and gave him knowledge of holy things, made him rich in his travels, and multiplied *the fruit of his labours*.<sup>1</sup> In the covetousness of such as oppressed him She stood by him, and made him rich ;<sup>2</sup> She defended him from his enemies, and kept him safe from those that lay in wait, and in a sore conflict<sup>3</sup> She gave him the victory ; that he might know that godliness is stronger than all."

With the event thus referred to in the Book of Wisdom (Jacob's flight from Esau after supplanting him in the

<sup>1</sup> Gen. xxviii. 5—12.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xxxi.

<sup>3</sup> Gen. xxxii. 24.

Blessing) begins the second and most interesting half of Jacob's life. The general description of the first half of his life we have in the words, "He was a plain man, dwelling in tents" (Gen. xxv. 27). That word translated "plain" does not mean what we commonly understand by simple : it is, in the original, very expressive : it is the same as the word elsewhere translated "perfect : " and is applied in Holy Scripture only to one or two eminent servants of GOD ; here it may be taken to mean that with all his faults (from which no man is free), Jacob was from his youth a faithful servant of GOD, and a firm believer in the promises of which he was the heir. Whatever "moral difficulties," then, present themselves to us in the history of Jacob, from our ignorance of the circumstances of the case, GOD has set His seal of general approval upon his character. Of the transaction which led to his banishment from home, and which was the beginning of his bitter sorrows, we may perhaps best speak in the judicious words of Bishop Hall : "Isaac," he says, "would unjustly turn Esau into Jacob ; Rebecca doth as cunningly turn Jacob into Esau ; her desire was good, her means were unlawful. GOD doth often effect His just will by our weaknesses ; yet neither thereby justifying our infirmities, nor blemishing His own actions. Here was nothing but counterfeiting ; a feigned name, feigned venison, a feigned answer, and yet, behold, a true blessing ; but to the man, not to the means."

From Gen. xli. 46, and other texts, we are able to calculate the age of Jacob, and to arrange with chronological accuracy the events of his life. Joseph, who had been a bonds slave for thirteen years, from his seventeenth to his thirtieth year, we are there told, "was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh." As

his brethren came into Egypt in the second year of that famine which followed on the seven years of plenty, they came in the ninth year after this release : and as Jacob was then a hundred and thirty years old (Gen. xlvii. 9), and Joseph was thirty-nine, it follows that Joseph was born in the ninety-first year of Jacob's life ;<sup>1</sup> and as Joseph was born in the fourteenth year of Jacob's servitude, it follows also that Jacob fled from Esau, and came to Laban in Mesopotamia, in the seventy-seventh year of his life ; and that when, after twenty years' service, he returned into Canaan, he was in his ninety-seventh year. We can thus fix the dates of the leading events in his changeful life. On a certain night, in his seventy-seventh year, came that wondrous dream of the ladder, with its angelic vision and its revelation to him of the GOD of Bethel ; followed in the morning by a solemn vow to be paid on his return. (Gen. xxviii.) Twenty years of hard service followed, fourteen years for Laban's daughters, six years for his cattle. And then on another night, in his ninety-seventh year, there took place that still more wondrous meeting with GOD at Penuel ; the wrestling with the Angel ; the change of the name from "Jacob" to "Israel ;" and the lameness, possibly, with the staff on which he leaned (Heb. xi. 21), was ever after as a reminder to him of the reality of the vision (Gen. xxxii. 31). Then, delivered by GOD's interposition from Esau, as he had been before from Laban, his old

<sup>1</sup> The patriarchs, we may believe, came to maturity much later in life than we do. The disparity between the ages of Jacob and of his wives is accounted for by the fact that Laban and Jacob were of the same generation : Isaac and Bethuel being cousins : Rachel and Leah were a generation younger : hence perhaps in Gen. xxix. 12, Jacob calls himself Laban's "brother."

vow still unpaid, and perhaps forgotten, Jacob quietly lived ten years in the beautiful "vale of Shechem." But then came the tragedy of Shechem (Gen. xxxiv.); and Jacob was again a fugitive. Again protected by supernatural aid from GOD, he and his family escaped from the fury of the Canaanites: and, when he was a hundred and seven years old, the year when Benjamin was born and Rachel died, Jacob set out on that journey from Shechem to Hebron which is described in Gen. xxxv. On this sad journey, with its halting places at Bethel, Bethlehem and Edar, he had to mourn for Dinah, for Deborah, for Rachel, for Bilhah, and for Reuben, all in a sense lost to him. And so, after paying at Bethel his vow made at that place thirty years before, and after more cheering revelations of GOD's protection, Jacob at last came to his aged father at Hebron, not again to leave him while he lived. Whether they had ever met before during the past thirty years does not appear: but Jacob now remained with his father for thirteen years; years spent, we may believe, in comforting the old man, and in receiving comfort from him; in listening to his instructions; in praying with him for Esau his favourite son; and when Isaac died, at the age of a hundred and fourscore years, during the last forty-three years of which he had been a blind, if not a bedridden old man,<sup>1</sup> Jacob and Esau met, for the last time; their old school-boy quarrel forgotten over their father's grave. Jacob was now a hundred and twenty years old; ten more years

<sup>1</sup> Isaac was sixty years old when Jacob was born, and a hundred and thirty-seven when Jacob was seventy-seven: his eyes were then "dim so that he could not see," (Gen. xxvii.) He was blind, then, from his hundred and thirty-seventh to his hundred and eightieth year.

passed after his father's death ; and then there came the news from Joseph, and his last journey into Egypt, preceded by another appearance of GOD to him. (Gen. xli.)

In the year, apparently, following that in which Rachel had died, and Benjamin had been born (i.e. the hundred and seventh year of Jacob's life), Joseph, being seventeen years old, had been sold by his brethren into Egypt. It was in the twenty-third year after this, when he had mourned for Joseph as dead for twenty-two or twenty-three years, that Jacob came into Egypt, in the hundred and thirtieth year of his life ; there for seventeen years he lived ; and there, in the hundred and forty-seventh year of his age, he died ; after uttering those great prophecies which we have in the 49th chapter of Genesis.

If ever, then, we are tempted to be led away with the cavils of modern unbelief, and with the fancied difficulties of believing in the wondrous death-bed prophecy of Jacob submitted here to our faith, we shall find ourselves helped by remembering what is told us of the man who was chosen to be the mouthpiece of prophecies so amazing. When we think of the man and of his life, of his many previous sorrows, and his many previous visions and revelations ; of the atmosphere of supernatural protection surrounding him from his birth ; of the age to which he lived : we feel there had been a fitting preparation for so wondrous an end ; we cannot separate the life from the death ; the one is no more supernatural than the other ; by his human sorrows he was trained and disciplined in that "holiness without which no man shall see the LORD;" by his divine revelations he was fitted to be, like Enoch, or Noah, or Moses, a great witness for GOD in an unbelieving world ; a prophet and messenger of GOD to man.

This brief sketch of Jacob's life will, it is hoped, help us to turn with fresh interest to the study of his prophecies about the Holy Land; that land in which he had himself been a wanderer for more than a hundred years, and which was to be the home of his descendants; that land which has such interest for us from its associations with the past, the present, and the future. Of that land it has been truly said:

“ It had, what other lands have never had,  
The golden light of GOD's mysterious choice.  
It was the holy East, advancing on  
Towards the water edge of the great sea,  
Confronting that grand West, which lay beyond,  
Which first it should convert, then civilise,  
And lastly glorify.

A land, the earthly home of heavenly truth  
When all the world lay in the shades of death.  
More like a sanctuary wherein GOD dwells,  
Than region of the earth's geography.  
Hardly a mountain which had not beheld  
Some miracle. Hardly a hollow dell  
To which some promise had not been attached:  
Its river banks, its shores of inland sea,  
Were overhung with sacred poetry  
Like clouds, a network close of prophecy  
Hung over the whole land.”<sup>1</sup>—

And over that land, and its people, clouds of prophecy yet to be fulfilled, still hang: never were the eyes of the world more intently fixed on it, than they are at the present moment: never were politicians and theologians more keenly watching its political or its prophetic horizon.

<sup>1</sup> “From Bethlehem to Nazareth,” pp. 68, 69.

# God's Witness in Prophecy and History.

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## CHAPTER I.

### *JACOB'S BLESSING ON REUBEN.*

GEN. XLIX. 3, 4.

“Reuben, thou *art* my firstborn,  
My might, and the beginning of my strength,  
The excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power :  
Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.”

THESE are the opening words of that Psalm or Hymn of Prophecy which Jacob uttered on his death-bed in Egypt, when, in obedience to his command, his sons had gathered round him to hear what should befall them in the latter days. After the old custom of fathers giving their last blessings to their children before their death ; as in after times Moses, and Joshua, and Samuel, and David, and our Blessed LORD Himself, before their departure out of this world gave their parting commands to their assembled followers, so now the Patriarch Jacob called his children together to hear his dying words :—  
“Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days ; gather yourselves together, and hear, ye sons of Jacob : and hearken unto Israel your father.”

And these parting words of blessing which Jacob spoke

on his death-bed, and in which he predicted the several fortunes of his sons, are in the form of Hebrew poetry or psalm. As we have the prophetic Song of Moses before his death, so we have here a prophetic Song of the dying Patriarch Jacob, the structure of the sentences being in the form of verse, after the manner of much Hebrew prophecy. Like that bird which is said to sing only before her death in notes not heard before, so here we have the venerable patriarch, in his hundred-and-forty-seventh year, appearing for the first and last time before us as endued with a new poetic gift, "the *vox cycnea* of the departing seer." We have known him before as a man of great physical strength and endurance: as one capable of extraordinary bodily fatigue, able to lead the sleepless life of an Eastern shepherd for twenty years: and we have known him as a man of mighty faith and fervent piety: as one accustomed "to visions and revelations of the LORD," prevailing with GOD in prayer, conversing with Him in dreams; but now in this death-bed scene he comes before us as a poet, a composer of verses and psalms. This would not be thought so wonderful in the East as it would be among ourselves; but still it is to be noticed; "At evening-time it is light" with him, more light than ever; as the outward man is decaying with the decrepitude of age, "the inward man is renewed" with unwonted strength; the gift of prophecy which was in him "gains greater power the nearer he approaches the borders of the eternal world;" and as the Spirit of GOD comes upon him, a strain of prophetic song bursts from his lips, as there burst forth afterwards from the lips of Zacharias and Simeon and the Blessed Virgin, the inspired Hymns of the Benedictus, the Nunc Dimittis, and the Magnificat.



The opening verses of this Psalm or Hymn of prophecy contain Jacob's prediction concerning Reuben his firstborn son; and if we look into what Scripture tells us of the character and history of Reuben and his descendants, we shall see the full meaning of Jacob's prophecy, and the manner of its accomplishment, we shall find the subject of the historical fulfilments of this and the other prophecies in this chapter a useful Bible study: for the continuous fulfilment of them in history as time goes on is a continuous witness to GOD'S accomplishing in Providence what He had foretold in Prophecy. Over such a long period of time does each fulfilment extend, into times so late does it run on, that to however recent a date unbelief may wish to shift the utterances of these prophecies, history bears witness that they were uttered before their fulfilment was accomplished.

All Jacob's sons, except Benjamin, were born during the period of his second seven years' service; Reuben, the eldest son of Jacob and Leah, was born in the tents of Laban towards the end of the first year of that period. His birth and the meaning of his name are mentioned in Gen. xxix. 32. The name Reuben, which means "See, a son," or, "The son of seeing," was given him by his mother, in pious gratitude to GOD for his birth, "She called his name Reuben; for she said, Surely the LORD hath seen my affliction;" the "affliction" she referred to being the poignant grief she had suffered at seeing Jacob taking her sister Rachel to wife only one week after his marriage with herself, while she remained neglected and despised.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Laban promised that if Jacob would "fulfil Leah's week," i.e. would wait till the week's festivities of Leah's wedding were over,

Except for the unnatural crime of having unlawfully taken one of his father's wives, a crime repudiated as disgraceful even among the heathen, (see Gen. xxxv. 21, 22 ; 1 Cor. v. 1,) and for which as we learn from 1 Chron. v. 1, 2, he was disinherited by his father, what we read of Reuben is rather attractive than otherwise. He first comes before us as a little child of five years old, at play in the fields at harvest-time, gathering flowers there, running with them to his mother, and placing them in her hands. (Gen. xxx. 14.) This little incident of Reuben's childhood shows a boy of affectionate feelings, open and warm-hearted ; then he was a little child of five years old, now he kneels by his father's dying bed to receive his parting blessing, a strong man sixty-two years of age ;<sup>1</sup> and we can well believe that as he knelt there, the father's thoughts would travel back to his eldest boy's childhood, and his heart would be wrung with sorrow as he uttered words so severe ; and when Reuben heard them he may well, like Esau, have cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry ; for the few events recorded during the intervening period of fifty-seven years amply testify that Reuben, as a man, had that warm and kindly nature of which he gave promise as a child.

When he was twenty-two or twenty-three years old came the next recorded event in his life, his well-known he would give him Rachel to wife also, on condition of his serving him another seven years. (Gen. xxix. 27.) Commentators are unanimous on this explanation. (See Judg. xiv. 12.)

<sup>1</sup> By comparing Gen. xlvii. 9 ; xli. 46, 53 ; xlv. 6 ; xxx. 24, 25 ; and xxxi. 41 together, we see that when Jacob came down into Egypt Joseph was 39 years old, and Jacob 130 ; Joseph was born then in the 91st year of Jacob's life. Now, when Jacob was 147, Joseph was 56 years old, and Reuben 62. This calculation supposes that Jacob was in Mesopotamia exactly 20 years.

rescue of his brother from the hands of his would-be murderers on the occasion of his sale to the Ishmaelites. (Gen. xxxvii. 21, 22, 29, 30.) Here his character appears in an eminently attractive light, as well in his kindly artifice for trying to save his brother's life, as in his anguish at the apparent frustration of his plan; though as the eldest born he was the chief sufferer from Jacob's partiality for Joseph, he seems to have been free from that envy of him which most of his other brethren felt; taking in this respect after his mother, whose pious character seems to have been free from that envy which embittered so much of Rachel's married life. And we may say that the other notices which we have of Reuben in Genesis, give us the same favourable impression of his natural disposition as his kindness to Joseph does. When in his forty-fourth or forty-fifth year he comes down with his brethren to buy corn in Egypt, his recollection of the minute details of the scene at "the pit" twenty-three years before; his appeal to the consciences of the others, by reminding them of that scene, so that Joseph, who overhears them, cannot refrain his tears; his offer to take the sole responsibility of the safety of the brother who had succeeded to Joseph's place in the family, (Gen. xlii. 22, 37,) testify to his having as a man that warm-hearted nature which he showed as a child:—"an ardent, impetuous, unbalanced, but not ungenerous disposition; not crafty and cruel, as Simeon and Levi."<sup>1</sup> And what we feel now, his aged father felt then, and expressed in words, when he said, "Reuben, thou art my firstborn, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power." But all the naturally attractive points in his character could not alter his father's estimate of him, nor the sad

<sup>1</sup> Bible Dict., Art. "Reuben."

prediction which he utters concerning him. Reuben had, no doubt, repented of his sin, but his repentance could not undo the mischief which that sin had caused, of which the lapse of forty years could not efface the memory or the guilt; nor could it reverse the sentence by which GOD deprived him of the place of the first-born; and Jacob, who spoke by inspiration of GOD, now disinherited him (1 Chron. v. 1, 2); and at the same time predicted that in this world that sin could not be forgiven, but that according to GOD'S mysterious law it would be visited on his descendants; that in this world the effects would never be undone; that neither Reuben, nor the tribe of Reuben, would ever rise into eminence again; that the Reubenites should remain an obscure and unimportant tribe even to the end.

An attention to the exact meaning of Jacob's words is important, for it shows the accuracy of the way in which the prediction was fulfilled.

“Reuben, thou art my first-born,  
My might, and the beginning of my strength,  
The excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power :  
Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel.”

It will be noticed that the word “excellency” is in the original, as in the translation, thrice referred to; the “excellency” of dignity and the “excellency” of power is thine by birthright, but unstable as water, thou shalt not retain this excellency, or “excel.” There is a play on the word “excellency” in the word “excel;” an attention to this, and to the first meaning of the original word, throws light on the signification of the prophecy, and on the accuracy of its fulfilment. The same words translated here “excellency” and “excel” are elsewhere

in our Bibles translated "remainder,"<sup>1</sup> and "remain ;"<sup>2</sup> Jacob's words, then, plainly mean, "Of all that now remains to thee of dignity and power nothing shall remain ;" "Of the dignity and power which are thine abundantly by thy birthright *nothing shall survive* ;" as the Targums paraphrase it, "Thine should have been the birthright (the double portion), the kingdom, and the priesthood ; but the birthright is given to Joseph, the kingly authority to Judah, the priesthood to Levi." It is probable, moreover, that the words, "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel," are used both to describe Reuben's character and his future punishment. There is in the words a figurative allusion to the passing away of water,<sup>3</sup> which has dried up as a stream or watercourse which was full in winter, but is dry in summer ; as waters thou shalt fail ; as a tribe thou shalt pass away till few men are left of thee. Jacob sorrowfully predicts that of the dignity, the power, the numerical superiority, the very individuality of the tribe of Reuben, few traces will remain ; and this agrees with, and explains, the sentence afterwards pronounced by Moses on the same tribe in Deut. xxxiii. 6,

"Let Reuben live, and not die,  
And let his men be few ;"<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> So, from meaning remainder or "residue," it comes to mean an "abundant residue," and so abundance, superiority, excellency.

<sup>2</sup> The verb, in the conjugation here used, is (as noticed by Obbard) always transitive, and means to leave anything behind, or over, as a remainder ; to cause to remain. Thus in Exod. xii. 10 ; xvi. 19 ; Deut. xxviii. 54, it is translated "leave," or "let remain."

<sup>3</sup> The literal rendering being "bubbling over like water." See Poole's Synopsis, and authorities quoted by him. This is also S. Jerome's interpretation.

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Pusey shows that the rendering "let *not* his men be few" is

As a tribe, Moses says, he is to be insignificant in numbers, &c. ; to live, but that is all.

And the few notices of the after history of the Reubenites which we have in Numbers, the Judges, and the Chronicles, amply confirm the truth of the prophecy which Jacob uttered. In his whole after history Reuben was an obscure tribe, and one which gradually decreased in numbers and importance, which is the meaning of the predictions of Jacob and Moses. Towards the close of the wanderings in the wilderness the tribe made one desperate effort to recover their forfeited right of primogeniture,<sup>1</sup> (Numb. xvi.,) but after this they sink into obscurity again. "No Judge, no Prophet, no hero of the tribe of Reuben, is handed down to us." The names of no persons of any distinction have been preserved as belonging to it, except those two rebellious chieftains Dathan and Abiram, who joined in the conspiracy of Korah the Levite against his cousins Moses and Aaron. And the men of Reuben never made any manly effort to emerge from their obscurity, and take that place among the other tribes which still properly belonged to them. They could not be depended on in times of war and danger ; in the political struggles and religious revivals of the nation they took no part ; they did not care even to cross the Jordan, and receive their share in the Promised Land. After the wars of Joshua their influence disappears from the page of history. In the great struggle between Sisera and Barak they basely hung back ; Deborah bitterly complains of them for this

inadmissible ; as the borrowing of the negative can only take place when it has occurred in the principal clause, and not (as here) in a subordinate one. (Pusey's Daniel, p. 253.)

<sup>1</sup> Pusey on Daniel, p. 253.

in her song of triumph, (Judg. v. 15,) complains—so her words mean—that “the distress of his brethren could not move Reuben: that he lingered among the sheepfolds while his brethren were engaged in that terrible fight; that he preferred the warbling of the shepherd’s pipe, and the bleating of the flocks, to the clang of the trumpet,” and the shout of war. Why, she asks, abodest thou among the sheepfolds? Why? except that “unstable as water, thou shalt not excel?”

And it is the same all down their history. They were simply a cattle-loving tribe, shepherds, like their fathers. (Gen. xlvii. 3.) And even the toils of agriculture were as distasteful to them as those of war; they had not energy enough even to take or retain the cities allotted to them; civilization and progress and city life had no charms for them; their highest ambition was to seek pasturage for their vast herds and flocks, which roamed through the spacious downs and sheep-walks of the inheritance which had been given them; to engage in petty broils with the Arabs, or to carry off the cattle of some neighbouring tribe. (1 Chron. v. 9, 10.) If their fighting men are mentioned, it is always in connexion with the tribes of Gad and Manasseh, never distinctly by themselves, except on the one occasion, in the days of Saul, of their attack on an Ishmaelite encampment. (1 Chron. v. 10.) Their history was more and more inglorious as time went on; in the glimpses we get of them in the Book of Chronicles, we see them gradually vanishing away into a mere Arabian tribe; gradually spreading with their tents and flocks over the vast wilderness which lies between the Jordan and the Euphrates,<sup>1</sup> (1 Chron.

<sup>1</sup> This refers to the whole tribe, not to the great Reubenite Sheikh mentioned in the verse before.

v. 9,) every day cutting themselves off more and more from "the Israel of GOD." And the last notice we have of them tells us how the tribe of Reuben lost its faith in GOD, as well as its energy and zeal (1 Chron. v. 26); it tells of their idolatry and its punishment; of their casting off the faith and worship of GOD, and going after the gods of the Moabites, in whose land they dwelt, and with whom they gradually intermingled; and how for this they were among the first to go into captivity, swept away in two successive invasions<sup>1</sup> of the Assyrians, who carried the bulk of the tribe away captive to the country of Gozan, by the banks of the river Habor.<sup>2</sup>

Thus we see how accurately the old prediction of Jacob was fulfilled,

"Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel;"

or, as we have seen the words more exactly mean, thou shalt not leave behind thee any of thine excellency of dignity and power. Thus was the prophecy fulfilled, that of Reuben's dignity and power nothing should survive, but that they should pass away like the failing waters of a dried-up stream.

But one more brief glance at the history of the tribe will further show how Jacob's prediction was fulfilled in the manner implied by his figurative language. It will show how naturally GOD brought about in providence what He had foretold in prophecy, Reuben's sin working out its own chastisement.

There were two causes which naturally and providentially brought about the fulfilment of the prophecy. The

<sup>1</sup> B.C. 771, and B.C. 741.

<sup>2</sup> See Bible Dict., Art. "Reuben," from which many of these suggestions and expressions have been borrowed.



first cause was the position of Reuben's territory in the map of Palestine.

The position which the tribe of Reuben occupied in the map of the Holy Land is well known. It was the southernmost and the smallest portion of the district east of the Jordan, originally forming part of the land of Moab, but in Joshua's time being in the possession of "Sihon king of the Amorites," from whom the children of Israel won it in the great and decisive battle fought at Jahaz, or Jahazah, afterwards one of Reuben's towns. (Numb. xxi. 23; Josh. xiii. 18.) The cities and boundaries of the tribe of Reuben are given in Numb. xxxii. 23, and in Josh. xiii. 15—21.<sup>1</sup> Lying on the east of the sacred river, their territory was not within the limits of the "land of Canaan," originally promised by God to Abraham,<sup>2</sup> but was shut out from it by the deep, mysterious gulf of the Dead Sea, and by those mountains

<sup>1</sup> In that memorable journey which Balaam and Balak took together, when they travelled slowly from the banks of the Arnon to the city of Peor, as described in Numb. xxii. and xxiii., stopping at different high places to sacrifice, they traversed from south to north the exact extent of what was afterwards Reuben's territory. It is a wide expanse of rolling downs, covered with short smooth turf; the Belka of the modern Arabs, and famous as pasture ground for sheep; it is called in Scripture "the plain country of the Reubenites," the Mishor or level downs. See Deut. iv. 43, and iii. 10; Josh. xiii. 9, &c.

<sup>2</sup> The country on the west of Jordan is called in Scripture "the land of Canaan;" that on the east is spoken of as "the land of Gilead." See Numb. xxxii. 29—32; Josh. xxii. 32. See also Numb. xxvii. 12; Deut. iv. 21, and xxxiv. 4. The land of Canaan was the special inheritance promised to Abraham, though his seed was to have rule from Egypt to the Euphrates, (Gen. xv. 18;) this land between the Jordan and the Mediterranean was the land which the spies searched out; the land which Moses so earnestly longed in vain to enter.

of Moab, which, "like an immense purple wall, seem to overhang the hills of Judah." Not being part of the land of Canaan, this territory did not come into the possession of the Reubenites by the providential "disposal of the lot," like those of the Western tribes, but they asked for it and obtained it because it was a land fit for cattle. It is instructive then to notice how in this way it came about, in the providence of GOD, that Reuben's own sin of unbelief worked out its own chastisement, so bringing about the fulfilment of Jacob's prediction. All Reuben's after troubles resulted from his sinful and unbelieving choice to remain away from his brethren, outside the Holy Land, on the east of Jordan. The very position of his self-chosen territory helped to fulfil Jacob's prophecy, that he should not "excel," but decay in dignity and power; should not leave behind him any of that superiority in "dignity" and "power" which was his birthright. By taking up the very remote position which he did, he became by degrees the last instead of the first of the tribes. "The impassable barrier of the Dead Sea lay between him and the Western tribes; he had not, like Gad, a long strip of territory contiguous to the Jordan, with many fords across it; but the position of his territory on the other side of the Dead Sea, with its impassable precipices and ravines, cut him off from the rest of Israel, and made attendance with the other tribes at GOD's worship at Jerusalem a matter more difficult for him than it was for any of his brethren."<sup>1</sup> This isolation of Reuben from the other tribes was one great reason why he took no part in the political struggles and religious revivals of his nation. Living far away from the great centre of political and religious life, he fell gradually away in

<sup>1</sup> Tristram's "Bible Places."

faith, in energy, in "dignity" and "power;" he became a semi-nomad tribe, the heads of which were simply great "sheep-masters," and nothing more, like the Moabites among whom he dwelt, without their energy for building or for war: so the tribe dwindled away in numbers and in power. To the Reubenites the words of Ecclesiasticus xxxviii. 25, might well apply, words which will account for Reuben's low position in the world or the Church, "How can he get wisdom that holdeth the plough, and that glorieth in the goad, that driveth oxen, and is occupied in their labours, and whose talk is of bullocks? He giveth his mind to make furrows; and is diligent to give the kine fodder."

This isolated position of Reuben was the first great cause of his political and religious deterioration. The second cause of his loss of power was the persistent hostility and enmity of the Moabites.

These children of Lot, the old enemies of the children of Abraham, being, as has been said, the original possessors of that country, east of the Jordan, seem persistently to have looked on the Reubenites as intruders. Balak was the king of Moab at the time when the decisive battle of Jahaz was fought, in which Sihon, king of the Amorites, was slain: but he, (Balak,) instead of welcoming the Israelites as conquerors of Sihon, persisted in his enmity against them, and so brought on himself his own destruction, though Israel was directed to have no quarrel with Moab (Deut. ii. 9); and this enmity was never afterwards relaxed. And so the Moabites seem gradually to have dispossessed Reuben from his towns and farmsteads, thus fulfilling Jacob's prophecy—apparently without struggle on his part; "It is evident that Moab from the south continued from time to time to press northwards,

so as to displace Reuben, driving him further and further eastwards," towards the wilderness abutting on the Euphrates: evident that the cattle-loving Reubenites cared not for the loss of their towns, so long as rich pasturage for their flocks was left them. Hence most of the towns of Reuben, with the names of which we are so familiar in the writings of the Prophets, such as Heshbon, Medeba, Aroer, Elealah, Sibmah, Dibon, Jahaz, Baalmeon, Kiriathaim, are spoken of by them as Moabite rather than Israelite towns; thus we learn from Isaiah xv. 2, that one of these cities had been recovered by Moab from Reuben as early as the days of Hezekiah: and from Jer. xlvi. 2, 34, 45, that a century later it still continued in Moab's possession; from 1 Chron. xix. 7, we gather that Reuben had lost another of his cities even before David's time: and from Isaiah xv. 2, that it was again a Moabite town in the time of Hezekiah.<sup>1</sup>

And these incidental notices in Holy Scripture of the way in which Jacob's prophecy of the gradual dwindling away of Reuben's dignity and power was fulfilled, have been confirmed to us lately in an unexpected manner. It was in Dibon, one of those towns of Reuben which fell into the possession of Moab, that the now famous "Moabite Stone" was discovered in 1868. On this stone, Mesha, King of Moab in the time of Ahab, (2 Kings iii. 4,) describes his conquests over Israel, conquests following on that rebellion of his which is mentioned in 2 Kings i. 1. On this stone as many as sixteen Moabite towns are mentioned by name, some as having been taken by Moab from Israel.<sup>2</sup> Thus this stone, "fashioned by long for-

<sup>1</sup> See Tristram's "Bible Places."

<sup>2</sup> See the account of the discovery, and the inscription fully given in "Stones Crying Out," pp. xl.—xlvii. of introductory chapter.

gotten hands" some 2,800 years ago, bears witness to the accuracy of Scripture prophecy; as is remarked in the Speaker's Commentary, "This recently discovered Moabite stone thus proves that the cities assigned by Joshua to the Reubenites were for the most part wrested, partly or wholly, from them by the Moabites, with whom the Reubenites in all likelihood became gradually intermingled." In 2 Kings i. 1, we see a fulfilment of the prophecy of Gen. xlix. 3, 4.

We thus gather from incidental notices in Scripture, and from a recent discovery made within the territory of the tribe of Reuben, how accurately Jacob's old prediction was fulfilled; how soon the ancient prestige of the eldest tribe was gone: how ingloriously one of his towns after another was wrested from Reuben's feeble hands, and passed into the possession of his enemies; the accuracy of the prophecy about Reuben is seen in the fact that the Prophet does not predict any struggle with his enemies, as in the case of Gad, (Gen. xlix. 19,) or any holding of his own on submission to tribute, as in the case of Issachar, (Gen. xlix. 14, 15,) but simply an inglorious passing away of the "dignity" and the "power" of the tribe till nothing of either "survives." This Jacob predicted in his prophecy. And this Moses predicted when he said,

"Let Reuben live, and not die,  
But let his men be few."<sup>1</sup>

The story of Reuben's sin, and of its punishment

<sup>1</sup> This Blessing has also a message of consolation. Reuben's descendants might fear, from the irreversible sentence hanging over them, that for the sin of their ancestor the tribe would "die" out altogether, or that judgments would follow them into another world; but this they are assured shall not be the case, an assurance confirmed in the visions of Ezek. xlviii. and Rev. vii. 4-8.

suggests many questions and reflections about God's providential government of the world, which we cannot attempt to answer or think out now. But the plain, general lesson for us to learn from the story, turns on the true meaning of the expression, "unstable as water," words which, as we have seen, probably describe both Reuben's character, and the manner in which Providence worked out the fulfilment of the prophecies of Jacob and Moses concerning him. What, then, are we to understand by the expression?

The words contain a figure of speech which will be always more or less obscure, and which is variously interpreted. According to our translation the words mean that Reuben was known for his instability or unsteadiness of character; that he was wanting in fixedness of moral purpose; changeable, fickle, easily led. According to this interpretation the figure of speech "unstable as water," exactly corresponds to a similar one used by S. James, who describing a "double-minded" or "unstable" man, (S. James i. 6—8,) says he is as easily moved this way or that, towards good or towards evil, as a wave of the sea, or the surface of water, is moved this way or that by the wind. This explanation is supported by the great authority of our translation, and by the fact that Reuben and his descendants were thus easily led; Reuben's own good and evil passions were easily moved; and on the two great occasions of the rebellion of Korah, and of the request of the two and a half tribes not to be brought over Jordan, the Reubenites were led into sin by others, in the first case by Levi, in the second by Gad. The words then *may* refer to Reuben's instability of moral purpose; they may mean that he was an unsteady lad, as contrasted with Joseph, who firmly resisted a similar

temptation, and who is hence called by his father a "stone" or a rock for firmness. (Gen. xlix. 24.) Reuben *may* be here called "unstable as water," as one who easily yielded to temptation. But neither ancient nor modern interpreters give this meaning. Nor can we feel sure that the Hebrew justifies it. The most sure ground we have for the meaning of the word here translated "unstable," is its use in three other passages of Scripture, Judges ix. 4; Jer. xxiii. 32; Zeph. iii. 4; where it means light, in the sense of treacherous, or wanton; and this, according to modern interpreters, is the idea conveyed by it here; not instability of purpose, or fickleness, but rather violence and licentiousness.<sup>1</sup> The original Hebrew word is a substantive, not an adjective, coming (it is said,) from a word meaning to leap forth like water boiling over, or bursting the barriers imposed on it: the kindred word in the Arabic is said to mean to be proud and haughty, to lift up oneself, to swell and rise like turgid and swelling water. Gesenius (quoted in Bible Dict.) explains the figure "unstable as water" to mean, "Boiling up like a vessel of water over the rapid wood fire of the nomad tent, and as quickly subsiding into apathy when the fuel was withdrawn." But all this variety of interpretation, all this difficulty of arriving at actual certainty in the matter, seems to teach us that Holy Scripture intends rather to

<sup>1</sup> The Targums say that Jacob likens Reuben to a garden into which enter torrents swift and strong, which it cannot bear, but is overwhelmed. The Septuagint has ἐξέβρισας, which is used of an overflowing river, in Ezek. xlvii. 5. The Vulgate has *effusus es sicut aqua*. According to Bp. Wordsworth Jacob's figure of speech resembles that used in 1 S. Pet. iv. 4, where S. Peter speaks of those who are carried away by their headstrong passions under the illustration of swiftly running streams, each rushing on, in its own course, to the same "flood (*ἀνάχυσος*) of riot."

fix our thoughts on the marvellous accuracy with which the old prophecy was fulfilled, than on the character of Reuben himself, or on the exact nature of that besetting fault which led him into gross sin : it is intended that our minds should be fixed on the great broad fact that *the wave of time can never wash out sin* ; that we should meditate on the mysterious law that the sins of the fathers (in this case sins against the fifth and seventh commandments), are visited on the children to remote generations. For these reasons the interpretation which S. Jerome gives to Jacob's words, and to which we have referred above, is well worthy of our attention. Of that interpretation Bishop Patrick says : "The Hebrew word for 'unstable as water' (*pachas*), meaning 'haste,' and the Chaldee having the signification of 'leaping,' the interpretation of S. Jerome seems the most reasonable, which is that it means 'poured out like water out of a vessel upon the ground.'<sup>1</sup> And it then denotes Reuben's falling from his dignity, and losing his pre-eminence, as water suddenly disappears when it is poured out on the earth, and sucked up into it. Many refer it to Reuben's immorality : but *that* is noticed in the after part of the verse, where it is given as the reason of his being degraded." While, then, it is very probable that the words "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel," describe the character of Reuben as carried away headlong into sin by the impetuosity of his unrestrained passions, it is not improbable that they also refer to the passing away

<sup>1</sup> One very old English Bible, which has quaint illustrations of each of Jacob's Blessings on the Tribes, illustrates Reuben's Blessing by a picture of a man carrying a ewer, or some vessel, of water so carelessly and so much on one side, that the water is spilling out of the vessel as he walks.



of Reuben's "excellency of dignity and excellency of power," as S. Jerome and others explain. The gradual dwindling away of the tribe being illustrated by the figure of the gradual drying up of a brook or of a stream as has been described. It is probable that Jacob's prophecy means this ; it is certain that the prophecy of Moses does.

The one solitary New Testament allusion to the territory occupied by the tribe of Reuben, a reference which is in harmony with that stern history of which the outline has been traced, may form a fitting conclusion to our subject.

Reuben's territory, so far as we know, was never once visited by our Blessed LORD. When He used to travel up the eastern valley of the Jordan on His way to the feasts, He would turn off and cross the sacred river before reaching Reuben's former territory. But these out of the way regions are once referred to in the Gospels in connexion with as dark a tale of crime and sorrow as any recorded in Scripture. Reuben's territory is interesting from its having been the scene of the death and burial of Moses. Somewhere among the hills of Reuben was his unknown grave :

" By Nebo's lonely mountain,  
On this side Jordan's wave,  
In a vale in the land of Moab,  
There lies a lonely grave ;  
And no man knows the sepulchre,  
And no man saw it e'er,  
For the angels of GOD upturned the sod,  
And laid the dead man there.

" In that strange grave without a name,  
Whence his uncoffined clay

---

Shall break again, O wondrous thought !  
Before the Judgment Day,  
And stand with glory wrapt around,  
On the hills he never trod,  
And speak of the strife, that won our life,  
With the Incarnate GOD."<sup>1</sup>

But in those same regions a prophet, greater even than Moses, died and was buried in New Testament times. Zara or Zareth-Shahar, ("the splendour of the dawn,") is mentioned as one of the cities assigned by Joshua to Reuben, (Josh. xiii. 19,) on that eastern side of the Dead Sea, which formed one of the boundaries of the tribe. It is the only one of Reuben's towns which is built on that gloomy shore, for elsewhere the beach of that dismal lake is shut in with precipitous gorges and ravines of rock right down to the water's edge. But this town of Zara stood within a mile of the edge of the Dead Sea, to the west of Mount Pisgah, where its remains may still be seen. To the south-east of this spot, midway between it and Kiriathaim, another of Reuben's towns, also identified, are the ruins of the city and fortress of Machærus, thought to be the only surviving relic of the buildings actually reared by the semi-nomad tribe of Reuben in those far distant ages, others being not considered earlier than the days of Solomon. This fortress, built, or strengthened by the Herods, is mentioned by Pliny, Strabo, and Josephus, as the strongest in Herod's dominions next to Jerusalem itself. And it was there, in this remote but impregnable spot beyond the Jordan, that he whom our LORD describes as the greatest who had been born of women, His own forerunner John the Baptist, was imprisoned and cruelly murdered by Herod,

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Alexander. See Deut. xxxiv., and S. Luke ix. 30.

“for Herodias’ sake, his brother Philip’s wife.” Josephus is our authority for this, and there is every reason why this statement should be believed, for this fortress was about the only place in his dominions where the tyrant would have dared to commit a crime so unpopular, so impregnable was it and so far away. The rocky ridge or plateau on which this castle of Machærus stood, stretches for more than a mile from east to west, high above the town of the same name, and some 3,800 feet above the Dead Sea, on which it looks right down, commanding a view of Jerusalem and of the hill country of Judæa beyond, a view at which “the captive exile” may often have gazed, if his dungeon admitted such a prospect. The whole of this ridge seems to have been one extensive fortress, and on the summit of a huge cone, forming part of it, stood its citadel or keep. In this rugged spot, in keeping with the gloomy surroundings of that mysterious lake, the great martyr died. In this fortress Herod gave his fatal birthday supper, which the beautiful Salome disturbed by her wanton dance. And in a dungeon of that keep, on the heights above, John the Baptist was beheaded by an officer sent from the banqueting room. Down those rocky heights the little band of John’s disciples tenderly carried their master’s body to the burial, and then “went and told JESUS.” (S. Matt. xiv. 12.)<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For the description of the place see Tristram’s “Land of Moab,” p. 281, the authority for the above account. The author of that book visited the place, and says that the undoubted remains of two dungeons may still be seen, one of which he thinks may well have been the scene of S. John’s imprisonment and murder.

## CHAPTER II.

### JACOB'S BLESSING ON SIMEON AND LEVI.

GEN. XLIX. 5—7.

“ Simeon and Levi *are* brethren ;  
Instruments of cruelty *are in* their habitations :  
O my soul, come not thou into their secret ;  
Unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united :  
For in their anger they slew a man,  
And in their self-will they digged down a wall ;  
Cursed *be* their anger, for *it was* fierce ;  
And their wrath, for it was cruel :  
    I will divide them in Jacob,  
    And scatter them in Israel.”

THIS prophecy of Jacob about Simeon and Levi bears upon it the proof of its own genuineness and antiquity, more perhaps than is the case with any other of the predictions in this chapter. For, as has often been remarked, if the author of these words had been a writer who lived after Moses, as some imagine, he would not have used such humiliating terms as these concerning Levi. It is moreover very honourable to Moses, the great Hebrew leader and lawgiver, who was himself of the tribe of Levi, that he has recorded these words of censure on his own tribe, from the lips of Jacob.<sup>1</sup> This prophecy

<sup>1</sup> Bp. Wordsworth, quoting from Hengstenberg.

has thus "the witness in itself" of its own antiquity, and that of the book of Genesis, of which it forms a part.

And in connexion with this point it has also been remarked that "Of the change of the curse into a blessing, which was afterwards made in Levi's case, there is not the slightest indication in Jacob's prediction : and in this also we have a strong proof of its genuineness ; for after this honourable change in the time of Moses,—due in great part to the faithfulness of Moses himself, and of the Levites with him,—it would never have occurred to the forger of a prophecy to cast such a reproach, and to foretell such a judgment, on the forefathers of the Levites."<sup>1</sup> The truth of this remark comes out very strongly if we contrast the prophetic words of Jacob with those of Moses himself afterwards in his blessing on the tribe of Levi as recorded in Deut. xxxiii. 10, "They shall teach Jacob Thy judgments, and Israel Thy law : they shall put incense before Thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon Thine altar."

If we look into the meaning of Jacob's words, and the history of these two tribes, we shall see the wondrous and continuous fulfilment of this ancient prophecy : we shall also find that "there is stamped on their history the great law of the justice and love of GOD ; the law that irreversible chastisement deepens on persevering impenitence, but that on repentance, such chastening becomes, through the mercy of GOD, the channel of His choicest favours."<sup>2</sup>

Simeon and Levi, whose names are here coupled together in Jacob's denunciation of them, were his second and third sons, children of Leah. Their births are mentioned in Gen. xxix. 33, 34 : the names of each of them

<sup>1</sup> Speaker's Comm. ad loc.

<sup>2</sup> Pusey's Daniel, p. 254.

were given them by their mother in a spirit of pious thankfulness to GOD for their birth. "Simeon," which means "hearing," expressed Leah's gratitude to GOD for hearing or taking notice of her afflictions and her prayers; "Because the LORD hath heard that I was hated, He hath therefore given me this son also: and she called his name Simeon:" while Levi, which means "joined," expressed the mother's hope that "after the birth of that their third boy, the affections of her husband, which had hitherto rested on the favoured Rachel, would at last be fixed on her;" "My husband," she exclaimed, "will now be 'joined' to me;" so she called the child Levi, which means joined or joining, from the Hebrew word *lavah*, 'to adhere;' a meaning which was long afterwards confirmed, with a new application, in the sense of "joined" unto the High Priest as assistant ministers to him in the service of the sanctuary (Numb. xviii. 2).

But though the names which Leah gave her two boys were lasting memorials of her thankfulness to GOD for His goodness in giving her them, the boys themselves as they grew up showed none of the faith and piety of their mother. No incident is recorded of their childhood; but from Jacob's thus coupling their names together, which he does not do in the case of any others of his sons, it is probable that from the first they had been very close companions in mischief, probably in other and more violent exploits than are now remaining on record. The expression, "Simeon and Levi are brethren," means that they were of kindred disposition, not referring to the fact that they were sprung from one mother; as we speak of a guilty "pair," or "partners" in crime.

Jacob's words are generally supposed to refer to the first recorded event of their lives, the well-known story

of the massacre of the Shechemites, which, from a comparison of dates, must have taken place when Simeon was twenty-one, and Levi twenty years of age (Gen. xxxiv.), the event which brought to a close Jacob's ten years' residence in the lovely vale of Shechem. The exact meaning of his words is probably as follows, as given in the margins of our Bible :

“ Simeon and Levi are brethren :  
Weapons of violence are their swords :  
Into their secret council come not, my soul,  
Unto their assembly be not joined, mine honour !  
For in their wrath they slew men (Heb. a man),  
And in their selfwill they houghed oxen (Heb. an ox) :  
Cursed be their anger, for it is fierce,  
And their wrath, for it is cruel :  
    I will divide them in Jacob,  
    And scatter them in Israel.”

There was evidently, then, a close bond of union between the two brothers, the evil effects of which their father here deplores, and which in prophetic language he says must be broken. But it is by no means certain that Jacob's words only refer to the well-known story of the Shechem massacre recorded in Gen. xxxiv., when Simeon and Levi, with their retainers, rescued their sister Dinah from Hamor, ruthlessly revenging on a whole town the sin of one man. As the two men knelt down to receive their dying father's farewell words, one was sixty and the other sixty-one years of age : the transaction at Shechem, then, had occurred forty years before, when, as has been said, the two brothers were young men of the ages of twenty and twenty-one respectively. Jacob's words, then, may well refer to other scenes of violence also, of which they had been guilty, if we may

judge by the severity of his language. It is mentioned by him that they had on the occasion referred to houghed, cut the hamstrings of, some oxen, as if in wanton cruelty; and nothing could excuse the cruelty of so disabling oxen. But there was another scene in which these two young men took part, in which they displayed more heartless cruelty even than this; the sale of Joseph to the Midianites is the next recorded transaction in which they were concerned: and it is a very general opinion that in the guilt of that intended fratricide, as in that of the Shechem tragedy, Simeon and Levi had the chief share, and that their father alludes to that tremendous crime also in his denunciation of the cruelty of the two brethren. It is impossible to read carefully the narrative of that event without being struck with the thought that they ought, like Reuben and Judah, to have interfered to save Joseph from the sons of the concubines, whose hatred against him because of his "evil report" of them to their father was the original cause of the intended murder; the responsibility of the contemplated crime, at any rate, must rest chiefly on them as the eldest of the conspirators; and this supposition is confirmed by the fact that on the going down into Egypt twenty-three years afterwards, Simeon was "bound" and kept in prison by Joseph, as a hostage for Benjamin, Joseph thus trying to reach the conscience of Simeon, and designing also to separate the two brothers, who had hitherto been such close companions in evil. If this be so, then we must think of Simeon and Levi as the two chief actors in that scene of heartless cruelty in which his brethren cast Joseph<sup>1</sup> into the pit; and then, regardless of the

<sup>1</sup> The "coat," or tunic, "of many colours" was worn next the skin. Joseph was therefore cast naked into the pit.



"anguish of his soul," and deaf to his cries for mercy, sat down to eat bread. On the whole we may conclude that the cruelty and envy of Simeon and Levi towards Joseph on that occasion, in contradistinction to the kindness of Reuben and Judah, was present to Jacob's mind when he said, "Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel." The children of Simeon and Levi at the going down to Egypt are mentioned in Gen. xlv. 10. And this concludes all that is told us of the two brothers; but it is enough to show them to have been men of violence and cruelty such as Jacob here describes and denounces. No separate incident is recorded of the Patriarch Levi; but any passing allusions to the Patriarchs, as young men, which we have in Scripture, make us fear that none of them, except Joseph, had a very high standard of moral purity.

The after history of the Levites, and of the manner in which Jacob's prophecy about their dispersion in Israel was fulfilled, is too well known to need repetition. But if we follow up the scattered notices which we have of the Simeonites, we shall see that the old cruelty and fierceness of their ancestor reappear in each recorded transaction in which they are engaged, justifying, as it were, the severity of the prophetic sentence pronounced on them by their father; and that their after history was a continuous fulfilment of Jacob's prophecy concerning them.

For the after history of the Simeonites we must read Numb. xxv. 14; Numb. xxi. 2, 3, compared with Judges i. 17; Judges i. 3—7; 1 Chron. iv. 24—28; 1 Chron. iv. 34—43; 2 Chron. xv. 9; 2 Chron. xxxiv. 6; Obadiah 19; Judith vi. 15. The first of these chapters contains the well-known story of the frightful act of wickedness

committed by Zimri, "a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites," with the swift vengeance of Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest which followed. It is too well known to need repetition : it was perhaps the crisis and turning point of Simeon's history. But besides this there are four Bible stories told about the Simeonites, which also illustrate the character of the tribe.

The first event is described in Numb. xxi. 2, 3, compared with Judg. i. 17. It is the story of the ruthless destruction of the city of Hormah.

In their wanderings in the wilderness the king of Arad made a sally on the children of Israel, and took some of them prisoners ; it is not said whether he killed any : on this the Israelitish army made a vow that if GOD would deliver the people of Arad into their hand, they would devote them to destruction, i.e. they should be anathema. The vow, we are told, was heard and accepted by GOD, and the spot where it was taken they called Hormah, or Anathema. This vow, made then, was fulfilled in Judg. i. 17, by Judah and Simeon some thirty years after, for it could not be fulfilled before, though in Numb. xxi. its fulfilment is mentioned by anticipation. (Compare Numb. xxxiii. 40, and Josh. xii. 14.) We cannot venture to criticise the morality of the transaction ; but, without laying any undue stress on the fact, it is interesting to notice that when the Divine oracle commanded Judah to go up first to destroy the Canaanites, that great tribe immediately asked the aid of the Simeonites in the work, as if turning naturally to men who inherited the old native fierceness of their ancestor Simeon ; at any rate it is the Simeonites who are the ready actors in this tragedy ; it is they who are found ready and forward to slaughter in cold blood all the in-

habitants of a city, in obedience to a vow taken by the army some thirty years before. The earlier name of the devoted city was Zephath, they now call it Hormah, or Anathema, in memory of this deed of blood, as they had before called the spot where the vow was taken by the same name.

The same chapter, the first of Judges, records another act, which seems one of wanton cruelty, the well-known story of the mutilation of Adonibezek, king of Bezek, Judg. i. 7; his thumbs and his great toes were cut off by the Israelites, who then took him prisoner to Jerusalem, where he died. He confessed that he had mutilated in the same way seventy petty kings of Canaan; we cannot pity him: but still it is to be noticed that it was the Simeonites who were specially employed in this barbarous act, perhaps who suggested it; being invited by Judah to give their help in this case as in the last, as if the Simeonites, descendants of him who had wantonly maimed the oxen of the Shechemites, were known as men who would be ready for this sort of work when it was required to be done.

The other two recorded transactions in which the Simeonites were engaged, (and which happened in the reign of Hezekiah some seven hundred years after those recorded in Judg. i.,) are mentioned in 1 Chron. iv. 34—41, and 1 Chron. iv. 42, 43. There we find the Simeonites engaged in two marauding expeditions, and showing the same spirit of violence and cruel treachery which comes out in the massacre of the Shechemites. In the first of these expeditions thirteen chieftains, or princes, of the tribe of Simeon, attack and massacre the quiet and peaceable inhabitants of a little settlement described as situated at the entrance or east side of

the valley of Gedor, somewhere, we may believe, in the direction of Mount Seir. They coveted their rich pasture grounds, so they utterly destroyed them, and dwelt in their room: "They found fat pasture and good, and the land was wide, and quiet, and peaceable; and they smote their tents, and their habitations (or the Mahurim) that were found there."

In the second of the expeditions mentioned in the same chapter, a band of five hundred Simeonites, under the leadership of four captains or chieftains of the tribe, attacked and exterminated the remnant of the once great nation of the Amalekites, which had found refuge, possibly from Saul and David, in the distant fortresses of Mount Seir; taking possession of their quarters, where they were still living on the return of the Israelites from the captivity in Babylon; "They smote the rest of the Amalekites that were escaped, and dwelt there unto this day."

Thus in the four recorded transactions in which the Simeonites are mentioned as specially engaged, there comes out the same spirit of cruelty and violence and craft which Jacob denounces in the father of the tribe.

And the same may be said of a story in the Apocrypha in which the Simeonites figure, whatever be the historical value to be attached to it, the well-known story of Judith and Holofernes. In the widow Judith, the great heroine of the Tribe of Simeon, the last of Simeon's descendants of whom we have any express record, all the intrepidity and audacity which seem to have characterised the founder of the tribe, are seen most strongly developed. Her genealogy is traced up to Zurishaddai, the head of the tribe at the time of their greatest power, (Numb. i. 6;) Bethulia, the scene of the story is a sort of little colony of Simeonites, (Judith vi. 15;) Ozias, the

chief man of the city, was a Simeonite, (ib. ;) so was Manasses, the former husband of Judith, (viii. 12 ;) so was Judith herself; and she nerves herself for her tremendous exploit of cutting off the head of Holofernes by a prayer to the LORD GOD of her father Simeon, and by recalling in all their details, the incidents of the massacre of Shechem. (See Judith ix. 2, and Bible Dict., Art. "Simeon.")

But once more. If the after life of Simeon remarkably illustrates the mysterious law by which sins are transmitted from the father to the children, still more remarkable was the accurate fulfilment of the prophecy that for the sins of the father, the children of Simeon should be scattered and divided :

"Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce ;  
And their wrath, for it was cruel ;  
I will divide them in Jacob,  
And scatter them in Israel."

It has been pointed out<sup>1</sup> that the first blow which broke the spirit and the numbers of the tribe of Simeon was probably that pestilence which visited the camp of the Israelites after their great sin in the matter of Baal-Peor. In that transaction the tribe of Simeon was the chief offender ; and in the census which was taken just after we find that the numbers of the tribe were reduced from fifty-nine thousand to twenty-two thousand fighting men ; in other words, that two-thirds of the tribe had perished. (See Numb. i. 23 ; xxvi. 1, 14.) In that well-known story, then, of Israel's sin with the Midianites, the first recorded transaction in which the Simeonites were engaged, we see the beginning of the fulfilment of

<sup>1</sup> Blunt's "Undesigned Coincidences."

Jacob's prophetic sentence on the two brothers, Simeon and Levi :

“ I will divide them in Jacob,  
And scatter them in Israel.”

It was Phinehas the Levite who brought swift vengeance on the chief offenders, and at the same time turned away the old curse from himself : “ The plague brake in upon them. Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment : and so the plague was stayed. And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore.” (Ps. cvi. 29—31.) Then Jacob's prediction was first fulfilled ; for thus the old compact and partnership between Simeon and Levi were dissolved ; henceforth the two would be “ divided in Jacob,” and “ scattered in Israel,” as he foretold ; the zeal of Phinehas for GOD was the more commended because of the former friendship between the two, but the result would be that this friendship would be broken, never again to be wholly healed. And then too the prediction was further fulfilled, in that the fierce might of the tribe of Simeon was on the same occasion also broken by the pestilence, which fell with such tremendous severity upon it that two-thirds of the tribe perished. It is to this great judgment which followed on the wickedness of the Simeonites that S. Paul refers, when he says in those well-known words, “ There fell in one day three and twenty thousand.” (1 Cor. x. 8.)<sup>1</sup> So reduced was the tribe of Simeon in numbers that it fell from being one of the first to be the very last and least of all the tribes. This leading part which it took in this act of open sin against GOD, and its consequent insignifi-

<sup>1</sup> The twenty-four thousand of Numb. xxv., include those slain by the “judges” in verse 5.

cance in numbers, may probably be the reason why, alone among the tribes, Simeon is passed over in the farewell address of Moses to the Israelites, and no blessing pronounced by him on it in Deut. xxxiii.

We trace the next step in the fulfilment of Jacob's prophecy when we come to the division of the Holy Land among the tribes by Joshua.

In some respects the land of Simeon is as interesting and sacred as any in Palestine. A reference to the map shows the position which the tribe occupied in the Holy Land, at the extreme south, on the very edge of the wilderness: his lot, according to Josephus, included that part of Idumea which bordered on Egypt and Arabia: it took in part of that wilderness of Shur which is connected with so many interesting Bible stories (see Gen. xvi. 7; xx. 1; xxv. 18; 1 Sam. xv. 7; and xxvii. 8): that wilderness which the Israelites entered after they crossed the Red Sea (Exod. xv. 22, 23), and which, as its name Shur, or "a wall," signifies, formed the dividing border between Egypt and Palestine, and was called sometimes the wilderness of Etham (Numb. xxxiii. 8). Two or three of its towns, such as Gerar, Ziklag, and Beersheba, call up many sacred memories of events in the lives of the Patriarchs, Prophets, and Kings.<sup>1</sup> But Simeon's territory was but an appendage to the tribe of Judah: Simeon hardly possessed a distinct territory of its own at all: the tribe, which at the time of the Exodus ranked third among the others in power and numbers (see Joshua xix. 1—8, and xv. 26—30, and 1 Chron. iv.

<sup>1</sup> The territory of Simeon was twice, and only twice, as far as we know, traversed by our LORD, each time in His childhood. On the flight of the Holy Family into Egypt and on their return they must have travelled through the western border of the tribe.

28—33), had in Joshua's time become so unimportant in numbers, &c., compared with the other tribes, that in the division of the Holy Land it could scarcely be said to have a separate existence: it formed as it were but a small canton of the great tribe of Judah; (see Numb. xxvi. 14; 1 Chron. iv. 24—27; Josh. xix. 9;) the cities which Simeon received were but a small handful of towns and villages selected out of the cities of Judah; eighteen or nineteen being assigned to the one; one hundred and fourteen to the other: these were as many as the tribe had numbers or strength to occupy; or possibly the Philistines possessed the cities intended for them, and being too strong to be dislodged, the Simeonites had to seek settlements elsewhere: but they were the least favoured in the portion assigned them; their territory was on the very edge of the wilderness; it was that "dry and thirsty land where no water is," fertilised chiefly by those artificial wells which Isaac and the other patriarchs dug (Gen. xxvi. 17—32), rather than by natural springs; its few towns were grouped round one of these, the venerable well of Beersheba; the Simeonites were thus necessarily scattered; they were dispersed by Joshua among the cities of Judah, their fighting men being billeted as it were upon the towns of Judah like a foreign auxiliary force, rather than like an army of occupation taking possession of their own towns. In this way, then, we can trace the fulfilment of Jacob's prophecy. The Simeonites were thus not more than an appendage of the tribe of Judah, Joshua merely allotting them a district out of the territory of Judah. It is said of them, "Their inheritance was within the inheritance of the children of Judah:" and again, "Out of the portion of the children of Judah was the inheritance of the children of Simeon;" they had, pro-



perly speaking, none of their own, any more than the Levites had. (Josh. xix. 1—9.) They remained divided, and almost unrecognised: GOD thus fulfilling the prediction that He would “disperse them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.” And this held good after the revolt of the ten tribes; it is probably to these Simeonites dispersed through the cities of Judah, that the inspired writer refers when he says of Rehoboam, “As for the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.” (1 Kings xii. 17.)

But further. From the glimpses we get of the Simeonites in the Book of Chronicles, we can see Jacob's severe sentence being continually carried out as time rolled on. Some families of the Simeonites never multiplied like the other tribes: perhaps none of them did. (1 Chron. iv. 27.) Or, if they did, they were dispersed in distant emigrations and expeditions. (1 Chron. iv. 38.) They went forth in quest of new settlements, either because there was no room for them in Judah, and they were crowded out of their old homes in their own cities, or because (as may be implied in 1 Chron. iv. 31) some of these cities were taken from them by Judah when they revolted from the house of David to Jeroboam.<sup>1</sup> For in 1 Chron. iv. 24—31, we find cities of Simeon mentioned as belonging to that tribe, “unto the reign of David;” while at a later period, in the times of Ahab and of Nehemiah, they are enumerated as belonging to Judah. See Josh. xix. 2, 5; 1 Sam. xxvii. 6; 1 Kings xix. 3; Nehem. xi. 25—28, where this is specially mentioned of Ziklag and Beersheba. Another illustration of the fulfilment of Jacob's prophecy meets us in the time of Solo-

<sup>1</sup> Those Simeonites called “children of Israel” in 1 Kings xii. 17, remained faithful to Judah.

mon. His dominions were divided into twelve provinces, each with an officer appointed over it. (1 Kings iv. 7—19.) “A very slight examination shows us that these twelve divisions corresponded roughly to the tribes of Israel without counting Simeon, and considering the two halves of Manasseh to be separate tribes. . . . It is remarkable that the name of Simeon as a tribe does not occur in this passage, nor was the territory of Simeon made into a separate province; indicating that Simeon was not now regarded as a separate tribe or compact body; its members living a nomadic life in the Negeb Desert apportioned to it, or having become fused with the Edomites.”<sup>1</sup> But at any rate the prophecy of Jacob that they should be divided and scattered was fulfilled by these migrations of the Simeonites from their old homes to new and distant settlements. We see one illustration of this in the story of Judith; Bethulia, which, as we saw, was a sort of little colony of Simeonites, (whatever its exact situation may have been,) was far removed from the ancient territory of Simeon; it was one among many cities half colonised by those of whom Jacob had said, “I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.” We see two other illustrations of it also in 2 Chron. xv. 9, and xxxiv. 6. From these two passages we gather that in the times of Asa and Josiah the Simeonites were scattered through various cities of the northern and southern kingdoms: in the one case we find them leaving their various homes and rallying round Asa in his “reformation:” in the other we find Josiah visiting their cities in his northern circuit of inspection; while the allusion in 1 Chron. iv. 42, shows that a large body of them still remained in their old home in the South.

<sup>1</sup> Conder's “Handbook to the Bible,” p. 282.

Thus, as the ages went on, the Simeonites were living witnesses of the truth of GOD'S sentence that they should be divided in Jacob and scattered in Israel as no other tribe except the Levites were. From their half civilised, half nomad, settlement at Beersheba, the very "Land's End" of Palestine, at the edge of the desert, we find the Simeonites going forth as wanderers; some of them dispersing themselves in other cities of the Holy Land; some of them crossing the boundary between Palestine and the desert, searching for pasture, or seeking new homes; roaming as far as the mountain ranges of Petra and Seir. And there they may be recognised even now: "It is startling to find that a tribe professing to be of the sons of Israel, and holding no connexion with the Arabs of the desert, is still to be found in the country round Petra, literally fulfilling the ancient prediction of Obadiah, 'They of the south shall possess the mount of Esau,' and the still more ancient one of Jacob, 'I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.'"<sup>1</sup>

There is one further manner in which Jacob's prophecy about the dispersion of the Simeonites was fulfilled, which must not be passed over: for though it is not mentioned in Scripture, it rests on a Jewish tradition; and is accepted as true, both by Jewish and Christian commentators. It is interesting as showing that the chastening which fell on Simeon was sent in mercy; that the breaking of his fierce might was turned into gain for the whole Church; that the sin, not the sinner, was cursed by Jacob.

It has been often said that though the sentence on Levi was not reversed, it was, on his repentance, turned into a blessing, and made an occasion of that tribe's greater

<sup>1</sup> See Maclear's Joshua, ch. xix., and Pusey on Obad. 19.

nearness to GOD. This is true. But if we may believe an old and widespread Jewish tradition, (so old and widespread that we cannot disregard it,) this was partially true of Simeon also. It is generally believed that all the schoolmasters in Israel (at least all the teachers of little children), were of the tribe of Simeon, and that all the Scribes and many of the Pharisees of our LORD'S time were of this tribe. The Targums tell us that "the Simeonites and Levites became the teachers of the Law in the synagogues and schools."<sup>1</sup> In their commentaries on this verse (Gen. xlix. 7), they say that there is a tradition among the Jews that the schoolmasters were of this tribe of Simeon, so fulfilling the prophecy of Jacob [about their dispersion];<sup>2</sup> in one, Jacob's words are thus explained, "There shall not be to thee [O Israel] poor scribes and teachers of infants, save from Simeon;"<sup>3</sup> in another, "I will divide the tribe of Simeon, able teachers of the law in the congregation of Jacob;"<sup>4</sup> in a third, "I will divide the possession of the sons of Simeon into two parts.: one part shall go forth to it out of the midst of the sons of Judah, and part among the rest of the tribes of Jacob;"<sup>5</sup> while one at least of the Christian Fathers says, "From Simeon came the scribes, and from Levi the priests."<sup>6</sup> We welcome these traditions as in harmony with that known love of GOD which is never stronger towards His covenant people than when He is chastening them for their sins, or for the sins of their forefathers. And it

<sup>1</sup> Jerus. Targ. quoted by Bp. Wordsworth ad loc.

<sup>2</sup> See Comment. of Solomon Jarchi.

<sup>3</sup> Rashi ad loc. quoted by Pusey on Daniel, p. 254.

<sup>4</sup> Jerus. Targ. quoted by Pusey, ib.

<sup>5</sup> Targum of Ps. Jonathan, ib.

<sup>6</sup> S. Hippolytus, Frag. § 25, quoted by Wordsworth, ib.

would seem that down to our LORD's time this fulfilment of the old prophecy was going on : for we gather from S. Luke v. 17, that Pharisees and "Doctors of the Law" were settled in "every town of Galilee and Judæa" in His time.<sup>1</sup> If then all these "Doctors of the Law," and many of these "Pharisees" were, as is probable, Simeonites, then they must have been scattered not only through Judæa, but also throughout Upper and Lower Galilee, so fulfilling Jacob's prediction as to what should befall them "in the last days," that is in the days of the Messiah.

But if his prediction was thus fulfilled, this manner of its fulfilment is more than a striking accomplishment of the words,

" I will divide them in Jacob,  
And scatter them in Israel."

It gives sad point to his preceding words,

" O my soul, come not thou into their secret [council (Heb.)] ;  
Unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united ;"

for in these words Jacob not only expresses his abhorrence of the plots formed by Simeon and Levi against the Shechemites, and their own defenceless brother, but in these words about "what shall befall his sons in the last days," Jacob in the spirit of prophecy is looking mournfully forward to the part which shall be played by Simeon and Levi in the last great drama of the slaying of the world's Sacrifice. He thus prophetically foresees and foretells that last combination of Simeonites and Levites "against the LORD and against His CHRIST" (Acts iv. 26) ; he denounces that secret Council which the Scribes and Pharisees (who were descended from

<sup>1</sup> So explained in Geikie's Life of CHRIST.

Simeon) and the High Priests, Priests and Chief Priests (who were descended from Levi), called together, to devise a plan for putting our LORD to death ; he denounces that unholy alliance of the two brethren, in which the hypocritical zeal of Simeon and Levi was repeated and surpassed in their hypocritical anxiety for GOD's honour, and for their own worthily receiving the Passover (S. John xviii. 28), at the very moment when they were plotting the judicial murder of "the Lamb of God" Himself.

There is much in all this to make us admire the unity of Scripture, and the wondrous element of constantly fulfilled prophecy running through it. As we see the fulfilments of these prophecies of Jacob unrolled in the events of history, we are constantly reminded of those words of our LORD, "I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe." (S. John xiv. 29.) But there is also in it very humbling teaching about our deeply fallen nature ; we, like Simeon and Levi, are all "born in sin," and "children of wrath ;" we must, then, all be "born again," or we "cannot see the kingdom of GOD." And we each, moreover, have some great besetting sin or sins, as Simeon's and Levi's cruelty and self-will : and this sin, if yielded to, is transmitted to posterity, so mysterious is sin in its nature. But this besetting sin may be overcome ; and so become our crown, as is seen in the case of Levi ; especially in the greatest of the Levites, Moses : he had by nature the headstrong violence peculiar to his tribe, but this natural fierceness was overcome by grace ; so that Moses, by nature the fierce Levite, became by grace "very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." (Numb. xii. 3.)

We see, then, the wisdom of finding out, fighting against, and overcoming our besetting sins; else they may destroy the soul hereafter, and in this world be visited on many generations. It was for the purpose of helping Simeon and Levi in this work of repentance that GOD, by the mouth of Jacob, pronounced upon them a sentence so severe, a sentence effectual in the case of one tribe, though ineffectual in that of the other. It is for the purpose of helping His servants now in this work that GOD sends on them their own peculiar sufferings: our special cross is mercifully adapted to our special sin, if we are willing to be taught of GOD; and so by GOD's grace we at length are changed as Moses was. The native fierceness of a true-born Levite, which was ever ready to break forth in Moses, disqualified him for the work which GOD intended him to do; therefore it was that GOD withdrew him for forty years into the wilderness, and compelled one who was qualified to legislate for a great nation to keep sheep for forty years in the desert. But these forty years of retirement did their work: the fierce Levite came forth from that chastening trial fit for the work he had to do; the same man who was once so eager to deliver his countrymen from Pharaoh was, when the time came, bowed down with a sense of his own weakness; as backward and unwilling to undertake his great mission as before he had been forward and eager. So it is with us if we, like Moses, are CHRIST's servants. (Heb. xi. 26.) Our special sufferings are fitting us for our work here and hereafter: before there comes fitness for the honour of doing CHRIST's work, there comes first that CHRIST-like humility and lowliness of mind in which Moses, the once fierce and proud Levite, at last so pre-eminently excelled.

## NOTE ON THE TRIBE OF LEVI.

It is commonly said that the curse of Jacob on the cruelty of Simeon and Levi was taken off the descendants of the younger of the two brothers, for the zeal of the Levites in the slaughter of the worshippers of the golden calf, (Exod. xxxii. 28,) and for the zeal of Phinehas in slaying Zimri and Cozbi. (Numb. xxv. 5, 6.) And so it was, though their sentence was not reversed. (Exod. xxxii. 29; Deut. xxxiii. 8—10; Ps. cvi. 28—31.)

The after history of the Levites is too well known to be repeated: but the facts told us of them in the Old Testament, which ought to be remembered *in order*, are:

(a) Their slaughter of the idolaters, for which Jacob's curse was turned into a blessing. (Exod. xxxii. 26—29; Deut. x. 8, 9.)

(b) The rebellion of Korah the Kohathite Levite against his cousins Moses and Aaron, in which however the Levites themselves, as a body, did not join. (Numb. xvi.; Ps. cvi. 16; Eccus. xlv. 18; S. Jude 11.)

(c) The renewal of the Blessing given to the Levites, in Exod. xxxii. 29, with a confirmation and new meaning of the name of Levi, or "joined." (Numb. xviii. 1—4; xxvi. 11; xxvii. 3.) The word *levi*, being a verbal noun, not a part of the verb *lavah*, is thought by some to mean a "joiner;" or a "connecting link."

(d) The zeal of Phinehas, rewarded with a "perpetual priesthood," fulfilled in CHRIST, and the threefold Christian ministry. (Numb. xxv.; Ps. cvi. 28—31.)

(e) The fulfilment of Jacob's prophecy in the dispersion of the Priests and Levites in the forty-eight cities assigned them. (Levit. xxv. 32—34; Numb. xxxv. 2; Joshua xiv. 4, and xxi. 1—40.)

(f) The Priests and Levites were not included in the census taken in numbering the people, nor in the sentence that none but Caleb and Joshua should enter Canaan of those who came out of Egypt. This is plain from Scripture: and it comes out in the fact that Eleazar, who succeeded Aaron, was more than twenty years old at the Exodus: and moreover the special sentence of exclusion from Canaan pronounced by GOD on Moses and Aaron for their sin (Numb. xx. 12) would not have been needed if they had been excluded by their age.



### CHAPTER III.

#### *JACOB'S BLESSING ON JUDAH.*

GEN. XLIX. 8—12.

“Judah, thou *art he* whom thy brethren shall praise :  
Thy hand *shall be* in the neck of thine enemies ;  
Thy father's children shall bow down before thee.

Judah *is* a lion's whelp :

From the prey, my son, thou art gone up :

He stooped down, he couched as a lion,

And as an old lion ; who shall rouse him up ?

The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,

Nor a lawgiver from between his feet,

Until Shiloh come ;

And unto him *shall* the gathering of the people *be*.

Binding his foal unto the vine,

And his ass's colt unto the choice vine ;

He washed his garments in wine,

And his clothes in the blood of grapes :

His eyes *shall be* red with wine,

And his teeth white with milk.”

**I**T is a remarkable fact that a widely-spread opinion prevailed among the ancients that the souls of men on their death-beds were endued with prophetic power. Socrates, in his apology to the Athenian people shortly before his death, thus speaks : “ Now I am desirous to prophesy to you who have condemned me, what will happen hereafter : for now I am arrived at that state, in

which men prophesy most, when they are about to die."<sup>1</sup> His scholar Xenophon puts similar words into the mouth of the dying Cyrus: "The soul of man at the hour of death appears most divine, and then foresees something of future events."<sup>2</sup> "The soul," says Aristotle, "foresees and foretells future events when it is going to be separated from the body by death."<sup>3</sup> This opinion of the heathen sages of antiquity is as old as the days of Homer,<sup>4</sup> and it is referred to by Shakespeare (*Hen. IV.* 1st part, Act 5, Sc. 4):

"O! I could prophesy,  
But that the earthy and cold hand of death  
Lies on my tongue."

Possibly this widespread opinion of the ancients may in part be traced to traditions of the fact which meets us in Scripture, that Jewish Patriarchs and others were not infrequently inspired on their death-beds to foretell events in the future history of those who were to come after them. But however this may be, the fact that such an opinion widely prevailed is a curious and interesting one; and this prophetic series of Jacob's death-bed utterances is specially worthy of attention, not only as having been given by inspiration of GOD, but as possessing that sacred interest which has always been attached to the dying words of the great and the holy.

Of all the prophecies uttered by inspired seers on their death-beds, this prophetic blessing pronounced by the patriarch Jacob on his son Judah is perhaps the best known, and contains the plainest reference to the Mes-

<sup>1</sup> *Platonis Apolog. Socr.*, quoted by Bishop Newton, Vol. I. p. 51.

<sup>2</sup> *Xenoph. Cyrop. lib. viii. ad finem.* Ib.

<sup>3</sup> *Sextus Empiricus Adv. Mathem.* Ib.

<sup>4</sup> *Il. xvi. 852; xxii. 355—360.* Ib.

siah, as is admitted by Jewish and Christian expositors alike.

There is an essential difference between Judah's blessing and that given to any other tribe. The essence of the blessing given to Judah, as distinguished from the other tribes, consists in this, that Jacob transmitted to him, and to him alone, that spiritual blessing which had been given by GOD to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, "In thy seed" (i.e. CHRIST) "shall all nations of the earth be blessed." A blessing was given by Jacob to each of his sons: but the blessing, the birthright which Esau despised, and Jacob bought so dearly, the eagerly coveted distinction of being the progenitor of the Messiah, was conferred on Judah only. This is the meaning which runs through the words spoken by Jacob to Judah his fourth son. To Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob a double blessing had been promised by GOD, a temporal and a spiritual one: a temporal one concerning the promised land, a spiritual one concerning the promised seed—viz. CHRIST. The promise of the land of Canaan had been given them, and the promise of the seed in whom "all nations of the earth should be blessed." This double blessing Jacob bequeathed at his death to his sons. He assigns to each of them a portion in the promised land, but he marks out Judah as the tribe through which CHRIST the promised Seed is to descend. The blessing is bequeathed by Jacob to his chosen son in much the same language in which it had been delivered to himself by his father Isaac in years gone by. Isaac had thus blessed Jacob, "Let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee: be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee." (Gen. xxvii. 29.) This blessing Jacob now transmits to his son Judah:

“ Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise ;  
Thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies ;  
Thy father's children shall bow down before thee.”

Then, to give greater certainty and fuller meaning to his words, he adds,

“ The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,  
Nor a lawgiver from beneath his feet  
Until Shiloh come,  
And unto him shall the gathering of the people be.”

And he concludes with a prediction of the atoning work which Shiloh is to do when He comes : though the concluding words, like the rest of the blessing, doubtless refer both to Judah and to CHRIST.

Such are the general purport and meaning of the blessing here given by his father to Judah. It is an expansion of the old promise to Abraham, handed down to him about the promised seed with other details added : itself an expansion of the older promise given to our first parents at the gate of Paradise : it is as much a prophecy about the kingdom of Shiloh, the Prince of peace, as it is about the kingdom of Judah, as we shall see if we examine more closely the meaning of the words, and the manner of their fulfilment.

Judah was the fourth son of Jacob and Leah, being born the year after his brother Levi. His birth and the meaning of his name are recorded in Gen. xxix. 35 : “ Leah bare a son : and she said, Now will I praise the LORD : therefore she called his name Judah,” i.e. “praise.” To this prophetic meaning of his son's name Jacob refers, confirming it in a deeper, fuller sense, “ Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise ;” Well art thou so called : for thy brethren have had, and

ever shall have, cause to praise thee. We read in 1 Chron. v. 2, that, with the exception of Joseph, "Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him was the chief ruler or prince," i.e. David: these words explain those of Jacob: Judah even in his lifetime did, next to Joseph, prevail above his brethren. In the story of their going down to Egypt to buy corn, Judah took his place among the patriarchal band as the "leader and spokesman" for the rest. As it has been said, "he is the Peter of the twelve, foremost in word and deed. His steady determination and generosity overcome his father's reluctance to let Benjamin go; his confession of guilt, his ready self-sacrifice, and pathetic eloquence cause Joseph to weep aloud and make himself known to his brethren." Thus while Joseph was pre-eminent among his brethren, Judah was always eminent among them. Jacob then in his blessing on Judah looks back to this eminent position which he had held among his brethren, and which the tribe ever maintained; and he looks forward to the future pre-eminence of the great tribe of Judah under David its "chief ruler" or prince; "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise." It is in allusion to this old prophecy that S. Paul, in Rom. ii. 29, makes a similar play on the word Judah, or praise, when he says, "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly, whose praise is not of men, but of GOD."<sup>1</sup>

But the meaning of this word "praise," and its use in this place have deeper teaching than this, and show that Jacob is speaking not so much of Judah as of CHRIST. This word translated "praise" is never used in Scripture in any other sense than that in which Leah used it when

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Bp. Wordsworth ad loc. The words, "and circumcision . . . in the letter," are in a parenthesis.

she so named her son, viz. that of praise or worship addressed to GOD :<sup>1</sup> it never means praise given to a man. It occurs some hundred times in Scripture, and is always translated praising or giving praise to GOD, the only meaning of the word. We cannot suppose, then, that in ninety-nine of these hundred passages where the word occurs it means praising or worshipping GOD, and that in this one solitary verse it means praising or commending man. The word whenever else it is used involves in it the idea of divine honour ascribed to Him Who is praised : it as necessarily involves the idea of worship as the word Prayer does : Holy Scripture would no more speak of praise being addressed to one who was merely man than it would of prayer ; when therefore Jacob, looking forward in the spirit of prophecy to what shall befall his sons "in the last days," apostrophises Judah in these words, "Thou art he<sup>2</sup> whom thy brethren shall praise," he in effect says, Thou art he to whom thy brethren shall offer the worship of thanksgiving, adoration, and praise. Whatever reference his words have to Judah himself or to David, they must in their full sense be spoken of One Who is GOD as well as Man, the LORD of Judah as well as the Son of Judah : when he predicts that divine honour shall be paid to One descended from Judah, Jacob is prophesying of CHRIST, of Him Whom in the verse following he speaks of as Shiloh : even as the words of 1 Chron. v. 2, may, according to the original, be translated, "Of Judah shall come the chief ruler, or prince," i.e. CHRIST.

Thus the very word "praise," which Jacob uses here

<sup>1</sup> Noticed by Obbard.

<sup>2</sup> "Thou" being emphatic ; the words "art he" are not in the original.

teaches us to apply the first part of his blessing not so much to Judah as to our LORD, Who was hereafter to spring from that tribe,<sup>1</sup> of Whom it was afterwards foretold that "prayer should be made ever for Him, and daily should He be praised;" and Who was in poetic language said to "inhabit the praises of Israel," to dwell in that temple where praises ascended. (Ps. lxxii. 15; xxii. 3.) And in our Eucharistic Sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, when with the silent raptures of faithful hearts, or with the loud strains of the organ, the praises of Him Who is our "Judah" ascend to GOD, then the words of Jacob are in their highest sense fulfilled, "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise."

But further; having thus predicted that the thankful praises of his brethren shall be given to Judah, Jacob adds that dominion over them shall also be conferred upon him; that his enemies shall be subdued under his feet: that he shall wield the sceptre of a kingdom which shall not pass away; for that at a certain time One from out of Judah shall appear, to Whom the obedience of all nations shall be rendered: "Thy father's children shall bow down before thee: thy hand shall be on the neck of thine enemies . . . the sceptre shall not depart from Judah till Shiloh come, and unto Him shall the obedience (or the gathering) of the people be." This prediction, like the other, has a twofold fulfilment, in David, and in CHRIST. First in David: the dominion over his brethren here promised to Judah was first given to him in the time of David; till then Judah had no authority over his brethren; Moses, of the tribe of Levi; Joshua, of the tribe of Ephraim; Barak, of the tribe of Naphtali; Gideon, of the tribe of Manasseh; Samson, of the tribe

<sup>1</sup> Heb. vii. 14.

of Dan ; Saul, of the tribe of Benjamin ; each of these as lawgiver, or judge, or king, ruled over Israel for a time, and gave pre-eminence to the tribe from whence he sprang ; but no prince of the house of Judah rose into eminence till after the death of Saul.<sup>1</sup> The tribe of Judah had not authority over the rest till David, belonging to that tribe, was made king by the whole nation ; in him for the first time Jacob's promise to Judah was fulfilled,

“Thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies,  
Thy father's children shall bow down before thee.”

It was, then, in the victories of David, the peaceful reign of Solomon, and the supremacy of the kingdom of Judah, with its long line of kings descended from this tribe, that Jacob's prediction received its first fulfilment : Then the “sceptre” of kingly dominion was grasped by Judah ; then of this tribe it could be said “Judah is my lawgiver,” (Ps. lx. 8 ; ) then the tribe rose into a position of lasting pre-eminence. It is important to remember this, for it proves that Jacob's words, “till Shiloh come,” cannot possibly mean “till he come to Shiloh.” The sceptre could in no sense be said to depart from Judah when he came to Shiloh, for before the tabernacle was set up at Shiloh Judah had no sceptre of authority which could depart ; but we are apt to forget this, and the simple answer it supplies to an unbeliever's evasion of the force of this old prophecy ; “We are so familiar with the supremacy of the tribe of Judah that we are apt to forget it was of comparatively recent date. For more than four

<sup>1</sup> Even if Othniel, the first judge, be regarded as an exception, he did not descend from Judah, but from Kenaz, a duke of Edom, grandson of Esau. See Bible Dict. Art. “Caleb” and “Kenaz.”



hundred years of the nation's life in Palestine, a period equal in length to that which elapsed between the Norman conquest and the wars of the Roses, Ephraim, with its two dependent tribes of Manasseh and Benjamin, exercised undisputed pre-eminence; to the house of Joseph belonged the first great leader of the nation, Joshua, and the greatest of the judges, Gideon; to the house of Benjamin belonged Saul the first king; the great sanctuary of the house of Joseph, and during the whole period of their supremacy, of the nation also, was Shiloh; the spot where for so many centuries was 'the tent which GOD had pitched among men.' (Ps. lxxviii. 60.) It was not till the close of the first period of Jewish history that 'GOD refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim, but chose the tribe of Judah, even the hill of Sion, which He loved.'" (Sinai and Palestine, ch. v.)

Thus was Jacob's prediction first fulfilled in David. And it was also, and more fully, fulfilled in CHRIST. It is of Him that Jacob specially speaks as having His hand on the neck of His enemies; as it is He Whom His brethren praise and adore on earth, and shall praise for ever in heaven, so it is He Who is the ruler of His FATHER's children, the conqueror of all His FATHER's enemies. It is of our LORD and of His ascension into Heaven; of His past and coming triumphs, that Jacob speaks, when, telling Judah what shall befall him in the last days, he says, "Thine hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies, thy father's children shall bow down before thee."

But the divine inspiration under which Jacob uttered the prophecy of Judah's future greatness, and the accuracy with which it was fulfilled, come out very strongly if we reflect on the illustration which he uses to describe

the future career of the tribe, viz. that of a lion lying down after devouring his prey :

“Judah is a lion's whelp :  
From the prey, my son, thou art gone up :  
He stooped down, he couched as a lion,  
And as an old lion ; who shall rouse him up ?”

Here is the origin of the well-known title of “The Lion of the tribe of Judah,” given to our LORD by the heavenly hosts in the vision of Rev. v. 5 ; but no better image could have been used to describe beforehand the position of the tribe of Judah between the death of Joshua and that of Saul than that of a sleeping lion gorged with prey. As the Greek and Latin poets speak of the lion descending from the mountains into the plain on his prey, and then going up into the mountains back to his lair again, so Jacob, with the same accuracy of illustration, says, “From the prey, my son, thou art gone up.” In this lies the force of the figure and the accuracy of the prediction ; for when once the prey had been seized, when once Judah had gone up from it, in other words, after the conquest of Canaan was completed, he reposed, none making him afraid. Like a fierce lion gorged with food, which having satisfied his hunger does not attack the passing traveller, but is harmless if not roused, so was Judah formidable. “In the natural fastnesses of his native mountains Judah dwelt undisturbed throughout the troubled period of the Judges,” reposing after his victories in his lion's share of the Holy Land allotted to him. “Othniel was partly a member of this tribe (Judg. iii. 9—11), and the Bethlehem of which Ibzan was a native, may have been Bethlehem-Judah (Judg. xii. 8—10), but even if these two judges belonged to Judah,

the tribe itself was not molested, and with the one exception mentioned in Judg. xx. 18, when they were called by the divine oracle to make the attack on Gibeah, they had nothing to do during the whole of that period but to settle themselves in their home. Not only did they take no part against Sisera, but they are not even rebuked for this by Deborah. Nor were they, on the other hand, disturbed by those incursions of the Philistines which during the rule of Samuel and Saul were made upon the territories of Benjamin and Dan." (Bible Dict. Art. "Judah.") As, then, the tribe of Judah during all this period held an independent position of its own, keeping aloof from the rest, neither offering nor asking aid, neither attacked nor attacking, independent of its friends, unmolested by its enemies, what better prophetic illustration could Jacob have used in his blessing upon him than that which he has employed, that of the king of beasts lying down, not cruel and aggressive like a hungry lion, but like one sleeping gorged with prey?

We notice that three words are here used for lion, expressive of three steps of the animal's growth; mention is made of a lion's whelp, a lion, and an old lion: in other words, the gradual growth of the power of the tribe of Judah is prophetically compared to the whelp growing in age and strength. Between the times of Joshua and David the lion's whelp, nursed among the hills of Judah, grew in strength and fierceness, and "when the men of Judah came and anointed David king over the house of Judah, in that great hero of the tribe the warlike spirit of 'the lion of the tribe of Judah,' seemed really roused for the first time since the days of Caleb and Othniel." (Stanley's Lect. p. 313.) "In Othniel, the lion of Judah, which had won the southern portion of Palestine under

Caleb, appears for the last time, till the revival of the warlike spirit of the tribe by David ; all the other notices of the tribe during this period indicate a peaceful spirit : the pastoral simplicity of Boaz and Ruth ; its absence from the gathering under Barak ; its retiring demeanour in the story of Samson, all point in this direction," (ib. 16.)

It is interesting to notice that all this receives confirmation from the glimpses which we get of the peaceable habits of the tribe of Judah in the old genealogical records of Simeon and Judah, given us in 1 Chron. iv. As we glance down those venerable family records of the two associated tribes of Simeon and Judah, reaching as they do from a remote past down to the times of the Captivity, we are struck by the contrast which thus incidentally comes out between the tribe descended from him who was the ringleader in the massacre of the Shechemites, and in the intended murder of Joseph, and that descended from him who saved the life of Joseph by his plea, "What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood?" (Gen. xxxix. 26.) The records of the Simeonites contain accounts only of some desert raids and exploits of cruel rapine and murder, as if the old founders of families in Simeon were men of the sword, and nothing more ; men who looked down on any profession but that of arms ; who held in contempt the "potter's wheel," or the "weaver's beam." But the founders of families in Judah figure as skilled in the arts of peace and industry, as well as brave in war ; as wealthy tradesmen, artizans, and farmers, as well as soldiers. Among the ancient worthies of Judah we find one known as "the father of the valley of the craftsmen," i.e. of the valley, or street, inhabited by families of Smiths, to use a modern word. (1 Chron. iv. 14.) From another verse we

learn that the tribe of Judah furnished the best weavers in the kingdom (v. 21), from another (v. 23), that there was at Jerusalem a royal establishment of potters, a potter's guild, perhaps, from which the well known "potter's field" was named; and that others were specially known as florists, or royal gardeners, or agriculturists. These old genealogies we cannot always unravel, but they throw great light on history; they enable us to see why the tribe of Judah was one whom his brethren praised—why it was fitted to be a rising one, and to outlive all the others; its members rose to eminence in the arts of peace and trade; they were not ashamed of these things then or afterwards. And all this shows the accuracy of the prophetic picture of the tribe which Jacob drew in his blessing on it, when he represented it as powerful yet peaceful, and as holding aloof from aggressive wars on its neighbours. After the conquest of Canaan it settled down for four centuries in the arts of peace; so far from engaging in aggressive war, so far from assuming authority and dominion over its brethren, it gave itself to the pursuits of industry, excelling and delighting as much in them as in war. Thus the great tribe of Judah lived on and gathered strength, waiting GOD's time to call it into notice. Even as David, the great hero of the tribe, knowing that GOD had called him to the throne, quietly waited till GOD's time came, keeping sheep, or studying the arts of music and song till GOD called him to fight; so the whole tribe, destined by prophecy to rule over its brethren, waited in industrious obscurity, till its hour had come; not like Benjamin, ravening as a wolf; not like Gad, tearing as a lion its prey; but like a couching lion whom none would care to rouse, powerful enough to repose on its victories.

The words which follow are so well known, and so much has been written about them, that little need be said now about them :

“The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,  
Nor a lawgiver from between his feet,  
Until Shiloh come,  
And unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.”

Having foretold that to Judah should be given authority over the other tribes—a prediction which was fulfilled in the coronation of David—Jacob goes on to say, that the sceptre, when once grasped by David, shall be held in trust by him down the ages, till it is claimed by One whom all nations shall obey. The word here translated “sceptre” is the same as that translated “tribe,” in the 16th and 28th verses of this chapter, and in other parts of Scripture. Our word “tribe” means a “third part,” and is merely a word taken from the old division of the Roman people into three parts or “tribes.” But the Hebrew word translated “tribe” in Scripture is the rod or staff of office which belonged to any particular tribe or clan as an ensign of its authority; thence the word comes to signify that particular tribe itself as being united under one rod or staff of authority. The prophecy therefore means that the people of Israel should be represented and governed by Judah till a certain Person belonging to that tribe should arise, Whom the nations of the world, Gentiles as well as Jews, should obey; that till then the house of Judah should preserve its separate independence among the tribes of Israel, and among the nations of the earth; that till then the family of David should not be extinct, nor the tribe of Judah lose its supremacy or existence as a separate political body, governed by its own

princes and its own laws ; that Judah should not cease from being a governing and representative tribe till One came, to Whom the sceptre of the kingdom of Judah should be transferred. That Person, at Whose coming the tribe of Judah is to be dissolved, is called Shiloh, the same name by which that place was called where the tabernacle "rested" after the wanderings in the wilderness ; as applied to this place the word means "rest ;" and there is every probability that when here applied to the Messiah it means the same also. "Because the word had this meaning, it was the name given to the place which was the seat, or resting-place of the ark of God after its wanderings, from the time of Joshua till the establishment of the monarchy. Shiloh was a spot unmarked by any natural features of strength or beauty, or by any ancient recollections ; recommended only by its comparative seclusion, near the central thoroughfare of Palestine, yet not actually upon it. It is called in Joshua xvi. 6, Taanath-Shiloh, and in Josh. xviii. 1, Shiloh, the explanation being that its old Canaanite name was Taanath, and its Jewish name Shiloh ;<sup>1</sup> the title of Shiloh being probably given to it in token of the 'rest' which the weary conquerors found in its quiet valley."<sup>2</sup> Appropriately then is this name with this meaning, given by Jacob to our LORD, our Shiloh, in Whose presence the ark of the Church finds rest ; nothing turns on the true meaning of the word : the only important point being that the words "till Shiloh come" cannot possibly mean "till Judah come to Shiloh," which is historically as well as grammatically untrue, as we have seen ; but Shiloh, as a name of our LORD, most probably means the rest-

<sup>1</sup> According to the Jerusalem Targum.

<sup>2</sup> Stanley's Lect. p. 276.

giver, or the peace-giver—the giver of rest, the “Prince of peace.” One, Jacob says, is to come of this tribe, Who shall be able to say to every weary and heavy-laden soul, “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest;” and to Him, Jacob adds, the gathering, or obedience of the people shall be; the word “obedience” occurring only here and in Prov. xxx. 17, and meaning the loving, reverent, obedience which a child renders to its mother.

The manner in which God providentially fulfilled Jacob's prophecy about the preservation of the Jewish monarchy and people “until Shiloh came,” has often been described, and it forms one of the most interesting chapters in the history of the world. The four successive monarchies which ruled the world after the Captivity, the Babylonian, the Persian, the Macedonian, and the Roman, alike respected the integrity of the kingdom of Judah. Storms of change and conquest, which swept away other kingdoms of the earth, passed harmlessly over the head of the little kingdom of Judah; the rival kingdom of Israel was dissolved after the Captivity, (for it was never promised that the sceptre and lawgiver should not depart from the tribe of Joseph,) but the kingdom of Judah, through many changes, lived on till CHRIST came. The truth of Jacob's prediction does not depend on the right interpretation of the promise of the sceptre not departing from Judah till CHRIST came, the meaning of which is a matter of much controversy: whether the royal authority was preserved in Judah after the Captivity; whether it was for a time suspended; or whether it was altogether in abeyance, it could not be said that the sceptre had departed from Judah in our LORD's time, for our LORD Himself held it; the angel's message at the Annunciation was, “The LORD GOD



shall give unto Him the throne of His father David ;” and our LORD holds it still ; for it was added, “ He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end.”<sup>1</sup> Pilate unconsciously gave Him His true title on the Cross ; as man He was lineally descended from David, and while known as “ the Carpenter’s Son,” was actually the heir to the throne of David and Solomon ; He was, as Pilate wrote, “ The King of the Jews.”<sup>2</sup>

In the concluding words of the blessing on Judah, there is most probably the same double allusion to Judah and to our LORD, which runs through the rest of the prophecy. After saying that the sceptre should not depart from Judah till Shiloh come, Jacob adds these concluding words :

“ Binding his foal unto the vine,  
And his ass’s colt unto the choice vine ;  
He washed his garments in wine,  
And his clothes in the blood of grapes ;  
His eyes shall be red with wine,  
And his teeth white with milk.”

Under this image of the wine-stained warrior of Judah, we may probably see, first, a prediction of Judah’s future possession of the south wine-growing district of Palestine. The position of the tribe of Judah on the map of the Holy Land is too well known to need description. One chapter of the Book of Joshua (ch. xv.) is taken up with an exact survey of the boundaries of the tribe, and with catalogues of its cities, with their “ villages,” or “ farm-premises” attached. So thickly was it peopled, that as many as a hundred and twenty-four cities are enumerated as comprised within its borders ; and judging from the

<sup>1</sup> S. Luke i. 33.

<sup>2</sup> See Bp. Wordsworth ad loc.

ruins which now meet the eye there must have been many more. Jacob's description of the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" going up to his mountain-lair in the Holy Land is accurately applicable to the features of the country, both because of the contrast between the "hill country of Judea," and its beautiful gardens and corn-fields on its western side, and because the lion had its favourite abode in the jungles of Judah, as comes out in the history of David, and the writings of the prophet Amos, the herd-man or sheep-breeder of Tekoah, belonging to Judah. So the latter part of the prophecy was here fulfilled. The once famous "cities of Judah" present now a scene of ruin and desolation; but the wine-presses still to be seen lying at their gates testify to Judah having been essentially a wine-growing country; to this allusion seems to be made, when Jacob speaks of him as washing his garments in wine, while the prophecy which speaks of the abundance of wine and milk in Judah had a fulfilment in the fruitfulness of its soil, as in the royal vineyards of Engedi, and of Carmel (Cant. i. 14; 2 Chron. xxvi. 10<sup>1</sup>), "wine and milk were the riches of Judah's tribe." In its territory were the most extensive vineyards and wine-growing districts, though the "wine of Lebanon" was the most highly prized. The vineyards still to be seen on the slopes of Bethlehem have often been described; the elevation of the hills and table-lands of Judah is the true climate of the vine, and that winding valley of the Hebron, on which Caleb set his heart, and which he received as his special inheritance, was famous for its vintage; its terraces were covered with the rich verdure and golden clusters of the Syrian vine in Bible times,

<sup>1</sup> The Carmel, in which Uzziah had husbandmen and vinedressers, was Carmel in Judah, see Josh. xv. 55, and 1 Sam. xxv. 2.

and in its rocky hills are still to be seen hewn the ancient wine-presses of the cities of Judah. Thence came the gigantic cluster, the one relic of the promised land which was laid at the feet of Moses, (Numb. xiii. 22—24.) That valley of vineyards was supposed to be the primeval seat of the vine itself. The vine was the emblem of the Jewish nation, as seen on the coins of the Maccabees, and in the colossal golden cluster which overhung the porch of the temple in our LORD'S time ; while the grapes of Judah still mark the tombstones of the Hebrew race at Prague in the oldest of their European cemeteries ;<sup>1</sup> and travellers describe the enormous size of the vine-branches of Judah, which would be thick enough to bind asses to them, and so to load them with fruit, as Jacob describes.

But through the concluding words of Judah's blessing, as through the first part of it, there runs another and a deeper meaning. The Jewish Rabbis of our LORD'S time were eagerly expecting the coming of a great national deliverer, the central point in all their teaching was the certain advent of the Messiah, the Anointed of God, Who should "restore again the kingdom to Israel" in more than all its former glory. And this prophetic blessing of Jacob on Judah was one of the prophecies on which these eager expectations were principally built ;<sup>2</sup> for it was but one link, though a very ancient one, in a chain of prophecies, which pointed to the tribe of Judah, the family of David, and the town of Bethlehem, in connexion with the birth of our LORD. In this image of a wine-stained warrior, as in the former one of a couching lion, Jewish Targums and Christian Fathers are alike agreed in seeing a prophetic reference to our LORD ;—

<sup>1</sup> See Sinai and Palestine, p. 162.

<sup>2</sup> See Geikie's Life of CHRIST, Vol. I., pp. 88—94.

They interpret the vine to mean the Jewish people, of whom it is the constant symbol, and the wild ass to mean the Gentile converts brought into the vineyard of the Church; the washing here mystically spoken of to refer to our LORD, "the true Vine," washing the Church in His Blood, and to His treading alone the wine-press of man's salvation. This is no doubt the true interpretation of Jacob's words; he foretells the atoning work which Shiloh is to do under much the same imagery which Isaiah employs, in Isa. lxiii. 1—3. In the words which follow, "His eyes shall be red with wine," &c., we may perhaps see a prediction of the glory and beauty of CHRIST after His resurrection; but at any rate it is impossible not to connect Jacob's prophecy about Shiloh "binding His foal unto the vine, and His ass's colt to the choice vine," with Zechariah's similar prophecy that the Messiah, when He came, should ride into Jerusalem upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. The King of the Jews is to ride into His capital, not in a chariot, or on a war-horse, but on an ass, an animal symbolical of peace and of ancient Jewish royalty combined. The two prophecies throw light on one another; Jacob says, Shiloh, the Prince of peace, shall bind His ass to the vine when He comes; Zechariah says, "Thy King cometh, riding upon an ass . . . He shall speak peace to the heathen," (Zech. ix. 9.) Zechariah speaks more plainly than Jacob, but each speaks of the same event, the triumphs of Shiloh "the Prince of peace;" each makes mention, in connexion with the Messiah, of the ass, the symbol of peace; each, though not with equal plainness, refers to the triumphant entry of our LORD into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. Some have gone further than this; they think we may infer from Jacob's words about

Shiloh binding the ass to the vine, that it was to a vine-tree that the two disciples "found that ass tied and the colt with her," on which, in obedience to His command, they set our LORD when He was about to fulfil Zechariah's ancient prophecy about Him, and to enter Jerusalem as Shiloh, "the Prince of peace," in fulfilment of this still more ancient prophecy of Jacob.

S. Peter, in a well-known passage, tells us what is the use to be made of every Old Testament prophecy; he says, "Whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place;" i.e., a dark, or murky, desert. (2 S. Pet. i. 19, Revised Version.) This is the use which the Psalmist says is to be made of the Old Testament generally, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." (Ps. cxix. 105.) In each case GOD'S Word is compared to a lamp, because as lamps are lighted at night to guide the traveller in passing through the Eastern deserts, or held up on high as beacons at the head of an Eastern caravan on a night-march, or during the night-watches, so is GOD'S Word the light of His people in passing through the dark wilderness of this world. If this is true of all Old Testament prophecies, it is more especially so of this wondrous forty-ninth chapter of Genesis; in it there are set as many as twelve such lamps of prophecy casting a more or less bright light before and around them: and this prophetic blessing on Judah shines with a light brighter, and seen further off, than any of the rest. It is a lamp with a brightness peculiarly its own, to which the Old Testament believers must often have turned for comfort as to "a light shining in a dark place." But for us it is more than this; for us, (so far reaching is this ancient prophecy,) it spans, like a lovely rainbow of hope, the dark sky of this world's history.

## CHAPTER IV.

### *JACOB'S BLESSING ON ZEBULUN.*

GEN. XLIX. 13.

“ Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea,  
And he *shall be* for an haven of ships ;  
And his border *shall be* unto Zidon.”

IN the words immediately preceding Jacob had just uttered the great and well-known prophecy about the sceptre not departing from Judah till Shiloh came : as the partiality of Isaac for Esau his eldest son had been overruled by GOD'S Providence, guiding him to transfer the blessing to Jacob, so Jacob had, by special inspiration of GOD, just transmitted the coveted blessing, not to Joseph his favourite son, but to his fourth son Judah. And now, upon this great prophecy respecting the coming of CHRIST there follows immediately this short, and at first sight apparently trivial and unimportant, one about Zebulun : the dying patriarch, his mind full of the visions of CHRIST which his prophecy of Shiloh had called up, his prophetic eye still fixed on the far future, the divine afflatus being as it were full upon him, abruptly passes from the mighty themes which had been occupying his own mind and those of his hearers, to predict that his tenth son Zebulun shall receive a piece of sea-board as his portion in the Holy Land. The con-

trast between these two prophecies thus following one another is great and startling : Jacob seems to pass from a subject infinitely great to another infinitely small ; from uttering a divine and magnificent strain of prophecy, in which, being " in a trance, but having his eyes open," he beheld the rise and fall of empires, and, beyond these, the setting up of that kingdom " which shall not pass away," he goes on to utter one relating to a mere matter of detail respecting the geographical position which one of the most obscure tribes shall occupy in the Holy Land ; " Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea." But it is just this contrast which stamps the prophecy as divine ; this exhibition of the tender care of GOD for the minutest wants of His creatures, side by side with that of His infinite power, is in exact harmony with His character and with the revelations of it given in Holy Scripture : these two consecutive blessings of Judah and Zebulun, the one setting forth the infinite greatness of GOD'S Almighty power, the other the infinite minuteness of His providential care for us, give a combined view of GOD'S power and love, such as we have in those two well-known verses of the 147th Psalm which praise Him as the maker of the stars, and as the physician of every sorrowful heart ; " He healeth those that are broken in heart, and giveth medicine to heal their sickness : He telleth the number of the stars, and calleth them all by their names." (Ps. cxlvii. 3, 4.) This minute prediction about the maritime position of the tribe of Zebulun in the Holy Land, uttered by Jacob some two hundred and fifty years before the conquest of Canaan, is, when thus looked at, not among the least, but among the most remarkable, of Scripture prophecies : its very minuteness is a testimony to its having been spoken by One Whose Providence

“watches equally over the fall of a sparrow and the fall of a kingdom.” To those who know and observe something of GOD's loving providence as manifested in the little affairs of the lives of His servants, this simple prediction about Zebulun's future home is perhaps more convincing, as having come from Him, than are those mighty far-reaching prophecies which predict the fall of great empires, and the desolation of populous cities. “The nearer fulfilment of this and such other predictions, which descended to local details apparently unimportant, would also serve to keep up the faith of the Hebrew people in the more distant spiritual fulfilment of the other predictions concerning the Messiah and His kingdom,” as Bishop Wordsworth remarks : “ They would be like the fulfilment of CHRIST's prophecies concerning the ‘ colt tied where two ways met,’ and of the ‘ man bearing a pitcher of water,’ which served to keep up the faith of His disciples, and which serves also to confirm our faith in His prophecies concerning the universal spread of the Gospel, and His own second coming.”

But if we examine Jacob's words about Zebulun, their meaning and their fulfilment, we shall find that this prophecy, though short, as compared with that about Judah, is in itself full of interest, and indirectly is as full of reference to our LORD as even the well-known prophecy about the coming of Shiloh.

Zebulun was the tenth of Jacob's sons : we notice then that Jacob goes out of his way, so to speak, to bless Zebulun before many of his elder brethren : he passes immediately from speaking of Judah his fourth son, to speak of Zebulun his tenth : the reason is generally supposed to have been our LORD's close connexion with the land of Zebulun, or the land of Galilee, as it was otherwise called.



Hence, having spoken of the tribe of Judah to which our LORD was to belong, Jacob goes on to bless the tribe of Zebulun, within whose territory (better known to us by its other name of Galilee), our LORD was to dwell for thirty years; first making it the scene of His Incarnation, and then making it so much His home that He was known to the world as JESUS of Galilee, or, in Old Testament language, JESUS of the land of Zebulun and Naphtali. It is this which gives the words of Jacob's blessing on Zebulun special interest for us: they are the first Scriptural allusion to that land of Galilee which afterwards became so sacred as the home of our Blessed LORD, and the native province of most of His Apostles. We are all very familiar with the notices of Galilee in the New Testament, but it is to the Old Testament we must turn for the earliest mention of it, and for the meaning of the term. The word Galilee occurs in the Old Testament in Joshua xx. 7, and xxi. 32; 1 Kings ix. 11; 1 Chron. vi. 76; 2 Kings xv. 29; Isa. ix. 1. It comes from a word meaning "to turn in a circle;" and Galilee of the Gentiles, as it was usually called, is properly speaking, "The circle of the Gentiles," or of heathen nations. It originally meant, it is thought, that circuit or region of cities of which Kedesh-Naphtali, or the Holy Place of Naphtali, an old heathen sanctuary of primæval times, and the birth-place of Barak, was the centre. But though originally Galilee was the district immediately surrounding this sanctuary of heathendom, and though the name was afterwards so extended that it included the four northern tribes of Naphtali, Asher, Zebulun, and Issachar, yet Galilee most commonly meant, "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali" only, (Isa. ix. 1; S. Matt. iv. 15.) Galilee was so thickly peopled in later times that

parts of it, we are told, had the appearance of one vast town ; but the tribe of Zebulun shared the obscurity which rests on the four northern ones just mentioned : so far as taking any share in the political history of the nation, it was specially obscure. In Joshua xix. 10—16, where its territory is accurately defined, only twelve cities are allotted to it, with their villages ; and of these the names of but five are actually given : the names of the rest are lost, or suppressed ; for the list is evidently imperfect, being abruptly introduced by the word “and,” with nothing going before to which this word can belong.<sup>1</sup> No mention is even made of the celebrated city of Nazareth, the future home of our LORD : and alone among the tribes the children and the cities of Zebulun find no mention in the old family records and genealogies of 1 Chron. iv.—viii. It is evident from all this that it was GOD’S will that the history of this Galilæan tribe should be buried in great obscurity. Yet it was from no want of bravery and energy on their part that it was so, and from no want of great men belonging to the tribe : this is seen in the notices which we have of them ; twice only in Old Testament times do the children of Zebulun come forward in history as a tribe, in Judg. v. 18, and 1 Chron. xii. 33, 40 : but each mention of them is highly honourable : first in the time of Barak their patriotic bravery drew down the praise of Deborah, in contrast with her rebuke of the lethargy of Reuben, “They jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field ;” or, as it is in the margin, their bravery “exposed them to reproach ;” so rash and careless of their lives they seemed in venturing down from their mountain fastnesses into the open field against

<sup>1</sup> See Maclear’s Joshua, *ad loc.*

Sisera's chariots of iron. And again, among the volunteers who attended David's coronation at Hebron none are mentioned in words of such high praise as these men of Galilee : of the Zebulonite volunteers it is alone said, " They were expert in war, and were *not of double heart* ;" they threw themselves, i.e., heart and soul into David's cause ; they espoused it with their whole hearts ; with no jealousy or secret envy at the glory to which the great tribe of Judah was raised. Thus we see it was from no fault of theirs that Zebulun was an obscure tribe ; it was from no want of bravery or energy on their part ; it was for no sins of the fathers visited on the children ; it was simply GOD'S will that they should remain in retirement and obscurity. That there was no lack of great men among them, appears from Judg. v. 14, where we learn that in the time of Deborah many distinguished men belonged to this tribe ; men ready with the pen as with the sword ; or, as the words may mean, men skilled as field-marsals ; rangers of battle, able to set the battle in array, as is said of them in 1 Chron. xii. 33 (margin). They gave at least two judges to Israel in time of their country's need, Ibzan and Elon, (Judg. xii. 8—12, comp. with Josh. xix. 15,) men able to govern Israel through seventeen years of those stormy times ; and two prophets, Jonah and Nahum,<sup>1</sup> (2 Kings xiv. 25, Nahum i. 1,) both sent, though at the interval of a hundred years, as mission Prophets to the great capital of the Gentile world. But GOD did not call Zebulun to be a great ruling tribe as He called Judah : politically speaking it was pre-eminently obscure. Their captivity is nowhere distinctly mentioned ; but it is implied in Isa. ix. 1 ; 2 Kings xv. 29, and xvii. 18 : the last notice of them in the Old

<sup>1</sup> See Pusey on Nahum.

Testament is in 2 Chron. xxx. 18, in connexion with Hezekiah's great passover, and is interesting as an event which occurred after the captivity of the northern kingdom: for this mention shows that numbers of them remained on in their own land after the Captivity, the ancestors of those men of Galilee who fought so bravely under the Maccabees, and were afterwards so loyal as Apostles and disciples of our Blessed LORD.

It was, then, with reference to the future position and fortunes of this interesting tribe that Jacob thus prophesied :

“ Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea ;  
And he shall be for an haven of ships ;  
And his border shall be unto Zidon.”

And with this we should compare the farewell blessing of Moses on the same tribe, in Deut. xxxiii. 18, 19 :

“ Of Zebulun he said,  
Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out ;  
And, Issachar, in thy tents.  
They shall call the people unto the mountain ;  
There they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness :  
For they shall suck of the abundance of the seas,  
And of treasures hid in the sand.”

Taken together these prophecies speak of,

(1.) The peculiar geographical position and features of Zebulun's territory in the Holy Land :

(2.) The peculiar character of the people themselves.

First. It is on Zebulun's future position on the map of Palestine that Jacob's prediction chiefly turns. In the spirit of prophecy he assigns to his tenth son that portion of the promised land which afterwards formed a large part of the province of Galilee, one of the divisions of Palestine in our LORD's time. In doing this Jacob, as

usual, alludes to the meaning of his son's name, without actually playing on the word "Zebulun," showing that, as is the case with the other names of the tribes, it was significant and prophetic. Zebulun's birth, and the origin of his name, are given in Gen. xxx. 19, 20: "And Leah said, God hath endued me with a good dowry: now will my husband dwell with me, (*izb'leni*,) because I have born him six sons, and she called his name Zebulun," i.e., "dwelling." Referring to this meaning of his name, Jacob says, "Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea," shall pitch his tent, or have his habitation by the seashore. And in further allusion to it, he adds, "Zebulun shall be a haven," a secure dwelling-place or shelter for tempest-tossed ships, a harbour into which they may run, and in which they may safely ride at anchor. And he adds further about the position of the tribe, "And his border shall be unto Zidon;" his side (literally his thigh) shall be upon Zidon, i.e., the tribe shall border upon Phoenicia,—Sidonia being an ancient name for Phoenicia before Tyre was built, (Deut. iii. 9; Jos. xiii. 4, 6; Judg. iii. 3; 1 Kings v. 6.) There is much force in the Hebrew word twice used in this prophecy, and translated "haven." The word is in the original "Cove" (פִּיָּן). It means much more than a seashore, or even harbour. It means a land overhanging the sea, and covering ships from the winds. It is our word "cove," or "covering-place from the wind," and it throws light on the meaning and on the fulfilment of the prediction to remember this. Thus Jacob predicts that Zebulun shall both "possess" a secure haven, and that his land shall "be" in itself as a secure haven. He foretells the perfect security of Zebulun's home, as well as its actual geographical position and features. He says that Zebu-

lun shall dwell securely himself in a sea-girt home, and that he shall be a secure dwelling-place, a harbour of refuge, for others. To Zebulun thus possessing a sea-board and a harbour or bay, Moses alludes also in his prophetic blessing. "Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out," or outlet. He was to possess so much of the coast as would give him an outlet to the Mediterranean Sea for his merchandise and commerce. (Deut. xxxiii. 18.<sup>1</sup>)

And secondly : this old prophecy about Galilee and the Galilæans predicts also something about the people as well as about the land of Zebulun, which is full of interest for the student of prophecy. Zebulun's character, as sketched beforehand by Jacob, is as unlike as possible to that of Issachar, his elder brother, who is pictured as an ass couching down in lazy sloth ; and is equally unlike to that of Judah, who is represented as holding aloof from the other tribes, and from the world in general, under the figure of a lion couching in his den, whom none cared to disturb ; Jacob, on the contrary, intimates that Zebulun is to be a seafaring and commercial tribe. When he says it is to border on Phœnicia, he implies that it is to take a part in Phœnician commerce : to have neighbourly intercourse with Phœnicia, the cradle-land of the world's commerce, the nursery of the world's sailors. As distinguished from the sleeping lion of the tribe of Judah, and the couching ass of the tribe of Issachar, these Galilæans are to be a pushing, energetic, enterprising people ; not holding aloof from others, like the Jews of Judea, but mixing more freely with the other nations of the earth ; a seafaring and commercial people, active as fishermen on the sea of

<sup>1</sup> For the boundaries of Zebulun and Asher, see "The Land and the Book."

Galilee, and as traders and sailors on the Mediterranean or Great Sea. We might infer this to be the meaning of Jacob's prophecy; but the language of Moses in his blessing puts this interpretation of it beyond doubt, and further unfolds its meaning. His prophetic blessing in Deut. xxxiii. 18, 19, is very noteworthy, for it plainly reaches into those New Testament times in which the men of Galilee took such a prominent part as the first missionaries of the Cross. Moses speaks of the missionary, as well as of the commercial, spirit of the tribe. He first says that Zebulun, as possessing a commodious sea-shore, and the fisheries of the Lake of Tiberias, is to thrive by commerce; he is to "rejoice in his going out," i.e., in his mercantile or commercial enterprises, as contrasted with Issachar, who, in his fertile inland district, his farms, and his cornfields, is to dwell at home, and prosper in agriculture,

"Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out,  
And Issachar, in thy tents;"

and then he adds, in continuance of Zebulun's blessing,

"They shall call the people to the mountain,  
There they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness."

This mountain cannot be Mount Tabor, or any other local sanctuary,<sup>1</sup> but the mountain of the LORD'S House, the Temple at Jerusalem and the Christian Church; this prediction, therefore, means, that the tribe of Zebulun shall invite others to serve GOD in His Temple, or Church, or holy mountain; zealous in Old Testament times for the law and worship of GOD, and in New Testament times for the preaching of the Gospel among the Gentiles. And the same prediction about the religious

<sup>1</sup> Pusey's Commentary on Daniel, p. 256.

zeal of the Galilæans is also generally supposed to be figuratively expressed in the concluding words of Moses' blessing;<sup>1</sup> words which, in their first meaning, predict that the depths of the neighbouring sea, and the very sand of their sea-coast, shall yield up hidden treasures to them :

“They shall suck of the abundance of the seas,  
And of treasures hid in the sand.”

Thus does this old prophecy of Jacob, when compared with that of Moses, speak first of the security of Zebulun's home ; and secondly, of the commercial and missionary spirit of the tribe. How was Jacob's prophecy in each case fulfilled ? First : his words were, in the first instance, a prediction as to Zebulun's portion in the Holy Land ; and they were fulfilled in the territory assigned him by lot under Joshua, between the Mediterranean Sea and the Lake of Tiberias, a portion well described beforehand as a “haven of the sea,” secure from wind and storm. Zebulun's portion was thus for situation one of the most favoured of any in the Holy Land. It is difficult to follow exactly the boundaries of the tribe as described in Joshua ; but Josephus tells us it reached on one side to the Lake of Gennesareth, and on the other to Carmel and the Mediterranean Sea. Thus sea-girt on the east and west, on the north and south it was protected by friendly tribes, by Asher and Naphtali on the north, and by Issachar, his next eldest brother, on the south. It had open access to the Mediterranean Sea, with all its vast commerce, on the western side, while on its eastern it commanded the rich fisheries of the Sea of Galilee.

But Jacob's prediction that Zebulun should possess a

<sup>1</sup> Speaker's Commentary.



secure haven, or harbour for ships, meaning, as we have seen, a headland stretching out into the sea, a "covering-place from the wind," was fulfilled with even more wondrous accuracy. It is one of those Scripture prophecies which, like some of the minute details about the Passion which are predicted in the Psalms, arrests our attention by its very minuteness. A glance at the map shows that the whole coast of Palestine along the Mediterranean Sea possesses only one harbour of any importance, the Bay of Acre, as it is now called. This bay, though spacious and very beautiful, is shallow and exposed, so that Acre does not always offer safe harbourage. But on the southern and opposite side of this bay there is a roadstead immediately under Carmel which supplies an anchorage sufficiently secure.<sup>1</sup> It is instantly recognised on the map as stretching far out into the sea, and forming a secure shelter for ships, such as Jacob describes. Acre itself belonged to Asher, but this secure covert from the wind, with a sufficient piece of seaboard to command access to it, belonged to Zebulun, according to the statement of Josephus, and also of Scripture; for this was the outlet on the sea which Moses speaks of, and which we are distinctly told in Joshua xix. 11 Zebulun possessed, for it is there said, "His border went up to the sea."<sup>2</sup> And the possession of this one secure place

<sup>1</sup> It is called now the roadstead of *Haiifa*. In "Byways in Palestine," Mr. Finn remarks, "The view of the Caiffa Bay reminds us of the prophetic blessing, 'Zebulun shall dwell at the *haven*,' &c. I am convinced that the Hebrew root חָוֵן (English *haven* and German *hafen*) is perpetuated not only in these words, but in the modern appellation, Caiffa, or as it may more properly be written *Hhaiifa*." (p. 236.) In a recent article in *Blackwood*, Feb. 1883, it is recommended as "a new winter resort."

<sup>2</sup> Not "toward" the sea, as in our translation. Some think the

of anchorage by Zebulun,—the only spot in the Holy Land fully answering to Jacob's description,—is a wondrously exact fulfilment of Jacob's words,

"Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea,  
And he shall be for an haven of ships."

It was no doubt a prophecy which, by its minute details predicted and fulfilled, appealed to the faith of Old Testament believers, much in the same way as some predicted detail about our LORD'S Passion appeals by its fulfilment to ours: and it would no doubt have been as impossible, even for unbelievers, to say then that the prophecy of Jacob had been written after the event, as it would be impossible for unbelievers to say now that Psalm xxii. 18 had been written after S. John xix. 23, instead of centuries before it.

But "no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation."<sup>1</sup> No first fulfilment of such a prediction exhausts its meaning. It reaches on to Gospel times; it was to be fulfilled, as Jacob told his sons, "in the last days," i.e., in the times of the Messiah. S. Matthew tells us that Isaiah's old prophecy about Zebulun (ch. ix. 1, 2) was fulfilled in the fact that our LORD "dwelt" at Nazareth and "dwelt" at Capernaum, possibly with a reference to the meaning of Zebulun's name of "dwelling." And this interpretation of Isaiah's old prophecy about Zebulun may well suggest to us that Jacob's still older one about the same tribe was fulfilled thus also. And so it was. Jacob's words about Zebulun possessing

whole Bay of Acre belonged to Zebulun, but most of it, apparently, belonged to Asher. Josephus says, "Zebulun's lot included the land which extended as far as the Lake of Gennesareth and that which belonged to Carmel and the sea." (Antiq. i. 26.)

<sup>1</sup> 2 S. Pet. i. 20.

a secure shelter for ships, and about the security of his land as the dwelling-place of a tribe which it was GOD'S will should remain hidden and obscure, were fulfilled in New Testament times, in that here our LORD remained hidden in obscurity for thirty years. It is this Gospel meaning of Jacob's blessings which after all has the greatest interest for us. It is supposed, as has been said, that it is because of the prominent connexion of our Blessed LORD with Zebulun (a connexion closer than that with any tribe except Judah), that Jacob blesses him, as it were, out of his turn. It is, then, this close connexion of our LORD with Zebulun which Jacob here predicts. It is possible to see even the prophetic significance of the very name of this favoured tribe. If the Bible were only the word of man, instead of being the Word of GOD, the meaning of the word Zebulun would be insignificant; but as it is, it is not insignificant or accidental that the portion of the promised land which was to be the scene of the Incarnation, and the dwelling-place for thirty years of Him Who is both GOD and Man, was so long before called by a name which carried in itself, and in its meaning, a prediction of those wonderful events,—Zebulun,—or dwelling. At any rate in our LORD'S residence within the borders of this tribe were fulfilled the words of Jacob,

“ Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea,  
And he shall be for an haven of ships.”

For thirty years it was the earthly home of Him Who is our Zebulun, “our dwelling-place from generation to generation.” The sacred land of Zebulun or Galilee was the place where CHRIST was conceived by the HOLY GHOST: where GOD dwelt,—tabernacled,—in our huma-

nity ; where as man He grew up from childhood to boyhood, and from boyhood to youth, and from youth to manhood ; Cana of Galilee, Tiberias, the land of Genesareth, and Nazareth itself were within the borders of this tribe. All this was foretold by Jacob, by Moses, and by Isaiah with more or less plainness ; and this interpretation of these prophecies about the blessings in store for the land of Zebulun accounts for the interesting fact that the Rabbis of our LORD'S time taught that though the CHRIST was to be born in Judæa, He would appear first in Galilee.<sup>1</sup>

And how appropriate, how exact, is Jacob's language when thus explained ! "Zebulun shall be for an haven of ships." How could Nazareth be better described than as such a haven ? In what Jacob says about the security of this sea-girt tribe ; about its being a secure haven for ships, we may see an allusion to our Blessed LORD'S hidden life at Nazareth, which held accurately true. No better description of Nazareth could be given than that it was for Him a haven of shelter. The Holy Family found it so when they sorely needed a hiding-place from Herod. This figure of speech has been applied to it :

"Once more the vision changes.—Nazareth,  
His childhood's quiet home, invites our gaze ;  
Quiet, sequestered Nazareth ! which green hills  
Sentinel so pleasantly, how didst thou draw  
Those three souls, tempest-toss'd, as harbour draws  
Safe home the ships at setting of the tide !"<sup>2</sup>

After all that has been written about the loveliness and the hidden obscurity of Nazareth, how better could it have been described beforehand than as a secure haven

<sup>1</sup> See Geikie's "Life of CHRIST." Vol. II.

<sup>2</sup> "From Bethlehem to Nazareth," p. 47.

for ships where He Who is our "Zebulun" could dwell safely? It was just this. The town, unknown and unnamed in the Old Testament, lay in a basin or inclosure, curiously formed among the hills of Galilee. A valley among those hills running nearly east and west, about a mile long, and a quarter of a mile broad, at a certain point enlarges itself so as to form a sort of basin; and in it, along the lower edge of the hill-side, lies the sacred spot, which, in the language of poetry in which Jacob speaks, might well be called a haven,—the quiet secluded village in which the SAVIOUR of man spent the greater part of His earthly existence. Was not this for Him a very "haven of ships?" It was, moreover, but one of the two hundred and forty villages and towns of which Josephus speaks as being so thickly scattered over Galilee; their very number making it easy for the LORD to remain in one of them unknown. Even Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, a village only eight miles from Nazareth, had not heard of Him when He was thirty years of age. Even His own cousin "after the flesh," John the Baptist, "knew Him not" as GOD (S. John i. 31). So quiet, so secure was this haven which He had chosen and prepared for Himself beforehand. "Verily Thou art a GOD that hidest Thyself, O GOD of Israel, the SAVIOUR" (Isa. xlv. 15). In Nazareth were those words most truly fulfilled! In no place could He have more effectually hidden Himself, till it was His will to manifest an Epiphany of His glory. In that haven of rest His royal birth was overlooked and forgotten. Storms could not reach Him there, nor the hatred of the Herods, nor the envy of the priests, nor the rude intrusion of the world. By His love of obscurity He rebukes all our desire after notoriety, all our impatience of a flat, un-

eventful existence. But "He could not be hid;" His place of retreat might have remained for ever unknown to His enemies; but for our sakes He came forth out of a retirement which as man He loved, to preach, to labour, and to die.

Thus, then, was the first part of Jacob's prophecy fulfilled: first in Zebulun himself, and then in CHRIST:

"Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea,  
And he shall be for an haven of ships."

But if the fulfilment of the prophecy concerning the position and security of Zebulun's home is plain, plainer still is that of the second part of the prophecy which describes beforehand the character of the men of Galilee. Jacob, as has been said, predicts the commercial, and Moses the missionary, spirit of the tribe. Jacob says Zebulun is to border upon Phœnicia: to take his part in the commerce of that great nation; and Moses says he is to "rejoice in his going out." By predicting that they are to have a harbour on the sea-coast Jacob implies that these Galilæans are to be fishermen or traders; and they are also, Moses adds, to be missionaries for God, calling the Gentiles to God's holy mountain, offering sacrifices of righteousness there, sucking of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand. And it is easy to see how these predictions about the commercial and enterprising spirit of Zebulun were fulfilled. Though too far from the centre of government to take a very active part in Jewish politics, the people of Zebulun were brought into closer contact with the outside heathen world than their brethren of the south were. Through "Galilee of the Gentiles" ran what is called in Isaiah ix. 1, "the way of the sea," i.e., the great high road between

Damascus and the Mediterranean, along which were constantly passing the merchant caravans of Syria, Phœnicia, and Egypt. Thus the people of Zebulun or Galilee were a cosmopolitan people, and they had special opportunities for trade and commerce from that proximity to the Phœnicians or Sidonians which Jacob foretold.

Moses seems to speak of their trade in glass, when he says,

“ They shall suck of the abundance of the seas,  
And of treasures hid in the sand.”

And this promise to Zebulun was as strikingly fulfilled as that about his possession of a roadstead for anchorage. The art of making glass is said by Pliny to have been discovered by Phœnician sailors on the coast of this maritime tribe. But at any rate the sand of their coast was specially valuable for the manufacture of glass; and the murex, from which the celebrated Tyrian dye was extracted, was found here. Tacitus and Pliny both speak of the inexhaustible “treasures hid in the sand” of this coast. Tacitus says of a certain spot here, “It is a tiny shore, but unexhausted.” Pliny says of it, “It is a shore of not above half a mile, but it has sufficed for yielding glass for many centuries.” Thus do ancient writers speak of the way in which the coast of Zebulun yielded sand for glass, out of which, we are told, were produced mirrors and vessels of glass.<sup>1</sup> But when we compare this language of Moses about the abundance of the sea being poured into the lap of Zebulun, with that of Isaiah when he prophesies of the conversion of the Gentiles under precisely similar figures of speech (ch. lx. 5, 6, 16; lvi. 11, 12), and when we observe that this language

<sup>1</sup> Tac. Hist. v. 7; Plin. N. H. xxxvi. 26, quoted in Pusey's Daniel, p. 251.

is applied to men of Galilee in immediate connexion with their calling in of the Gentiles to GOD's holy mountain, we may believe that in this figurative language, "Zebulun shall suck of the abundance of the seas," Moses foretells that the children of Zebulun shall be instrumental in preaching the Gospel to the different nations of the world.<sup>1</sup> This prophecy had one remarkable fulfilment, already referred to, in the mission of Jonah to the Ninevites; Jonah, one of the greatest and earliest of missionaries to the Gentiles, belonged to the tribe of Zebulun (2 Kings xiv. 25, Jos. xix. 13); and another marked fulfilment in the mission of Nahum to the same great heathen nation, whose repentance at Jonah's preaching was but shortlived. The name of Capernaum, or "village of Nahum," indicates that Nahum was a Galilæan prophet, and the same is to be inferred from Nahum i. 1, (Pusey *ad loc.*) and, if a Galilæan, he was most probably of this tribe, to which Jonah belonged. So ignorant was the taunt of the priests and Pharisees to Nicodemus, "Search and look; for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet." (S. John vii. 52.) But it was in New Testament times that the energetic and missionary spirit of the Galilæans here predicted chiefly comes out. It was among them our LORD chose to dwell, and as a Galilæan that He chose to be familiarly known. And their character fitted them for the high honour our LORD bestowed on them; fitted them to be the guardians of CHRIST's childhood, and afterwards the heralds of His Gospel. We have seen how much of nobleness of character they had in Old Testament times: they were a tribe honoured by God, though obscure among men. This nobleness of character they retained to the end.

<sup>1</sup> As remarked in the Speaker's Commentary.



*"The Galilæan loves honour, and the Jew loves money."*

In these few words the Talmud sketches the contrast between the two provinces of Galilee and Judea. Possibly the money-loving Judas Iscariot was the only southern Jew among the Apostles ; but at any rate men of Galilee were our LORD'S chosen disciples, Apostles, and friends. The Jew of the south, wrapped in self-importance, and full of religious pride in his assumed superior knowledge of the Law, looked down on his Galilæan brethren. But it was in Galilee, not in Judea, that our LORD chiefly found willing hearers, and made most disciples. In their bravery and patriotism they showed themselves at the last siege of Jerusalem worthy sons of those ancestors who had "jeopardied their lives unto the death in the high places of the field" (Judg. v. 18) ; while their fidelity to the faith was shown by their fond and constant visits to the Temple, in spite of the hostile Samaritan territory lying between it and them. And they threw the same ardour into the service of CHRIST as into that of the Law. It was among them our LORD was most welcomed. In their midst the SAVIOUR, persecuted elsewhere, found constant refuge ; they threw open their land to Him as a safe shelter from the rage of the Jews, and as a "haven" of rest to Him from His persecutors, even to the last ;<sup>1</sup> from them He gathered the firstfruits of His kingdom, and after His resurrection it was to a band of Galilæans that He delivered the commission to spread the Gospel through the civilised world. (See Geikie's "Life of CHRIST," Vol. I. pp. 310, 314.)

<sup>1</sup> See S. John vii. 1, which tells us that "after these things," (recorded in S. John vi.) "JESUS walked in Galilee, for He would not walk in Jewry, because the Jews sought to kill Him."

Out of the many practical thoughts suggested by this wonderfully fulfilled prophecy, we may select one arising out of the meaning of the word "Zebulun" itself, as applied to our LORD ; a thought in harmony with the interpretation of the prophecy which has been given, but which it will be found generally useful to bear in mind in studying this chapter.

In many ways Scripture draws our attention to the meanings of the names of the twelve patriarchs, and these meanings must have been constantly present to the minds of Old Testament believers ; so that we need not fear that we are building up fanciful theories if we draw teaching from them. They were given in the first instance by Leah and Rachel, with a special meaning which Scripture expressly records, and which it afterwards confirms with fresh force in the dying blessings of Jacob and Moses, or on some other occasion. Their names would be afterwards engraved on those banners and armorial bearings by which, as we know from Numb. ii. 2, and x. each tribe and family in Israel was distinguished, and they would thus be seen openly unfurled in the journeys through the wilderness, or when the camp of GOD rested. And afterwards, when the Israelites were established as a congregation of worshippers, and came by their representative high priest into the immediate presence of GOD, on the great Day of Atonement, these names were, by the Divine command, carried in thither before GOD, engraved on precious stones, upon the heart and shoulders of their officiating minister, there to be a secret memorial before GOD, as on the banners they were displayed openly to be seen of men. (Ex. xxviii. 12, 29 ; xxxix. 6—14.) We may believe then that in each of these names which were thus remembered before GOD on earth,

and which meet us again in each mystic vision of the New Jerusalem above seen by Ezekiel (ch. xlvi. 31—34) and S. John (Rev. vii. 5—8, and xxi. 13), there was some lesson taught to the Old Testament Church and to us ; some truth about the attributes of the Almighty, or about the privileges of His believing people ; some lesson for each tribe. On the different meanings, then, of these various names it is profitable to meditate when we are studying these different prophecies with their historical fulfilments. And not least instructive among the significant meanings of these various names is the lesson suggested by that of the name Zebulun,<sup>1</sup> or “dwelling.” As each member of the tribe of Reuben was reminded by his ancestral name that the GOD of Israel was One who ever “saw the affliction” of His people, and each Simeonite that GOD’s ear was ever open to hear his prayers : as the name of Judah reminded the Church that “GOD inhabited the praises of Israel,” so the name of Jacob’s tenth son taught the Old Testament Church a special lesson as often as the banner of the tribe was unfurled, or as often as the letters of the name glittered in the mystic light of the Urim and Thummim on the high priest’s vestments. That lesson may be well expressed in the language of Psalm xci. 9—11, words of which our LORD Himself is the speaker, “Because thou hast made JEHOVAH which is My refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation : there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.” Believing

<sup>1</sup> The word *Zebul*, akin to Zebulun, occurs in 1 Kings viii. 13, 2 Chron. vi. 2, Isa. lxiii. 15, where it is used for the “House of GOD,” and for “Heaven :” the earthly and the heavenly dwelling-places of the Almighty.

Israelites of the tribe of Zebulun were taught by the name of their father to make JEHOVAH their refuge and habitation. And for us the Scripture study of Zebulun seems to say, The LORD JESUS—JEHOVAH the SAVIOUR—must be our Zebulun, our dwelling place, our haven of rest. First on earth, as we acknowledge when we pray to Him Who is the lover of souls,

“ Hide me, O my SAVIOUR, hide,  
Till the storm of life be past ;”

and hereafter in Heaven,

“ Safe into the haven guide,  
O receive my soul at last.”

“ Then are they glad, because they are at rest : and so He bringeth them unto the haven where they would be.”  
Ps. cvii. 30.

## CHAPTER V.

### JACOB'S BLESSING ON ISSACHAR.

GEN. XLIX. 14, 15.

“Issachar *is* a strong ass  
Couching down between two burdens :  
And he saw that rest *was* good,  
And the land that *it was* pleasant ;  
And bowed his shoulder to bear,  
And became a servant unto tribute.”

THERE was not the same reproach conveyed in these words when spoken by Jacob in the early morning of Jewish history, that there would be in similar language if used now by ourselves. There was, in fact, no mark of contempt in the illustration which he employed ; nothing degrading or dishonourable to a great tribe in it : as we might compare any one's strength to that of a horse, so a Jew might, as here, draw such a comparison from a strong-limbed ass. The ass in most Eastern countries, as in some parts of Europe, is a very different animal from what he is among us, far more stately and robust, far handsomer and better cared for,<sup>1</sup> as well as much swifter in pace. So it was in ancient times among the

<sup>1</sup> In the recent agricultural show at Kilburn nothing was more striking than the great beauty of the asses which were exhibited, showing to what marvellous perfection of shape, and size, and beauty this ill-treated animal may be brought.

Jews ; the most noble and honourable among them, ladies of wealth and rank, princes, prophets, and judges thought it no degradation to ride upon them ; no animal was more useful or more highly valued. Among the Jews during the first half of their history, i.e. from the days of Abraham to the reign of Solomon, the ass took the place of the horse among ourselves for all domestic and agricultural purposes ; they had no horses, being forbidden by GOD to rear them, (Deut. xvii. 16 ;) but asses were as common and as useful as horses among us ; they equally valued them as beasts of burden, for ploughing, for riding, for driving, for the work of the field and of the mill. The comparison which Jacob makes would be, to a Jew, rather an honourable than a degrading one.<sup>1</sup>

And further, to the Jew this animal was peculiarly a national one, being by the very law of GOD, identified with the history of the Jewish people ; " It was the long-continued mark of their ancient, pastoral, simple condition ;" its perpetual use among them, to the total exclusion of the war-horse, which is spoken of as the symbol of the pride and power of Egypt, (Isa. xxxi. 1,) was evidently intended to be a perpetual sign of GOD's covenant with them ; a constant reminder that they were to be " a peculiar people," putting their trust in GOD, and

<sup>1</sup> For the honour in which this animal was anciently held see Gen. xxxvi. 24 ; Judg. v. 10 ; x. 4 ; xii. 14 ; 1 Chron. xxvii. 30. It is thought that 2 Sam. viii. 4 gives the first instance of a public act of disobedience to the law against the breeding of horses. And the ass was as highly esteemed in Egypt as in Palestine, as we know from the monuments. " The Egyptian breed of asses was famous, they are often represented on ancient Egyptian monuments ; it is a mistake to suppose, as some have done, that the Egyptians did not use them, and abominated those who did." (Wordsworth on Gen. xlii. 26.)

not in horses and chariots, which formed the strength of other nations.<sup>1</sup>

These facts about this animal—its eminent usefulness, the very high esteem in which it was held, its connexion with the Jewish people—throw light on the meaning of Jacob's prophecy about Issachar, and add interest to his words.

It is, perhaps, more difficult to trace with certainty the fulfilment of this prophecy about Issachar than it is that of any other of Jacob's blessings on the tribes; but if we cannot be absolutely certain about the meaning and fulfilment of each part of the prophecy, there is much in it which is plain enough; and so much is told us about the tribe of Issachar in Scripture, that it will be easy to put together the facts told us, and to compare them with what seems the meaning of Jacob's words, so gathering the probable fulfilment of the prophecy, and its practical instruction for ourselves.

Issachar was the ninth son of the patriarch Jacob, the fifth who was born to Leah. The circumstances of his birth were peculiar, and the memory of them is perpet-

<sup>1</sup> Probably, like the Sabbath, a perpetual reminder that they had been bond-servants in Egypt. Hence, perhaps, the confused connexion in the minds of the heathen between their care for the ass and their observance of the sabbath, and the absurd fables believed about the former; the statement of Tacitus is that in the wilderness the Israelites, when perishing from thirst, were guided by wild asses to a rock overshadowed by palm-trees, where Moses discovered for them a copious spring: that a seven days' journey then brought them to Palestine, and that the sabbath was instituted to commemorate their safe arrival there within that period, while their deliverance from death for want of water was kept in memory by the erection of an image of an ass's head in the holy of holies. Tacit. Hist. v. 3.

uated in the meaning of his name. Moved with envy of her sister, or by impatient desire for children, Leah, in the strange fashion of those far off times, had given her female slave Zilpah to Jacob to wife, and she looked on the birth of her own son Issachar afterwards as GOD'S reward to her for having done this: "Leah said, GOD hath given me my hire, because I have given my maiden to my husband, and she called his name Issachar," which means "There is a hire," or, "He brings a hire, or reward;" the word coming from *sachar*, the Hebrew for hire or wages; akin to which is the word *sacheer*, a hired servant, or hireling, (Gen. xxx. 17, 18, margin.)<sup>1</sup> This name, Issachar, like the others, was doubtless prophetic, and Jacob probably now plays on its meaning when he predicts that the tribe, of which his ninth son was the patriarch, should "become a servant unto tribute." Of Issachar himself nothing is told us, but from the words of Jacob here which speak of his physical capacity for work, coupled with a love of home and quiet, rather than of travel and war; and from similar words used by Moses afterwards of his descendants, "Rejoice, Issachar, in thy tents" (Deut. xxxiii. 18), i.e. in thy home; it is not improbable that Issachar as a young man took more after his father than any of the other patriarchs; for exactly the same character is given of Jacob in Gen. xxv. 27, where it is said he was a plain man, "dwelling in tents," i.e. fond of home, and in Gen. xxx. and xxxii., which

<sup>1</sup> The spelling has been explained: (a) *שָׂכָר*, *there is a hire, or reward*; which words occur in 2 Chron. xv. 7, and Jer. xxxi. 16. (b) *שָׂכָרָה*, *he brings (or receives, as in Ps. xxiv. 5) a reward*. There is no ground for the statement in the Bible Dictionary that the name was originally Isascar; or that two "hirings" are referred to. The reference is clearly to Zilpah. (Obbard ad loc.)



describe his dealings with Laban and Esau; the former of whom he served for hire, and the latter of whom he was more anxious to bribe than to fight.

Issachar, notwithstanding, occupied the post of danger and honour in the wilderness journeys, marching with Judah and Zebulun in the van (Numb. x. 15); and he was assigned the most central and exposed position in the Holy Land; the territory which, with its boundaries, and its cities, is described in Josh. xix. 17—23. The tribe of Issachar is mentioned in connexion with some of the chief events in the history of Israel, political and religious, in the times of the Judges and of the Kings. In the times of the Judges Issachar, with the two tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun, bore the chief brunt of the fight between Sisera and Barak; its faith and desperate courage in encountering on foot Sisera's chariots of iron are commemorated in the inspired war-song of Deborah and Barak (Judg. v. 15):

“And the princes of Issachar were with Deborah,  
Issachar pressed close behind Barak, on foot, into the valley.”<sup>1</sup>

In the times of the Kings the tribe had, pre-eminently above the others, a name for political sagacity: the children of Issachar being spoken of in 1 Chron. xii. 32, as men who “had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do.” In that roll-call of the tribes the

<sup>1</sup> Geikie's translation in “Hours with the Bible.” More literal is the A. V., “Issachar was *sent* on foot into the valley.” This word *sent* is the same in the original as that translated *let loose* in Gen. xlix. 21. There it is applied to the “sending forth” of the timid hind, Naphtali, into the battle; here, to the “sending forth” of the sluggish ass, Issachar; each tribe was *sent*, or urged, by Deborah to the fight. The same idea of compulsion is implied in the words “send forth,” as used in S. Matt. ix. 38, and S. Luke x. 2.

inspired writer makes the Simeonites remarkable for their valour (1 Chron. xii. 25), the Ephraimites for their illustrious name (v. 30, margin), the Zebulonites for their unbroken ranks (v. 33), but to Issachar he gives the palm for political wisdom and sagacity (v. 32).<sup>1</sup> At the same time in other genealogical records the tribe is also described as essentially a warlike one,<sup>2</sup> as prominent in war as pre-eminent in intellect; they were "valiant men of might" in all their families, (1 Chron. vii. 1—5.) The enormous military and numerical strength of the tribe is pointed out in the same place, where we are told that Issachar in those days when the tables were drawn up actually numbered eighty-seven thousand fighting men. But in connexion with this, and as accounting for it, the sad fact is mentioned that polygamy prevailed in the tribe; that its heads of houses "had many wives." And coupled with this mention of their polygamy another fact denoting moral degeneracy is stated, viz., that as many as thirty-six thousand of the warriors of Issachar were irregular soldiers, not regular troops, but "bands" of wild seminomad marauders or mercenaries.<sup>3</sup> The industrious application of the men of Issachar to the cultivation of their land is implied in 1 Chron. xii. 40, where we find them bringing rich presents to David, the produce of their farms, their flocks, their oliveyards, and their vineyards. And another mention of them three centuries afterwards, in

<sup>1</sup> Maurer, quoted by Obbard.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Thomson in "The Land and the Book," says, "the ass is the most pugnacious of brutes." Strabo and Herodotus mention that among some nations asses were employed in war. There may be allusions to this in 2 Kings vii. 7, 10, and Isa. xxi. 7. See *Paxton's Illustrations*, I. 546, 547.

<sup>3</sup> Such is the force of the expression, "bands of soldiers," applied to them in 1 Chron. vii. 4.

2 Chron. xxx. 18, is equally favourable. This is the last Old Testament reference to Issachar; it gives us a glimpse of the remnant left in the land after the judgment of the captivity of the ten tribes had fallen upon it. In this reference to the tribe we see great numbers of them taking part in Hezekiah's passover at Jerusalem, their want of ceremonial preparation being pardoned in answer to that pious king's intercession on their behalf.

The tribe of Issachar gave at least one judge<sup>1</sup> to Israel, Tola of Mount Ephraim, and two kings, Baasha and Elah, (Judg. x. 1; 1 Kings xv. 27; xvi. 6; 2 Chron. xvi. 1.) To it belonged Naboth the Jezreelite and his family, whose tragical story is so well known to us; and three celebrated women, the sorceress, or wise-woman, of Endor, whom Saul consulted the night before his death; the "great" gentlewoman of Shunem, the hostess of Elisha; and Abishag, also a Shunammite, the nurse of David, and possibly also the heroine of Solomon's Song,<sup>2</sup> (1 Sam. xxviii. 7; 2 Kings iv. 8; 1 Kings i. 3; Cant. vi. 13.) It is also thought that Omri, mentioned in 1 Chron. xxvii. 18, as Issachar's representative in David's House of Peers, or assembly of rulers of the tribes, and who is spoken of as belonging to the great house of Michael (1 Chron. vii. 3), was the founder of the "house of Omri," and of the "house of Ahab;" if this be so, Issachar supplied other kings and queens who reigned over the ten tribes besides those two already mentioned. In the New Tes-

<sup>1</sup> According to Stanley, Deborah belonged to the tribe of Issachar.

<sup>2</sup> The towns of Jezreel, Shunem, and Endor, belonging to Issachar, it seems implied that natives of these towns, or residents in them, belonged to it also. In the Septuagint the reading of Cant. vi. 3, is Shunamite, not Shulamite.

tament the name of Issachar finds due mention in S. John's vision of the sealing of the tribes (Rev. vii. 7), as it had done in Ezekiel's vision of the Holy Land and the holy city (Ezek. xlvi. 25, 26, 33). Nain, one of Issachar's towns, was the scene of the great miracle recorded in S. Luke vii. ; and Megiddo, another of them, mysteriously gives its name to the scene of final conflict between good and evil, in the vision of the battle of Armageddon, i.e. of "the hill of Megiddo," (Rev. xvi. 16.)

These notices of places and persons connected with the tribe of Issachar, mentioned in Scripture, remind us how many were the events of interest which took place within its borders ; many stories familiar to us from childhood occur to us as we think of Issachar's land ; a very panorama of such events passes, as it were, before the mind's eye as we do so. Thus many things combine to give interest to the old prophecy uttered so long beforehand concerning this tribe,

" Issachar is a strong ass  
 Couching down between two burdens ;  
 And he saw that rest was good,  
 And the land that it was pleasant ;  
 And bowed his shoulder to bear,  
 And became a servant unto tribute ;"

and we are now prepared to look into the exact meaning of the Prophet's words, and to see how far the history of the tribe of Issachar enables us to trace their fulfilment, comparing them, as in the case of the other tribes, with the words used by Moses in his blessing on the tribe,

" Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out ;  
 And Issachar, in thy tents."

First ; the prophet predicts the strength of the tribe ;

“Issachar is a strong ass,” i.e., in the original, “an ass of bone,” a strong-boned or strong-limbed ass. Jacob compares Issachar to the large he-ass used for burden, and field-work, and ploughing, not to the lighter and swifter she-ass used more for riding. The strength predicted of Issachar is not, as in the case of some other tribes, the strength of a wild beast dangerous to man, but of a domestic animal highly serviceable to him. It seems implied that the tribe is to be an agricultural one, fit for the hard bodily work of the farmer or ploughman or field labourer. When Jacob compares Issachar to “a strong ass,” he likens him to an animal which, as we have seen, was of all others most useful and most highly esteemed; as indispensable a domestic animal as the horse is among ourselves. The expression which follows, “couching down between two burdens,” is variously interpreted. According to our translation, the tribe is represented as an ass lying down between two heavy loads, as two panniers, laid upon him, which in the next verse he is spoken of as “bowing his shoulder to bear.” But the word translated “burdens” is of uncertain meaning. It occurs besides in Judges v. 16, where it is translated “sheepfolds.” Blaming the Reubenites for their tardiness, Deborah asks the tribe, “Why lingeredst thou among the sheepfolds to hear the strains of the pipe?” And a similar<sup>1</sup> word occurs in Ps. lxxviii. 14, where it is translated “pots.” “Though ye have lain among the pots,” i.e., among the fire-ranges on which pots are placed; an expression, according to Parkhurst’s Lexicon, denoting the abject slavery of those addressed, this being the place where the lowest slaves used to sleep. And so in Ezek. xl. 43 (margin), it is also explained “endiron,” or “the

<sup>1</sup> The cognate word, as we say.

two hearth-stones." According to the actual origin of the word, it means "things placed in a row." The Septuagint and Vulgate translate it, "lying down within their own boundaries."<sup>1</sup> Others render it, therefore,

"Issachar is a strong ass  
Couching down between two hedge-rows."

Some say it means between two "cattle-pens," the open stalls for the cattle in summer, the dual number being used because the stalls were divided into two compartments. The ambiguous meaning of the original seems to be best reproduced in the word "ranges," which means "rows of fixtures," whether mountains, kitchen-ovens, stalls, or what not. The word refers to something domestic, which was familiar to the Israelites, but to us unknown. In any case Jacob predicts the indolence of the tribe. The image is that of a sleek, well-groomed, well-fed animal lying down at rest instead of working.

Then, secondly, Jacob predicts the fair inheritance of Issachar,

"And he saw that rest was good,  
And the land that it was pleasant."

The portion which Issachar is to receive is called a "pleasant land," a word rendered elsewhere "beautiful," "sweet," and the like. There he sees that "rest" is good. Or rather, perhaps, that his "place of rest" is so. The word means sometimes "resting-place," as in Numb. x. 33, Micah ii. 10. The Hebrew word is *Menuchah*, which is found in our Bibles in the margin of Judg. xx. 43, and of Jer. li. 59, and is translated "ease" and "quiet," and this is the word here used for the "rest"

<sup>1</sup> The LXX. has κληρων: the Vulgate has "Asinus fortis accubans inter terminos."

which Issachar saw was good. He is represented by the prophet as in the enjoyment of a fair inheritance, under the figure of an animal "lying down in green pastures," as in Ps. xxiii. 2;<sup>1</sup> or in a "good fold," as in Ezekiel xxxiv. 14, 15, 25; lying down in ease and quiet. This seems the chief point in the prophecy: Jacob predicts the tribe's excessive love of peace and quietness, degenerating into sloth. Whatever are the natural characteristics of the ass, this animal is in Scripture essentially symbolical of peace, as contrasted with the horse, the Scriptural emblem of war;<sup>2</sup> in this lies the point of the comparison. Jacob thus figuratively foretells that the tribe, though strong, will be lovers of peace rather than lovers of war, and that their love of peace will degenerate into sloth. In the language of Dr. Pusey, the main point in the prophecy is, "the resting enrichment of Issachar, through which the commerce of Zebulun is to pass."<sup>3</sup> Moses afterwards expresses the same thought in his prophetic blessing, (Deut. xxxiii. 18,) when he thus contrasts the two Galilæan tribes,

"Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out,  
And Issachar, in thy tents."

Issachar is to devote himself to agricultural and pastoral work at home, rather than to undertake, like his younger brother Zebulun, the perils of the sea, or to engage in the commercial traffic of the merchant, or in the labours of the fisherman. With keen appreciation of his inheritance, he is to renounce the warlike spirit and military enter-

<sup>1</sup> In Ps. xxiii. 2, the same word *menuchah* occurs; in the Bible (margin) it is translated "quietness;" and in the Prayer Book version "comfort."

<sup>2</sup> This is the main point of the prophecy of Zech. ix. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Pusey on Daniel, p. 252.

prises of his brethren, rejoicing within his tents. In Scripture language the word "tent" has the same meaning as our word "home." The prediction of Moses that Issachar is to "rejoice in his tents," implies that he is to have the same love of home which Jacob predicts. Moses speaks of his inactivity "in his tents," as Jacob had spoken of his "couching down between two burdens," each meaning that Issachar is to become too fond of the rich inheritance which was to fall to his lot, and to sink into sins consequent on a state of too great prosperity, sloth, sensuality, and self-indulgence.

Then, thirdly, the prophet predicts for the tribe a condition of servitude as the result of all this,

" And bowed his shoulder to bear,  
And became a servant unto tribute."

This is also variously interpreted. In the Septuagint it is translated, "Issachar became a husbandman," and the words, "a servant unto tribute," or a "tributary servant," may well mean this. The expression is sometimes used in Scripture of servitude under a foreign sovereignty, (Deut. xx. 11; Jos. xvi. 10,) but it is most frequently applied to tribute rendered by labour, rather than paid in money; to "tribute of bondservice," as it is called in 1 Kings ix. 21; 2 Chron. viii. 8. The word "tribute" occurs in Exod. i. 11, a passage which probably throws light on its meaning here, where we read, the Egyptians did set over the Israelites "princes of tribute," in our translation "taskmasters," i.e., exactors of tribute not in money but in bricks; tasks set for the day. If this passage may be taken to explain Jacob's words, his prediction may mean, as in the Septuagint, that the men of Issachar should be essentially husbandmen, submitting to tasks



of servile field-work or farm-work : that instead of fighting like their brethren, they should, through sloth, voluntarily submit in Canaan to that sort of work beneath a burning sun, (melting work it is literally,<sup>1</sup>) to which they had from compulsion submitted in the brickfields of Egypt. According to this interpretation, Jacob's prediction simply means that the tribe of Issachar is to be an agricultural one. But the word is that ordinarily used for tribute; the prediction may, therefore, also mean what our translation implies, that Issachar should actually become tributary to others; that he should slothfully prefer to cultivate his land at ease, rather than go out with his brethren to war, or do garrison duty at home; voluntarily paying those taxes to which farmers are liable, but from which soldiers are exempt; or perhaps holding his land on a different military tenure from the rest. This is the interpretation of Jacob's prophecy generally given by commentators; the prediction, it is said, "points to the habits of an indolent, agricultural people, and to what is likely to accompany such habits, an endurance of oppression in preference to a war of independence."

Such was Jacob's prophecy about the land and people of Issachar; the land pleasant as a place of rest; the people strong and patient; but indolent and self-indulgent, if not actual slaves.

How were these predictions fulfilled?

First. They were fulfilled in the rich portion which Issachar received from Joshua. That portion was the plain of Esdraelon, or Jezreel, with its surrounding valleys and hills, and its mountain-villages and towns. Issachar was the southernmost of those four northern

<sup>1</sup> See Isa. xxxi. 8 (margin); and Job vi. 14 (margin).

tribes which comprised what was called the Land of Galilee ; it received afterwards the name of Lower Galilee, as Zebulun, Naphtali, and Asher comprised Upper Galilee. It extended, according to Josephus, in length from Carmel to the Jordan, and in breadth to Mount Tabor. This plain of Jezreel, better known by its Greek name of Esdraelon, might well be regarded by Issachar as a pleasant land, and a good resting-place. "Every traveller has remarked on the richness of its soil, and the exuberance of its crops ; the aspect of the plain in spring-time is that of a vast waving corn-field . . . the very weeds are a sign of what in better hands the vast plain might become."<sup>1</sup> It was watered by the Kishon, or "winding stream," so famous in Bible stories. (Judg. iv. 7, 13 ; v. 21 ; 1 Kings xviii. 40.) "On the north is Tabor, which even under the burning sun of that climate is said to retain the glades and dells of an English wood. On the east, behind Jezreel, is the opening which conducts to the plain of the Jordan ; to that Beth-shean, which was proverbially among the Rabbis, the gate of Paradise for its fruitfulness."<sup>2</sup> It is traversed by three mountain-ranges, those of Tabor, Little Hermon, and Gilboa, the sides of which are thickly dotted with the remains of villages and towns ; amongst others with those of Shunem, Endor, and Nain, each with its mysterious memories of the return of a departed spirit from the other world (2 Kings iv. ; 1 Sam. xxviii. ; S. Luke vii). Its chief town was Jezreel, a city built before Joshua's time (Josh. xvii. 16 ; xix. 18), but beautified by Ahab, who had there his palace, with his "ivory house" (1 Kings xxii. 39), and his establishment of eight hundred and fifty idolatrous prophets, who were supported at Jezebel's table (1 Kings

<sup>1</sup> Stanley's "Sinai and Palestine."

<sup>2</sup> Bible Dict.

xvi. 33 ; 2 Kings x. 11). This great and wicked city gave its name to what corresponded roughly to Issachar's portion, the plain of Jezreel, or "the seed-plot of God." Here it was, in this fruitful plain of waving cornfields, with its surrounding valleys and hills, that "Issachar saw that rest was good, and the land that it was pleasant."

It has been suggested that the special situation and conformation of this tribe's territory presented in a remarkable manner the appearance predicted by Jacob, viz. that of an "ass couching down between two burdens," two hedge-rows, or stalls. For the plain of Jezreel or Esdraelon, the central part of which is known by the name of "the valley of Jezreel," runs east and west from the valley of the Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea. And this plain lies between two masses of hills, those of South Palestine on the one side, and those of North Palestine on the other ; and it is thought by some who have lived in the Holy Land that the figure of Issachar as of an ass lying down between two burdens or ranges, receives an explanation from the fact that this is the appearance which his inheritance presents ; lying exactly, as it does, between those two ranges of hills, those of Samaria on the one side, and those of Galilee on the other.<sup>1</sup>

Again, if we turn to the history of the tribe of Issachar, we see other points in which Jacob's prediction was strikingly accomplished in the people themselves.

It was fulfilled in the peculiar characteristics which distinguished Issachar among the other tribes. The animal to which Jacob symbolically compares it leads us to expect that the tribe would be an agricultural one, probably consisting very much of farmers and landowners, devoted to the cultivation of the soil. So we find it was ;

<sup>1</sup> Suggested by E. A. Finn, author of "Home in the Holy Land."

the nature of his inheritance required it should be so; and we get interesting glimpses of one or two such families; one that of a rich farmer of Issachar, whose property lay near Shunem, and whose only son was killed, perhaps by sunstroke, as he was with the reapers in one of his father's cornfields (2 Kings iv.), and another, that of Naboth the Jezreelite, who was also a landowner of this tribe, and who, with all his sons, was cruelly murdered by the tyrant, probably his fellow-tribesman, to whom he refused to sell his land and his vineyard; while the glimpse we get of the tribe bringing their offerings of fruit and grain and stock to David, shows the same devotion to the cultivation of their farms by the children of Issachar.

And further: from the comparison which Jacob uses we might expect to find that the men of Issachar would be held in high esteem by their brethren as useful public servants: for it is to an animal which of all others is most strong and useful for all kinds of hard work that Issachar is compared. And we have seen that in these points the prophetic illustration held good. The enormous military strength of the tribe comes out in the description given of it in 1 Chron. vii., to which we have referred; and language is used of them in 1 Chron. xii. 32 such as we do not find applied to any other tribe. "They had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do." This language, as expressive of their political sagacity and wisdom, is very strong: such words are only once used besides in Scripture, when in Esther i. 13, the chief ministers of the great king Ahasuerus are spoken of as "Wise men who knew the times." The words seem to mean that there were many in Issachar just before David's accession, who, more than others, had wisdom

to know that GOD'S time had now come for David to be established on the throne. They seem to show too the estimation in which a man like David held the tribe. Then of the two hundred princes of Issachar who alone are mentioned as actually joining David, it is added, "All their brethren were at their commandment," i.e. in the original, "were at their mouth;" hung upon their words; as we do on those of great statesmen and churchmen.<sup>1</sup>

But it may well be asked, how can it be said that this great tribe, so strong for husbandry, and so strong for war, and to which so many eminent persons belonged, ever bowed their necks to the yoke of servitude? What proof have we that instead of using the strength and gifts which he had received from GOD, Issachar sank into sloth? How were the concluding words of the prophecy fulfilled,

"He bowed his shoulder to bear,  
And became a servant unto tribute?"

The words may only mean what the Septuagint says they do, that Issachar was to become a husbandman, that the tribe should be an agricultural one; but the expression "He became a servant unto tribute,"<sup>2</sup> apparently

<sup>1</sup> The "understanding of the times" has been variously understood. Josephus paraphrases it, "Who foreknew what was to come hereafter." (*Antiq.* vii. 2, 2.) Some Jewish interpreters refer it to skill in astronomy, compiling of almanacks, and the like. This may be the meaning of Deut. xxxiii. 18, 19. Kalisch interprets it, they were reputed to possess "a wise insight into the political aspect of the times:" were always prepared to point out the measures "which Israel should adopt;" and as their advice was generally attended with happy results, "all their brethren followed the words of their lips."

<sup>2</sup> In the Vulgate "Factus est tributis serviens." No Israelites

implies that Issachar was to be actually under tribute; the prophecy then probably means that, capable of mighty efforts, Issachar should yet prefer to be tributary to his enemies rather than to fight them. Upon the fulfilment of this part of the prophecy Scripture does not enable us to speak positively, but it may probably be explained as follows.

The territory of Issachar, corresponding, as it did, to the Plain of Esdraelon, was the great battle-field of Palestine, that on which the chief conflicts of Israel with its enemies were fought, the scene of her greatest triumphs, and of her saddest defeats. Many spots in other parts of the Holy Land recall the memories of illustrious warriors and heroes, and were the scenes of stirring events in the history of Israel; but every spot in Issachar's land, every hill, and stream, and valley seems to recall the names of such heroes and events. Those words of the poet, applicable to every part of the Holy Land, and to all the heroes of Sacred Writ, may be specially applied here:

“They fell devoted, but undying;  
 The very gale their names seemed sighing;  
 The waters murmured of their name;  
 The woods were peopled with their fame;  
 The silent pillar, lone and grey,  
 Claimed kindred with their sacred clay;  
 Their spirits wrapt the dusky mountain,  
 Their memory sparkled o'er the fountain;  
 The meanest rill, the mightiest river,  
 Rolled mingling with their fame for ever.”<sup>1</sup>

The towns of Aphek and Shunem, of Endor and Taanach; the mountains of Tabor and Gilboa; the valley of Jez- could be compelled to be bond-servants, or slaves, to their brethren, (Lev. xxv. 39; 1 Kings ix. 21, 22; 2 Chron. viii. 8, 9.)

<sup>1</sup> Byron's "Siege of Corinth," xv.

reel ; the passes of Esdraelon ; the river of Kishon ; the waters of Megiddo :<sup>1</sup> these and other spots in Issachar's territory remind us of the many mighty memories of the past which are associated with this tribe, they recall some of the most important events in the nation's history, victories of some of her greatest heroes ; victories of Joshua, and Barak, and Gideon, and others ; victories over Canaanites, and Midianites, and Philistines, and Amalekites ; victories of which the Church still sings in her psalms of praise. But what we have to notice in all this as probably throwing light on the fulfilment of Jacob's prophecy is, that Israel's great battles were fought *in* Issachar, but not *by* Issachar. Except for the heroic part which Issachar took on the one occasion of the battle against Sisera, so far as the records of the tribe tell us, it took no part, certainly no worthy part, in those conflicts which were fought at its very doors, and on the issue of which the fate of the nation depended ; and for anything we read to the contrary, it may have been through the sluggishness of this great tribe that the enemies of Israel were admitted into the heart of the country as they were. The express mention more than once of its enormous military and numerical strength forbids the notion that it was a weak or unwarlike or effeminate tribe ; yet to Manasseh, and not to Issachar, was entrusted the care of those border fortresses and towns which commanded the most important of the passes by which an enemy could gain access into their territory<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See 1 Sam. iv. 1, 10, 11 ; xxix. 1 ; xxviii. 4 ; Ps. lxxxiii. 9, 10 ; Judg. v. 19 ; iv. 14 ; 1 Sam. xxxi. 1 ; Hos. i. 5 ; Judg. v. 19, 21 ; 2 Kings xxiii. 29 ; Zech. xii. 11.

<sup>2</sup> See also Stanley's "Sinai and Palestine." Meroz, so bitterly cursed by the Angel of the LORD for its backwardness in the fight

(Josh. xvii. 11). The towns were in Issachar's territory, but not in his keeping; and when in the war against the Midianites, Gideon, the great hero of Manasseh, earnestly called on the other northern tribes to aid him in the fight, and they responded to his call, Issachar is not mentioned either among those who were called by him, or who rallied round him in the fight, though it was on the slopes of Gilboa, in Issachar's own land, that Gideon's little army was encamped. So again, on the critical occasion of the rallying of the tribes round David at Hebron, the great tribe of Issachar seems to have sent no troops to join his standard; whereas the other tribes at this great military gathering mustered, in modern language, 10,000, or 40,000, or 50,000 sabres, all we are told of Issachar is that *two hundred* of them joined David, and that apparently not as combatants but as councillors. These notices of the tribe may serve for others; if they do not prove that Issachar slothfully submitted to be under tribute rather than fight when great emergencies arose, they certainly confirm the idea that such may have been the case. It is probable, also, as is generally supposed, that Jacob's prophecy about Issachar paying tribute was fulfilled in the exposure of his land to those enemies who were tempted by its richness to invade it. Being a wide open plain, it was the place where those chariots of iron, that "chariot-cavalry" which was the terror of the Israelites, were most effective. It formed a thoroughfare, a beaten highway of Palestine for every invasion from east to west, and from north to south; and in its exposed condition, it is thought, we can read with Sisera, (Judg. v. 23,) is thought to have commanded one of the most important of these passes, the one leading from Jezreel to the valley of the Jordan.



the fortunes of the tribe of Issachar, which for the sake of this possession sank into the position of tributaries to the various marauders, those Canaanites (Judg. iv. 3, 7), or Midianites, or Amalekites (Judg. vi. 3, 4), or Philistines (1 Sam. xxix. 1), who tempted by Issachar's luxurious crops, burst from time to time through his frontier.<sup>1</sup> No actual proof from Scripture of this can be brought forward ; but there is one text (Judg. v. 19), which may well bear this meaning. In connexion with that great battle against Sisera in which Issachar's distinguished bravery is mentioned, it is there said, "The kings came and fought ; then fought the kings of Canaan in Taanach by the waters of Megiddo, *they took no gain of money.*" According to the fair rendering of the Hebrew, these words may well mean, (as similar expressions mean in Gen. xiv. 23 ; 1 Sam. viii. 3 ; 2 Kings v. 15, 23 ; Exod. xxiii. 8), that the Canaanite kings would not now accept any tribute money, or be bought off from seeking to destroy the people of GOD. In Issachar's land the battle was fought : where the Megiddo flowed by the town of Taanach was the very key of Issachar's position ; but the Canaanites now accepted no longer that tribute which Issachar had been accustomed to pay them for security

<sup>1</sup> See Maclear's Joshua ad loc. Dr. Geikie, in "Hours with the Bible," p. 424, explains Jacob's words thus : "The tribe of Issachar made its home in the rich plain of Esdraelon. But it was able to do so only at the price of its independence, for the strong Canaanite city of Acre guarded it on the west, and that of Bethshean at its eastern end, while the fortresses of Taanach and Harosheth overlooked it from spurs of the southern hills." Kalisch plausibly suggests : "the people of Issachar appear to have readily, and perhaps spontaneously, placed themselves under the protection of more warlike and active tribes, as Zebulun, and especially Ephraim, and to have in return paid a proportionate tribute."

in the possession of their crops ; even as is done at this day by the few inhabitants who occupy what was once Issachar's land.<sup>1</sup>

One more striking fulfilment of Jacob's prophecy remains to be noticed. The prophetic picture of the history of the tribe of Issachar which he draws represents it as sinking into sensuality and self-indulgence ; the animal which he selects as the symbol of the tribe places this beyond doubt. Notwithstanding its usefulness, the ass in Scripture is always spoken of as the animal which, next to the dog, is most unclean and unfit for food or sacrifice. This is the meaning of the command thrice given in connexion with the Passover, (Exod. xiii. 13 ; Exod. xxxiv. 20 ; Numb. xviii. 15,) that the firstborn foal of an ass must either be redeemed or put to death ; useful as it was for all kinds of work, it could not be put to any till it had been redeemed by the owner with the blood of a lamb slain in its stead ; fitting type of a sinful but redeemed people, used as a parable to teach us who belong to "the Church of the firstborn," that we are all "born in sin ;" that we each need redemption by CHRIST'S

<sup>1</sup> See Mr. Finn's "Byways in Palestine," p. 229 ; speaking of the Plain of Esdraelon, he says, "The wretched people grow castor-oil plants because those afford no temptation to the hostile Arabs. In that year however (1851), and probably for some time previously, the plain had been at peace, unmolested by strangers ; consequently I saw large crops of wheat there, and fields of barley waving in the breeze. These were mostly the property of the Turkoman tribe, who, like the Kenites of old, reside there in tents, neither building houses nor planting vineyards, though to some extent they sow seed. They have been long upon that ground, but move their tents about, according to the exigencies of pasture for their flocks and herds. I believe, however, that they pay 'khoowah' (brotherhood), i.e. *tribute and military aid to the Suvoor Arabs for protection and peace under common circumstances.*"

blood before any acceptable "work" can be done by any one of us. And this is the meaning of Deut. xxii. 10, which in the Old Testament letter of the Law forbids yoking to the same plough the clean and the unclean animal; and in the New Testament spirit of the Gospel forbids the marriage of believer with unbeliever (2 Cor. vi. 14—16). This fact, then, that the ass in Scripture is the symbol of uncleanness, adds much significance to the figurative language under which Jacob predicts that Issachar should sink into indolent sloth and self-indulgence. It places it beyond doubt that Jacob meant the tribe would give way to sensuality.<sup>1</sup> And this part of the prophecy receives a remarkable fulfilment in that fact incidentally noticed about the tribe of Issachar in 1 Chron. vii., to which reference has already been made, viz. that *polygamy prevailed in that tribe*. The significant fact there mentioned about the heads of families in Issachar, that "they had many wives," in other words that they practised polygamy, proves that their indulgence in this matter must have been very great, to have been thus specially noticed among a people who too often departed from God's ancient law in this matter; Issachar gave way to that self-indulgence which enervates and enslaves any people, and unfits them for the hardships of a soldier's life; and in this incidental mention of their polygamy we see a striking, and as it were, undesigned, fulfilment of this ancient prophecy.

But whatever obscurity hangs over the exact meaning of each of Jacob's words, and the manner in which each part of his prophecy was fulfilled, there is none in the

<sup>1</sup> "Asses were regarded by the Egyptians also as essentially unclean in a religious sense, hence they offered them in sacrifice to their evil deity Typhon." (Wordsworth on Gen. xlii. 26.)

practical teaching of the warning which he gives his son ; the lesson to be learned is plain enough. The history of the tribe of Issachar is a commentary upon those words of Solomon, "*The slothful shall be under tribute*" (Prov. xii. 24), words possibly addressed to those who, knowing more of Issachar's history than we do, might be better able than ourselves to see them illustrated in GOD'S providential chastisement of that self-indulgent tribe. The history is a commentary too on those oft repeated warnings against the sluggard which Solomon gives us in Prov. vi. 4, 9—11 ; xxiv. 33 ; xix. 15 ; xx. 13. It has a message for the idle schoolboy and the slothful domestic servant, at moments when they are tempted by love of idleness or sleep ; it warns us against those sins into which idleness leads. But the lesson goes beyond this. It shows us all generally how great is the danger of that ease and worldly prosperity which too often steeps the senses of the soul in spiritual lethargy and forgetfulness of GOD. It speaks to the true Christian. It reminds us that we must never, with Issachar, seek our rest here : that it is never safe in this life to see, with him, that "rest here is good, or the land here that it is pleasant ;" fighting and working, not resting, is the Christian's calling ; fighting against evil, working for GOD. To us all GOD says, "Arise ye, and depart ; for this is not your rest : because it is polluted" (Micah ii. 10). While surrounding His servants with abundant mercies, He by some means makes them feel this is not and cannot be their rest. And this warning against bodily and spiritual sloth, which Jacob's prediction reads us, is one which applies to the most advanced Christian, as well as to the young beginner. This is what the great allegorist teaches us in his graphically painted picture of the "Enchanted ground,"

which he has so wisely placed far on in the Christian pilgrimage; "Here one of the pilgrims began to be dull and heavy with sleep . . . wherefore he said, Let us lie down here. By no means, said the other, lest sleeping we never wake more; . . . Wherefore let us not sleep, as do others, but let us watch and be sober."<sup>1</sup> (1 Thess. v. 5.) Here is Issachar's temptation set before us, into which our souls may at any time fall if we cease to advance in the spiritual life, in the knowledge of God, and of His word. To the Church at large, this "pleasant land" of the "Enchanted ground" represents a time of freedom from persecution; a season full of danger. To the individual soul it means such seasons of worldly prosperity, or freedom from the pressure of our Cross, from bodily pain, or mental anxiety, and the like, as tend to make us careless and "at ease in Sion;" to make us less earnest in prayer, less diligent in religious duties and self-examination, less watchful against besetting sins, less "careful to maintain good works." (Titus iii. 8.) In spiritual things, as in bodily, "This is not our rest;" "The eye of faith sees only the heavenly rest to be good, and that land of promise to be pleasant."—There CHRIST Himself shall be our Issachar; our exceeding great "reward."

<sup>1</sup> Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress.

## CHAPTER VI.

### *JACOB'S BLESSING ON DAN.*

GEN. XLIX. 16—18.

“ Dan shall judge his people,  
As one of the tribes of Israel.  
Dan shall be a serpent by the way,  
An adder in the path,  
That biteth the horse heels,  
So that his rider shall fall backward.  
I have waited for Thy salvation, O LORD.”

WITH these words begin Jacob's prophecies respecting the sons of the concubines: having given his blessing to the six sons of Leah, he then goes on to bless the four sons of the handmaids, the chapter concluding with his benedictions on the two sons of Rachel. Beginning now with Dan, the eldest of the four children of lowly birth, Jacob assures him that he shall have a place of honour among his brethren equal to that of the other tribes; adding at the same time that though Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel, yet shall he be to them as a serpent in the way.

“ Not many animals,” Professor Huxley has somewhere remarked, “ are gifted with so many faculties as a serpent. It can stand up erect, climb as well as any ape; swim like a fish, dart forward, [throw itself backward,] and do

all but fly in seizing its prey. The destructiveness of these animals to man is illustrated by the fact that twenty thousand human lives are yearly lost in India by their poison. No creatures seem more easily destroyed by man, and few seem less able to defend themselves; but it may safely be said that they are more deadly enemies to our race than any other beasts of the field."

It is to this deadly foe of the human race, to an animal that may be called the enemy of GOD and man, that Jacob compares his fifth son Dan in these words,

"Dan shall be a serpent by the way,  
An adder in the path."

Jacob uses two words to describe the snake-like character of Dan; the first is the ordinary word for serpent, *nāchash*, coming possibly from a word meaning to "eye," or "watch narrowly and keenly," the serpent's eye being proverbially keen in watching its prey. (See Gen. xxx. 27; xlv. 5, 15; 1 Kings xx. 33, where the verb is used and translated "learn by experience," "divine," and "diligently observed.") It is this word that Jacob uses when he foretells that Dan shall be as a "serpent" to his brethren. But the other word which he uses is much more significant, and is full of meaning as to the after history of the tribe. When he says, "Dan shall be an adder," (or as it is in the margin, an arrow-snake,) "in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward," he compares the tribe to a particular kind of serpent which has peculiar habits of its own. The word which he uses, (*sh'phee-phohn*), derived, according to Gesenius, from a word meaning to "glide," or to "creep,"<sup>1</sup> occurs no where else in Scripture; but it is

<sup>1</sup> The word "serpent" means "a creeping thing," from the Latin word "serpo," to creep.

evidently that species of serpent which was commonly called the "cerastes," or the double-horned adder, which hides itself in the sand of its native deserts, and bites the heels of unwary animals as they pass (see Eccles. x. 8 ; Amos v. 19). It abounds in the sandy deserts of Egypt, Africa, Syria, and Arabia. It is probably the asp of Cleopatra ; and the particulars in the character of Dan which are given agree better with this cerastes, or horned snake, than with any species of serpent.<sup>1</sup> "This adder lies in wait for passengers in the sand, or in the rut of the wheels in the highway ; from its lurking place it treacherously bites the horse's heels, so that the rider falls backward, because the animal on which he rides becomes almost immediately torpid from the dreadful activity of the poison."<sup>2</sup> This creature is equally formidable to man and to the lower animals, and is the more dangerous because it is not easy to distinguish him from the sand in which he lies ; and he never spares the helpless traveller who unwarily comes within his reach.<sup>3</sup>

The cunning of this adder is seen also in another strange characteristic ; it moves on occasions in a very peculiar way : whereas other serpents creep along in a straight direction, this cerastes moves *sideways*, stumbling, as it were, on either side ; it moves in all directions with great rapidity, but when it is inclined to surprise any one who

<sup>1</sup> See Paxton's "Illustrations," Vol. I., p. 446.

<sup>2</sup> Ælian. de Nat. Animal. Lib. xvi. chap. 28. Plin. Hist. Nat. l. ix. c. 32.

<sup>3</sup> Diodor. lib. iii. p. 128, quoted by Paxton as above. Kalisch remarks, the cerastes was a reptile held by the ancients to be so formidable, that they believed if it was killed by a man on horseback with a spear, the "poison would run up the weapon and kill, not only the rider, but the horse as well." (Plin. viii. 33.)



is too far from it, it *creeps with its side towards the person*,<sup>1</sup> and with its head averted, till judging its distance, it turns round, springs upon him, and fastens on the part next to it. It is not correct to say that the cerastes does not leap or spring;—and when Moses, in his blessing on the tribe of Dan, in Deut. xxxiii. 22, says,

“ Dan is a lion's whelp ;  
He shall leap from Bashan,”

he describes a characteristic not only of the lion, but also of the serpent-tribe.

Such are the peculiarities of this adder to which Dan is here compared. It is interesting to see how the history of Dan justified and fulfilled this description given of him by his father.

“ The several blessings which Jacob bestows on his sons have probably a reference to the past as well as to the future fortunes of each ;” “ there are, no doubt, allusions to events in their lives, which are not left on record.”<sup>2</sup> All we know of Dan's former history is contained in Gen. xxx. 1—6 ; xxxvii. 2 ; xli. 23. The first of these passages tells us of his low birth and origin ; he was the son of Rachel's handmaid Bilhah, whom in a moment of envy and impatient unbelief she persuaded Jacob to take to wife. The second passage tells us of Dan's conduct when he was a young man of twenty. His conduct was as low as his birth ;—he was the eldest of those four low-born sons, of whom it is said, “ Joseph brought unto his father their evil report.” The language of condemnation is unusually strong in the original, (an evil evil-report of them). It may have been connected with some sin

<sup>1</sup> Bruce, quoted in Bible Dict.

<sup>2</sup> Blunt's “ Undesigned Coincidences.”

of idolatry, or some gross sin ; at any rate Dan was the eldest of the four offenders, and, so far as that goes, the worst. He was one of those four brethren whose envy was specially stirred by Joseph's goodness, and by his telling to their father the evil tale which had got about of them ; and perhaps he was the one who gave the serpent-like and insidious advice for murdering him. (Gen. xxxvii. 20.)

The next reference to him which we have in Scripture (Gen. xlvi. 23), is in a passage which mentions the names of the children of the twelve Patriarchs who came into Egypt. Here it is to be observed that alone among the tribes the individual names of Dan's sons are passed over in silence ; they are there called by the family or tribal name of Hushim ; and in a similar passage, Numb. xxvi. 42, by the name of the Shuhamites. This concealment of the names<sup>1</sup> of Dan's children is the first indication of that silent blotting out of his name which meets us again in the utter omission of the tribe from the genealogies of 1 Chron. ii. to xii., and from the list of those who were sealed by the Angel in the vision of S. John (Rev. vii. 5—7) ; and there are besides other indications in Scripture of an unwillingness on the part of the inspired historian to mention the tribe by name. The importance, however, of the place which Dan held among the others as a military tribe appears from two facts : (1) when the people were numbered in the wilderness of Sinai, the tribe of Dan was, with the exception of Judah,

<sup>1</sup> For two remarkable indications of a mysterious abhorrence of the name of Dan, see Wordsworth on 1 Chron. vii. 12, and xxvii. 16—22. He says, "Sons of Aher," should be rendered "sons of another," that other being Dan, as is seen by Gen. xlvi. 23 ; and that Dan is put in the last place in 1 Chron. xxvii. because of his evil name.

the most numerous of all ; and (2) to Dan was committed the all-important post of forming the rear-guard of the host during the march through the wilderness, his position being on the north side of the tabernacle. Here, with his own brother Naphtali and his half-brother Asher, before him, he brought up the rear of the long procession in the wilderness journeys. (Numb. ii. 31 ; x. 25.) Mention is made in Exod. xxxv. 30—35, of Aholiab, "a Danite of great skill as a weaver and embroiderer," whom Moses appointed, under Bezaleel, to erect the tabernacle : and these are the only notices of the tribe of Dan which we have till we come to the description of the inheritance allotted to him, given in Joshua xix. But if we turn to that chapter, Josh. xix. 47, 48, and to Judg. xvii. and xviii., we see plainly how the Prophet Jacob's words were fulfilled ; his prophecy about Dan is one of the plainest and saddest of all the blessings which he bestows on his sons.

Part of the plain of Sharon,<sup>1</sup> with the cities built upon it, was the rich but narrow heritage of the tribe of Dan. (See Josh. xix. 40—46.) That plain, from which the flower called "the rose of Sharon" takes its name, "in its whole extent is the largest on the west side of the Jordan, for it includes the entire territory of the Philistines : " the part of it assigned to Dan extended along the coast of the Mediterranean from Joppa on the north to Ekron on the south : it was the smallest, but the

<sup>1</sup> This Plain of Sharon is mentioned in 1 Chron. xxvii. 29 ; Cant. ii. 1 ; Isaiah xxxiii. 9 ; xxxv. 2 ; lxx. 10 ; Acts ix. 35. The name has the definite article always prefixed—*hash-Sharon*—and denotes a district, as we speak of "The Weald," "The Downs." The Sharon mentioned in 1 Chron. v. 16, is without the article, and is a distinct place. (Bible Dict.)

richest of the inheritances of the tribes ; extending southwards from Joppa along the sea-coast only some fourteen miles, it was yet the very corn-field and garden of South Palestine, combining the advantages of sea and land in one small territory. Dan was the last to receive his allotted inheritance from Joshua. It is strange that so very small a portion was given to so very large a tribe : and either because this small but very choice portion of the Promised Land was too narrow for a tribe so numerous (Josh. xix. 47 ; Judg. xviii. 1), or because it was too valuable a prize to be given up without a struggle by its original possessors (Judg. i. 34), and was not entirely subdued by the Danites, a body of them made that treacherous attack on the defenceless city of Laish, or Dan, which is described in Josh. xix. 47, and Judg. xviii. In the Book of Joshua we read that "the coast of the children of Dan went out too little for them :<sup>1</sup> therefore the children of Dan went up to fight against Leshem, and took it, and smote it with the edge of the sword, and possessed it, and dwelt therein, and called Leshem, Dan,<sup>2</sup> after the name of Dan their father." And the eighteenth chapter of Judges describes more particularly that dark tale of treachery and blood : it tells us how "the people of Laish dwelling careless, quiet and secure," (i.e. being lazy and idle,) and having "no magistrate in the land to shame them," (i.e. being shamelessly immoral ; ) and being "far from the Zidonians," i.e. separated from the mother-

<sup>1</sup> The words "too little" are inserted in our version, but they are not found in the original Hebrew, which literally means, "the border of the children of Dan went out from them," i.e. was extended.

<sup>2</sup> This town of Laish, or Dan, must not be confounded with another town of that name in Gen. xiv. 14, Deut. xxxiv. 1.

city Zidon by the huge mass of Lebanon, were suddenly surprised by the murderous attack of six hundred lawless adventurers of Dan : how on their way they stole the teraphim and graven image from Micah of Mount Ephraim, and carried off also his Levite, or, as we should say, his private chaplain, compelling him to officiate as their priest in their new colony, the first of a line of idolatrous priests whom they established there, of the tribe of Levi, but not of the family of Aaron.<sup>1</sup>

It is in this serpent-like attack on that defenceless city that the prophecy of Jacob found its first fulfilment : and then it was that Dan (as Moses expresses it) leaped from Bashan, from the slopes of Hermon : like a young lion of Bashan, or a cerastes, leaps on his unsuspecting prey (Deut. xxxiii. 22), so Dan, as it were by one sudden leap from the south of Palestine to the north, fell on the city.<sup>2</sup> Serpent-like that treacherous caravan, with its six hundred warriors, besides its women and children, and flocks and herds, wound its way silently along : moving like the treacherous adder in its side-long attack : creeping adder-like through the length and breadth of the land ; trailing along its serpent track till it leaped on the doomed city as the horned snake leaps on its prey. This wonderfully graphic story is told towards the end of the Book of Judges : but it plainly happened in the very beginning of the settlement in Canaan, soon after the death of Joshua : and in the comparison of Dan to a serpent and adder we may well see a prophetic allusion to that act of dark treachery and cruel slaughter : in far prophetic

<sup>1</sup> "Moses" is most probably to be read for "Manasseh" in Judg. xviii. 30. See Bibl. Dict. p. 225. b.

<sup>2</sup> Or it may mean, the Danites leaped from Hermon, close to which Dan was built. Bashan extended to Hermon.

vision Jacob may well have seen "that band of daring Danites creeping stealthily around the reedy margin of the marsh toward Laish," when he said,

" Dan shall be a serpent by the way,  
An adder in the path,  
That biteth the horse heels,  
So that his rider shall fall backward."

This capture of a little border town may at first sight seem an inadequate fulfilment of a great prophecy. But if we consider a moment the exceeding great wickedness of that transaction in which Dan took part, and all its remote consequences to the other tribes, we see how striking a fulfilment it was of Jacob's words.

The eighteenth chapter of Judges, after telling us how the children of Dan stole away Micah's false gods, and his resident Levite, tells us that they established this idolatrous form of the worship of JEHOVAH in their new northern home ; and this circumstance that idolatry was already established in the northernmost town of Palestine evidently pointed out the place to Jeroboam as a fit town in which to set up one of his idolatrous calves. Thus the Danites were those who first "made Israel to sin." Moreover, it would appear from 2 Chron. ii. 14, that the Danites had not kept up their purity of lineage, any more than they had that of their faith and worship, but had intermarried with the idolatrous Phœnicians of the country. They were thus guilty of double disobedience to the commands of GOD, of first introducing and then keeping up idolatry and schism in the Church of GOD. And so when in after years Jeroboam established a schismatical priesthood and a schismatical worship in Israel, he found his work ready to his hand for him ; an-

ticipated by what Dan had done: he found a suitable preparation for his work already made in the northernmost town of Israel; he found the idols which the original colonisers of Dan had taken with them already set up there; a Levitical priesthood, not of the sacerdotal order, with an organised system of dissent from the National and true Church, already established: he found a precedent begun; a foundation laid; and his own work of "making Israel to sin" was in consequence all the easier to him.

Can we wonder, then, that Dan was to a Jew almost the same as an idolater? that to him the two words meant the same? This seducing of Israel to sin against God, to become schismatics from the Church, to fall into idolatry, was an act worthy of the old serpent, Satan himself. How better could Jacob have foretold that Dan should thus in a side-way, as it were, introduce idolatry into the Church of God, poisoning for the first time, and for ever after, the springs of religious faith and worship, than by comparing him to a serpent in the way, an adder in the path, causing the Church of God to fall backwards from its high privileges and position as the witness of God to the whole world?<sup>1</sup>

It is a common tradition among Jews and Christians that Antichrist is to be of the tribe of Dan, though he will give himself out as of the tribe of Judah. Both Jewish and Christian interpreters have seen in Jacob's prediction about Dan a prophecy of the serpent-like artifices of Antichrist; and in connexion with this old Jewish and Christian tradition it is perhaps not unworthy of notice that he is here symbolised by a serpent hav-

<sup>1</sup> Blunt, in his "Undesigned Coincidences," gives this connexion between Dan and Jeroboam a conspicuous place.

ing "two horns:" for we are at once reminded that in Rev. xiii. 11, the false prophet, or Antichrist, is similarly symbolised as a dragon or serpent-like beast, "having two horns like a lamb."

It is curious to notice in Jacob's prophetic illustration of Dan the same symbolical mark of the powers of evil which we meet with in the Book of Revelation. The following remarks on this subject from Isaac Williams on the Apocalypse will be found interesting. Remarking on the fact noticed above that the name of this tribe is omitted among those who are sealed in the vision of Rev. vii., he says, "The names of Ephraim and of Dan, perhaps on account of their idolatry, are altogether suppressed. For they were both, on the two great occasions of idolatry, the promoters of it (Judg. xvii. xviii. ; 1 Kings xii. 25, 29) ; Bethel, which belonged to Ephraim, and Dan, were its strongholds. This substitution of one name for another teaches us of that awful mystery of blotting the name out of the Book, and another taking the crown (Rev. iii. 5, 11). The omission of Dan cannot be accounted for, as Hammond suggests, in the dwindling away of that tribe ; nor is any adequate reason assigned ; but it is well known that the opinion has always descended in the Church which connects Antichrist with the tribe of Dan. In mentioning which, S. Irenæus introduces the words, 'The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan ; the whole land trembled at the sound of the neighing of his strong ones.' (Jer. viii. 16 ; Adv. Hær. lib. v.) It may be observed that in the passage of the Prophet Jeremiah to which he alludes, it is added, 'Behold I will send serpents among you which will not be charmed ;' and that the Antichristian powers under the sixth trumpet are described as horses with serpent-



tails ; and the adder is the well-known emblem of Dan. He is 'a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward.' The Rider in the Apocalypse, with the company that follow Him on white horses, is 'the seed of the woman,' whose heel the great serpent shall bruise. S. Augustine, speaking of Dan's not having obtained its adequate allotted inheritance in the land of Canaan,<sup>1</sup> adds, that the reason of it 'must be believed to be in the secret counsel of GOD. But Jacob, when he blessed his sons, spake such things of that Dan, that it may be supposed that Antichrist is to arise out of that very tribe.'<sup>2</sup> But though thus quoting S. Augustine, Isaac Williams adds, "It does not appear so probable that a literal fulfilment is to be expected of Antichrist arising out of that tribe, as that the circumstance [of the omission of the name] should contain some mysterious spiritual prediction. One of the twelve patriarchs is 'a serpent ;' and disappears from the Book of Life ; one of the twelve Apostles is 'the son of perdition,' the very name of Antichrist."<sup>3</sup> (2 Thess. ii. 3.) All this is very difficult : but it could not be passed over in an exposition of this prophecy : the reflections suggested by this part of the subject are less gloomy when we remember that the name of Dan is not omitted in Ezekiel's mystic vision of the Church : it finds its place with the rest in Ezek. xlvi. 1, 32. But by these mysterious omissions of Dan's name GOD would perhaps mark His abhorrence of the sins of conniving at idolatry, false doctrine, heresy and schism : such sins sap the very foundations of a National Church, and poison the fountains of religious

<sup>1</sup> Judg. xviii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Quæst. in Jes. Nav. lib. vi. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Williams on Apoc. pp. 121, 122.

thought in any people, as we, to our cost, know too well.

Such, then, was the first fulfilment of Jacob's dying words respecting Dan ; he predicts not good but evil concerning him. He warns him that mischief and treachery are to be characteristic of his tribe ; it is to be a tribe as capable of producing heroes, and judges, and warriors, and to be given as fair a chance as any of his well-born brethren, for—

“ Dan shall judge his people  
As one of the tribes of Israel ;”

but it is to show the worst characteristics of the serpent-tribe, not only the subtlety of the ordinary serpent, but the venom and treachery of a specially dangerous adder. And as we have seen, the prediction itself was literally accomplished.

But the words of Jacob have another fulfilment besides this, which remains to be noticed.

Among the towns given to Dan in that portion of the beautiful Plain of Sharon which fell to his lot, were those of Zorah and Eshtaol. It was from these towns, (as we are told in Judg. xviii.,) that there issued forth that daring band which traversed the whole territory of Israel, and surprised and destroyed Laish under Mount Hermon, making the Dan of the North a more familiar name than the old Dan of the Plain of Sharon. But these towns of Zorah and Eshtaol became famous afterwards for another reason. Zorah was the home of Manoah, and the birth-place of Samson the great Danite hero. And there can be no doubt that Jacob expressly prophesies of that great hero of the tribe of Dan, Samson, when he says,

“ Dan shall judge his people,  
As one of the tribes of Israel ;

Dan shall be a serpent by the way,  
An adder in the path,  
That biteth the horse heels,  
So that his rider shall fall backward."

(See Judg. xiii. 2.)

The meaning of the word "Dan" is "judging." This name was given by Rachel to her slave's child at his birth in gratitude to GOD for the event. "Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son: and Rachel said, GOD hath judged me, and hath also heard my voice, and hath given me a son; therefore called she his name Dan:" that is, as the margin explains, "Judging." (Gen. xxx. 5, 6.<sup>1</sup>) On this name Jacob as usual plays; on this name he bases the blessing which he gives, confirming the name with a new meaning. He says Dan, the judge, shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel, i.e., as has already been explained, Dan, the son of the concubine, no less than the sons of Leah, shall have a high place of honour among his people. In the days of the Judges the tribe to which the judge belonged had naturally for the time being a sort of pre-eminence above the other tribes. Dan, Jacob says, shall have this pre-eminence in his turn; adding to this, that he should nevertheless be as a serpent and an adder; rather attacking his enemies with serpent-like cunning than with open violence; as Moses also predicts when he compares him to a lion's whelp leaping on his prey, for which he has been cunningly watching; Jacob compares him to that cerastes, whose peculiar method of attack has been de-

<sup>1</sup> "The simplest form of the root is naturally taken as the name; it is neither active nor passive, and there is no room for the criticism of Gesenius and Mr. Grove, that the derivation is passive in xxx. 6, and active in xlix. 16."—Obbard.

scribed. And the same is predicted by Moses in Deut. xxxiii. 22, under another figure, that of a young lion of Bashan watching from his lair and springing on his prey :

“ Dan is a lion's whelp,  
He shall leap from Bashan ;”

he shall leap from the slopes of Hermon, where he is couched watching for his prey.

It is impossible not to see in this combination of the opposite characteristics of the lion and the serpent a remarkable prediction of the character of the warlike tribe of Dan, especially as exemplified in the character of Samson its representative hero. Bold, and daring, and strong as a lion, the peculiar circumstances of his times, and his own exceeding cleverness, compelled him to fight his enemies, the Philistines, with serpent-like artifices and cunning tricks, unusual in great and brave warriors.

In the comparison of Dan to a serpent we may, then, see allusions to the serpent-like artifices by which Samson gained so many advantages over the Philistines. It has been remarked that Samson bit the heels of the horse, so that his rider fell backwards, when he pulled the house down on the Philistines to his own and their destruction ; but the same remark will plainly apply to those clever but cruel tricks by which, regardless of the sufferings of men and animals, he gained advantages over those enemies of his country.<sup>1</sup> There can be no doubt that in the first part of the prediction, “ Dan shall

<sup>1</sup> “ Rashi explains יָדָעַן (*yadeen*) to mean ‘*shall avenge*,’ as in Ps. cxxxv. 14, applying it to Samson avenging the Israelites on the Philistines. He destroyed them without touching them, (Judg. xvi. 29, 30,) as the serpent destroys the rider by merely biting his horse’s hoofs.”—(Obbard.) The “*horse*” in the prophecy must primarily refer to a *foreign* enemy or invader.

judge, or avenge, his people," as well as in the second part also, Jacob points the finger of prophecy to the great national hero, Samson, of the tribe of Dan; that when he says, "Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel," he means that as the tribe of Manasseh rose to eminence under Gideon, and Naphtali under Barak, so should Dan under Samson. These three, like the other thirteen Judges, were great "local" celebrities. "If we string together the different accounts of the different parts of Israel which are given us in that miscellaneous collection of records called the Book of Judges, and treat them as connected and successive history, we shall fall into as great an error as if we treated in the same manner the histories of Mercia, Kent, Essex, Wessex, and Northumberland before England became one kingdom."<sup>1</sup> This must be borne in mind when thinking of Jacob's prophecy as fulfilled in the person and exploits of the great Danite hero, Samson. Samson during the latter half of his life must have been contemporary with Eli and Samuel. Though his story is given in the Book of Judges before the episodes of Micah and the six hundred Danites, it is plain that Samson was not born till some four hundred years after that dark act of treachery and idolatry which has left a stain on the tribe of Dan, and on the name which they gave to the city which they took. There is consolation in the thought that GOD thus remembered Dan after the tribe had sinned so grievously. Samson was supernaturally born: and by his birth a further chance, so to speak, was given by GOD to Dan. But though this was so, and though Samson's faith is commended by S. Paul in Heb. xi. 32, the low origin of the tribe seems to come out even in the conduct of its great

<sup>1</sup> Bible Dict. Art. Gideon.

hero ; he is but the descendant of the slave concubine Bilhah after all ; and after this flash of light the tribe sinks back into the dark obscurity from which it sprang. But Jacob clearly prophesied of Samson in these words of Gen. xlix. 16—18 ; and it was, we may reverently say, “that this Scripture might be fulfilled,” that an Angel of the LORD in due time appeared to a woman of the tribe of Dan, whose husband’s name was Manoah (Judg. xiii. 2, 3), announcing the coming birth in the city of Zorah, (of unhappy memory,) of Samson, the mightiest<sup>1</sup> of the Judges of Israel, whose exploits, possibly, under the name of the Phœnician Hercules, fill as large a page in heathen histories as they do in Holy Scripture.

And it is while thinking of all the misery which the unhappy birth of Dan has been, and is to be, the cause of ; while looking forward into the dark future of the history of Dan ; while meditating on that tribe’s apostasy from GOD, on the idolatry of Israel, on the fitful and feeble efforts of the judgeship of Samson ; and while looking on to the Antichrist of “the last days,” that the dying Patriarch exclaims,

“ I have waited for Thy salvation, O JEHOVAH !”

Having been moved by the Spirit of GOD to speak of the serpent biting the heel, Jacob’s thoughts are naturally called back to the old primæval promise made to Eve, the first Gospel promise, where the sentence that the serpent should bruise the Messiah’s heel was succeeded by the promise that the serpent’s head should be crushed by the coming Seed of the woman, that is CHRIST.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mightiest, that is, in supernatural strength, not in any chivalry of character.

<sup>2</sup> Speaker’s Commentary.

And this combination of thought finds utterance in the exclamation which now breaks forth, "I have waited for Thy salvation, O LORD!" Through the coming darkness he sees by faith the day of CHRIST; beyond the coming night of the close of this world's history, the night of Antichrist, he rejoices to see "the day of the LORD," the day of CHRIST. He sees it and is glad; he longs ardently for the first coming of Him in the flesh Who was to "destroy the works of the Devil," and for the Second Advent of the same SAVIOUR in glory,—the true Dan, the true Judge of quick and dead, Who will be able to do what no Samson or earthly deliverer could do. I die, he says, waiting for the salvation which Thou, O JEHOVAH the SAVIOUR, alone canst bring. So the Chaldee paraphrase is, "I am not waiting for the salvation of Gideon son of Joash, who will be but a temporal deliverer; nor for the salvation of Samson son of Manoah, which will soon pass away; but I am waiting for the redemption of CHRIST the Son of David, Who is coming to gather the children of Israel to Himself, and for Whose salvation my soul ardently longs."

The passage suggests to us, then, that we too shall one day each need the same strong SAVIOUR in Whom Jacob believed. We may see in Jacob's description of the serpent the way in which that old serpent the Devil still attacks us with temptations, and causes us to fall into sin. This was the cause of our sins; when we sinned we were not watchful; and before we were aware we found that the tempter, like the lurking adder, had as it were come behind us, and caused us, like heedless riders, to fall backwards. From such an enemy there is One, and One only, Who can deliver, even the Seed of the woman, Whose own heel was bruised by

him for our sakes, that He might bruise the serpent's head.

"I have waited for Thy salvation, O LORD!"

This is no battle-cry of the tribe of Dan, but the last battle-cry of Israel the warrior of GOD, when the fight was all but over, and the heavenly country full in sight, and when possibly some bright angelic vision met his dying eyes. "I have waited for Thy salvation, O LORD!" This is the cry of him whose old name had been "Jacob," meaning a heel, or to take by the heel, that is to supplant; but whose new name was Israel, the prince, or "the soldier of GOD," who had overcome in the fight.

"I have waited for Thy salvation, O LORD." This is the cry of the whole creation still, which groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And this cry is perhaps wrung from Jacob now by a sense of his own dependence on his own and his fathers' GOD, "on Whom, now on the very verge of the grave, he waits, overpowered with the sight of the momentous history of his children." The word "I have waited," expresses eager and loving expectation for GOD's salvation. It is used in Job vii. 2 of the tired hireling anxiously "looking for" the shadows of evening, and rest from his work; and in Ps. cxxx. 5, 6, of a soul "waiting for" GOD, as the sleepless watcher in the night waits and longs for the dawning of the morning; the word in its origin means the extreme stretching forth of earnest expectation, as of a tightly stretched cord strained to its extreme length; "it is a word of *gesture*, and of like import with S. Paul's ἀποκαρδοκία in Rom. viii. 19, and Phil. i. 20, which is properly the *stretching forth of the head and neck*, with earnest inten-



tion and observation, to see when a person or thing expected shall appear."<sup>1</sup> With such holy desires after the presence of GOD Jacob dies. "The whole life of a good Christian," S. Augustine somewhere says, "is nothing else but a state of holy desire." (Gen. xlix. 18; S. Matt. v. 6; Rom. viii. 18—25; Rev. xxii. 20.) Such a life of holy desire, whatever his faults, Jacob had lived; to such holy desires after GOD he gives utterance at his death when he says, "I have waited for Thy salvation, O LORD!" Blessed in death will he be, who in life has thus "waited for the kingdom of GOD." "Since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O GOD, beside Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him." (Isa. lxiv. 4; 1 Cor. ii. 9.)

<sup>1</sup> Parkhurst's Lexicon.

## CHAPTER VII.

### *JACOB'S BLESSING ON GAD.*

GEN. XLIX. 19.

“Gad, a troop shall overcome him :  
But he shall overcome at the last.”

IT has been remarked that of all the sons of Jacob two tribes alone returned out of Egypt to the land which their forefathers had left five hundred years before, with their occupations unchanged,—“The trade of thy servants hath been about cattle from our youth even till now ; we are shepherds both we and our fathers” (Gen. xlv. 34 ; xlvii. 3). Such was the account which the Patriarchs gave of themselves to Pharaoh on their first coming into Egypt. At the time of the Exodus the civilisation and the persecutions of Egypt had worked a change in the habits of most of the tribes ; but Reuben and Gad remained faithful to the pastoral pursuits of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; the other tribes had been trained, or were willing to be trained, from a nation of shepherds into a nation of soldiers ; but Reuben and Gad were content to remain shepherds still ; and at the halt on the east of the Jordan (Numb. xxxii.), we find them coming forward to Moses, and representing to him that they have a great multitude of cattle, and pleading

for a settlement where a place for their cattle may be found.<sup>1</sup> We find them not caring to cross the sacred river into the Promised Land, or to exchange the wandering life of a shepherd for that of a soldier, or a husbandman, or an artizan.

To this nomad and unsettled pastoral life which the tribe of Gad should hereafter choose to live, exposed as such a wandering life would be to attacks from other desert tribes, Jacob alludes in his brief blessing upon Gad, the son of his concubine Zilpah,

“Gad, a troop shall overcome him,  
But he shall overcome at the last:”

or, as the words exactly translated would be,

“Gad, a plundering troop shall plunder him,  
But he will plunder at their heels.”

As is usual in this prophetic song, Jacob plays continually on the word “Gad,” which means a marauding or plundering troop. Leah had named her slave’s child Gad (Gen. xxx. 10, 11), with the same intention, according to our translation. “Leah said, A troop cometh,” a troop, i.e., of children cometh, perhaps of turbulent and unruly children; or perhaps meaning, Gad shall be an unruly boy, and his descendants unruly also, “so she called his name Gad.” This meaning of this old inspired name the prophet Jacob here confirms. Gad means a piratical band or troop. It is used, e.g., in Micah v. 1, on which Dr. Pusey remarks, “The word” (Gad—Gedûd) “is almost always used of bands of men employed in irregular, marauding, inroads.” See also 2 Kings v. 2, and xxiv. 2, and Job xix. 12. In the first of these places it is used of a party of roving bands of

<sup>1</sup> See Bible Dict., Art. Gad.

soldiers, plundering "companies" of Syrians, one of which carried off the "little maid" who waited on Naaman's wife. In the second, of "bands" of the Chaldees, and Moabites, and Ammonites, which the LORD "sent against Judah to destroy it." And in the third, it is used for that host of evils which the LORD allowed to be sent against Job.

The word, then, here means "bands of robbers or of irregular soldiers," as it does in 1 Sam. xxx. 8; 2 Sam. iii. 22; and 2 Chron. xxvi. 11. To the attacks of such irregular troops Jacob here predicts that this tribe shall be constantly exposed,

"Gad, a troop shall overcome him,  
But he shall overcome at the last."

The original of the word translated "overcome" is, as we have seen, "Gad" also. As we might translate it, the words actually are,

"Gad, a troop shall troop upon him,  
And he shall troop at their heels."

There is no certain promise that Gad shall finally overcome the incessant attacks of his enemies. We translate it, "A troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last," as if there were first to be a defeat, and then a final victory. Jacob may very probably have meant this; but we cannot be certain from his language that he did. There is no sense of overcoming or of being overcome in the original. The word means to rush upon, attack, assault, assemble against, invade, as waters rush over, or beat against their banks, or as goats rush on one another with their horns. The idea is rather that of alternate defeat and victory than of final conquest. (See Psalm xciv. 21; Micah v. 1; Jer. v. 7; Hab. iii. 16.)

Spiritual teaching turns on the meaning of these words of Scripture, therefore their exact significance is worth remembering.

The prophet predicts, then, that the tribe of Gad shall live in a constant state of warfare, like the Bedawin Arabs : that they will not be so fond of settling down in cities, and into the habits of civilised life, as of keeping up a wandering, wild, unsettled existence ; that they will always be, as it were, with their armour on, or ready for war. He sees Dan as a lurking serpent, biting the heels of the passing horse. He sees Gad as a pursuing troop of horsemen of the desert, pressing close on the heels of the retreating foe which in hard fight he has vanquished ; now overcome, and now overcoming ; now pursued, now pursuing ; now hard pressed by the troops of the enemy ; now pressing hard on their retreating troops, in the manner of desert warfare.

Such is the meaning of Jacob's prophecy, "Gad, a troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last:" or, as it may mean, "Gad, a plundering troop shall plunder him, but he will plunder at their heels."

We may now observe (1) the accurate historical fulfilment of Jacob's prophecy about Gad : and (2) the spiritual teaching which the history of the tribe has for us, which is a very marked feature in it.

I. If we turn to the after history of Gad, we shall see how it was that Jacob's prophetic description of the tribe was true. We know nothing of the former history of the young man Gad himself, except that he was the seventh son of the patriarch Jacob, he and his younger brother Asher being the children of Zilpah, Leah's maid ; the third of those four sons of the concubines of whom

Joseph brought that very "evil report" to his father, of which mention is made in Gen. xxxvii. 2. But it is probable that the name was prophetic from the first: that it was from Gad the father of the tribe that his descendants derived the warlike, independent character here given them by Jacob. Moses in his blessing on this tribe says, in Deut. xxxiii. 20, 21,

"Blessed be He that enlargeth Gad :  
He dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown  
of the head.  
And he provided the first part for himself,  
Because there, in a portion of the lawgiver, was he seated"

This "first part," which, as Moses said, Gad provided for himself, lay on the east side of Jordan, and it was this peculiar position which Gad occupied among the other tribes at the time of the settlement of the land under Joshua, which necessitated such a life of constant fighting as Jacob in his prophetic blessing on the tribe describes: and in this fact we see the accurate fulfilment of his prophecy. If we compare together Numb xxxii. 33—36; Deut. iii. 12—17; Josh. xii. 1—6; xii. 24—28; 1 Chron. v. 11, 16, we may see, with the help of a map, what was the territory assigned to Gad, and where it lay. They occupied the choicest part of the well-known "land of Gilead,"<sup>1</sup> or, as it is sometimes called, "the land of Gad and Gilead," on the eastern side of Jordan. One half of this famous pasture-land of Gilead was formerly ruled over by "Sihon, king of the Amorites," and the other half by "Og, king of Bashan;" and from them the children of Israel conquered it, as the

<sup>1</sup> For a graphic and full description of the country, see Oliphant's "Land of Gilead."

Church still sings in that song of praise which commemorates these victories, the hundred and thirty-sixth Psalm.<sup>1</sup> This coveted prize of the "land of Gilead" Moses gave to the two tribes and a half which remained on the other side of Jordan; that part of it which had been ruled over by Sihon, he divided between Reuben and Gad: the part which Og had governed was all assigned to Manasseh, this latter tribe receiving also the country of Bashan, properly so called. Of this celebrated land of Gilead, Gad had the largest and choicest share, only a margin of it on one side and the other being given to Reuben and Manasseh.<sup>2</sup> His portion comprised the picturesque but hilly and mountainous part, with its shady forests and noble streams, and the whole of the wide eastern valley of the Jordan, which extends along the course of that river from the Northern end of the Dead Sea to the lower end of the Sea of Galilee. There is nothing to be compared with it as a "place for cattle" (Numb. xxxii. 1). "A wide table-land, tossed about in wild confusion of undulating downs,

<sup>1</sup> Alone among the tribes the name of Gad occurs in the inscription found on the celebrated "Moabite stone." "*The men of Gad were dwelling in the land of Ataroth from of old.*" Such is the interesting testimony of that old inscription, reaching back some 2,500 years, to one of the earliest conquests of this tribe, and corroborating Numb. xxxii. 3, 34. The town was taken and rebuilt by Gad.

<sup>2</sup> "They soon, however, extended themselves beyond these limits. The official records of the reign of Jotham of Judah, (1 Chron. v. 11, 16), show them to have been at that time established over the whole of Gilead, and in possession of Bashan as far as Salcah, while the Manassites were pushed still further northwards to Mount Hermon." Thus was fulfilled the prophecy of Moses in Deut. xxxiii. 20, that Gad should be "enlarged" by GOD.

clothed with rich grass throughout; these downs being broken by three deep defiles, through which three rivers fall into the valley of the Jordan and the Dead Sea: to the north and south are magnificent forests of sycamore, beech, terebinth, ilex, and fig trees, or relics of primeval forests long since cleared away. Unlike the flat, open downs of smooth and even turf which formed the sheep-walks of the adjoining tribe of Reuben, the country of Gad is very picturesque, most beautifully varied with hanging woods, mostly of valleronia oak, laurestinus, cedar, arbutus, andrachne, and other trees. At times the country had all the appearance of a noble [English] park, with graceful hills, rich vales, and luxuriant herbage.<sup>1</sup> It abounded, moreover, in spices and aromatic gums, which were exported to Egypt and other countries. It was the native soil of that tree of world-wide fame from which the precious gum called the "Balm of Gilead" was distilled; that balm which long formed the essential ingredient in the "Confirmation Chrism" of the Roman Church, and which is in Scripture a symbol of that precious Blood which "cleanseth us from all sin." (Gen. xxxvii. 25; Jer. viii. 22, and xlvi. 11.)

Such was the beautiful home in which the Gadites lived on the eastern side of Jordan. But for this very reason they were surrounded by enemies, who disputed with them the possession of it, and they were exposed to those constant attacks which the prophet Jacob foretold. In this far-famed land they lay exposed to the attacks of those desert tribes which roamed on the other side of Jordan, such as the Ammonites, the Midianites, the Hagarites, &c., who were animated by one common feeling of hostility to them; they thus lived in a state of

<sup>1</sup> Stanley, Irby, and Porter, quoted in Bible Dict.



perpetual warfare, and were doubtless fond of courting such attacks from these desert tribes; whom they had no power or command given them by GOD to exterminate, as they had in the case of the wicked Canaanitish nations on the other side of the Jordan. For this reason, then, Jacob's prophetic description of Gad held good during all their after history: in the times of Joshua, of the Judges, of the Kings, during and after the Captivity; Gad did not settle down with the other tribes in the land of Canaan: he did not cross the Jordan with them; but, with Reuben and half the tribe of Manasseh, he remained on the east side of the sacred river; settled in a country which from its inaccessible and easily defensible character was suited for predatory warfare, this brave and warlike tribe (for Scripture always represents it as such) lived the wild life of turbulent mountaineers and outlaws of the forest, rather than that of members of a political body. So their whole after history was a fulfilment of the prophet's words,

“Gad, a plundering troop shall plunder him,  
But he will plunder at their heels.”

But there is a passage in the Book of Jeremiah from which especially we may see with what wonderful exactness this old prophecy of Jacob was fulfilled.

In Jer. xlix. 1, 2, we read, “Concerning the Ammonites thus saith the LORD: Hath Israel no sons? hath he no heir? why then doth their king [the king of the Ammonites] inherit Gad, and his people dwell in his cities? Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will cause an alarm of war to be heard in Rabbah of the Ammonites; and it shall be a desolate heap, and her daughters shall be burned with fire; then

shall Israel be heir unto them that were his heirs, saith the LORD." This prophecy of Jeremiah about Rabbah was uttered some four hundred years after that city had been taken by Joab, when Uriah the Hittite was slain beneath its walls.<sup>1</sup> The Ammonites, then, from this their stronghold of Rabbah were ever wont to issue forth on the children of Gad, in whose territory that great city was situated. All down their history the Ammonites constantly contested the possession of their territory with the children of Gad with varied success : these Ammonites, therefore, were specially the troop of which Jacob speaks, when in the spirit of prophecy he says,

" Gad, a troop shall overcome him ;  
But he shall overcome at the last."

In the time of Jephthah, a great hero of the tribe of Gad, we first hear of this conflict between the Gadites and the Ammonites. Part of the land assigned to Gad had originally belonged to the Ammonites. In Judges xi. 13, we find the king of Ammon stating to the messengers sent to him by Jephthah the claims of the Ammonites to the territory of Gad : Jephthah in verse 15 denies the king's statement ; but it is evident that the land had originally belonged to Ammon, as we may see in Joshua xiii. 24, 25. The Ammonites had held it before Sihon, king of the Amorites, from whom the Israelites won it by the sword at GOD'S command (Judges xi. 23). And even after that dispute with Jephthah, the great leader of the tribe of Gad, and one of the most celebrated of the Judges, the Ammonites constantly contested with the Gadites the possession of that beautiful country on the east of Jordan, so fulfilling Jacob's prediction. In

<sup>1</sup> See 2 Sam. xi. 1, 14—17.

the time of Saul we find Nahash, an Ammonite king, coming up and encamping against another town of Gad, Jabesh-Gilead, and the Gadites are only saved by the prompt interference of Saul, (1 Sam. xi.) In the time of David, we find their capital city Rabbah, of unhappy memory, the scene of long contested fighting. In the time of Jehoshaphat we find hordes of the Ammonites swarming through the pass of Ziz, and only driven back by the miraculous interposition of GOD. (2 Chron. xx.) The Ammonites were among the most troublesome and the most irrepressible enemies of Israel. (See 1 Sam. xi. ; 2 Sam. x., xi. ; xii. 26 ; 2 Chron. xx. ; xxvii. 5 ; Zeph. ii. 8, 9.) The children of Gad lived among them : they were most of all exposed to their attacks : and so Jacob's words were constantly being fulfilled.

These Ammonites moreover specially answered to the prophetic description given of them by Jacob when he calls them "a troop," a plundering or marauding band of irregular soldiers. They lived to the north of the Moabites, and were closely allied by birth to them : but they were far less civilised than they,<sup>1</sup> as we gather from scattered notices of them in Scripture. "While Moab was the settled and civilized half of the nation of Lot, the Ammonites formed its predatory and Bedouin section;" possessing but the one stronghold of Rabbah, from which they sallied forth against Gad in the manner described by Jacob ; and not devoting themselves to agriculture, but wandering with their flocks over the Arabian wastes ;—fond of plunder, as Jacob foretells when he calls them "a plundering troop," and speaks of the peculiar warfare between them and Gad. And from the passage of Jeremiah

<sup>1</sup> See Bible Dict., Art. Ammon.

to which we have referred, we learn how through long centuries of their history, long centuries after Jephthah and Saul, and David, Jacob's prophecy held good; Gad had chosen to live among these hordes of the desert, and so he was constantly plundering, or being plundered by, them, as Jacob predicted. And from Jeremiah we learn that this was going on even to the times of the captivity. When Tiglath Pileser carried the inhabitants of the land of Gad and Gilead into captivity, the plundering Ammonites came and occupied their vacant land and deserted cities; and with righteous indignation the Prophet Jeremiah asks the Ammonites why in Israel's troubles they have seized by force upon the country which still belongs to Gad, and which should have been left vacant for him on his return. And all this is a commentary on the words of Jacob which exactly describe the constant though petty wars of Gad and Ammon,

“Gad, a plundering troop shall plunder him;  
But he will plunder at their heels;”

or “at the last;”—at last the stronghold of Ammon will be destroyed by the righteous anger of GOD; and so, in the sense of our translation, the words of Jacob were true,

“Gad, a troop shall overcome him,  
But he shall overcome at the last.”

Thus accurately all down the ages were the prophetic words of the dying patriarch fulfilled: and this is one of those Scriptures which were “written that we might believe;”—one of the brightest of those lamps of prophecy which “shine as lights in a dark world.”

II. But further. If we turn to the thirty-second chapter of the Book of Numbers, and the thirty-third

chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy, which contains the blessing pronounced by Moses upon this tribe, we see there the reason why Gad lived where he did : we see that it was his own choice thus to separate himself from the people of GOD, and to remain on the eastern side of Jordan. It was by his own choice that he was exposed to that continual fighting which Jacob predicts, and to such constant attacks from the Ammonites and other wild tribes and robber-bands of the desert. It was his own voluntary act to settle so far from the house and people of GOD ;—and underneath that fact lies spiritual teaching for us, who have still to choose between the Church and the world.

The following words of the author of "Sinai and Palestine" well put before us the nature of that choice which Gad was called upon to make, and the momentous issues involved in it : "It is," he says, "striking to remember that with the beautiful land of Gilead and Bashan in their possession—a land of which travellers say, that in beauty and fertility it as far surpasses western Palestine as Devonshire surpasses Cornwall—the Israelites nevertheless pressed forwards, through the Jordan valley, up the precipitous ravines of Jericho and Ai, and settled in the rugged mountains of Judah and Ephraim, never to return to those beautiful regions which had been their first home in the Promised Land. 'The LORD had made them ride on the high places of the earth, that they might eat the increase of the fields ; and He made them to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock ; butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats with the fat of kidneys of wheat : and they did drink the pure blood of the grape,' (Deut. xxxii. 13, 14.)

So spake their Prophet-leader whilst they were still in the enjoyment of this rich country. Yet forwards they went. It was the same high calling which had already drawn Abraham from Mesopotamia, and Moses from the court of Memphis. They knew not what was before them : they knew not what depended on their crossing the Jordan, on their becoming a settled and agricultural, instead of a nomadic, people : on their reaching to the shores of the sea, and from those shores receiving the influences of the western world, and sending forth to that western world their influences in return. They knew not ; but we know : and the more we hear of the beauty of the trans-Jordanic territory, the greater is the wonder, and the greater should be our thankfulness, that they exchanged it for Palestine itself, inferior, as it might naturally have seemed to them, in every point, except for the high purposes to which they were called, and for which their permanent settlement on the eastern side of the Jordan would, humanly speaking, have wholly unfitted them. What a change would thus have been made in their destiny is best seen by following up the history of the tribes which did so separate themselves from their brethren.”<sup>1</sup>

From these words we can see how much was involved in the choice which Gad made when he asked Moses to be allowed to remain in the beautiful pasture lands of Gilead : we can see that in the heroic faith which other tribes had, Gad was utterly wanting. The story of the

<sup>1</sup> “Sinai and Palestine,” pp. 318, 319. “The Reubenites dwelt not in houses but in tents. (1 Chron. v. 10, Josh. xxii. 4.) The Gadites were wild horsemen of the desert : the towns of Jair, the old chief of the tribe of Manasseh beyond Jordan, were called ‘Havoth-Jair,’ or villages of tents.” Ib.

selfish and worldly choice which he made is given in Numb. xxxii. 5, and is referred to in Deut. xxxiii. 21. In the former passage we read that when they saw "the land of Gilead, that, behold, the place was a place for cattle," they said to Moses and Eleazar, "If we have found grace in thy sight, let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and *bring us not over Jordan.*" "Bring us not over Jordan!" Memorable words! It was a worldly choice, which was expressed in them—a choice like that of Lot and Esau; and a selfish choice, for they asked for the first and the best. It is true that the Reubenites joined in the request. But Gad was evidently foremost in the matter (Numb. xxxii. 5, 25, 21), and Reuben, with his natural weakness, fell in with Gad's request. And Moses says, in Deut. xxxiii. 21, "Gad provided the first part for himself," showing that Gad, not Reuben, was the chief actor as well as the chief speaker in the story of Numb. xxxii. It was an unbelieving choice; they were pitched in the plains of Moab at the time: Og, king of Bashan, and Sihon, king of the Amorites, had perished in battle; but instead of looking eagerly forward to the land of Canaan, the promised land, promised by GOD to Abraham, and following "the high calling of GOD" which was leading the Church invisibly onwards, they "looked back" on the lands of Og and Sihon, on which GOD's judgments had fallen, and which they had just conquered; Reuben and Gad marched under the same standard (Numb. x. 18, 20), and made the same request: and so Reuben was partaker in Gad's choice. The land was, as we have seen, fitted for cattle; and Gad and Reuben had more cattle than their brethren, and did not care to rise above the occupation and life of shepherds, so they said to Moses,

“ Let this land be given unto thy servants for a possession, and bring us not over Jordan :” and Moses, after words of sorrow for their choice, did as they asked, though as the land was too much for two tribes, part of it was given to half the tribe of Manasseh (Numb. xxxii. 33), though they had not joined in Gad's request ; given to them, perhaps, as the conquerors of it. (Numb. xxxii. 39.)

Holy Scripture does not say that Gad committed an act of sin in this matter : but it was with reference to it that Moses gave them the well-known warning, “ Be sure your sin will find you out.” Sin then lay at the secret root of the choice : it showed the spirit of Lot when he chose the gardens of Sodom, not the spirit of their father Abraham ; and it proved in the end a disastrous choice : for the tribes on the east of Jordan were first carried into captivity. (2 Kings xxv. 29.) They honestly and bravely helped their brethren in fighting the Canaanites, so far, at least, that forty thousand out of their hundred thousand fighting men crossed the Jordan and took their part in the wars of the LORD under Joshua : but the most of them, with their wives and children and cattle, remained behind. “ Bring us not over Jordan,” was their request, and to this request they held. They are commended by Moses, in Deut. xxxiii. 20, 21, for “ executing the justice of the LORD” by warring against His enemies in Canaan, though they did not care to settle in Canaan ; and they were blessed by Joshua, with a warning (Josh. xxii. 1—6) ; so we cannot believe they meant actually to sin against GOD. But they too much, as we have seen, “ despised the pleasant land,” (Ps. cvi. 24,) “ the land of desire,” as the words mean ; the land which they ought to have “ desired ;” “ the land of desire” to the



Church, because the land of GOD's promise to her. And the result was that they became more and more mixed up with those idolatrous tribes which lay between the Jordan and the Euphrates. They are described in Deut. xxxiii. 20; 1 Chron. v. 18—22; xii. 8—14, as brave and lion-like men, noble and warlike and chivalrous; but their early falling away from GOD, and their early punishment, are described in 1 Chron. v. 25. They were, like the Reubenites, far away from the temple, its influences, its ministers, its ordinances, and they, like them, soon adopted the manners as well as the idols of those among whom they had chosen to live; "They relinquished their settled life, and the defined limits, which befitted the members of a federal nation in covenant with GOD: and they gradually became mere Bedawin of the desert, spreading themselves over the vast deserts between their allotted possessions and the Euphrates," from whose banks GOD had first called Abraham away. And so those who had once thought so little of GOD's promises as to say, "Bring us not over Jordan," were merged in the heathen nations again, and carried off to that land of Assyria to which they had chosen to live in such dangerous proximity.

Thus does history show GOD fulfilling in Providence what He had predicted in Prophecy: thus, was Gad's own sin made providentially to work out its own punishment, that punishment working out the fulfilment of Prophecy: and the spiritual teaching of the story is plain for us who have still, like Gad, to choose between GOD and the world: we can thus learn a valuable lesson which we may ever connect in our minds with the words,

"Gad, a troop shall overcome him:  
But he shall overcome at the last."

The history of Gad is a warning to us against exposing

ourselves to temptations which are of our own, and not of GOD's choosing. Gad had reason bitterly to repent of his worldly choice. If that beautiful home which he chose for himself had been given him by lot, as the possessions of the other tribes were, he might safely have lived in it, and trusted that GOD would take care of him; but as it was his own worldly choice and not GOD's providence that placed him in the midst of temptations, he incurred a very dangerous risk from the attacks of those enemies to which Jacob warned him he would be constantly exposed. Gad's history warns us then against the danger of choosing this present evil world, instead of GOD, as our portion (S. Luke xvi. 25; Heb. xi. 24—26); against the danger of *religious indifference*; indifference to GOD's promises and to our high calling in CHRIST.

There were many heroes for GOD among the children of Gad, for there were many elements of greatness in their character. To this tribe belonged that Jephthah the Gileadite, whose undaunted faith is held up as a pattern to us in Heb. xi. 32, and who appears to have been a native of Mizpeh, a Gadite town, (Judg. xi. 34, 31; Josh. xiii. 26,) to it belonged that courtly Barzillai of Rogelim, or Mahanaim, (2 Sam. xvii. 27; Ezra ii. 61; Josh. xiii. 26,) who with chivalrous courtesy entertained the fugitive king during the unnatural rebellion of his son, and who from a feeling of independence afterwards declined the king's offer of ending his days at court. (2 Sam. xix. 32—39.) And to this tribe belonged those eleven heroes, whose faith doubtless as well as chivalry impelled them to "join their fortunes to David at the time of his greatest discredit and embarrassment, undeterred by the natural difficulties of flood and field;" "whose faces were like the faces of lions, and who were

as swift as the roes upon the mountains; of whom the least could resist a hundred, and the greatest a thousand," (1 Chron. xii. 8, 14, 15,) of whom it is said, "These are they that went over the Jordan in the first month, when it had overflown all his banks." To this tribe belonged also those valiant men of Jabesh Gilead who "went all night, and took the body of Saul and the bodies of his sons from the wall of Bethshan," against which the Philistines had exposed them, then burnt them, burying their bones under a tree at Jabesh, and "observing a strict funeral fast for seven days," (1 Sam. xxxi. 11—13,) an act of rare courage, and showing the same loyalty and delicacy of feeling towards the family of Saul which we notice in Barzillai's conduct towards David, together with a noble gratitude for his former kindness. (See 1 Sam. xi.) And to this tribe belonged another greater than either of these worthies of Gad, for it is probable that the great Prophet Elijah, "of the inhabitants of Gilead," belonged by birth as well as by residence to this tribe.<sup>1</sup> In his wild garb and aspect, his abrupt address, his rapid movements,—so rapid as to evade the most watchful foes, we seem to see some characteristics of these wild troopers of the children of Gad, whom Jacob describes as continually flying from, or pursuing after, a troop of desert horsemen, combined with the dauntless courage and dignified bearing of a prophet and a courtier. But though there were many heroes for GOD in this tribe, and though we obtain a very high idea of a tribe to which such men as these belonged, the children of Gad were for the most part such as we have described them. "They are not all Israel, which are of

<sup>1</sup> The true rendering of 1 Kings xvii. 1, probably is "From Tishbi of Gilead." See Bible Dict. Art. Thisbe and Tishbite.

Israel." (Rom. ix. 6.) The tribe, as a whole, take but a subordinate place in the general history after they have honourably fulfilled their duty in the conquest of Canaan. They are politically unimportant. This comes out in Scripture plainly, though incidentally; e.g., they take no share in the campaign against Sisera: (Judg. v. 17.) Again, after their great victory over the Ammonites under Jephthah they are taunted by the jealous Ephraimites with the scornful title of "Gileadite fugitives" (Judg. xii. 4), words which show that the reproach always clung to them of having deserted their brethren in not crossing the Jordan with them. And in the list of chief rulers of the tribes given in 1 Chron. xxvii. 16—22, we observe the names of Gad and his own brother Asher are alone omitted: neither of these tribes was represented in what we may call in modern language the representative House of Peers which David assembled before his death, and the members of which he addressed on that occasion as "My brethren," as distinguished from those addressed by him in the same verse as, "My people," (1 Chron. xxviii. 1, 2.) The reason why Gad was not represented by any prince of his tribe was, most probably, that like his own brother Asher, he was not of sufficient political importance to be able, or to care, to be represented among his peers in the great council of the nation in David's time. They were in fact a tribe of brave but irregular warriors, and nothing more, as the Prophet Jacob foretold they would be:

"Gad, a troop shall troop upon him,  
And he shall troop at their heels."

We cannot take leave of the history of Gad without dwelling for a moment on the mention in the New Testa-

ment of one important town which was situated within the borders of the tribe, and which seems to give additional point to the lesson of spiritual teaching to be learned from the history. Within the territory of this tribe were many holy places, the names of which recall sacred and mysterious scenes. There was Mahanaim, or "the two camps," where Jacob saw two camps of the "heavenly host" pitched around him (Gen. xxxii. 2 ; Josh. xiii. 26) ; Penuel, where he had seen the face of GOD. (Ib.) Gilead, or Galeed, which witnessed the covenant between him and Laban (Gen. xxxi. 25, 48) ; while across Gad's territory, and almost intersecting it, ran the torrent of the Jabbok, or "stream of wrestling," over which in the dim early twilight he had sent his wives and little children, and by the other side of which he remained to wrestle with GOD, and to obtain the name of Israel. (Gen. xxxii.) And not far distant, in the same tribe was "Bethabara beyond Jordan," where the LORD JESUS was baptized, and from a spot very near to which, Elijah the great prophet of Gad, ascended into Heaven. These recall holy memories of the past. But there was another spot within the territory of the tribe which recalls memories of another and a sadder kind. Gadara, in the land of the Gadarenes, the neighbourhood of which was the scene of our LORD'S miracle of healing the demoniac, as recorded in S. Matt. viii. and S. Luke viii., was one of the chief cities in the north-west boundary of this tribe ;<sup>1</sup> and it is of this Gadara, one of Gad's towns, that it is said, "Behold, the whole city came out to meet JESUS, and when they saw Him they besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts." These

<sup>1</sup> See Oliphant's "Land of Gilead," which shows that Gadara belonged to Gad. It is wrongly marked in some maps.

sad words, "They besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts," seem, as it were, the far-off echo in the New Testament of those sad words in the Old Testament story, "Bring us not over Jordan."

"Bring us not over Jordan!" Such too often would be the prayer of GOD's saints, were it not for His abounding grace and mercy. Bring us not into this affliction: bid us not give up all for Thy sake: bring us not over the Jordan of death, though we know we shall see Thee, O SAVIOUR, at the other side.

"Bring us not over Jordan!" This is, in other words, the same prayer as that in the New Testament parable, "I pray thee have me excused." Have me excused from being confirmed. Have me excused from preparing to partake of that spiritual feast of good things which the LORD JESUS, at such a cost, has prepared for me, but which requires me to give up my worldliness and my ease. And then, if the soul continue in this indifference, indifference becomes actual aversion: and those who began by shrinking back from GOD's call to holiness in the spirit of the prayer of the children of Gad, "Bring us not over Jordan," end with the language of the Gadarenes, who "prayed JESUS to depart out of their coasts." A troop of temptations overcomes them; and they do *not* "overcome at the last."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### *JACOB'S BLESSING ON ASHER.*

GEN. XLIX. 20.

“Out of Asher his bread *shall be fat,*  
And he shall yield royal dainties.”

IT is quite possible that as the Blessings of the Twelve Tribes, which we have in Gen. xlix. and Deut. xxxiii., when taken separately, are twelve prophetic pictures of the future history of each tribe, so the two chapters, taken as a connected whole, may be a sort of prophetic chart of the spiritual history of each faithful soul; quite possible that we have in these prophecies, taken as one connected series, a sort of inspired “Pilgrim’s Progress,” so to speak, an inspired chart of the trials, falls, joys and sorrows, conflicts and victories of the Christian pilgrim, such as those which give its name to that well known and wonderful book,—a divine map, that is, of the religious experience of “every one that is born of the Spirit,” who has not “received the grace of GOD in vain.” No general exposition of these chapters from this point of view could perhaps be successfully attempted; it must be a subject left to each student of Scripture according as it commends itself to his own judgment and experience; but we may believe that these many-sided prophecies of

Jacob and Moses, given as they are so as to supplement one another, and not arranged in the same order,<sup>1</sup> have been so "written for our learning" as to suit the religious experience of the saints. We are taught in S. John iii. 8, that there is an infinite variety, and in S. Mark iv. 28, compared with 1 S. John ii. 13, that there is a certain uniformity in those laws of the hidden life which regulate spiritual progress; and that variety and that uniformity may very probably be traced in the two great chapters of Gen. xlix. and Deut. xxxiii., viewed as prophetic pictures of the privileges, the conflicts, the victories of the Church of God in every age.

But however this idea of the chapters as a connected whole may commend itself to the judgment of the reader, it will probably be found that at any rate the history of the tribe of Asher is eminently suggestive of Christian pilgrimage; that the story, besides being an illustration

<sup>1</sup> The following Table, partly from Bishop Wordsworth, shows the order in which the Tribes are mentioned in the Old and New Testament.

Order of Birth.	Order of Blessings (by Jacob.)	Blessings (by Moses.)	Order of Sealing in S. John's Vision. Rev. vii.
Gen. xxix. ; xxx. ; xxxv. 23.	Gen. xlix.	Deut. xxxiii.	
Reuben, )	Reuben.	Reuben.	Judah.
Simeon, ) Sons of	Simeon.		Reuben.
Levi, ) Leah.	Levi.	Judah.	Gad.
Judah, )	Judah.	Levi.	Asher.
Dan, ) Sons of	Zebulun.	Benjamin.	Naphtali.
Naphtali, ) Bilhah.	Issachar.	Joseph.	Manasseh.
Gad, ) Sons of	Dan.	Zebulun.	Simeon.
Asher, ) Zilpah.	Gad.	Issachar.	Levi.
Issachar, ) Sons of	Asher.	Gad.	Issachar.
Zebulun, ) Leah.	Naphtali.	Dan.	Zebulun.
Joseph, ) Sons of	Joseph.	Naphtali.	Joseph.
Benjamin, ) Rachel.	Benjamin.	Asher.	Benjamin.



of GOD'S witness in prophecy and history, pre-eminently also illustrates the temptations through which different Christians have to pass, or the same Christian at different stages of the religious life.

Jacob's blessing upon Asher is specially interesting to us from its connexion with that one given by Moses to the same tribe (Deut. xxxiii. 24, 25), which contains those well-known words of promise,—words applicable not only to Asher, but to the Church in every age,—words through which the Spirit of GOD has whispered hope to so many a tempted soul in “the dark and cloudy day,” “As thy days, so shall thy strength be.”

Jacob's blessing on the tribe is,

“Out of Asher his bread shall be fat,  
And he shall yield royal dainties;”

of Asher Moses said,

“Let Asher be blessed with children;  
Let him be acceptable to his brethren,  
And let him dip his foot in oil.  
Thy shoes shall be iron and brass;  
And as thy days, so shall thy strength be.”

These two prophecies should be taken together as helping to explain one another: if we compare the one with the other, and so examine their meaning, their historical fulfilment, and their spiritual teaching, the view of the teaching which we have suggested as conveyed by Asher's history will very plainly come out.

Asher occupies the eighth place in the order of birth, and in the order of blessing. His descendants, in common with the tribes of Zebulun, Naphtali and Issachar, were settled in that northern portion of Palestine which was called by the general name of “Galilee of the Gen-

tiles." This name "Galilee of the Gentiles" was peculiarly applicable to Asher, for it was, from first to last, a half Gentile tribe, as much so in our LORD'S time as in the days of Joshua. It lay at the extreme north of the Holy Land, between Mount Lebanon and the Mediterranean Sea ; including within its borders the celebrated cities of Tyre and Sidon. (Josh. xix. 24—31). It is better known to us by the name of Phœnicia or Phœnice, or "The land of the palm ;" a name given to it by the Greeks from the multitude of its palm-groves or palm-trees. It was also called in ancient times Sidonia or Zidonia, "the land of Sidon or Zidon," (Gen. xlix. 13 ; Judg. xviii. 7,) from Sidon the eldest son of that Canaan, son of Ham, on whom his grandfather, Noah, pronounced the curse recorded in Gen. ix. 25—27. We learn from Gen. x. 15—20, that some three or four centuries before the Patriarch Jacob, with his eleven sons, crossed the brook Jabbok, and entered the Promised Land (Gen. xxxii. 22), this old man Canaan, with his eleven sons, had migrated into the same country, which was therefore called Canaan after his name, and peopled with his descendants :<sup>1</sup> among these descendants Sidon, the eldest son, gave his name to that part of Canaan which was afterwards the northernmost portion of the Holy Land, and called as we have said, sometimes Sidonia, "the land of Sidon," sometimes Phœnicia, "the land of the Palm." And this portion which fell to Sidon was afterwards assigned by Joshua to Asher : Sidonia proper roughly coinciding with the territory of the tribe of Asher. It was to this future inheritance of Asher's in the land

<sup>1</sup> Some of these, not included among the "seven nations" of Canaan, seem to have settled to the north of Lebanon, beyond the frontiers of the land promised by GOD to Abraham.

of Canaan, pre-eminently rich and beautiful as its name Phœnicia implied, that Jacob refers in his prophetic blessing on his son, when he says,

“ Out of Asher his bread shall be fat,  
And he shall yield royal dainties.”

Asher, to whom in the spirit of prophecy his dying father assigned this fair inheritance, was, as has been said, the Patriarch's eighth son, he and his own elder brother Gad being the children of Jacob's concubine Zilpah, Leah's maid. He was the youngest of those four sons of the concubines whose “evil report” Joseph brought to his father. (Gen. xxxvii. 2.) The meaning of his name is, like the others, significant and prophetic, the word “Asher” meaning “happy” or “blessed.” This name was given him by Leah in token of her happiness at the birth of her handmaid's child : “Leah said, Happy am I, for the daughters will call me happy ; and she called his name Asher.” (Gen. xxx. 13.) To this meaning of Asher's name Moses refers in his blessing on the tribe, “Let Asher be *blessed* with children.” (Deut. xxxiii. 24.)<sup>1</sup>

Of the Patriarch Asher himself nothing is told us : but we have a few scattered notices of his descendants from which we can trace the history and character of the

<sup>1</sup> It is instructive to notice how this word Asher came to mean happy or blessed. The progress of thought in the meaning of the word Asher seems to have been (and it is constantly meeting us in Holy Scripture) that whatever is good is difficult of attainment, and so brings happiness and a quiet conscience, for before the word *Asher* means happy it means “a step,” as a verb to take a step forward ; our word straightforwardness has the same double meaning. (Lee's Heb. Lexicon.) In Scripture language then to be happy means to have attained by progressive steps to a state of prosperity and quiet, as one whose “steps are ordered by the LORD.”

tribe. We learn two facts about them: first, that their character was naturally warlike and patriotic: this we gather from Judg. vi. 35; vii. 23; 1 Chron. vii. 40; xii. 36; 2 Chron. xxx. 11, 12: they respond to Gideon's call in his war against the Midianites; they are represented by forty thousand valiant soldiers at David's coronation, men who are noticed above the others for their military discipline: and they manifest a patriotic and religious spirit at the time of Hezekiah's great passover, in coming up from their distant homes to Jerusalem, in favourable contrast to the apathy shown by many of their brethren. And yet, secondly, we learn that notwithstanding their naturally noble character, their history is a sad record of failure and deterioration. By comparing Josh. xiii. 6, with Judg. iii. 1—4, we find that they failed to exercise the supernatural strength given to them at the crisis of their national life, when the idolatrous Phœnicians were within their power, and that this supernatural strength was therefore withdrawn, and the Phœnicians were left to prove them. And so they shared with Asher that good land from which they were to have been expelled: and the consequence was that the Baal-worship of this Phœnician nation spread by degrees its infectious poison through the whole kingdom of Israel. An illustration of the effeminate indolence into which the tribe thus fell comes out in Judg. v. 17, where Deborah complains that the men of Asher came not to the help of their brethren in the war against Sisera, preferring to remain in the creeks and harbours of their new allies. In the reign of David the political insignificance into which this brave tribe had sunk is apparent from the fact that it did not furnish a prince, or ruler, or father of the tribe as its representative to serve the king in the

government of the nation. (1 Chron. xxvii., xxviii.) Its name is omitted from the list of patriarchs of the tribes : no prince of Asher took his place in what we may call Israel's House of Peers, the meeting of which is recorded in 1 Chron. xxviii., and the members of which are enumerated in the preceding chapter. (1 Chron. xxvii.) In fact it is to be noticed that alone among the tribes no single name of any political leader of eminence, hero or heroine, is mentioned as belonging to this tribe in Old Testament times. In New Testament times one name shines very brightly out of the general obscurity surrounding it, that of Anna, or Hannah, a prophetess, "daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher," who was privileged to witness the presentation of CHRIST in the Temple, after waiting for His birth during a long life of more than one hundred years (S. Luke ii. 36), and we have two or three interesting notices of the land and towns of Asher in the New Testament. This semi-Gentile region was honoured by a visit from our LORD once at least in His journeys through Galilee, when on the occasion of healing the daughter of the Syro-Phœnician woman, "He entered into a house" in one of Asher's towns on the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.<sup>1</sup> If it was not in a street of one of these two last named cities that the miracle took place, "He must then at any-rate have looked down on the smoking chimneys of their great glass works and dyeing works, on their long rows of warehouses filled with the merchandise of the world ; on their palaces and temples ; on the shipping crowded into their harbours and moles."<sup>2</sup> (S. Matt. xv. 21.) And there is

<sup>1</sup> The great prophet Elijah spent some two years at Zarephath, a town about ten miles south of Sidon (1 Kings xviii.)

<sup>2</sup> Geikie's "Life of CHRIST."

another almost equally interesting mention of the land of Asher in the Acts of the Apostles. Christian missionaries had visited these northern coasts after the persecution about Stephen (Acts xi. 19), and later on we find eminent Christian Churches in two of Asher's towns, Tyre, and Ptolemais, or Acre or Accho, as it was otherwise called. (Judg. i. 31; Acts xv. 3; xxi. 2, 7.) And it is plain that the good seed sown among the people in these parts bore a large harvest; for the last notice we have of them is that interesting scene recorded in Acts xxi. 7, where many Christian families crowded round S. Paul on the beach at Tyre, unwilling to let him go; and then, while waiting for the ship which was to convey him to Ptolemais, kneeled down with him on the shore and prayed. With this visit of S. Paul to Tyre and Ptolemais, Scripture notices of the tribe of Asher are closed, except for the mention of the name in those mystic visions of Ezekiel and S. John which relate to the future. (Ezek. xlvi. 3, 34; Rev. vii. 6.) But in those regions an interesting Christian Church lives on still. In a well known book<sup>1</sup> we have a modern traveller's detailed description of a Sunday service which he attended in a Syrian country church at a spot not far from Achzib, one of Asher's frontier towns (Judg. i. 31), in the coasts of Tyre and Zidon. He was present at a celebration of the Holy Communion there. It was a simple village congregation of Christians of the Holy Eastern Church; but he was told after the service by the aged parish priest who had been officiating, that the church had been recently rebuilt entirely by the offerings of these poor people.

Such are the events of interest connected with the

<sup>1</sup> Tristram's "Land of Israel," pp. 69—72.

land and people of Asher. Let us now see what was the exact meaning of the ancient prophecies of Jacob and Moses concerning this tribe, and how they were fulfilled in Asher's after history. It will be necessary to consider a little in detail the exact language used in them; thus will our attention be fastened on the agreement between the prophecy and its fulfilment, as it was intended by Scripture it should be.

Jacob in his prophetic blessing on Asher speaks thus of the tribe, "Out of Asher his bread shall be fat." Moses in his benediction says, "Let Asher dip his foot in oil." Both these expressions mean the same thing, and we find each of them explained in the character and natural productions of the territory assigned to Asher by Joshua.

The land of Phœnicia, which, as we have seen, was marked out in prophecy for Asher, was rich in the exuberance of Nature's choicest gifts, and in every natural beauty of scenery and landscape. A glance at the map shows what the territory of Asher was. It lay along the bright shore of the Mediterranean Sea, from Mount Carmel northwards. It took in that sacred spot, and the lovely bay of Acre;<sup>1</sup> the great cities of Tyre and Sidon and Zarephath, with their celebrated gardens of tropical fruits, their fisheries, and their merchandise; "all Lebanon," eastern and western range, with

<sup>1</sup> Except the southern extremity of the bay, which belonged to Zebulun. See map in "The Land and the Book." The peculiar assignment to Asher of the region on the coast, more properly belonging to Zebulun, will also be noticed in the map prefixed to this volume. Had it not been for its possession of this maritime portion of the plain of Esdraelon, Asher would have been without corn. For a description of the present condition of the plain, see "Letters from Galilee," in Blackwood's Magazine, Sept., 1883.

its far-famed forests of fir and cedar, its mines of copper and iron ; its mountain villages "clinging like swallows' nests to the sides of its cliffs," and all the maritime portion of the plain of Esdraelon, proverbial for the richness of its corn-growing soil. Nothing was wanting in this rich storehouse of Nature's choicest gifts, though it was chiefly famed for those trees from which oil is extracted, and from which it took its name of "the land of the palm."

Thus, then, we see an exact agreement between the predictions and their fulfilment. The words of Jacob and Moses describe beforehand such a possession for the tribe of Asher as he was afterwards given. Here, as Moses predicted, he could "dip his foot in oil," the oil of those luxuriant olive groves such as still distinguish this region, and of those olive yards on the south-western slopes of Lebanon, which are to this day the most extensive in the country ; while "he could fatten on the 'bread' of the rich plain of Esdraelon, and his fertile upland valleys." The region was a land rich in oil, and in food out of a fertile or fat soil, while there was but little corn in it. And Jacob's language expresses this : the word "bread," which he uses, stands in the original language, as in ours, for food generally, and the word "fat," which he uses, means "fat as oil," or, as we say, "fat as butter." It refers to the land, not to the bread, of Asher, as is implied by a certain peculiarity in the grammatical construction of the original.

But further. The words of Jacob to Asher promise him mineral wealth as well as riches of the soil. He says, Asher's "land shall yield royal dainties," and Moses reiterates and amplifies the same promise even more clearly when he says to the same tribe, "Thy shoes shall be



iron and brass." The meaning of these prophecies is to be seen as plainly as that of the former. It was predicted that the land of this tribe should be rich in artificial as well as in natural productions. "Royal dainties" are in the Hebrew "dainties of a king;" worthy, that is, of being presented as gifts to a king, and of adorning the tables and palaces of monarchs. The word translated "dainties" does not mean delicacies of food only, but luxuries of all kinds, such as would be found in the houses of the great: costly fabrics, articles of jewellery, works of art, products of the loom, treasures of the mine. The word "dainties" is in the original the same as the word "Eden," and is used in Scripture for things beautiful and desirable in dress, merchandise, &c. These predictions were fulfilled in that the royal merchant cities of Tyre and Sidon, the manufacturing town of Zarephath or Sarepta, with its smelting works and brass foundries, and the city of Gebal, or "the Giblites," famous for its stone-masons and ship-carpenters, stood in the territory of Asher (see Josh. xix. 28, 29; xiii. 5; 1 Kings v. 18, (margin); Ps. lxxxiii. 7; Ezek. xxvii. 9). Dyed garments from Tyre, glass ornaments from Sidon, cunning works in brass from Zarephath,—these were among the "royal dainties" which the cities of Asher "yielded;" while from the forests, and quarries, and mines of Lebanon came others also: timber for the navies of the kings of Tyre and of Israel; "cedars of Lebanon exported for the palaces of the kings of Assyria;"<sup>1</sup> metals in a manufactured state from the cities of Asher, called by Moses "shoes of iron and brass."<sup>2</sup> And especially

<sup>1</sup> Pusey on Daniel. This is also often referred to on the monuments.

<sup>2</sup> By "shoes of iron and brass," is meant metals in a manufactured state from the cities of Asher. Ib. p. 251, n. 7.

did Asher "yield royal dainties," dainties worthy to be offered even to the King of kings, when the Temple of GOD at Jerusalem was adorned with works in brass and wood wrought in materials gathered out of her territory, and by workmen under the superintendence of one of her resident engineers (see 2 Sam. v. 11; 1 Chron. xiv. 1; 1 Kings v. 1).

It was in the possession of this favoured portion of Palestine, a land rich in the products of nature and in every variety of scenery; a land of rivers and streams; "a land whose stones were iron, and out of whose hills he might dig brass" (Deut. viii. 9); a land adorned with choice works of GOD and man, that the prophetic blessings on Asher found their fulfilment. When the shepherds of Asher fed their flocks on Mount Carmel, when their mountaineers looked forth from their homes in Lebanon, through the vistas of its magnificent glens, out upon the broad and bright Mediterranean; when their husbandmen gathered summer fruits in the orange-groves of Sidon, they must often have thought (with gratitude to GOD for His goodness) of the blessing bequeathed to them in the prophetic words of their father Jacob,

"Out of Asher his bread shall be fat,  
And he shall yield royal dainties."

But once more. The prophecy of Jacob concludes here: he says nothing of the future history of Asher; for that we turn to the blessing of Moses (Deut. xxxiii. 24, 25) on the tribe, which concludes with those well-known words, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." The different meanings of this many-sided promise, in its application to individual believers now, are well understood by all true servants of GOD, according to their

various experiences ; but we have now to ask, what was its original and historical meaning ? How was it fulfilled in the after history of the tribe of Asher ?

It is with the last two lines of the prophecy of Moses that we are now alone concerned : these are connected together ; they are spoken *to* Asher, not *of* him.

“Thy shoes shall be iron and brass,  
And as thy days, so shall thy strength be.”

What, then, is the full meaning of these words ?

It is not enough to say that the “shoes of iron and brass” refer to the copper mines and iron mines of Phoenicia, or to the metals in a manufactured state, of the foundries of Sidon or Sarepta. These interpretations may be true, but they do not reach the meaning of the double promise contained in the two lines connected together and addressed to Asher.

The language of Moses is very strong. It implies that the Asherites in their future home, given them by Jacob, would be living in the constant presence of enemies, against whom they would need the continual protection of GOD. The exact meaning of each Hebrew word it is not easy or necessary to determine ; but the figurative language sufficiently explains itself. Shoes in the East were not worn at all times, but were only put on by those about to undertake some business away from their homes, such as a military expedition (Isa. v. 27 ; Eph. vi. 15) or a journey (Exod. xii. 11 ; Josh. ix. 5, 13 ; Acts xii. 8). Shoes or sandals, their soles defended as Moses describes, were worn on such occasions as these, as we learn from the Talmud. The feet and legs of infantry were thus defended, as those of Goliath, the champion of the Philistines (1 Sam. xvii. 6). Iron is also in

Scripture the symbol of strength, as in Dan. ii. 40, 41, it symbolises the strength of the Roman Empire ; and in 2 Sam. xxxiii. 7, it is spoken of as defending the feet and legs of travellers and soldiers. In Micah iv. 13, "horns of iron and hoofs of brass," are figurative expressions of the power given to the Church to push down and trample down her enemies ; and in S. John's vision of our LORD returning from His victory over death and the grave, He is twice described as having His feet like fine brass, in token of His irresistible might (Rev. i. 15 ; ii. 18). In this figurative language of Moses, then, Asher is addressed as a member of a nation of foot-soldiers, such as the Israelites all were, not being allowed to keep horses ; as a tribe of soldiers who will constantly need to have their armour on ; not like Zebulun, as men of trade, merchantmen, and fishermen ; not like Issachar, as men resting in their tents ; but as men surrounded by enemies against whom they will need and receive the Divine protection. If, as some think, the word translated "shoes," means not only strong coverings for the feet and legs, but other military defences also, such as bolts and bars, and locks attached to strongholds, or gates of iron and brass, this protection against their enemies is also promised. And then, it is further added, that this defence for the foot-soldier's weakest part, shall never be withdrawn, any more than shoes shod with iron and brass could wear out. Moses says, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be," days meaning days of temptation as well as of life. He doubtless reminds the tribe that as in the wilderness the same Divine strength had been put forth for them in the same way, when "their raiment waxed not old upon them, neither did their feet swell" (Deut. viii. 4), so now in their new home, amid new dangers,

supernatural, unailing, strength would be given them such as they would need.

Thus the blessing of Moses goes beyond that of Jacob ; the latter only speaks of Asher's land ; the former promises Asher preservation from some very great dangers awaiting him there ; and a moment's reflection shows us to what enemies Moses thus significantly refers, and what were the dangers to be encountered by Asher in his new home ; enemies and dangers awaited him there, against which he would need all the protection here promised.

At the time when Moses spoke, and probably as far back as the time of Jacob, the chief maritime and commercial people in the ancient world were the Phœnicians.<sup>1</sup> They were for many centuries the greatest nation of the earth in trade, and commerce, and colonisation ; among the first artists and scholars, as well as navigators and discoverers, of those early days. To them we are said to be indebted for the invention of writing, the art of making glass, the discovery of the purple dye. They were so much before the other nations of the Western world that it was they who introduced the alphabet into Greece just about the time of the Exodus ; and Sidon, their capital city before Tyre was built,<sup>2</sup> was an opulent

<sup>1</sup> "Speaking of Tyre, the Prophet Isaiah says, ' Its antiquity is of ancient days,' xxiii. 7. Even then, B.C. 700, the Phœnicians looked back on a remote past. According to Herodotus, Tyre was founded 2,700 years before CHRIST, though this is only traditional." Geikie's "Hours with the Bible," iii. 346.

<sup>2</sup> Apparently about the time of Jephthah, B.C. 1200, Sidon was attacked and taken by the ships of the Philistines, those "terrible sea-kings" from whom the name of Palestine is derived. Its aristocracy took refuge in Tyre : and after its capture by the Philistines Sidon lost its rank of capital of Phœnicia. See Geikie's "Hours

and trading town when the nations of Europe were sunk in barbarism, and when, as we are told, the only food of the Greeks was acorns and berries of the forests.<sup>1</sup> Their manufactures acquired such a superiority over those of other nations, that in Homer's time<sup>2</sup> whatever was of special elegance or size in works of art, domestic utensils, &c., was called Sidonian or Phœnician. When he would describe a necklace of gold and amber of wondrous beauty, or a silver bowl of marvellous dimensions and divine workmanship, he speaks of it as the work of Sidonian artists, and as brought by Phœnician merchants over the sea; when he would describe an embroidered veil, selected from others as a present for a goddess in a heathen temple, he says it was worked by Sidonian women; and he mentions the interesting fact that children's toys formed a regular branch of Phœnician trade with the Greek cities on the coasts. "And the Phœnicians traded not only in their own manufactures or art creations. Their towns were the ports of Babylon and Nineveh. The commerce of the whole ancient world, from the Persian gulf to the Pillars of Hercules, was gathered into the warehouses of Tyre. The trade routes from all Asia converged on the Phœnician coast; the centres of commerce on the Euphrates and Tigris forwarding their goods by way of Tyre to the Nile, to Arabia, and the West; and on the other hand, the productions of the vast regions bordering the Mediterranean,

with the Bible," vol. iii. pp. 2, 347. Geikie quotes "Mövers, Die Phönizier," 2 vols., as the classical and exhaustive authority on the subject of the Phœnician Empire.

<sup>1</sup> See Mitford's Greece, vol. i. pp. 7, 8, 129; and Bible Dict. Art. "Zidon."

<sup>2</sup> See Homer, *Odys.* xv. 414 and 458; *Il.* vi. 289; xxiii. 744.

passing through the Canaanite capital to the eastern world." The Phœnician flag, in the time of Joshua, waved at once in the British Isles and in the Indian Ocean. The kingdom of Tyre was "the England of that day in its commercial activity and accumulated wealth."<sup>1</sup> But alas! in this case, as in too many others, the greatest refinement in civilisation was seen in connexion with the greatest refinement in crime. Their system of religious worship was the most revolting, cruel, and licentious which perhaps the world has ever seen. In plain language, their ordinary worship was the indulgence of the worst vices of our fallen humanity under the name of religion,—a very deification of immorality, —while their extraordinary acts of devotion, on such occasions as times of pestilence or war, consisted in sacrificing the noblest-born of their little children by burning them alive in the fire to their gods. And it is to this cruel Phœnician infanticide, as copied by the Israelites, that the Psalmist refers in those well-known words, "They sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils, and shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan, and the land was polluted with blood." (Ps. cvi. 37, 38.) And these Phœnicians, a nation so powerful, so wealthy, so interesting, so immeasurably above the Israelites in civilisation, so immeasurably beneath them in the knowledge of God, were, as we have seen, the people in possession of the country destined for the tribe of Asher at the time when Jacob and Moses uttered their prophecies concerning it. When Jacob spoke of Asher's future territory as a land which "yielded royal dainties," he may well have referred to the celebrity

<sup>1</sup> See Geikie, *Ib.* vol. ii. p. 459; iii. pp. 344, 350; iv. p. 43.

which Phœnicia enjoyed for works of art and manufacture ; when Moses spoke of " shoes of iron," these Phœnicians were the enemies against whom he promised Asher protection.

We thus see the full force, and the first historical meaning of that much-loved promise, " As thy days, so shall thy strength be." We cannot conceive any circumstances in which GOD's faithful servants would more need some such special promise of protection than those in which believers were placed who belonged to the tribe of Asher. Here indeed was a danger the prospect of which might well fill an agricultural and simple-minded people like the Israelites with terror and alarm. Here was a trial of faith awaiting Asher, which accounts for the strong language which Moses uses when encouraging him with promises of protection. When about to go into battle against such enemies as these, they might well need the promise, " Thy shoes shall be iron and brass : and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." And this was not the worst : the people of Asher, especially the young people, would need divine help to protect them morally, even more than politically, against such a nation as these Phœnicians were : they would need moral as well as military courage ; they would need strength not only to fight against such enemies in the field, but against the example of immorality set them by a people so accomplished yet so depraved ; in one sense so much above them ; in another so far beneath them.<sup>1</sup> And such two-fold help GOD promised them beforehand by Moses in that figurative language,

" Thy shoes shall be iron and brass ;  
And as thy days so shall thy strength be."

<sup>1</sup> The rich and powerful Phœnicia was to the upper Hebrew



We know, alas ! that Asher did not use the strength which GOD gave him ; that, instead of driving out these Canaanite Phœnicians, the Asherites settled down among them, to their own deterioration and ultimate ruin as a tribe : but we can be in no doubt that GOD gave the strength here promised to Asher, and that if they had only prayed for and used GOD'S promised grace, the military men of this brave and noble tribe would have been able to "drive out" these Phœnicians, who, after all, were chiefly powerful not by land but by sea : but the more the tribe as a whole disobeyed GOD the more would believers need GOD'S grace to remain faithful ; strength to resist the temptations to which they would be exposed ; the temptations arising from a great accession of wealth in their new home, and from being suddenly thrown into the society of a most fascinating, but most corrupt, heathenism.

We see, then, the first meaning of this still precious promise, "As thy days, so shall thy strength be ;" it was originally addressed not to those in affliction, but to those in prosperity ; it was a promise of strength to resist "the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil ;" not those arising from poverty or pain or the like. And as the coming of CHRIST draws more near, the Church will more and more need its fulfilment in its original meaning as addressed to Asher ; the world is becoming more heathen ; those who love CHRIST, and who wish, like Him, to be in the world but not of the world, will need more and more to have strength to resist temptations

classes of that day (the time of Jehoshaphat) what Normandy was to the court of the Confessor, or Paris, under Louis Quatorze, to the later Stuarts. The worship of JEHOVAH might do for the common people, that of Baal was the only one fit for the great. Geikie, *Ib.* iv. 152.

such as assailed believers of the tribe of Asher; who, while mixing in daily life with these fascinating Phœnicians, were, like Anna the prophetess, "looking for redemption in Israel."

But if we turn again for a moment to the history of Asher, in his connexion with this great heathen monarchy of the ancient world, we shall see one other way in which God wonderfully fulfilled in Providence what He had promised in Prophecy; one special fulfilment of the promise "As thy days, so shall thy strength be," which must not be passed over.

It is a striking fact that these Phœnicians, powerful as they were, too powerful for Asher to conquer, left like the Philistines, to prove Israel, and to teach them the art of war, never did, like the Philistines, attempt to subdue or oppress, or even to fight against, the children of Israel. It is remarkable that, though engaged in almost perpetual hostilities with the adjoining nations, the Israelites never once went to war with the Phœnicians, nor the Phœnicians with them. And this is the more remarkable, when we remember how the fierce resentment of these Baal-worshippers against God's people was often provoked to the uttermost by the war which Israel waged against that fearful system of Baal-worship which we have described, and which was the established and endowed religion of the Phœnician nation wherever their power extended, either at home or in the different parts of their wide colonial empire. By the resentment with which Jezebel, a Phœnician princess, sought to slay Elijah, we may know, as it has been remarked, how deeply this powerful heathen nation must have been incensed against Israel in more than one crisis of their history; and traces of such resentment meet us in the fact referred to by the

Prophet Joel and others, that the Phœnicians, when they had the power, even sold the Israelites for slaves. The reason, the only reason, why the Phœnicians never did attack Israel, as has been truly pointed out in the Bible Dictionary, lies in a fact only incidentally mentioned in Scripture, the fact, viz. that providentially the Phœnicians were dependent on the Israelites for corn, and therefore it was for their interest always to be on friendly terms with them. This "land of the palm" abounded in all other natural and artificial wealth, except that corn which is the very staff of life, especially in the East. Of this, as has been said, scarcely any grew there : much was needed for the wants of such a people : and all that was imported there came to them from the land of Israel. We know this independently of Scripture :<sup>1</sup> but it is told us there also : for in that twenty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel which describes the various exports and imports of the Phœnician cities, and their commercial dealings with the different nations of the earth, it is said in the 17th verse that their wheat was imported from Palestine ; Judah and Israel are the only countries mentioned as exporting corn to Phœnicia : through the territory of the former passed those supplies on which Tyre and Sidon and other Phœnician cities depended for their bread. This fact then naturally, but most providentially, would prevent this powerful nation from making war upon Israel, and would make it desire peace almost at any cost. And this dependence of the Phœnicians on the Jews for corn continued to the last. This is the meaning of Acts xii. 20, "Herod was highly displeas'd with them of Tyre and Sidon : but they came with one accord to him, and having made Blastus, the king's chamberlain, their friend,

<sup>1</sup> See Bible Dict., Art. "Phœnicia."

desired peace; because *their country was nourished by the king's country,*" i.e. by Herod's country of Judæa. This fact, of Palestine being the granary of Phœnicia, explains the lasting peace between the two countries. The reason why the people of Tyre and Sidon courted the alliance of Herod, and could not afford to quarrel with him, was the reason why they courted the alliance of David and Solomon and Ahab: "they desired peace, because their country was nourished by the king's country," GOD, according to His promise, thus throwing the shield of His protection between the little tribe of Asher and the powerful Phœnician monarchy.

Thus did GOD make all things work together for the accomplishment of His promises; fulfilling in providence what He had promised in prophecy, as we so constantly find Him doing in the histories of the tribes of Israel. GOD did not place the Asherites in circumstances of temptation, till He had first made "the way to escape that they might be able to bear it" (1 Cor. x. 13). This was the first historical fulfilment of that "exceeding great and precious promise" which has ever since been fulfilled day by day, in a thousand different ways according to the varying circumstances of GOD'S servants in every age: a promise which can never pass away; and one which makes it unnecessary for us to feel anxiety about any future circumstances which can trouble us, because before those circumstances can arise, GOD will have already provided against them, as He did for Asher, to whom He said, when he was entering on his new home, and on new dangers,

"Thy shoes shall be iron and brass:  
And as thy days, so shall thy strength be."

Bishop Wordsworth<sup>1</sup> suggests what is the spiritual, or mystical, teaching to be drawn from Jacob's prophetic blessing on Asher. He says, "After the conflicts of Gad come the blessings of Asher, after the cross comes the crown; after the battles of earth come the beatitudes of Heaven, when the saints will feed on 'royal dainties' at the table of the great King in His palace for ever." This spiritual teaching we may draw from the subject. We may see in Asher's happiness in Canaan, as predicted by Jacob, a pledge and picture of the blessedness of the saints in Heaven. The wonderful preparation made by GOD so many centuries beforehand of a home for Israel to dwell in after the humiliations of Egypt and the temptations of the wilderness were over, was an earnest to them of that "rest which remaineth for the people of GOD." The wondrous beauty of the "land of the palm" would be a constant reminder and assurance to them how transcendent would be the beauty, how refreshing the rest, of that "better country, that is a heavenly," to which as pilgrims and strangers they confessed that they were still journeying. And this is also part of its teaching for us. Our "faith is the substance," indeed, "of things hoped for," our evidence of things which eye hath not seen (Heb. xi. 1). But a meditation on the accurate fulfilment of this old prophecy, and of the love of GOD in giving such a prophecy beforehand, brings that everlasting home within nearer view of the soul: it enables us to see, though through a glass darkly, that land where "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick; the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity:" that which Isaiah so expressively calls "the land of far distances" (Isa. xxxiii. 17, margin, and 24); the

<sup>1</sup> Quoting S. Cyril and S. Ambrose.

land, that is, of joys ever fresh, ever new, never wearying from monotony, never exhausted, never explored : infinite in "far distances" like that land of the palm where the beauties of all lands meet, where the flowers of every clime grow, and the birds of every clime sing ; where we shall see "the King in His beauty," that King Whose presence gives satisfying beauty to the whole : without Whose presence all joys there would be insipid, unsatisfying, transitory : by Whose precious blood all joys there have been purchased.

But this, though part of the teaching to be drawn from Asher's history, is not perhaps the main point of the lesson to be learned from it. This is but teaching which it has in common with that of each of the tribes. The whole land of Canaan is typical of Heaven, as well as Asher's beautiful home. The peculiar teaching of Asher's story is most probably that which has been already pointed out : we may see in it a picture of Christian pilgrimage and of what is perhaps the most dangerous temptation to be encountered by the Christian pilgrim. To refer again to the language of the great Christian dramatist ; as in the allegory the path of the pilgrim lies through scenes of most varied experience and temptations ; leading him, now down the valley of Humiliation ; now by the banks of the river of life ; now amid the streets of Vanity Fair ; now along meadows beautiful with lilies ; now through the region of the Enchanted ground : as at one time the pilgrims are lying "without hope" in the dungeons of the castle of Despair, and, at another, are able to see the very gates of the celestial City from the tops of the Delectable mountains : so it may be in these chapters, which describe the different characters, temptations, chastisements, conflicts and triumphs, of the dif-

ferent tribes of the Israel of GOD. They may set before us the various stages and temptations of our Christian pilgrimage. And if this be so, if we may draw this lesson from them, as in the sins and chastisements of Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, we may see the need of spiritual regeneration and of chastisements for besetting sins : as the conflicts of Gad and of Naphtali may represent to us the Christian's conflict between his two natures, described in Rom. vii., and his "wrestlings" with the powers of evil, described in Eph. vi. :<sup>1</sup>—as we have set before us the enervating prosperity of Issachar, warning us against spiritual sloth ; and the humiliating obscurity of Judah and Zebulun, showing us how souls are trained for work for GOD ;—so we are, perhaps, warned in the history of this tribe, against temptations which those are exposed to, whose lot, like Asher's, is cast in the midst of worldly society, with all the deteriorating fascinations of its amusements, and the corrupting influence of its low standard of Christian morality, and its fashionable tone of "free thought," or "free thinking," falsely so called. Asher's history is a commentary on those words of S. John, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the FATHER is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the FATHER, but is of the world." (1 S. John ii. 15, 16.) And on those words of S. James, "The friendship of the world is enmity with GOD : whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of GOD." (S. James iv. 4.) The temptations symbolised by Asher's history are those to which the allegorist refers, when he describes Faithful resisting

<sup>1</sup> As spiritualised in Hymn No. 91, Hymns Ancient and Modern.

to the death the temptation of that "fair wherein were sold all kinds of vanity: such merchandise as houses, lands, trades, places, honours, preferments, titles, countries, kingdoms, lusts, pleasures."<sup>1</sup>

The special strength promised to Asher by Moses confirms this interpretation. He addresses to him a promise specially needed by the Christian pilgrim who is *in* the world, but not *of* the world, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass." And the language of that magnificent peroration, with which the great lawgiver closes not only his blessings on the tribes, but also his ministry upon earth (Deut. xxxiii. 26—29),—language in which he dwells, under various figures, on the meaning of the word Asher, or happy,—may be taken as addressed to each Christian pilgrim, and as unfolding the meaning of the special promise to this tribe, "as thy days so shall thy strength be."

The figurative language in which the Church is spoken of in Cant. vii. 1, suggests a thought with which we may conclude; for it is similar to that used by Moses to Asher when he says, "Thy shoes shall be iron and brass."

The Bride in the Canticles is in that chapter thus addressed, "How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O Prince's daughter." On this Dr. Littledale, in his Commentary on Solomon's Song, (p. 304,) remarks, after explaining the spiritual meaning of the "shoes" of the Bride as we have done, "The Chaldee paraphrase of this is, 'How beautiful are the feet of Israel, when they go to appear before the LORD thrice yearly with their sandals of yew, and offer their vows and free-will oblations.'" He adds, that on this S. Gregory says, "The Church in her task of

<sup>1</sup> Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress, chapter on "Vanity Fair."



preaching is said to be shod when strengthened by the death of CHRIST to endure all persecutions ;” and that S. Ambrose says, “ The soul which subdues the flesh and keeps it under, using it as a sandal, taking care not to defile it in the mire, is truly beautiful in its progress towards its country.” Then Dr. Littledale remarks, “ As Moses was commanded to put off his shoes when he drew near the holy ground of the burning bush, [and as the priests put off their shoes on entering the Temple], so the time will come when the saints, as they enter the borders of the land of promise, will not merely do as Jews were wont, when entering Palestine again after a journey into Gentile regions, shake off the heathen dust back on its own soil, not suffering it to pass the frontier, but will cast out the very shoe of mortality over Edom, and tread bare-footed those streets of gold where is no mire or defilement :”

“ Our feet be shod as pilgrims,  
With bands of Gospel peace,  
Till life’s long march be ended,  
And strife and struggle cease :  
Till on the ground most holy,  
Our shoes from off our feet  
We put, with holy gladness,  
The pilgrimage complete.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W. C. Dix, quoted by Dr. Littledale from hymn, “ O CHRIST, Thou Son of Mary,” for S. Crispin.

## CHAPTER IX.

### *JACOB'S BLESSING ON NAPHTALI.*

GEN. XLIX. 21.

“Naphtali is a hind let loose :  
He giveth goodly words.”

**T**HE history of the tribe of Naphtali—of its people, its localities, its associations—fills an interesting page in the records both of the Old Testament and of the New Testament Church.

In the Old Testament the tribe of Naphtali is for ever connected with the great victory of Barak over Sisera, and the death of the latter at the hand of Jael. Hazor, the old capital of the Jabins (or the wise), the titular kings of North Canaan in the times of Joshua and Deborah ; Kedesh-Naphtali (or the holy place of Naphtali), the birthplace of Barak the LORD's champion against His enemies, and the place to which he summoned his ten thousand fighting men of Naphtali and Zebulun ; Allon-Zaanaim (or “the spreading tree by Zaanaim”), beneath which was pitched the tent of Heber the Kenite, to the ground of which Sisera was nailed by Jael ; Harosheth of the Gentiles, the residence of Sisera, to which the fugitives were pursued, and from a window in which “the mother of Sisera looked out” for her son who would

never return ;—all these places connected with that great victory of the Old Testament Church were within the borders of the tribe of Naphtali, and are so mentioned in Josh. xix. 32—39, which describes the inheritance of that tribe ; and in Judg. iv. 10—17, which relates the defeat and death of Sisera.<sup>1</sup> It was the men of Naphtali and Zebulun who “by faith” gained that victory over the enemies of the faith. It was Barak of Kedesh-Naphtali who, in the language of S. Paul, “out of weakness was made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the alien” (Heb. xi. 34). It was of the exploits of Barak the hero of this tribe, and of Jael, a heroine of those Kenites who had attached themselves to it, that Deborah the prophetess sang that inspired hymn which we have in the fifth chapter of the Judges.

But if this tribe is interesting to us from the associations connected with it in Old Testament times, it has a far deeper interest for us from its connexion with the history of our Blessed LORD, and of His Apostles in New Testament times. Kedesh, or the holy place of Naphtali (some local sanctuary of primæval times), is also called in the Old Testament “Kedesh in Galilee” (Josh. xx. 7, and xxi. 32 ; 1 Chron. vi. 76) ; so early was the sacred name of Galilee, which was afterwards extended to the

<sup>1</sup> The author of the “Land and the Book” thinks Harosheth was on the Kishon ; that the death of Sisera, and the slaughter of his host, took place in a narrow pass between the river and the mountain somewhere in the neighbourhood of the battle ; and that near these was pitched the tent of Jael. But this theory, though ingenious, is contradicted by Judges iv. 11, 17, which makes the tent in which Sisera was slain to have been pitched near Kedesh ; and by Psalm lxxxiii. 9, 10, which says the flight of Sisera's host was by Endor and Nain, in an opposite direction to where this theory supposes Harosheth to have been.

four northern tribes, given to that "circle" of cities (for so the word Galilee means), of which Kedesh-Naphtali was the centre. In the language of the Old Testament Scriptures Galilee specially means the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali;<sup>1</sup> the great victory of the Church over her enemies, was gained under Barak, by those who even in Old Testament times were called "men of Galilee," that name with which the world afterwards became so familiar. The two tribes together formed the sacred land of Galilee proper: but each has a separate interest of its own. The land of Zebulun, or the "dwelling-place," or the "haven," was the home and dwelling-place of the LORD JESUS for thirty years, during the days of His childhood and boyhood, and of His retirement from public life. Nazareth, where "He grew up as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground;" and "Cana of Galilee," where He worked His first miracle, before bidding farewell to His Mother and His old home life, were in Zebulun. But those cities by the Sea of Galilee "wherein most of His mighty works were done," Capernaum, Bethsaida, Chorazin, and others; those villages of Galilee through which His sacred feet so often travelled when "He went about doing good;" those hill-sides on which He so often sat, when He taught lessons at which the world still marvels, but which the world has not yet learned;—these were mostly in the tribe of Naphtali: its territory was that part of Galilee in which He chiefly worked and taught, and from which He called most of those Galilæan fishermen whom He chose to be His Apostles, and messengers of the Gospel to the world: while to this tribe belonged also the Sea of Galilee, or Gennesaret, or Tiberias—so dear

<sup>1</sup> See Isaiah ix. 1, and S. Matt. iv. 15.

to the hearts of Christians from its holy memories,—as has been well expressed in those lines of the poet :

“ How pleasant to me thy deep blue wave,  
O Sea of Galilee !  
For the glorious One Who came to save,  
Hath often stood by thee.

“ Fair are the lakes in the land I love,  
Where pine and heather grow,  
But thou hast loveliness above  
What nature can bestow.

“ It is not that the wild gazelle  
Comes down to drink thy tide :  
But He that was pierced to save from hell  
Oft wandered by thy side.

“ Graceful around thee the mountains meet,  
Thou calm reposing Sea ;  
But ah ! far more, the beautiful feet  
Of JESUS walked o'er thee.

“ Those days are past—Bethsaida, where ?  
Chorazin, where art thou ?  
His tent the wild Arab pitches there,  
The wild reed shades thy brow.

“ Tell me, ye mouldering fragments, tell,  
Was the SAVIOUR'S city here ?  
Lifted to Heaven, has it sunk to Hell,  
With none to shed a tear ?

“ O SAVIOUR ! gone to GOD'S right hand,  
Yet the same SAVIOUR still,  
Graved on Thy heart is the lovely strand,  
And every fragrant hill.”<sup>1</sup>

It is to one of these animals, which the poet in these verses so accurately describes as coming down from her

<sup>1</sup> M'Cheyne, quoted in “ The Land and the Book,” p. 352.

native mountains to drink of the water of the Lake of Galilee, that the Patriarch Jacob compares the tribe of Naphtali, when he says,

“ Naphtali is a hind let loose :  
He giveth goodly words.”

And we may well believe that it was with prophetic reference to the victory of Barak over Sisera, by which the tribe of Naphtali was so signally delivered by GOD from the enemies surrounding her, and for which she sang a well-known hymn of praise to Him, that Jacob uses this comparison. If we look a little more closely into the meaning of his prophecy, and into the history of the tribe, we shall find that it must be to this event in the history of the Old Testament Church that the prophecy refers ; and that the prophet's comparison holds good if we apply it also to the joyful deliverance of the Church from death and hell by our LORD'S victory over them.

Naphtali was the fifth son of the Patriarch Jacob, he and his own brother Dan being the children of his concubine Bilhah, Rachel's slave. His birth, with the bestowal and meaning of his name, is mentioned in Gen. xxx. 8. The name was given by Rachel to the child to commemorate her “wrestlings” in prayer with GOD for him before his birth : “Rachel said, With wrestlings of GOD have I wrestled with my sister, and have prevailed, and she called his name Naphtali,”—a word coming from *pathal*, to wrestle, and meaning “my wrestling,” or the son of my wrestling. The Chaldee paraphrase is “GOD hath received my request, when I supplicated in my prayer,” which explains the meaning of the name. To pray thus to GOD, as Bishop Wordsworth remarks, was right ; but to do so in the spirit of rivalry with her sister was wrong. It will be found that the name, besides

being thus commemorative, was also prophetic of the future wrestlings or struggles of the tribe of Naphtali with its enemies, and that Jacob refers to its meaning in his prophetic blessing.

We know nothing of the character or history of the Patriarch Naphtali himself, either as a boy or a man, beyond what is generally told us of the rest, except that as in each case the character of the founder of the tribe is repeated in his descendants, we may suppose that he was of a gentle and peaceable disposition, brave, but not naturally warlike or quarrelsome. There is a Jewish tradition that he was a very swift runner, and was the first to bring to Jacob the news that Joseph was alive (Gen. xlv. 25, 26). This tradition has its value, as it shows that the Jewish traditional interpretation of Jacob's words in Gen. xlix. 21, was the same as our own, the hind and the roe being emblems of swiftness and activity.<sup>1</sup> A glance at the map shows the position, and relative situation, of the tribe of Naphtali in the Holy Land, as described in Josh. xix. 32—39, already referred to.

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Pusey has shown that the translation "Naphtali is a spreading terebinth tree," &c., adopted in the Bible Dictionary and elsewhere, is, according to the Hebrew, inadmissible. (See Pusey on Daniel, p. 252, note 2.) He says that rendering is founded on an altered text נַפְתָּלִי, for נַפְתָּלִי: and that the translation, "he giveth forth goodly boughs," is also inadmissible, being founded on substituting "in lieu of נַפְתָּלִי, נַפְתָּלִי (for נַפְתָּלִי), from נַפְתָּלִי, which occurs only in Isaiah xvii. 6, 9, has no plural, and in its own nature would not have one, since it means not 'bough,' generally, but [topmost bough], as we say, 'a leader: ' which would have no plural. "Leaders would of course be a defect." Besides, as Kalisch remarks, Gesenius and others observe that the masculine נַפְתָּלִי, "he giveth," can only refer to Naphtali (נַפְתָּלִי), and not the hind let loose (נַפְתָּלִי נַפְתָּלִי). It is Naphtali, not the hind, that giveth the goodly words.

Northward it was at the apex, or northernmost point of Palestine, adjoining Asher, protecting the northern frontier with the belt of fortresses mentioned in Josh. xix. 35, &c. Southward the tribe extended so as to take in, as has been said, the chief part of the sacred Sea of Galilee, and of the sunny plain of Gennesaret with its tropical fruits and flowers. Possession of this favoured region is expressly assigned to the tribe in the prophetic blessing of Moses upon it (Deut. xxxiii. 23). Of Naphtali he said,

“O Naphtali, satisfied with favour,  
And full with the blessing of the LORD:  
Possess thou the west and the south.”

These words properly mean, “possess thou the sea,” i.e., the Sea of Galilee, and the sunny region bordering on that lake. The word “west” is “sea” in the original; and “the south does not necessarily signify a southern quarter, but a mild sunny region, such as that of Naphtali was, especially that part which bordered on the Sea of Galilee.”<sup>1</sup> And what has been said of our LORD’s preaching in the towns and villages of Naphtali shows how it was that this predicted “blessing of the LORD” rested on this favoured tribe; Bp. Wordsworth, in connexion with this blessing remarks, “Capernaum was in Naphtali, and it may be truly said that when our LORD preached there, Naphtali was ‘satisfied,’ (or satiated,) with favour, and full of the blessing of the LORD.” This remark about Capernaum applies to other towns in the same tribe.

It is hardly correct to say that “the history of Naphtali ends with its burst of heroism in the days of Barak and Jael (Judges iv.), and that it is not mentioned again

<sup>1</sup> Bp. Wordsworth ad loc.



till S. Matt. iv. 13—15." It is true that "with the exception of the transient splendour of the days of Barak and of Gideon, the four northern tribes hardly affect the general fortunes of the nation;" and that Naphtali, like Asher, though not to the same extent, settled among those Canaanites whom he ought to have destroyed, so becoming partially a Gentile tribe (Judg. i. 33; Isa. ix. 1, 2); but we can see from the few occasional notices which we have of the tribe, or of individual members of it, that it continued, in its after history, to deserve the high estimation taken of it by Jacob and Moses in Gen. xlix. 21, and Deut. xxxiii. 23. The territory of the tribe is significantly called in Josh. xx. 7, "Mount Naphtali:" and this expression is descriptive alike of the character of the country and of the inhabitants; they were a people who, with the air of their native mountains, drank in a love of liberty, and a spirit of independence. A favourable impression is given us of them in passages where they are mentioned; see Judg. v. 18; vi. 35; vii. 23; 1 Kings vii. 13, 14, 40; 1 Chron. xii. 34, 40; 2 Chron. iv. 11—16; xxxiv. 6; Ps. lxxviii. 27; Tobit i. 1—18; and we may take these scattered notices as specimens of others which are not given. From these we find that warriors of the tribe rallied round Gideon in his war with the Midianites, and round David when he set up his standard at Hebron. We find "Princes of Naphtali" taking a prominent part in the processional Litany which forms the groundwork of the sixty-eighth Psalm, when David carried up the Ark of God to Mount Zion. We find a widow's son of the tribe of Naphtali selected by King Hiram and King Solomon as the chief architect and engineer at the building of the Temple. And after the fall of the northern kingdom we find cities of Naphtali joining in the religious

reforms of Josiah. Moses addresses Naphtali (Deut. xxxiii. 23) as "Full with the blessing of the LORD." It is a saying of the Jews, (as if in interpretation of this blessing on them,) that though Naphtali lay so far north, members of that tribe were generally the earliest to bring their first-fruits to the Temple, and so were the first to receive the blessing from the Priest; and it is interesting, as if in confirmation of the tribe having a character for zeal in attendance at GOD'S House, notwithstanding the great distance at which they lived from it, to notice the glimpse which we get of a family of Naphtali after the captivity of the ten tribes. Tobit was a member of this tribe, and was among those who were carried captive to Nineveh; and he and his family are described as eminent for their constant observance of religious ordinances, feasts, and almsgiving, and as known also for their piety and devotion in earnest private prayer; the very beautiful prayers, thanksgivings, and prophecies attributed to Tobit in ch. xiii. seem very appropriately uttered by a member of that tribe which took its name from Rachel's successful "wrestlings" with GOD in prayer, and of which it was said in Jacob's prophetic blessing,

"Naphtali is a hind let loose :  
He giveth goodly words."

From these few notices it would seem that Naphtali, as compared with others, was a peace-loving and GOD-fearing tribe, rather than ambitious or warlike; though lovers of freedom, and capable of being roused into deeds of daring heroism. And we are now prepared to see how appropriate was the illustration which Jacob used when he compared Naphtali to a hind or gazelle rejoicing in her escape from the hunters; and how accu-

rately his prophecy was fulfilled by Barak's victory in Old Testament times, and "in the last days" by our LORD'S victory over sin and death.

Among all the animals of Palestine there are none better known or more beautiful than the hind and wild gazelle.<sup>1</sup> Travellers tell us they meet these graceful creatures all through Syria and Palestine, and that the more they see of them the greater is their admiration for them." Holy Scripture, especially in its poetical books, makes frequent mention of these animals under the various names of harts, roes, and hinds. The hart, or hind, is in Scripture emblematical of activity (Gen. xlix. 21; 2 Sam. ii. 18; Isa. xxxv. 6); of gentleness (Prov. v. 19); of feminine modesty (Cant. ii. 7, and iii. 5); of strong maternal affection (Jer. xiv. 5); of loveliness (Cant. ii. 9); of earnest longing after GOD in His ordinances (Ps. xlii. 1, 2). Its shyness and remoteness from the haunts of men are noticed in Job xxxix. 1; its timidity, causing it to cast its young at the sound of thunder, in Ps. xxix. 9; its sure-footed fearlessness in climbing the dizzy heights of cliff and crag, in 2 Sam. xxii. 34; Ps. xviii. 33; Hab. iii. 19. And especially in Solomon's Song both the hart and the gazelle are each constantly referred to as a type of the Divine Bridegroom of the Church; as, e.g. in those well-known words in

<sup>1</sup> The hind is, properly speaking, the female of the stag, or "hart" of Scripture, and the gazelle is the roebuck or "roe."

In Conder's Handbook it is stated that the "hart" of the A. V. (Heb. *Aiyal*, the word used by Jacob) is in reality the fallow deer, the red deer not having existed in Palestine; that the roebuck of the A. V. (Heb. *Tzebi*) is also one of the two species of gazelles common in the country: that the gazelle has been ascertained to exist in Carmel, as well as the fallow deer in the woods of Tabor. (P. 225.)

which, referring to the timid gazelle coming down at night from the mountains to feed on the plains, leaving the covert of its native hills till the morning light warns it to return, the Bride in the Canticles exclaims, "My beloved feedeth among the hills until the day break and the shadows flee away."<sup>1</sup> And further, while these lovely animals are common in Palestine generally, those who have lived in the Holy Land tell us that the land of Naphtali is *par excellence* the land of the gazelle; and the author of "The Land and the Book" says that "the mountains of Naphtali abound in gazelles to this day," (p. 172.)

It is to this active, beautiful, shy, and loveable creature, so commonly to be met with in the mountains of Naphtali, that Jacob, in the spirit of prophecy, compares the tribe which is to spring from his fifth son, when he says, "Naphtali is a hind let loose (or sent forth); he giveth goodly words" (or words of beauty). If we consider these words, we shall see that there can be but one event in the Old Testament to which Jacob here refers in connexion with this tribe of Naphtali, an event as important as any in Old Testament history, the great victory of Barak over Sisera, to which reference has been made above.

In his prophecy Jacob first alludes, as usual, to the meaning of the word "Naphtali," or "wrestling." It is as if he had said, Naphtali is as a gazelle caught in the toils of the hunters, hemmed in by them, but by her struggles she escapes from their snares, struggling like a successful wrestler. He then says he is a gazelle "let

<sup>1</sup> Cant. ii. 16, 17. So explained in "The Land and the Book," the well-known author makes no distinction between the hind and the gazelle; and implies that they are not distinguished in Scripture.

loose;" this expression has a twofold meaning. It is in the original the ordinary word for "sent," and means here as elsewhere, "sent forth," as a stag sent forth, or driven forth, from his covert, which may, when brought to bay, face and scatter his pursuers. But "let loose" also means, "let go," "sent forth free;" the same word is used of Noah's "sending forth" of the raven and the dove from the ark (Gen. viii. 7, 8, 10); of the Priest's "letting loose," or "letting go" the living bird out of the city into the fields in the ceremony of cleansing the leper (Lev. xiv. 7, 53); of the High Priest's "letting go," or "sending away" the scape-goat into the wilderness on the Day of Atonement (Lev. xvi. 21, 22). The word expresses the joy of an animal, which had been a captive, in its first recovery of liberty, as we see a dog bound for joy when it is unchained. We meet with the same word and figure of speech in Job xxxix. 5, "Who hath sent forth the wild ass free?" It is used in Isa. lviii. 6, of "letting" captives "go free." And it is the word so constantly used in Exodus, of Pharaoh "letting the Israelites go." Jacob thus figuratively describes Naphtali rejoicing as a hind "sent forth or let loose." Then he foretells the joy which the tribe will express for its escape and victory, "He giveth goodly words," words of joy and beauty. After its escape and victory the tribe will sing songs of praise. In all this we doubtless have a prophecy of the well-known victory of Barak, the great hero of the tribe of Naphtali, who, sent forth as a hind from her covert in the mountains of Galilee, came down from Mount Tabor to face on foot Sisera's nine hundred chariots of iron; a victory which was followed by Deborah's and Barak's song of praise.

When we remember all the characteristics of the wild

gazelle mentioned in Scripture, and of what it is emblematical there, we feel it was no inappropriate symbol of a tribe which, loving freedom, liked not war for its own sake, though fearless and daring when roused to action; a tribe which, judging by what is told us, loved the House of GOD more than the field of battle. Perhaps, however, at first sight it may not strike us how accurate was the comparison which Jacob here makes between a gazelle sent forth or let loose, and Barak at the head of his little band of ten thousand men of Galilee; but a little examination of what Scripture tells us of this story in Judg. iv. and v. brings out very clearly how accurately Barak is compared to an animal forced against its will to face the hunters, and exulting with joy in its escape from them.

Why it was that the eyes of Deborah and of the nation should be turned on Barak as a fighting leader in the war against Sisera we do not know; hinds are proverbially watchful and wary, and are generally told off as sentinels when deer are herding together; the deer is the most wary of all animals;<sup>1</sup> and it is possible that Barak, who is compared to this animal, may have signalized himself as a wary leader among his countrymen in a defensive or guerilla war against the Canaanites. But however that may be, the illustration is very accurate. Barak was at first timid about obeying Deborah's call, he did not dare to go except she went with him; all that we are actually told about him, except this unwillingness to fight, is the activity and swiftness of his onset down the slopes of Mount Tabor with his band of ten thousand men after him. The word "Barak" means lightning; and like lightning he came, so swift was his onset; he and his

<sup>1</sup> More so than even the wild goose.

band burst, like a storm from the hills, on the hosts of Sisera's army, which was scattered at his approach, discomfited, we are told, not by Barak, but by God Himself. (Judg. iv. 15.) The whole affair was as supernatural as Gideon's victory, with his little band of three hundred men, over the countless host of the Midianites—the victory was gained by faith, not by might, nor by power—the illustration of “a hind let loose,” or “sent forth,” accurately describes Barak's part in it. The battle was not of his choosing, it was rather forced on him by Deborah. The word translated “let loose” is, as we have said, (see p. 91,) the same as that rendered “*sent*” into the valley in Judg. v. 15. There it applies to the “sending forth” by Deborah of the sluggish ass Issachar; here to the “sending forth” of the timid gazelle Naphtali by her. As a gazelle compelled to leave her safe covert in the mountains, so Barak's band, at the bidding of Deborah, descended from the heights of Mount Tabor, where they had been beyond the reach of the chariot-cavalry of Sisera; going down into the plain beneath, as a herd of defenceless deer against those terrible chariots of iron. Deborah expressed how great was this venture of faith in those words of her song, “Zebulun and Naphtali were a people that jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field,” (Judg. v. 18,) i.e. exposed themselves in the open field away from the fastnesses of their native mountains, and from the protection of their fenced cities. The expression “jeoparded their lives unto the death,” is rightly rendered in the margin, “exposed their lives to reproach;” the same word as that so many times used in the Psalms of the “reproaches” or “blasphemies” to which our LORD in His Passion submitted; the mockery and scorn which He endured for us. The use of the

word here, as applied to the men of Zebulun and Naphtali, probably refers to some ridicule or contempt endured by the little band of heroes who, led by Barak, went forth in faith against Sisera's host, "on foot," yet not afraid of his nine hundred chariots of iron. They went down, too, like defenceless deer into the plain, in that they went unarmed either with spear or shield for attack or defence. (Judg. v. 8.) Some think they were entirely unarmed, even as the Israelites were disarmed by the Philistines afterwards. (1 Sam. xiii. 22.) We are told also by Deborah that "the stars out of their courses fought against Sisera" (Judg. v. 20); that "the river of Kishon swept them away;" that "then were the horsehoofs broken by means of the prancings" (Judg. v. 21, 22); expressions which also imply that this victory was gained by the interposition of God.<sup>1</sup> "Wind and storm fulfilling His word," turned the little river into a torrent, and the plain into a morass; and plunging into this quagmire, as the horses and chariots of Pharaoh did in the bed of the Red Sea, the enemies' "horsehoofs were broken by means of the prancings (margin, plungings) of their mighty ones." Then and thus it was that this victory was gained; the battle was the LORD'S: by faith it was won.

In all this, then: in the defencelessness of Naphtali,

<sup>1</sup> A reference to 1 Kings xviii. 44, explains what these expressions in Deborah's song mean. Elijah, looking down from Mount Carmel on the same plain which Deborah looked down on from Mount Tabor, urged upon Ahab to drive at full speed, "Prepare, get thee down, *that the rain stop thee not*;" meaning that if Ahab lingered, the coming storm would make the plain an impassable morass, by the innumerable streams which, after heavy rain, flow from the surrounding mountains into the plain beneath. But what Ahab did, Sisera was not allowed to do.



—deserted by most of his brethren ; hemmed in by the hosts of the Canaanites—in the shrinking timidity of Barak ; in the supernatural deliverance which God wrought for Naphtali by the forces of nature and by the hand of Jael,<sup>1</sup> by which the yoke of the oppressor was broken, and Naphtali was free ; in the exuberance of joy at that deliverance, which found expression in Barak's and Deborah's song, those "goodly words," or "words of beauty," which we have in Judges v., the *Te Deum* which the tribe sang to GOD after the victory—a victory of which the Church still continues to sing in the "goodly words" of her Psalms of praise<sup>2</sup>—in these and other points we see how appropriate is the comparison which the prophet Jacob makes when he says, "Naphtali is a hind let loose;" let loose in the sense of being "sent forth" by Deborah, and in the sense of being "set free" from the yoke of the Canaanites. It must be to Barak's and Deborah's victory, and to their song of praise afterwards, that Jacob prophetically alludes when he says in his dying blessing on the tribe,

"Naphtali is a hind let loose,  
He giveth goodly words."

But lastly : The fulfilment of the blessing of Moses on this tribe by our LORD's preaching within its borders has been already explained ; and that reminds us that Jacob's prophecy also was fulfilled in New Testament times, or, as Jacob expresses it in this chapter, "in the last days," i.e., in the days of the Messiah. Though our

<sup>1</sup> It is a curious coincidence that the word "Jael" is the Hebrew word for hind or gazelle ; the very same word that Jacob uses in this prophecy of Gen. xlix. 21, and that we translate "hind."

<sup>2</sup> Ps. lxxxiii. 9, 10.

LORD was not of the tribe of Naphtali, but of Judah, these words of Jacob to his sons show that it is of CHRIST and His victory that he here mystically speaks, as well as of that gained by Barak; and in proportion as we realise that the destruction of Sisera and the Canaanites was typical of the destruction of Satan, death, and sin, shall we be able to explain any "moral difficulties" which may suggest themselves to us in the story. We shall see GOD directing moral agents, and physical agents alike; in the blow struck by the uplifted arm of Jael, as well as in the destruction wrought by the fury of the elements, we shall see the will of GOD obeyed and His purposes worked out. How then were Jacob's words fulfilled in CHRIST,

" Naphtali is a hind let loose,  
He giveth goodly words?"

All that is said in Scripture about the hind or gazelle, —her grace and beauty, her natural defencelessness, her shy modesty, her loveableness, and gentleness—makes us feel what an apt emblem this animal is of One Who was "fairer than the children of men," Who loved obscurity more than the praise of men, and Who was from the first surrounded by enemies who watched and tempted Him, and at last compassed His death. Next to an innocent "lamb without blemish and without spot," brought to the slaughter, no animal could more fittingly symbolise the character and sufferings of our Blessed LORD than a hunted deer or gazelle. But we are not left to conjecture. If we have authority for saying that all through Solomon's Song, our LORD, as the Bridegroom of the Church, is set before us under the illustration of a gazelle on the mountains, we have authority also for saying that in that twenty-second Psalm, in which our LORD'S

Death and Passion are prophetically described, the same illustration is used : that our LORD'S Passion is there prophetically described under the figure of a hunted deer surrounded by dogs and men. For this (as has often been noticed) is the meaning of the title prefixed to that Psalm of the Passion, as is explained in the margin of our Bibles. It is a Psalm about the "hind of the morning." It has been shown that the titles of these Psalms are probably as old as the Psalms themselves. We may well believe, then, that this "hind of the morning,"—this hind hunted since the morning,—is here one of the titles of the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

How simple, but how full of meaning, is that old title to the twenty-second Psalm when taken in connexion with Jacob's words about Naphtali, and with the same figurative illustration in Solomon's Song ! Taking the old title of this Psalm, as authorising us to apply Jacob's figurative language to CHRIST, we may say the words were first fulfilled in our LORD'S ministry in Galilee, when leaving the privacy of His old home life, He began to preach and teach there, so drawing upon Himself the attention and malice of His enemies. Zebulun, the "haven for ships," the "dwelling-place" of the SON of GOD, was the place of safe retreat, in which, as a gentle gazelle concealed in her covert from the eyes of men and from the fear of the hunters, the LORD JESUS remained hidden in obscurity for thirty years, safe from the power and malice of the world which afterwards crucified Him. And Naphtali was that part of Galilee into which He issued forth from His obscurity, coming forth in obedience to the will of Him Who "sent" Him ; coming out of His retreat as a "hind sent forth ;" coming forth to give us

those "goodly words," those "words of beauty,"<sup>1</sup> which we have in the Gospels; coming forth to be watched and beset by His enemies, as a gazelle pursued to death by the hunters.

Yes! and our Blessed LORD was as "a hind let loose," "a hind sent forth," when He suffered as "a hind of the morning," hunted by His tormentors and judges from place to place on the early morning of Good Friday, till Calvary, where He died, was reached.

Few sights are more touching than that of a noble stag brought to bay at last: surrounded by dogs and men: perhaps with its back against a rock, perhaps standing in the water, which is being dyed with its life-blood, or is closing over its last agonies. If any sight could be more touching, it would be that of a hind thus dying, defenceless and unresisting. And such a touching sight is, in the title of the twenty-second Psalm, suggested to us as a picture of the dying agonies of Him Who was at the last like "a hind let loose," "dogs compassing Him," the "assembly of the wicked inclosing Him," (Ps. xxii. 16.) As a defenceless gazelle driven forth from her covert in the morning, and now surrounded by dogs and pierced by the hunters, so the LORD JESUS died for us; pierced by the shafts of bitter mockery in His tender heart, and by the thrusts of spear and nails in His sacred hands, and feet, and side.

Yes! and our LORD was "the hind of the morning," the "hind let loose," on Easter morning, when triumphant over His foes, He rose from the grave. The resurrection is here, as in Psalm xlix. 15, called "the morn-

<sup>1</sup> It is a curious fact that the modern name of the mountainous district of Naphtali is *Belad Beshorah*, or "the land of good tidings," as if in memory of the "words of beauty" first preached there.

ing ;” then it was on Easter morning, that with the joy of “a hind let loose,” GOD “loosed His pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be holden of it” (Acts ii. 24) ; then He was as “a hind let loose” from the prison of death and the grave. Then it was that GOD made His feet like hart’s feet, setting Him up on high,” (Ps. xviii. 33 ; ) then were His enemies scattered before Him, as the Canaanites before Barak. Then was also the prophecy in its highest sense fulfilled, “He giveth goodly words.” In those “goodly words” which CHRIST spake to His Church when He returned from His victory over death and the grave to meet His disciples in Galilee,—on some mountain of Naphtali,—bringing with Him the good and joyful news of His own resurrection, and of the certainty of ours, if we believe in Him, was this prophecy in its highest sense first fulfilled,

“Naphtali is a hind let loose :  
He giveth goodly words.”

If in the services for the cleansing of the leper, and for the great Day of Atonement, the same expression meets us, as we have seen it does ; if the “bird let loose” in the field, bearing away on its wings the atoning blood and the leper’s defilement, and the “goat let go” in the wilderness, bearing upon his head all the iniquities of the nation, were acted prophecies of CHRIST rising for our justification after bearing away our sins, this written prophecy of “a hind let loose” may also well speak to us of CHRIST’S resurrection after His conquest of death and sin ; as Bishop Wordsworth suggests, “it describes the love of CHRIST, and His ‘goodly words’ of comfort to His Church ; and the reciprocal love of all true Israelites in their ‘wrestlings of prayer’ with Him.”

## CHAPTER X.

### *JACOB'S BLESSING ON JOSEPH.*

GEN. XLIX. 22—26.

“ Joseph *is* a fruitful bough,  
Even a fruitful bough by a well ;  
Whose branches run over the wall :  
The archers have sorely grieved him,  
And shot *at him*, and hated him :  
But his bow abode in strength,  
And the arms of his hands were made strong  
By the hands of the mighty *God* of Jacob ;  
(From thence *is* the shepherd, the stone of Israel :)  
Even by the GOD of thy father, Who shall help thee ;  
And by the Almighty, Who shall bless thee  
With blessings of heaven above,  
Blessings of the deep that lieth under,  
Blessings of the breasts, and of the womb :  
The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the  
blessings of my progenitors  
Unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills :  
They shall be on the head of Joseph,  
And on the crown of the head of him that was  
separate from his brethren.”

**I**N describing the blessedness of the righteous, the sacred writers make frequent use of imagery drawn from trees which grow commonly in Palestine. The palm-tree, never swayed aside from its perfect uprightness ; growing slowly but steadily from century to century ;

yielding in its old age its large clusters of golden fruit from generation to generation (Ps. xcii. 12—14);—the olive tree, its “noble groves spreading like a silver sea along the base of the hills, and climbing their ascending terraces :” striking their roots into the cliffs and crevices of the rocks, and drawing from thence their richest stores of oil (Ps. lii. 8 ; Hosea xiv. 6) ;—the “green fir-tree,” or cypress, the glory of Lebanon, in its majestic beauty, tenacity of life, and undying greenness, through its perpetual supply of sap, in winter and summer (Hosea xiv. 8) ;—these and other trees mentioned in Scripture furnish the sacred writers with favourite emblems of the blessedness of the righteous : they picture to us the never fading freshness of their spiritual strength ; their fruitfulness in good works even to extreme old age ; the continual life of the soul through the unbroken supply of the grace of GOD : speaking by the prophet Isaiah, GOD says, “As the days of a tree are the days of My people” (Isa. lxv. 22) ; and this idea pervades much of the figurative language used in Scripture concerning them.

And especially a tree “planted by the water” is an emblem of the blessedness of the righteous. The Book of Psalms opens with this illustration in well-known words (Ps. i. 3) ; and so in Jer. xvii. 8, the man who trusts in GOD is compared to “a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river.” And in Ezek. xix. 11, the Prophet speaks of the Church of GOD as “a vine planted by the waters, fruitful and full of branches by reason of many waters.” And this last figure is the illustration which Jacob uses in the blessing which he pronounces on Joseph his favourite son, in the retrospect which, in the first half of the blessing, he casts back upon the past, and in the prophetic picture which,

in the second half of it, he draws of the future. All through the lengthened blessing which he gives, though various other imagery is also employed, there runs this idea of a tree planted by a well, flinging its branches far and wide ; watered by the blessed rain of heaven from above, and by springs welling up from the earth beneath. In the first part we have,

“ Joseph is a fruitful bough,<sup>1</sup>  
 Even a fruitful bough by a well ;  
 Whose branches run over the wall ;”

and again in the second part he says,

“ The Almighty shall bless thee  
 With blessings of heaven above,  
 Blessings of the deep that lieth under.”

It is remarkable, as has been said, that Jacob here makes no direct allusion in these words to the division of Joseph's descendants into two tribes : but he had already done this directly in the preceding chapter, pronouncing Ephraim and Manasseh his own children “ as Reuben and Simeon :” and now, though the distinction is forgotten in the overflowing blessing poured forth by Jacob on the head of the greatest of his sons, yet indirectly his blessing refers to the two tribes to spring from Joseph : it is a prophecy of the numerous posterity of Ephraim and Manasseh, which, as two branches from one tree, are to spring from him : and of the double portion in the promised land which the house of Joseph will therefore receive ; “ the luxuriance of the tendrils run-

<sup>1</sup> In the Hebrew it is, “ the son of a fruitful [tree], or of fruitfulness, whose daughters run over the wall.” The construction of the original is peculiar, and its exact meaning obscure.



ning over the wall may well point," as the Speaker's Commentary suggests, "to Joseph's growing into two tribes, whilst none of his brethren formed more than one."

The general meaning of this blessing of Jacob upon Joseph is referred to, and explained, in 1 Chron. v. 1, 2; where we read, "Reuben was the first-born, but his birthright was given unto the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel: Judah prevailed above his brethren, and of him came the chief ruler (or prince); but the birthright was Joseph's." It is this birthright, then, which Jacob now transfers from Reuben to Joseph. These privileges were twofold: a double portion of the father's goods, and dominion over his brethren: these two privileges, which Reuben lost by his sin, were not transferred in full to any other of Jacob's sons; but Joseph had the "double portion," in that two tribes were descended from him, while Judah received the dominion over his brethren, in that his dying father entailed on him the sceptre of sovereignty (ch. xlix. 10), and in that of Judah came the chief ruler or prince, David first, and, "in the fulness of time," Messiah or Shiloh. (Micah v. 2.)

It is to be noticed, then, that this prophecy of Jacob confers on Joseph temporal blessings only. In the abundant blessing here given, in which his dying father pours forth words of natural affection and pride, as well as of inspired prophecy, he does not go beyond the Divine purposes of GOD: not in Joseph, but in Judah, was the old spiritual promise to Abraham to be fulfilled, "In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed:" and the prophecy of Jacob is as remarkable for what he did not, as for what he did, say: the fact that he predicts for Joseph the most numerous posterity, and the largest and

richest portion in the Holy Land, but not the sceptre of sovereignty and independent authority, is the more remarkable when we consider for how long a period the tribe of Joseph did take the lead among the others as it naturally would : when we remember that for more than seven hundred years<sup>1</sup> of the national history, from the time of Joshua to the fall of Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom, the house of Joseph with its dependent tribes exercised independent pre-eminence. It is striking that notwithstanding his father's partiality, and Joseph's high position in Egypt, and the long period of the pre-eminence of the great house of Joseph, the prophet Jacob predicts for him no superior authority over the rest, beyond conferring on him a more numerous posterity, and a double portion in the Holy Land.<sup>2</sup>

This is, then, the general meaning of Jacob's words, as explained by other parts of Scripture. "The birthright was Joseph's :"<sup>3</sup> and this is what Jacob gave him before, and confirms to him now. The blessing is of course full of spiritual meaning, and had in CHRIST and His Church its fulfilment "in the last days." But as far as temporal promises are concerned it will be found that all the blessings of heaven, earth, and sea, which Jacob confers on the house of Joseph, relate to his rich inheritance in Canaan, and were fulfilled in his "double portion" there.

When "the great viceroy of Egypt" knelt down to receive his dying father's blessing, taking his place so humbly among his other brethren, he was in his fifty-

<sup>1</sup> From 1451 B.C. to 721 B.C. The short period of David's and Solomon's reigns was the one brief interval of Ephraim's submission to the house of Judah.

<sup>2</sup> The meaning of the name "Joseph" contained in it a prophecy of numerous descendants. See Gen. xxx. 24.

sixth year. (See Gen. xli. 46, 53; xlv. 11; xlvii. 28.) All the leading particulars of his eventful life,—his birth in the tents of Laban in the ninety-first year of Jacob's life; his prophetic dreams of future greatness; his father's undisguised partiality for him; his brethren's envy; his sale into Egypt; his three years' imprisonment there on a false charge; his subsequent glory in Egypt,—all these events are well known, and need not be repeated. And so as to those points in his history and character in which he was a type of our LORD,—the envy, the humiliations, the calumnies heaped upon him, with the glory which followed, when after thirty years of obscurity he came forth to be the saviour of his native and adopted country;—the new name of "Zaphnath-paaneah," signifying, we are told, "the Saviour of the world," which he received from Pharaoh; the transcendent loveliness of his character, combined with its intellectual greatness; his stainless purity; his readiness to forgive; his tender affection; his plain rebukes of sin; his patient perseverance in trying to reach the consciences of his brethren, and lead them to repentance; his fondness for little children:<sup>1</sup> in all these things there are so many minute points of resemblance between him and our Blessed LORD, that we cannot suppose them to be accidental: we must believe that the life and work of CHRIST were foreshadowed in the history of Joseph, and that Jacob for that reason, among others, calls him by that name which in its full sense can only belong to our LORD, "The shepherd and stone of Israel."

This title given to Joseph—as remarkable in its typical significance as the name of "Zaphnath-paaneah" given

<sup>1</sup> See subsequent chapter on Manasseh for Joseph's love of children.

him by Pharaoh—concludes the first half of the long blessing given him by his father, which is entirely retrospective. The blessing in the original is comprised in eighteen lines of Hebrew poetry: in the first nine lines Jacob speaks of the past; in the second, of the future history of Joseph's house; in the first part of the blessing he refers to Joseph's past humiliations and sufferings, and God's deliverance of him out of them; in the second part he predicts the future greatness of his house, and the magnificence of the portion in the promised land which the tribe of Joseph will receive from Joshua. We shall find it interesting to examine briefly the exact meaning of the whole of the blessing; though the second part only can be strictly called prophetic.

It is most probable that when the prophet Jacob says,

“ Joseph is a fruitful bough,  
Even a fruitful bough by a well;  
Whose branches run over the wall,”

he uses the illustration of a vine tree: “Joseph is a bough of a fruitful vine tree,” would be a fair translation of his words. The Jerusalem Targum is, “I liken Joseph my son to a vine planted by a well of water, that sendeth out her roots to the deep.” “Within the vineyard in the East low walls are sometimes raised for the purpose of supporting the vines: to this practice allusion is made by Jacob as to one with which the vine-dresser was familiar even in those early days. The Persian vine-dressers do all in their power to make the vine run up the wall, and curl ‘over the wall’ on the other side, which they do by tying stones to the extremity of the tendrils. In some other countries the vine is frequently made to entwine on trellises, round a well, where in the heat of

the day whole families collect and sit in the shade. Thus the Patriarch figuratively intimates to his family their obligation to Joseph for the protection and comfort they enjoyed under his government."<sup>1</sup> This is the same illustration which the Psalmist uses in Psalm lxxx. 8, and which he may well have borrowed from Jacob's words. Speaking of the Old Testament Church he says, "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt." That vine, transplanted into Canaan by Joshua, had been planted in Egypt when Joseph had been sold into that country by his brethren : that the branches running over the wall refer to Joseph's two sons Ephraim and Manasseh, to whom in the previous chapter Jacob had promised a numerous posterity, is probable from the fact that "Ephraim" means "double fruitfulness," a meaning which is played upon perhaps by Jacob in the expression "fruitful bough" as applied to Joseph's house : and in blessing Manasseh Jacob had also used a peculiar word which signifies to "multiply as fishes," when foretelling the great numbers of sons and daughters to be descended from him. (See Gen. xli. 52, and xlviii. 16, margin.) Jacob uses the same illustration which is enlarged upon in Ps. cxxviii., "Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house : thy children like olive plants about thy table." For the vine in Scripture is the emblem of fruitfulness ; while the young shoots of the olive tree, embracing and apparently protecting it, aptly symbolise a family of dutiful children : and Joseph appears to have been thus blessed in his children and his children's children. (See Gen. l.) Then, changing his illustration, as he often does in this poem, Jacob goes on to describe under another figure (that of

<sup>1</sup> Morier's Travels, I. 241, quoted in Paxton's Illustrations, ii. 498.

an archer sorely pressed and fighting against great odds,) the temptations and persecutions which Joseph had endured from the envy, hatred, and calumnies of others :

“ The archers have sorely grieved him,  
And shot at him, and hated him.”

The archers, i.e. in the original, “the lords of arrows;” The arrows were the “bitter words” of calumny and falsehood uttered by his brethren and Potiphar’s wife; the shafts of envy aimed at him by the former; the “fiery darts” of temptation to “sin against GOD” aimed at him by the latter. “Sorely grieved” is in the original “they embittered,” made very bitter, from “marah,” made bitter the soul of Joseph, and his life, for many years. So the Psalmist, speaking of the trials which GOD’s servants so often have to endure, says of the wicked, “They shoot out their arrows, even bitter words” (Ps. lxiv. 3, 4); and Jeremiah says, “They bend their tongues like their bow for lies” (Jer. ix. 3). Then Jacob, continuing the same illustration, refers to Joseph’s unswerving faith, and GOD’s providential care of him; His deliverance of him from the pit into which his brethren had cast him, and from the prison into which he was thrown by Potiphar :

“ But his bow abode in strength,  
And the arms (the powers) of his hands were made strong  
By the hands of the mighty One (not GOD) of Jacob :  
From Him is a shepherd (a feeder), a stone of Israel.”

This concluding part of the first half of the blessing is significant : when Jacob says, “From thence is a shepherd, a stone of Israel;” he means, some say, from that time, “from that circumstance” and trial of faith Joseph

came forth to be a shepherd, a stone of Israel. But "from thence" means rather "from GOD;" this he says was the result of his faith; the result of the workings of GOD's providential dealings with him (Gen. xlv. 5); the result of his being made strong by the mighty One of Jacob. Jacob speaks also with a reference to GOD having revealed Himself to him in the night watches at Bethel, when the stones were his pillow. But the plain meaning is, the result of all GOD's dealings was that Joseph was able to be a shepherd, a feeder of Israel: from GOD was the strength which supported Joseph in his afflictions, and made him a governor able to feed and rule both the Egyptians and Israelites, during the seven years of dearth: and a "stone of Israel;" able to build up his father's house which he had kept alive in famine; "the stone which the builders refused became the head of the corner" of the house of Israel. And hence it is said of him in Eccus. xlix. 15, with the same illustration, "Upon the earth was no man born like unto Joseph, a governor of his brethren, *a stay of the people*, whose bones were regarded of the LORD."<sup>1</sup>

The meaning of the second, or prophetic, part of the blessing is plain if we refer to the benediction pronounced by Moses on Joseph in Deut. xxxiii. 13—16, which amplifies the meaning of Jacob's words. Of Joseph Moses said,

" Blessed of the LORD *be* his land,  
For the precious things of Heaven,  
For the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath,  
And for the precious fruits *brought forth* by the sun,  
And for the precious things put forth by the moon."

This explains the words of Jacob,

<sup>1</sup> The words also bear the interpretation given above, p. 17.

“The Almighty shall bless thee  
With blessings of Heaven above,  
Blessings of the deep that lieth under :”

i.e., the inheritance of the house of Joseph shall be made fruitful with rain from Heaven above, and with fountains of living waters springing up from below the earth (Rev. xiv. 7); and it shall be ever enriched with the yearly fruits ripening in their several months.<sup>1</sup> To this he again adds a promise that his children, and his cattle also, shall be multiplied exceedingly, that God shall give him

“Blessings of the breasts and of the womb,”

a prediction fulfilled in his numerous descendants, who were twice as many as those of any other tribe, and who received three portions in the Holy Land, two on the west and one on the east of the sacred river. To this part of the blessing a sad allusion is made by the prophet Hosea nine centuries afterwards, when for the sins of Ephraim the blessing is turned into a curse. (Hosea ix. 11—17.) To this Jacob adds,

“The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the  
blessings of my progenitors  
Unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills.”

These words are also to be explained by comparing them with those of Moses (Deut. xxxiii.)

“Blessed of the LORD be his land,  
For the chief things of the ancient mountains,  
And for the precious things of the lasting hills.”

The Hebrew word which we translate “the utmost

<sup>1</sup> “Crescente lunâ frumenta grandescunt,” Plin. xviii. 30. It has been lately discovered that plants bend and turn towards the moon when shining brightly, as they turn towards the sun.



bound," and which the Septuagint translates "desirable things," is in the original "desire," or "object of desire," (as in Gen. iii. 6; Prov. xiii. 12, &c.) The Chaldee and Vulgate explain it, "Till CHRIST, the desire of all nations, come." The plain meaning is, "Blessings shall be thine, eternal as the everlasting mountains, desirable and precious as the fruits of the vine-clad hills;" a blessing only perfectly fulfilled in a spiritual sense. And Jacob and Moses both add,

"They shall be on the head of Joseph,  
And on the crown of the head of him that was separate  
from his brethren."

Or, as it is in the original, "Who was a Nazar, or Nazarite, among his brethren." Alluding to the fact that for twenty-two years, from his seventeenth to his thirty-ninth year, Jacob mourned for his son as dead, cut off from his brethren; and that Joseph was in another sense separated from his brethren, in that he was consecrated and set apart for GOD.<sup>1</sup>

But the main point in the prophecy is what we have said, a promise of temporal blessings under the illustration of a tree planted by the waters, made fruitful by rain from Heaven above, and by springs from the earth beneath; a promise fulfilled in the mountainous but well watered inheritance given him by Joshua: (see Josh. xiii. 29—32; and Josh. xvi. and xvii.) There are two special features in the proverbial beauty and fertility of the Holy

<sup>1</sup> This perhaps explains the meaning of S. Matt. ii. 23. When our LORD took up His abode in Nazareth, a city proverbial for its bad name (S. John i. 46), He fulfilled no particular prophecy, but those many prophecies which said He should be "separate from His brethren," in the sense of being despised as a Nazarene, and consecrated as a Nazarite.

Land which help us to understand more accurately the meaning of two expressions which both Jacob and Moses use to describe this inheritance of the tribe of Joseph. They promise him

“ Blessings of the deep that lieth under ;  
Blessings of the mountains and hills.”

The first of these promises was fulfilled, and its true meaning may be seen, in the marvellous number of “ living fountains of water,” springing up from the depths beneath the earth, which are even now a marked feature of the land of Palestine, especially of that portion of it which was occupied by the tribes of Ephraim and Western Manasseh.

The word which in Jacob's blessing on Joseph we translate “ the deep,” is in the Hebrew “ the abyss,” the same word as that translated “ the deep,” and “ the great deep” in Gen. i. 2, and vii. 11. “ Blessings of the deep that lieth under,” refer, then, to the copiousness of those springs of water, fed from the depths beneath, for which Palestine is so remarkable. The number of these “ living fountains of water” in the Holy Land, travellers tell us, is prodigious. They were, and still are, called by the Hebrew word “ Ain,” which means an eye (the same word as is here, in Gen. xlix. 22, translated “ well”), for these fountains are as the very eyes of the land for value. “ We might go,” says one traveller, “ all through Palestine, on both sides of the Jordan, and enumerate hundreds of them : powerful fountains, the permanent source of every river in the country. We need not wonder so much is said of them in the Bible, as e.g., by Moses in Deut. viii. 7, when he calls Palestine ‘ a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that

spring out of valleys and hills.' They are the glory and life of the land, and they abound to an extent almost incredible. Many villages in the mountains have scores of smaller springs, which run among the valleys, and give drink to every beast of the field. Some even boast of hundreds of these little sources of fertility."<sup>1</sup> "Perhaps the springs," says another traveller, "are the only objects which in themselves, and apart from their associations, really strike an English traveller with astonishment and admiration. Such glorious fountains are nowhere else to be found. . . . Here a great body of the clearest water wells silently but swiftly out from deep blue recesses at the foot of a rock ; here it eddies forth from the base of a lovely wooded mound ; here it leaps, a large river, headlong, foaming and roaring from its cave. These fountains can hardly be looked upon by the traveller without surprise and emotion."<sup>2</sup> To this peculiar feature of the Holy Land Jacob must have referred when he promised to the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, "Blessings of the deep that lieth under." It is not till we reach the territory of Ephraim, travelling from the south, that these copious fountains of water are met with in any abundance. The south was drier and less productive ; the tract below Hebron was known to the Jews by a term derived from its dryness, "Negeb," or the south country. Here lived Nabal, so chary of giving water to strangers, (1 Sam. xxv. 11.) Here was the "dry and thirsty land where no water is," (Ps. lxxiii. 1.) When we get to the territories of Ephraim and Manasseh all is changed. Jacob promised to Judah rich supplies of wine (Gen. xlix. 11, 12), vines flourish in a dry soil. But

<sup>1</sup> "The Land and the Book," p. 262.

<sup>2</sup> Bible Dict., p. 669.

Joseph was to be as a tree planted by a well of water. To Ephraim and Manasseh Jacob and Moses promised a land richly watered with mountain springs; these are the "blessings of the deep that lieth under;" the "blessings of the deep that coucheth beneath." The wide plains in the heart of the mountains of Ephraim, its streams of running water, its continuous tracts of vegetation, its innumerable fountains and streamlets, its thickly scattered villages, its constant succession of corn-fields and orchards, and not least the beauties of the vale of Shechem, the loveliest of the lovely valleys of Palestine, with its bowers and gardens;—these were among the "precious things" which the lot of God's providence gave to the house of Joseph in their central position in the Holy Land, as He had predicted by Jacob and Moses.

The other feature of the Holy Land which explains the promises in Gen. xlix. 25, 26, and Deut. xxxiii. 15, of "blessings of the mountains and hills," is the peculiar kind of farming and cultivation in use there.

When we think of hilly and mountainous districts, we speak of bleak hills and barren mountains; but the hills and mountains of Palestine were, in the minds of its inhabitants, connected with ideas of all the comforts of home. Their villages and cities were built on the tops or the sides of the hills, and never on the plains; their homes were among mountain heights. The "blessings of the durable mountains and everlasting hills," mean the blessings of cultivation to man and beast; the Jewish husbandman carried the improvement of his land up the sides of the steepest and most rugged mountains to the very top; he converted every patch of earth into a vineyard, or olive plantation; he covered his bare rocks

with soil : and the soil of the Holy Land is of a light loamy nature, and easily cultivated, it is a fine mould without stones, almost without a pebble ; he thus turned the rocks into fruitful fields. Where the steep was too great to admit of an inclined plane, he cut away the face of the precipice, and built walls round the mountain to support the earth, and planted his terraces with the vine and the olive. These circles of excellent soil were seen rising gradually from the bottom to the top of the mountains, where the vine and the olive, shading the intermediate rocks with the loveliest verdure, and bending under the load of their valuable produce, amply rewarded the labours of the husbandman. The remains of these hanging gardens, these terraced plantations, after the lapse of so many centuries, the revolutions of empire, and the long decline of industry, may still be distinctly traced on the hills and mountains of the Holy Land. Every spot of ground was in this manner brought into a state of cultivation, every particle of soil was rendered productive, and by turning a stream of water into every field where it was practicable, and leading the little rills into which they divided it, to every plantation, every tree, and every plant, they secured a constant succession of crops ; and a country so small was able to maintain a population so large as Scripture represents it to have been.<sup>1</sup> When then Jacob and Moses spoke of the blessings of the "everlasting hills" and of the "durable mountains," they may well have referred to these hanging gardens, terrace plantations, and smiling homes which covered the sides of those ancient mountains, and clothed

<sup>1</sup> See "Paxton's Illustrations," Vol. I., pp. 284, 288, from which this description is chiefly taken. Its accuracy is fully endorsed by modern residents in the Holy Land.

the tops of those vine-clad hills : where GOD "made the grass to grow on the mountains, and herb for the use of men."

Thus, as far as Joseph was concerned, is Jacob's blessing to be explained ; such was the historical fulfilment of his prophecy which speaks of Joseph under the double figure of a tree planted by a well of water, and of an archer-shepherd successfully defending himself against his enemies :

"Joseph is a fruitful bough,  
*Even* a fruitful bough by a well ;  
 Whose branches run over the wall ;  
 The archers have sorely grieved him,  
 And shot *at him*, and hated him ;  
 But his bow abode in strength,  
 And the arms of his hands were made strong  
 By the hands of the mighty *God* of Jacob ;  
 (From thence *is* the shepherd, the stone of Israel :)  
*Even* by the GOD of thy father, Who shall help thee ;  
 And by the Almighty, Who shall bless thee  
 With blessings of heaven above ;" &c.

But it is evident that the Prophet's words have a deeper meaning than this ; evident that underneath Jacob's description of the humiliations and glories of Joseph there lies a prophetic reference to "the sufferings of CHRIST and the glory that should follow" (1 S. Pet. i. 11), as has already been suggested.

"Time would fail" us to examine this subject in detail ; but we may, in conclusion, glance at two thoughts suggested by the words, "From thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel."

(1.) These words, like those in the eighteenth verse, "I have waited for Thy salvation, O LORD," are evidently a dying ejaculation of the Patriarch Jacob, and as such

they are in our Bibles marked as a *parenthesis*, for the lines immediately before and after them are connected together, and this connexion is interrupted by this ejaculation. Though therefore there is in them a clear reference to Joseph, they must be spiritually applied to our LORD JESUS CHRIST, Whose "day" the dying patriarch by faith beholds. The titles, Shepherd and Stone, or Rock, of Israel, are so commonly applied in Scripture to our LORD, that we cannot doubt that Jacob also refers to Him when he uses them in this place. In connexion with this interpretation of Jacob's words, Cornelius à Lapede mentions an interesting Jewish tradition about the word rendered "Mighty One," or as we have it, "Mighty GOD," in the twenty-fourth verse, which is used in Scripture as one of the names of GOD.<sup>1</sup> It is a word of three letters, ABR (אֲבִר), and the tradition says that this word of three letters teaches the mystery of the Trinity in Unity; the first letter standing for "Ab," or Abba, FATHER; the second for "Ben," the Hebrew for SON; the third for "Ruach," the Hebrew for HOLY SPIRIT; that the three letters together mean GOD the FATHER, GOD the SON, and GOD the HOLY GHOST; and that as three letters are one word, so these three Persons are one GOD. In this sense of the passage the words "from thence" refer to the preceding words, "the Mighty One of Jacob," or the Triune GOD of Jacob, as we may now render it; and Jacob by implication means that He Whom he calls the "Shepherd and Stone of Israel," is one of the Persons of the ever blessed Trinity, which can be none other than our LORD JESUS CHRIST, Who so often bears these titles.

<sup>1</sup> It is so used only in Gen. xlix. 24; Ps. cxxxii. 2, 5; Isa. i. 24; xlix. 26; lx. 16; and it has then a special pointing.

And in connexion with this application of these words to CHRIST, it is interesting to remember that in the East the "bow" was essentially the shepherd's weapon. This explains the connexion of thought between the words "His bow abode in strength," and the words following, "From thence is the shepherd of Israel." The bow was usually carried by Eastern shepherds with their crook, staff, &c. Thus Virgil tells us that the African shepherd always carried his bow and arrows (Georg. iii. 344, 345), and that the Cretan shepherds were armed with them also (*Æn.* iv. 70). This was an Eastern custom. Such weapons were needed for defence against wild beasts and against robbers; special mention is made of Esau's bow (Gen. xxvii. 3), and of Jacob's bow (Gen. xlviii. 22); and David, the shepherd-king, makes constant reference to his familiar use of the bow and arrows, to a knowledge of them acquired when defending his sheep.<sup>1</sup> While then we can see the meaning of the reference to the bow in connexion with the expression "Shepherd of Israel," as applied to Joseph, we can also see in it a mystical allusion to Him of Whom Joseph was such a striking type. Our LORD is more than once compared to an archer going forth conquering and to conquer; in such passages as Ps. xlv. 5; Hab. iii. 8, 9; Rev. vi. 1, 2, we find the Messiah, the great Shepherd of Israel, so described. He is spoken of in prophecy, and seen in vision, armed with arrows and bow, for the

<sup>1</sup> In Gen. xxxiii. 18, and xlviii. 22, there is mention made by Jacob of one special "portion" of the House of Joseph which he in the spirit of prophecy assigned him, originally bought by Abraham, and recovered by Jacob with his sword and "bow" from the Amorites, called in S. John iv. 5, "The parcel of ground which Jacob gave to his son Joseph."



protection of His people, and the destruction of His enemies. His bow which "abode in strength" was the Cross. The time came when Joseph's bow no longer "abode in strength:" when for the sin of Ephraim GOD said, with reference to this old prophecy, "I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel," (Hosea i. 5;) but the bow which ever "abode in strength" was the Cross of CHRIST, on which, by death, He overcame death; that bow<sup>1</sup> was the bow of our salvation; the Jews shot out "their arrows, even bitter words" of accusation and reviling; "they sorely grieved Him, shot at and hated Him;" but He bore all for our sakes; He saved others, Himself He would not save; and part of the "new song" of praise, which the Church redeemed by His Blood will sing before the throne above, may be well expressed in these words,

"His bow abode in strength,  
And the arms of His hands were made strong  
By the hands of the mighty GOD of Jacob;  
From thence is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel."<sup>2</sup>

(2.) And one further thought is suggested by this dying ejaculation of Jacob, "From thence is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel."

Jacob's thoughts are evidently going back to that scene

<sup>1</sup> When standing opposite to a picture of the Crucifixion, we see it forms exactly the figure of a bow.

<sup>2</sup> In Ps. lxxviii. 9, the ten tribes are called "the children of Ephraim, armed, carrying bows." This is commonly said to mean, "The tribe of Ephraim was famous for its skill in the use of the bow." But it rather implies that the tribe of Ephraim was as it were personified by an archer with a bow, as if in reference to Jacob's prophecy; and "turning back in the day of battle," means the apostasy of the ten tribes of Israel.

at Bethel, when, as he lay sleeping with the stones for his pillow, GOD revealed Himself to him as the Stone of Israel, and as the Shepherd Who would "feed" him all his life long. Amid all the "appearances" of the LORD to him, this was the one which made the deepest impression on his memory in the hour of death. So it was with Moses; in his dying blessing on Joseph (Deut. xxxiii. 16) he refers to GOD's revelation of Himself to him at the bush as the one which, after all GOD's wonderful and amazing revelations to him, had made the deepest impression on him; that scene of the burning bush, with the voice out of it, had reached his heart, and drawn it once for all to GOD. And so in his blessing of Joseph Moses speaks of GOD as, "My dweller in the bush," such is the touching language of the original.<sup>1</sup> So now the dying Jacob refers to the scene which across the waste of seventy years comes to him as vividly as ever, when beneath the starry sky GOD spoke to his soul at Bethel. (Gen. xxviii.) And thus S. Paul is ever and again referring to that revelation of Himself "in him" which the LORD JESUS made beneath the noon-day sun at Damascus. (Gal. i. 16.) So it is with "every one who is born of the SPIRIT;" the experience of each differs in many points; but each looks back on some great change, when, as Jacob at Bethel, or Moses at the bush, or S. Paul at Damascus, he first learned "to know the LORD;" first learned to say of Him, He is "my Shepherd," "my Rock," "my LORD, and my GOD."

<sup>1</sup> See Ainsworth and Poole ad loc.

## CHAPTER XI.

### *MOSES' BLESSING ON JOSEPH.*

(PART I.) *TRIBE OF MANASSEH.*

DEUT. XXXIII. 17.

“His glory *is like* the firstling of his bullock,  
And his horns *are like* the horns of an unicorn (margin):  
With them he shall push the people  
Together to the ends of the earth:  
And they *are* the ten thousands of Ephraim,  
And they *are* the thousands of Manasseh.”

THESE words are the conclusion of the benediction pronounced by Moses, before his death, on the tribe of Joseph. Up to a certain point he does little more than repeat and confirm the blessing given by Jacob to his favourite son. But these concluding words of the seventeenth verse are not found in the prophecy of Jacob in Gen. xlix. 22—26; they are supplementary to it, and an examination of the prophecies about Joseph's future history would be incomplete if we did not consider what Moses says here about him. A comparison between the prophetic blessings of Jacob and Moses has been briefly made in the cases of the other tribes; but in this case it is necessary to do so separately and at greater length; for Moses speaks on a point about which Jacob is silent. He refers to that dark side of the tribe of

Joseph's future history on which the Spirit of GOD does not speak by the mouth of Jacob. The aged father speaks only of the rich inheritance of Ephraim and Manasseh, but says nothing of their future career. He is spared from speaking (perhaps from knowing) of anything in the future which would cloud the brightness of Joseph's present glory ; but Moses speaks of that future which is anything but one of unchequered brightness. For alas ! the after history of the house of Joseph is as unlike as possible to that of their GOD-fearing ancestor. It is a sad story of falling away from GOD. The great tribe of Manasseh, at least that large part of it which never crossed the Jordan, was, though powerful, proud and haughty, independent of GOD and of their brethren, and the first to fall under the chastening judgments of GOD. And Ephraim was even worse. Represented at last by Jeroboam, "who made Israel to sin," his history is soon merged in that of the kingdom of Israel, of every single prince of which it is said, "He did evil in the sight of the LORD," till at last the sentence goes forth from GOD, "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." (Hosea iv. 17.)

It will be found that this sad termination of the once glorious career of the house of Joseph is figuratively but plainly foretold in the words of Moses, if we examine their full meaning, and compare them with the after history of Ephraim and Manasseh. In the figurative illustration of the fierce animals to which he compares the tribes, we shall find there is contained an accurate prophecy of their future history.

We observe that Moses, first, likens the house of Joseph to a young bull, full of grace and beauty ; and that then, continuing, but slightly changing, the illustration, he

compares it to some wild and fierce animal called a unicorn, goring<sup>1</sup> with its horns all before it; its two horns being expressly said to mean the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, which sprang from one house of Joseph, as two horns from the head of the same unicorn. For glory and beauty he compares the tribe of Joseph to a bull; for strength and fierceness to a unicorn.<sup>2</sup>

First, then, we observe Moses compares the tribe of Joseph to a young bull, pushing all before it with its horns in irresistible fury: "Joseph's glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of a unicorn: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth." The best interpretation of these words seems first of all to be that Moses is thus figuratively speaking of his successor Joshua, the great hero of the tribe of Ephraim, and of Joshua's conquest of the Canaanitish nations. We know how people flee in terror when pursued by a bull: and what figure could better describe the way in which the terrified Canaanites scattered and fled before Joshua? or the way in which cities and armies fell before his irresistible onset? It is under this figure of speech that Moses prophetically describes the victories of Joshua the great hero and glory of the tribe of Ephraim and the house of Joseph, when he says "his glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of a unicorn; and that with them he shall push the Canaanitish nations together to

<sup>1</sup> The word translated "pushing" is the ordinary word used for an ox goring with its horns.

<sup>2</sup> The translation "unicorn" is unfortunate, as that implies an animal with one horn, whereas Moses expressly speaks of two. This is explained below.

the ends of the land" of Canaan.<sup>1</sup> This seems the first meaning of the words of Moses ; the bull was the animal which of all others was most admired by the ancients for its stately beauty ;<sup>2</sup> it was the emblem of royalty, and in Egypt the symbol of deity itself, and the object of worship. Joshua is compared to a young bull in its full strength ; and his victories over the Canaanites are described under the figure of an infuriated bull before whose attacks all seek to flee.

But once more. After speaking of Joshua as representing the house of Joseph generally, though a member of the tribe of Ephraim, Moses goes on to describe the two tribes separately under another figure ; he compares the two tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh to the two horns of

<sup>1</sup> The word *âretz* is translated "earth" in this verse, and "land" in the 13th and 28th verses of this chapter. It means either. It is generally thought to mean the land of Canaan here. But if it means that the Canaanites were to be actually dispersed to the ends of the earth, that, in one sense, was true also. Horne (Vol. IV. p. 32) and other writers quote an ancient Phœnician inscription from Procopius (Vandal. lib. ii. c. 10), "*We are they who flee from the face of Joshua the robber, the son of Nun,*" and says, Suidas cites the inscription thus, "*We are the Canaanites whom Joshua the robber expelled.*" They also cite Justin, lib. 36, c. 2, and Tacitus, Hist. lib. v. c. 2, 3, to prove that the Carthaginians and other African races were colonies of refugees who escaped from Joshua. Tacitus uses the expression "*pulsis cultoribus*" to describe the expulsion of the Canaanites ; but he attributes their expulsion to Moses ; one of his numerous inaccuracies on this subject. The story of Procopius is accepted by Rawlinson as authentic history. (Bampt. Lect. 1859, iii. 91.)

<sup>2</sup> From Ælian, Hist. l. ii. 10, and Cicero de Nat. Deorum, l. i. 28, we learn it was regarded by the Egyptians and by the Romans as the most beautiful of created animals, not even excepting man himself. The word here translated "glory" is elsewhere also translated "majesty," and "beauty."

a unicorn (some mammoth denizen of the woods and prairies of the old world, now extinct, but well known then), intimating that in a sense each of the two tribes should resemble that animal. To understand the fulfilment of this part of the prophecy, we must inquire what animal is meant, and see how the after history and character of the two tribes carry out the description here given.

Much controversy has arisen as to what wild animal is here and elsewhere intended under the name of unicorn. It has of course no resemblance to that fabulous animal with one horn with which we are familiar in our armorial bearings, &c., for Moses here speaks of its two horns; but to see how accurate is the comparison which he here makes, we must notice what Scripture says elsewhere of this animal; we shall find that the characteristic points noticed in it correspond closely with those which characterize the two tribes. The Hebrew word is *R'ēhm*,<sup>1</sup> from *Rāh-am*,<sup>2</sup> a word signifying to lift up, or to be lifted up. The animal thus named is mentioned in Num. xxiii. 22; xxiv. 8; Deut. xxxiii. 17; Job xxxix. 9, 10; Ps. xxii. 21; xxix. 6; xcii. 10; Isa. xxxiv. 7. The great strength<sup>3</sup> (or perhaps height) of the animal is referred to in Numbers; its having two horns, in Deuteronomy; its untameable fierceness, which makes it useless for the service of man, in Job xxxix. 9—12. The twenty-second Psalm refers also to its fierceness, coupling it with the lion; the twenty-ninth describes the playful

<sup>1</sup> רֵחַם, R, A, M.

<sup>2</sup> רָחַם, (Zech. xiv. 10.)

<sup>3</sup> The word is in the original "strengths" (plural), or "heights," the same as in Ps. xc. 4 (margin), and may refer to the great height of the animal.

habits of the young unicorn, its skipping like a calf ; the ninety-second speaks of the great length of its horns, or else of the mode in which it uses them, lowering the head and then tossing it up ; and Isaiah, while uniting it with other powerful animals to symbolise the great leaders and princes of hostile armies invading his native land, represents it also as an animal fit for sacrifice, associating with bulls and oxen as with animals of its own species.<sup>1</sup> Putting together, then, what Scripture says of the unicorn here and elsewhere, it seems probable that some species of wild ox, or bison, or "bull<sup>2</sup> of Bashan" is intended, some gigantic and now extinct kind, which may in Bible times have been well known in Palestine, though now no longer found there, as is the case with the lion ; some animal as fierce and dangerous to man, as he was superior to other animals in size and strength. Some have thought a species of wild goat is intended, but this is not likely, for Moses keeps up the same illustration of a bull throughout this prophecy,—first calling Joseph a

<sup>1</sup> The lambs, &c. in Isa. xxxiv. 6, represent the private soldiers ; all the animals mentioned are fit for sacrifice. On Isaiah xxxiv. 7, Bp. Wordsworth remarks that the unicorns in this place represent the strong and lusty enemies of GOD ; and as 'such they are introduced by the Psalmist, together with bulls, into the prophetic scenery of the crucifixion (Ps. xxii. 21). There the proud and fierce rulers of Jerusalem are compared to these animals ; here the unicorns of Edom represent the enemies of GOD and His Church. CHRIST on the Cross was gored by "the horns of the unicorns." In Isaiah it is foretold the Church must look for the same treatment, but that GOD's judgments are reserved for these Edomite enemies of His Church.

<sup>2</sup> "Joseph is compared to a *firstling*, because he took the place of Reuben the first-born (1 Chron. v. 1, 2) ; and to a firstling of *his* bullock, perhaps because the country of Bashan, assigned to Manasseh, was famous for its cattle (Amos iv. 1)."—Bp. Patrick.



bull, known for its grace and beauty, then a wild bull, known for its strength and fierceness. Such an animal is spoken of by Cæsar, and by Pliny, under the name of the Urus ; under this name they describe a gigantic bull in terms not unlike those used in Scripture of the unicorn ; they speak of it as in height and stature scarcely below an elephant, and as so fierce as to spare no creature that crossed its path. In language almost like that of Job xxxix. 9—12, where the Creator calls upon Job to say whether he is able to make the unicorn willing to serve him, Cæsar says, "these animals cannot be tamed and rendered useful to mankind, no not even when young ; that therefore they are taken in pits and destroyed." And Pliny says, "He is of a size little inferior to an elephant, while in appearance, and colour, and figure he resembles a bull ; his strength and velocity are great, and he neither spares man nor beast that comes in his way."<sup>1</sup> And these particulars agree very well with what Scripture tells us of the unicorn.

Such is all we know of the animal referred to by Moses. The two points chiefly insisted on in the notices of it are its great size and strength, and its uselessness for the service of man because of its exceeding fierceness. And Moses may well be referring to these two characteristics of this fierce and dangerous animal

<sup>1</sup> Cæsar, Bell. Gall. vi. 20 ; Pliny, Nat. Hist. viii. 15, 70, quoted in Paxton's "Illustrations," ii. 197.

Conder's Handbook mentions that "it has lately been shown by means of the Assyrian bas-reliefs, that the *Rim* was a species of wild ox, now extinct in Palestine, but which used to be hunted by the Assyrian monarchs. One of these animals is sculptured, with the name—*Rim*—written above it in cuneiform characters. . . . It was a species of the bovine family now extinct in Palestine, perhaps resembling the buffalo."—P. 225.

when he says of the quarrelsome tribe of Ephraim, and of the haughty clansmen of Manasseh,

“Joseph’s horns are like the horns of an unicorn ;  
With them he shall push the people  
Together to the ends of the earth :  
And they are the ten thousands of Ephraim,  
And they are the thousands of Manasseh.”

If we glance at a few leading particulars in the histories of these two tribes, we shall find they accurately fulfil the prophetic description here given of them by Moses. We shall see that in their character and history Ephraim and Manasseh closely resemble that fierce and dangerous animal to which Moses compares them. Moses speaks of both. We must then briefly, but separately, follow out the history of each. Let us look now at what is told us of Manasseh, as he was the first-born.

First. How does the description of Moses apply to Manasseh himself, the father of the tribe?

In Gen. xli. 50, 51, and xlvi. 20, we have the birth of Manasseh mentioned, with the meaning and origin of his name. “And Joseph called the name of his first-born Manasseh” (that is Forgetting), “for GOD, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father’s house.” “The birth of this child in Egypt before the commencement of the famine, was the first alleviation of Joseph’s sorrows since he left his home, and his father who loved him with such passionate affection,” so he called his name Manasseh, or Forgetting.

Two incidents of Manasseh’s boyhood and youth are mentioned, and only two ; we do not know the order in which they occurred. The one is the well known story of Jacob’s putting Ephraim the younger brother into the

place of the elder Manasseh, on the occasion of his blessing, and of adopting, the two lads, when they were of the ages of twenty-one and twenty-two respectively. What it was that Jacob saw, or foresaw, in Manasseh's character which led him thus to degrade and disinherit him we are not told; but it is very possible that as the character of the young man developed itself, Joseph may have acquiesced in the sentence of Jacob upon him, though his natural partiality for him might remain unchanged, as Isaac's did towards Esau; or it is even possible that the other incident recorded of Manasseh may have been the cause of his grandfather's preference of Ephraim. For the next and only other incident mentioned of Manasseh is a marriage connexion which he formed, which may have been as offensive to his grandfather, as Esau's marriages with heathen women were offensive to his father Isaac. For Machir was his eldest and only son<sup>1</sup> (Josh. xvii. 1): and the mother of Machir was some Syrian woman or Aramitess (1 Chron. vii. 14); possibly (as has been suggested) a female captive whom Manasseh had taken in some predatory expedition, like that in which his nephews, the sons of Ephraim, lost their lives. (1 Chron. vii. 21.)

We are told in Gen. l. 23 that Joseph, before his death, took, or bore on his knees, (perhaps thus adopting them, see Gen. xxx. 3), Machir's little children. These chil-

<sup>1</sup> In Josh. xvii. 2, and 1 Chron. vii. 14, "children," or "sons, of Manasseh," mean descendants of Manasseh. The words are often used in this sense in Scripture. We know it is so in this case. By comparing Josh. xvii. 2, 3 with Num. xxvi. 30, 31, we see that Asriel was not the son, but the great-grandson of Manasseh. The text of 1 Chron. vii. can often only be understood when explained by parallel passages in Genesis, Numbers, Joshua, &c. Machir was Manasseh's only son; Gilead his only grandson.

dren were two, a boy and a girl, the boy's name was Gilead, and the girl's Abiah (Num. xxvi. 29; 1 Chron. ii. 21, 24); and it is to be noticed that they are not called "the children of Manasseh," as his other great-grandchildren are called "the children of Ephraim" (Gen. l. 23), but "the children of Machir," as if Manasseh were dead at the time. Joseph's partiality for these two little children may have been partly due to his affection for his first-born son Manasseh, and partly to the circumstance that their mother was a daughter of his favourite brother Benjamin (Gen. xlvi. 21; 1 Chron. vii. 15); Machir, Manasseh's son, having married his cousin, a daughter of his uncle Benjamin. And here we may notice that in this the last glimpse which we get of the great and venerable governor of Egypt, before he was laid on his dying bed, we see him with these two little children on his knees, his great-grandson Gilead on one knee, his great-granddaughter Abiah on the other. Such is the last glimpse given us of Joseph. Here is another point of resemblance between his character and that of our LORD; one more point added to the many others to be noticed. When we see him for the last time he is, like our LORD, calling little children to him, taking them up in his arms and blessing them. And this is also the last mention of the Patriarch Manasseh's name during the stay in Egypt, "Joseph saw Ephraim's children of the third generation; the children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were borne upon Joseph's knees." (Margin.)

These incidents of Manasseh's youth and manhood are all that are told us of his personal history; though, as has been said, we may infer from the nature of the last mention of him, his comparatively early death, and

that to the last he held the first place in Joseph's affections, notwithstanding his faults.

And thus, then, Manasseh when a young man had already, as we have seen, earned a character for himself which might have been appropriately symbolized by a fierce animal impatient of the yoke, for he soon broke away from the restraints of home, and of that strict morality which Joseph had taught by example, and no doubt by precept also; and he seems to have had the same taste for wild desert-broils which his brother Ephraim had.

But it is chiefly in the fierce, restless, and soldier-like character of the men of Manasseh that the prophecy of Moses was fulfilled, and that his comparison held good. We find that the character of the tribe of Joseph, when we look at their history, could not have been more accurately drawn than it is under this figurative illustration of an animal fierce and dangerous,—one so capable of being useful to man, yet so useless by reason of its untameable fierceness, as the wild ox was. But we must speak now only of Manasseh.

That little boy Gilead, whom Joseph nursed on his knee, was afterwards the father of the proud Houses of Gilead and Machir, which are often spoken of in Scripture as furnishing the fiercest warriors who fought under Joshua. And that little girl Abiah, whom we also see Joseph fondling in our last glimpse of him, and who afterwards married her cousin Hezron,<sup>1</sup> a prince of the tribe of Judah, and ancestor of the Messiah, a widower in his sixtieth year (1 Chron. ii. 21), was the founder of the great house of Jair, equally celebrated in the military annals of Manasseh. The exploits of these great clans

<sup>1</sup> First cousin once removed.

of the tribe of Manasseh in connexion with the conquest of the country east of Jordan are constantly referred to by Moses and Joshua. It was by them that the vast territory given to the two-and-a-half Eastern tribes was principally subdued. (See Num. xxxii. 39; Deut. iii. 4, 13—15; Num. xxxii. 42; Josh. xvii. 1.) In the great victories over "Sihon, king of the Amorites, and Og, king of Bashan," of which the Church still sings in the hundred and thirty-sixth, and other Psalms, the chief honour of the day belonged to those troops of half-Jewish half-Egyptian descent which Manasseh brought into the field; it was they who led the forlorn hope in storming the well-nigh inaccessible heights of Gilead, from which the Israelites dispossessed the Amorites; it was before the onset of their irresistible charge that the great hosts gathered under Sihon and Og broke and fled on the fields of Jahaz and Edrei.<sup>1</sup> The tribe of Manasseh was from first to last essentially a military one, not a tribe of shepherds like Reuben and Gad, but a tribe of warriors only. The territory of the gigantic Og king of Bashan was the most difficult of conquest among all the lands for which Israel fought; and the credit of its conquest, and of that of the whole country east of the Jordan is expressly given to Manasseh. "Because he was a man of war, therefore he had Gilead and Bashan:" (Josh. xvii. 1, compared with Num. xxxii. 39.) Where all were "men of war," the children of Manasseh were pre-eminently known by this proud title: the warlike deeds of the clans which formed the two half-tribes of Eastern and Western Manasseh gained for them this name, as the conquerors of hitherto impregnable cities, and of hitherto invincible foes.

<sup>1</sup> There were two cities named Edrei: see Wordsworth on Numb. xxi. 33.

It is victories such as these which had been gained under his own eye, which are here described by Moses under the figure of a fierce unicorn pushing or goring with his horns so that none can stand before him ; as Daniel, by a similar figure of a ram with two horns " pushing westward, and northward, and southward, so that no beast might stand before him," describes the victories of the Medes and Persians under Cyrus (Dan. viii. 3, 4, 20), so Moses says of the house of Joseph,

" His horns are like the horns of an unicorn ;  
With them he shall push the people  
Together to the ends of the earth."

These proofs of the strength, courage, and fierceness of Manasseh Moses had himself witnessed : and under the same symbolical language he predicts that the character of the tribe shall be the same in the future as it had been in the past. And the few glimpses which we get either of the history of the tribe, or of eminent individuals belonging to it, amply show how accurately the prediction was fulfilled. Their character for good soldiers they maintained to the end. Hence it was that to them was committed the defence of the important passes of the plain of Esdraelon,<sup>1</sup> or Jezreel, the battlefield of Palestine, the inheritance of the slothful tribe of Issachar, who had not energy to defend them. The historical importance of the history of Western Manasseh lies in this its occupation of those passes through which alone any hostile forces could enter into the richest and most open part of the Holy Land. On this turns the whole history of Gideon, the great hero of this tribe, who among the hills of Manasseh was raised up to descend upon

<sup>1</sup> See Stanley's "Sinai and Palestine," and Josh. xvii. 11.

the Midianite swarm of invaders. And "the same martial spirit which fitted Western Manasseh to defend the passes of Esdraelon, fitted Eastern Manasseh to defend those of Hauran and Anti-Libanus,"<sup>1</sup> in the far north-eastern frontier. This martial spirit of Eastern Manasseh is seen in the fact that they were able not only to occupy and establish themselves in the wild country of Bashan which they had conquered, but to push their conquests up to the very base of Mount Hermon,<sup>2</sup> in the manner foretold in the figurative language which Moses used. The comparison of the house of Joseph which he makes, as far as the tribe of Manasseh is concerned, thus held good all down their history: it comes out in the few notices we get of the tribe generally, and in those we get of eminent individual founders, or members of it.

But again. The other point noticed specially by Scripture in alluding to the unicorn is its unwillingness to be made use of for the service of man. Its great strength is, after all, more dangerous than useful, because of its untameable fierceness; and in this respect also the character of Manasseh eminently corresponds with that of the fierce beast to which Moses compares him: a wild ox, which might be so useful, but on which none can place a yoke. The challenge of GOD to Job is, "Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee, or abide by thy crib? Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? Or will he harrow the valleys after thee? Wilt thou trust him, because his strength *is* great? Or wilt thou leave thy labour to him? Wilt thou believe him, that he will bring home thy seed, and gather *it into* thy barn?" (Job xxxix. 9—12.) So far from being disposed to submit to the dominion of man, the unicorn is

See Stanley's "Sinai and Palestine."

<sup>2</sup> 1 Chron. v. 23.



extremely hostile and dangerous ; being little inferior to the lion himself in strength and fury. (Psalm xxii. 21.) And this utter uselessness of the unicorn for agricultural purposes, his unfitness to become a domestic animal by reason of his fierceness, accurately describes the character and after history of the house of Joseph, so far as the tribe of Manasseh is concerned. If more were told us about them we should no doubt see this more plainly ; but it comes out clearly enough in what is told. They made, as we have seen, great conquests ; but they made them for themselves, not for GOD and His Church. By far the greatest portion of them remained on the east of Jordan, not caring to cross over that sacred river with the people of GOD ; they preferred to remain in the wild regions which they had conquered, instead of casting in their lot with the Church of GOD in the land promised by Him to Abraham ; like an animal which will not submit to control, they were unwilling to submit their necks to the political yoke of a settled government, or to the religious yoke of tabernacle and temple ordinances. Only a few households, ten in all,<sup>1</sup> probably the humbler families of Manasseh, were willing to cross the Jordan : and among these the inheritance of Manasseh in the promised land was divided : the chief warriors of the tribe, represented by the fierce clans of Machir and Gilead, &c., were content to settle far away from the people of GOD : they as well as Reuben joined in act, if not in words, in that sad and memorable request of

<sup>1</sup> Josh. xvii. 5, 6. Five represented by the male descendants of Joseph, and five by the daughters of Zelophehad. Is this curious prominence given to the *daughters* of the house of Joseph predicted in those words of Jacob, "Whose daughters run over the wall?" (Hebrew of Gen. xlix. 22.)

Gad to Moses, "Bring us not over Jordan" (Numb. xxxii. 5). No excuse is made for them, as there is for Gad and Reuben, that the multitude of their cattle led them to make this request ; for no such reason could be pleaded by them : they were no shepherds, as has been said, but among the fiercest warriors in Israel ; and Scripture gives no other reason for their choice ; "What broke up the great tribe of Manasseh into two parts, and left one to follow the fortunes of its kindred house of Ephraim in the settled life of the western hills, and the other to wander over the pastures and forests of Gilead and Bashan is not expressly said."<sup>1</sup> We therefore cannot speak with certainty as to the reason ; but we may infer that it was what we have said ; that faith led one portion of the tribe to cross the Jordan with the people of God, while unbelief held the other half of the tribe back. No other reason probably can be given except that they wished to remain aloof and independent ; and that when the time came for the fulfilment of God's promises to Abraham, these half-Egyptian warriors neither loved what God commanded nor desired what He promised. Their sin was, we must fear, very great. When we think of the piety of their ancestor Joseph, and of all God's goodness to themselves ; when we think of all the spiritual discipline which they had gone through in the wilderness ; when we consider how they had been incorporated into the Church of God, being "all baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea ;" that "they did all eat the same spiritual meat, and did all drink the same spiritual

<sup>1</sup> Stanley's "Sinai and Palestine." Each half of the tribe had its own representative in what we have called David's House of Peers. The western was represented by Joel ben-Pedaiah : the eastern by Iddo ben-Zechariah (1 Chron. xxvii. 20, 21).

drink" (1 Cor. x. 1—4); this utter indifference to the promised land, this ingratitude to GOD which Manasseh showed, is a sad picture to contemplate. But such was the spirit manifested by them : like the wild animal to which they are compared, which remains wild and untractable, and untamed, and independent of man, and useless to man to the end, so to the end the great tribe of Manasseh remained ; rather pushing themselves into the position of a separate and independent people, than associating themselves with their brethren as members of one body. And Moses foresaw it would be so ; and foretold it in the illustration which he uses. And we know from the song of Deborah how truly his prediction was fulfilled : in the great national crisis of their country's danger in the time of Barak the mighty warriors of Manasseh proved utterly untrustworthy ; Israel's best troops then utterly failed. "Gilead abode beyond Jordan," this is Deborah's complaint when speaking of Eastern Manasseh<sup>1</sup> (Judg. v. 17). And these words, "Gilead abode beyond Jordan," sum up the short after history of the tribe till the end came ; "Manasseh took little [or no] part in public affairs ; they either left that all to Ephraim, or they were so far removed from the centre of the nation as to have little interest in what was taking place." And so the tribe which began to go wrong when they joined in the request of Gad, "Bring us not over Jordan," "abode beyond Jordan" till the end came. And it came very soon ; as early as the days of Jehu the judgments of GOD began to descend heavily upon them (2 Kings x. 32). And the captivity soon closed their

<sup>1</sup> Her complaint included perhaps Gad also : but in Judg. v. 14, Western Manasseh is called "Machir," and is contrasted with Eastern Manasseh, or "Gilead," in Judg. v. 17.

short, but once glorious career; the land which was the first conquered was the first lost; Manasseh was the first to go into captivity; and there we may hope, as they looked back on the past, these proud warriors learned to sing the Church's song in a strange land; there, humbled and chastened, they learned, we may believe, as they had never learned before, to enter into the spirit of those words of humility and faith, "We have heard with our ears, O GOD, our fathers have told us, what work Thou didst in their days, in the times of old: how *Thou didst drive* out the heathen with Thy hand, and plantedst them: how Thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out: for they *got not the land in possession by their own sword*, neither did their own arm save them; but *Thy right hand, and Thine arm*, and the light of Thy countenance, because Thou hadst a favour unto them," (Ps. xlv. 1—3.)

We may, in conclusion, make very brief remarks on two points: (1) As to one or two other events of interest connected with the tribe of Manasseh in Old and New Testament times: (2) As to the mystical interpretation of these words of Moses as a prophecy of CHRIST.

(1.) We have very few historical notices of Western Manasseh, but such as we have are all favourable: all connected with the religious reforms set on foot by pious kings of Judah, and in which members of this tribe are mentioned as taking part, as the revival of religion under Asa (2 Chron. xv. 9), the passover of Hezekiah (xxx. 1, 10, 11, 18), and the subsequent purging out of idolatry (xxxi. 1) from the northern tribes by Josiah (xxxiv. 6), and his restoration of the buildings of the Temple (verse 9). We must not suppose, then, that there were not many servants of GOD in this fierce and warlike tribe, both in Eastern and Western Manasseh. One such at

least belonging to this tribe, Gideon, the greatest of the Judges, is mentioned by S. Paul in Heb. xi. 32, as among those "who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, and obtained promises." And Elisha, the successor of Elijah, was "of Abel-meholah" (meadow of the dance) in the territory of Western Manasseh (1 Kings xix. 16). It was as he was ploughing in his native valley that the stern prophet (himself either belonging to this tribe or to that of Gad), in his long journey from Beersheba to Damascus, cast his mantle upon him as he passed by. Of Western Manasseh *half the land*<sup>1</sup> belonged to the daughters of Zelophehad, as has been said, and was peopled by their descendants; and it is interesting to notice that Dothan, where Joseph as a lad had been bought and sold as a slave, and where Elisha's servant saw that glorious vision of the horses and chariots of fire round about the mount on which the town of Dothan was built, was situated within the territory of this tribe,<sup>2</sup> just separated by intervening hills from the adjoining plain of Esdraelon.

Two or three of the most interesting events in our LORD'S life took place within the territory of Eastern Manasseh, through which He would naturally pass on His journeys between Galilee and Jerusalem, as pilgrims to the feasts usually travelled by the eastern valley of the Jordan on the further side of the river.

We know from 1 Chron. v. 23, that the great tribe of Manasseh pushed its conquests up to Mount Hermon. This mountain had three summits or peaks, which may account for the Psalmist's expression, "O my God, I will remember Thee from the land of Jordan, and of the

<sup>1</sup> Josh. xvii. 1—6. See Maclear's Joshua *ad loc.*

<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings vi. 13—17.

Hermonites" (Ps. xlii. 6), and also for the fact that it is called by three other names in Scripture : Sion (Deut. iv. 48 ; Ps. cxxxiii. 3) ; Sirion (Deut. iii. 9 ; Ps. xxix. 6) ; and Senir or Shenir (Deut. iii. 9 ; 1 Chron. v. 23 ; Cant. iv. 8 ; Ezek. xxvii. 5). And there seems no doubt that it was on one of these three peaks or summits of this "holy mount" Hermon (2 S. Pet. i. 18), that another vision even more glorious than that seen by Elisha's servant was witnessed by S. Peter, S. James, and S. John. It was there that the Transfiguration of our Blessed LORD took place, when Elijah, "of the inhabitants of Gilead," stood once more among his native hills, and when Moses also appeared, "talking with JESUS" of another "Exodus" more glorious than that out of Egypt, even that "Exodus"<sup>1</sup> which our LORD was about to accomplish at Jerusalem by His death and resurrection.

And two other scenes in the life of our Blessed LORD, of equal interest with the Transfiguration, took place within the borders of Eastern Manasseh. The twice-repeated Eucharistic miracle of feeding a multitude took place each time on the Eastern side of that Sea of Galilee, whose sacred waters washed the western boundary of Manasseh beyond Jordan. It was somewhere in that rocky region of that "land of Gilead," which stretches away from the Lake of Galilee to the base of Hermon, that our LORD revealed Himself as the Bread of Life which came down from Heaven, first to a Jewish and then to a Gentile multitude ; the spots where these two miraculous feedings took place were each in the same tribe of Eastern Manasseh ; as if the Good Shepherd

<sup>1</sup> The word used by S. Luke ix. 31, which we translate "decease" or "departure." With this in his mind, S. Peter calls his own departure by this word Exodus in 2 S. Pet. i. 15.

had purposely gone across the Jordan after those sheep which were scattered far from the Temple and people of God, that He might bring them back to the fold which their forefathers had left.

And lastly, the prophecy was fulfilled in a mystical sense. The victories of our Joshua, our "JEHOVAH the SAVIOUR" (as the words Joshua and JESUS mean), over His enemies and ours, were also foretold by Moses in this prophetic blessing on the tribe of Joseph. When He arose from the grave in His Easter beauty and strength ; when "at the sight the keepers did shake and became as dead men," then the words of Moses, as applied to our LORD'S victories over wicked men, over death and sin, and over the powers of evil, began to be fulfilled. Then "GOD arose and His enemies were scattered, and they that hate Him fled before Him:" (Ps. lxxviii. 1.) "The firstling of the bullock," an animal which by the law *must* be sacrificed, was JESUS CHRIST our sacrifice. The horns by which He "pushed His enemies to the ends of the earth," were the horns of the Cross : the horns of that altar to which the world's sacrifice was bound, (see Ps. cxviii. 27; Ex. xxvii. 2); and on which whosoever layeth hold by faith "he shall be saved," (see 1 Kings i. 50; Ex. xxi. 14). The Cross with its outstretched arms and upright beam was, as it were, the horns of an ox, and the horns of a unicorn.<sup>1</sup> And when our Joshua "appears the second time without sin unto salvation," and when "all the idols of earth He shall utterly abolish," then will be seen the perfect fulfilment of this prophecy of Moses, "His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of an unicorn. With them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth." And as horns

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth *ad loc.*

are in Scripture symbolical of strength and power (Deut. xxxiii. 17; 1 Sam. ii. 10); of honour (Job xvi. 15; Lam. ii. 3); of kings and kingdoms (Dan. viii., &c.; Zech. i. 18); Moses in these words utters the same figurative prophecy of the triumphs of the Messiah which Hannah afterwards did when she said of Him, "JEHOVAH shall give strength unto His King, and exalt the horn of His CHRIST" (1 Sam. ii. 10); and of which the Messiah Himself also speaks when He says, "My horn shalt Thou exalt like the horns of a unicorn."<sup>1</sup> (Ps. xcii. 10.)

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew word for horn is *keren*, which in the plural may be used either for horns of animals, or for bright beams of light, or rays of glory, (as in Hab. iii. 4, margin); for the verb *karan* means either to shoot forth horns, (as in Ps. lxix. 31, "hath horns,") or to dart forth rays, or flashes of light, as in Ex. xxxiv. 29, 30, 35, where it is translated "shone," as explained in 2 Cor. iii. 7. The Vulgate of this is, "Ignorabat quod *cornuta* esset facies sua." Moses wist not that his face was *cornuta*, i.e. sending forth rays of light and glory. This expression led to the mistaken representation of Moses in pictures or statues, as wearing horns, much like the horns of unicorns as seen in pictures.

In Scripture the unicorn has different symbolical meanings, among others it is a symbol of Antichrist. The unicorn in heraldry is symbolical of strength; hence perhaps its well-known use as a supporter of the Royal Arms. James I., when only King of Scotland, had two unicorns as supporters of his arms. On succeeding as King of England he substituted one of the unicorns for the Tudor Welsh dragon, and so instituted the present use. The lion which remains is the badge of Eleanor of Aquitaine. The Tudors had the Welsh dragon as the other supporter; Richard III. had a boar; Henry VI. antelopes; Richard II. a white hart, &c., &c. The reader may see the whole matter in detail in Willement's Regal Heraldry.



## CHAPTER XII.

### MOSES' BLESSING ON JOSEPH.

#### (PART II.) TRIBE OF EPHRAIM.

DEUT. XXXIII. 17.

“ His glory *is like* the firstling of his bullock,  
And his horns *are like* the horns of an unicorn :  
With them he shall push the people  
Together to the ends of the earth :  
And they *are* the ten thousands of Ephraim,  
And they *are* the thousands of Manasseh.”

WE have thus far seen that the after history of the tribe of Manasseh justified and fulfilled the prediction of Moses, who figuratively compared the house of Joseph to a wild ox which would not be tamed, the horns of the ox representing the warriors of Manasseh and Ephraim. And now a brief glance at the history of Ephraim will show (even more plainly than did that of Manasseh), how marvellously accurate was the illustration which Moses used when applied to him, and how exactly the prophecy was fulfilled that Ephraim should exhibit the characteristics of a wild ox or bull which would not be tamed, and which would ever be dangerous to passers by. We have already dwelt on the exceeding beauty of that part of the Holy Land where Ephraim

and Western Manasseh lived. We have, therefore, now only to speak of the character of Ephraim, and show how he proved himself unworthy of the fair inheritance allotted to him.

Like so many other men, Ephraim and Manasseh seem to have taken more after their mother than after their father. We have seen this was true in the case of Manasseh; it was probably true also in that of Ephraim, though it comes out more strongly in the case of his sons than in that of the patriarch himself. Unlike his brother Manasseh, Ephraim married respectably in his father's lifetime, though the name of his wife is not mentioned, nor are we told what countrywoman she was. The first thing actually recorded of him, after the incident of his receiving from his aged grandfather the blessing of the first-born, so displacing his brother Manasseh (Gen. xlviii.), is a great sorrow, which in the providence of GOD was allowed to fall upon him. It happened, apparently, during the period before the Exodus, and as this is the only event recorded during that period between Jacob's and Joseph's death, it is, therefore, full of interest. This misfortune which overtook Ephraim was the loss of all his sons, who perished in one day in a border affray with the Philistines of Gath. The story is told in 1 Chron. vii. 20, 21,<sup>1</sup> with which we must compare Numb. xxvi. 35, 36. We thus find that the sons of Ephraim were Shuthelah, Becher, and Tahan, whom the

<sup>1</sup> The text of 1 Chron. vii. must be verified by that of Numbers, or it is unintelligible. See Bible Dict., Arts. "Shuthelah" and "Ephraim." The explanation in the text is founded on these articles. Bp. Wordsworth on 1 Chron. vii. 20, 21, says that the writer traces Shuthelah's line parenthetically till he comes in v. 21 to a second Shuthelah. He then returns to the other sons of Ephraim, Ezer and Elead.

men of Gath, that were born in that land,<sup>1</sup> slew, because they came down to take away their cattle. And Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brethren came to comfort him. And his wife conceived and bare a son, and he called his name Beriah, because it went evil with his house ;” i.e., according to different explanations of the meaning of the word “Beriah,” because “evil” had come upon his house, or because “a gift” of another son was sent to the old man by GOD in place of those whom he had lost. This affray, in which Ephraim’s three sons were killed, was, it would seem, some plundering or cattle-stealing expedition along the sea coast, to rob the cattle of the men of Gath, in which Ephraim’s sons were the aggressors. And this chastening sorrow which fell on the patriarch Ephraim was the first of those many divine chastisements which fell on the tribe in its after history, and to which the prophet long after so touchingly refers in those well-known words, “I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus : Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, *as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke* : turn Thou me, and I shall be turned, for Thou art the LORD my GOD. Surely after that I was turned I repented, and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh : I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still : I

<sup>1</sup> Bp. Wordsworth thinks that “born in the land” means that these Philistines of Gath were born in the Land of Promise, i.e., the land “promised” but not yet “given” to the Israelites, which, therefore, the Ephraimites had as yet no right to invade. He compares the same expression in 1 Kings ix. 18, which means the promised land stretched even as far as where Tadmor was built.

will surely have mercy on him, saith the LORD." (Jer. xxxi. 18—20.<sup>1</sup>)

The story as told in 1 Chron. vii. is obscure, so far that it is impossible to disentangle with certainty the pedigree of Ephraim's sons ; but it is interesting, as "in it we catch the last glimpse of the patriarch mourning inconsolably in the midst of the circle of his brethren ;" and as it shows that Ephraim's sons had even then in those early days developed a character such as Moses afterwards in figurative language attributes to the tribe generally, when he describes it as a wild ox which refuses the yoke. Even in those early times his children broke away from the rules of parental discipline and civilised life ; and the prophet Jeremiah when speaking of Ephraim, uses the same figure of speech as still applicable to the tribe, which Moses had used so long before, describing him as "a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke."

This old record about Ephraim, inserted in the Book of Chronicles, has also value for us for another reason. It traces the descent of Joshua, the great hero of the tribe of Ephraim, from Beriah, whose birth is there mentioned in connexion with it. It is impossible, as has been said, to disentangle the list of names ; but it seems plain from it that Beriah, the son of Ephraim's old age, born after the deaths of his other sons, was the ancestor of Joshua ; the name Beriah (or "gift," as it may mean),

<sup>1</sup> In 1 Chron. viii. 13 we read that some Benjamites with a *Beriah* at their head, *drove* out the *Philistine* inhabitants of Gath, who before had destroyed the band of Ephraimites, whose disastrous expedition from Goshen into Palestine had given occasion to the sorrowful name of *Beriah*. A Beriah of the tribe of Benjamin avenges the old disaster. (Wordsworth.)

commemorating the birth of the child as a gift from the LORD, an unexpected and, perhaps, a miraculous one.<sup>1</sup>

In the greatness of Joshua, and in his victories, the glory of the tribe of Ephraim culminated. It has been often pointed out in how many striking particulars he was a type of CHRIST, in his name, work, &c. It may be that for this reason a mystery surrounds his genealogy, almost resembling that of Melchizedek; and a greater obscurity still rests on the question as to whether he left any descendants. It is most probable, as Scripture says nothing about them, that he did not. When he made the well-known declaration, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Josh. xxiv. 15), he most probably referred to that house of Ephraim, or that branch of it, which he represented; for no mention is made either of his own wife or family, nor, as has been said, of his descendants. He seems, so far as we can tell, to have been dedicated so entirely to the service of GOD that he remained without any family ties of his own. In corroboration of this, there is this blessing of Moses on Joseph now before us, in which he specially refers to his great successor Joshua, "Joseph's glory is like the firstling of his bullock." Joshua was the great glory of the house of Joseph and of the tribe of Ephraim; and

<sup>1</sup> The genealogy of Joshua is given in 1 Chron. vii. 23—27. The text of this chapter is full of difficulties. In the Bible Dict., (Art. Shuthelah), the line of Shuthelah is thus restored, and the genealogy of Joshua is thus traced: (1) Joseph, (2) Ephraim, (3) Shuthelah, (4) Eran or Laadan, (5) Ammihud, (6) Elishama, captain of the host of Ephraim (Numb. i. 10; ii. 18; vii. 48), (7) Nun, (8) Joshua. It is reasonable to suppose that Joshua would be the eighth in descent from Joseph; for at the same period we find Phinehas was the sixth in descent from Levi, Salmon was the seventh from Judah, &c.

as the firstling of a bullock could not be put to labour, but *must* be sacrificed to GOD, so Joshua (if, as seems implied, he had no wife or family of his own), dedicated himself, body, soul, and spirit, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto Him. The very minute resemblance between the Old Testament type and the New Testament antitype, between him who first bore the "name which is above every name," and the great "Captain of our salvation," between the work of Joshua and that of JESUS ("JEHOVAH the SAVIOUR,") adds probability to the conjecture.

But once more. The prediction of Moses that the tribe of Joseph would prove restive and unmanageable as a wild ox or unicorn, was soon fulfilled. It received its first and very speedy fulfilment at the partition of the lands under Joshua, the great representative of that tribe. In Joshua xvii. 14—18, we meet with the first act of insubordination manifested by the children of Joseph, the first manifestation of that insubordinate spirit which was ever ready to break out all down their history. We there read, "The children of Joseph spake unto Joshua, saying, Why hast thou given me but one lot and one portion to inherit, seeing I am a great people, forasmuch as the LORD hath blessed me hitherto?" And then there follows Joshua's ironical reply to their remonstrance, and request for a further grant of land. The men of Ephraim here reminded Joshua of the "blessings" given them by Jacob and Moses, and discourteously complained that he had not been a "better guardian of their interests." They thought Joshua, as their fellow-tribesman, would have shown partiality to them, instead of merely casting lots for their inheritance, as he did for the other tribes; and in their disdain they call that portion which God's

providence had assigned them but *one* lot (Josh. xvii. 14), though a triple division had been made for them, three large tracts of land having been assigned them.

Such, then, were the degenerate descendants of Joseph, the patriarchs of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh : such the insubordinate spirit manifested by both these tribes on their very first entrance into Canaan. The blessings which GOD had especially given them,—their preponderating influence from the earliest times,—instead of stirring up a spirit of gratitude, and unselfishness, and faith in GOD's continued care, produced effects the very opposite. If we study the whole of the passage in Josh. xvii., where the story we have referred to is told, we find this ; they complain that they have been given by GOD a land for which they will have to fight, instead of being able to live at their ease ; they betray a spirit of cowardice instead of a spirit of courage ; a spirit of unbelief where we should have looked for faith ; and they receive from Joshua the reproof which such a spirit deserved : they are plainly told by him that they must, like others, work in the place assigned them.

But this murmuring discontent of the children of Joseph against Joshua is but the first muttering of louder complainings which are heard afterwards all down the history of the tribe of Ephraim.

We find them making complaints, in the same fierce and unreasonable spirit, against Gideon (Judg. viii. 1—3) ; against Jephthah (Judg. xii. 1—7) ; against David (2 Sam. xix. 41—43 ; 2 Sam. xx. 1—5). That "murmuring" of the children of Joseph against Joshua, or rather the spirit from which it proceeded, gave sad indications of danger in the near future which were too soon realised. It foreboded too surely a spirit of pride, envy, and boast-

fulness ; tribal jealousies ; an intractable nature ; an unwillingness to do the work, and take the place, given them by GOD : in politics, insubordination and rebellion ; in religion, false doctrines, heresies, and schisms. In the case of Gideon they show themselves jealous of their brethren of Western Manasseh. In that of Jephthah they are jealous of their brethren of Eastern Manasseh. In that of David they are jealous of the men of Judah. It is ever the same unreasonable complaining spirit that breaks forth. The Ephraimites every now and then are too cowardly, or too slothful, or not energetic enough, to undertake some important enterprise in hand, and then they are jealous at its being undertaken by others, and at the advantages gained in which they themselves had not the chief share : unwilling to undertake the labour at the time, they wish to share the honour afterwards. Manifestations of this spirit of jealous impatience of any rival, and of insubordinate unwillingness to wear any yoke, either of GOD or man, characterise the great tribe of Ephraim, and fully justify the language used by Moses of them in this prophecy. This spirit was kept under in the times of the Judges, by the authority of Samuel, and by the popularity of David ; but it broke out finally under Jeroboam, the acknowledged leader of the tribe of Ephraim, GOD's instrument for punishing the sins of Judah. From that time the rupture between Judah and Ephraim was complete. Thenceforth the history of the tribe of Ephraim is the history of the kingdom of Israel. In throwing off the yoke of the house of David, Jeroboam and Ephraim threw off also the yoke of the law of Moses imposed on them by GOD. And, after all, the great public act of Jeroboam, "who made Israel to sin," by setting up idols in Dan and Beersheba, had long be-



fore had its counterpart in the secret idolatry of Micah of Mount Ephraim and his mother, as far back as the period immediately succeeding on the death of Joshua. (Judg. xvii. and xviii.) That was the beginning of the idolatry in Israel; and the deadly poison soon spread from the tribe of Ephraim to that of Dan; and we know not how far the leaven insidiously introduced by the woman of Mount Ephraim and her son spread into the other tribes besides Dan. The omission of the names of Ephraim and Dan from the list of the sealed tribes in the vision of Rev. vii., marks the displeasure of Scripture against them, which may be accounted for by the fact that each of these tribes was equally guilty of introducing idolatry into Israel. At any rate, the spirit of unwillingness to submit to the yoke of religious authority and the positive commands of GOD manifested itself all down Ephraim's history, side by side with the spirit of insubordination to the lawful authority of man, which was, as we have seen, so characteristic of the tribe. Jeroboam, the leader of Ephraim, was the first instance of that political dissent which is so common now among ourselves, who, like Ephraim, boast of our independence.

To the mind of Moses, then, who saw into futurity, who foresaw the political and the religious insubordination of the two tribes descended from Joseph, no symbol could appear more appropriate in describing them than that of a wild ox, or bull, or unicorn of the prairie and the forest, which no man could tame, on the neck of which no man could safely impose a yoke for field labour; whom no man could induce to take his share in that agricultural work for which oxen are specially suited; and we cannot but be struck with the perfect and un-

designed agreement of facts in history with prophecies uttered so long before: "Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee? or abide by thy crib? Canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow, or will he harrow the valleys after thee?" Such is the challenge of the Almighty to Job (ch. xxxix. 9). And until the fierce unicorn or the wild bull can be tamed and trained to labour,—so Moses seems to say,—Ephraim and Manasseh will not be trained to submit to the yoke of human or divine authority, or be content quietly to do their duty in that state of life to which it shall please God to call them:

" His glory is like the firstling of his bullock,  
 And his horns are like the horns of an unicorn :  
 With them he shall push the people  
 Together to the ends of the earth :  
 And they are the ten thousands of Ephraim,  
 And they are the thousands of Manasseh."

Who can say what the result would have been if the great warriors of Manasseh beyond Jordan had not separated themselves from their brethren: and if the great house of Ephraim on this side Jordan had not separated themselves from the GOD of their father Joseph? But this was not to be; and the world sees the result. That fierceness with which they might have fought on the side of GOD and His Church has resulted in pushing the people (their brethren) together to the ends of the earth, as Moses predicted, and in making them "wanderers among the nations," as we see them this day. (Hosea ix. 16, 17.)

But further. Moses is not the only Prophet who, when speaking of the tribe of Joseph, uses this illustration of a restive animal impatiently refusing the yoke.

It is instructive to notice how other Prophets take up the same strain of sad complaint over Ephraim, and use the same illustration which Moses did,—a bullock which will not submit to a yoke, and will not work in the service of man. See such passages as Jer. iii. 6, 11; xxxi. 18; Hos. iv. 16; x. 11; xi. 4; Amos iv. 11. The house of Joseph is once and again spoken of by the Prophets as “backsliding Israel.” The sad complaint over Ephraim which GOD utters by them is, “He slideth back as a backsliding heifer;” Ephraim is as “a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke;” “Ephraim is as an heifer that is taught, and loveth to tread out the corn; but I passed over her fair neck, I will make Ephraim to ride; Judah shall plow, and Jacob shall break his clods.” In these last words of Hosea x. 11, the tribe is spoken of as an ox doing only work which pleases him, and refusing to do any other. “Ephraim loveth to tread out the corn,” i.e. loveth *only* to tread out the corn; this treading out the corn being an easy and luxurious service, since GOD had forbidden to muzzle the ox while doing it. (Deut. xxv. 4.) So far only, then, would Ephraim do what GOD willed; doing only what pleased themselves. And then GOD speaks of Himself as of one handling a rebellious animal gently; as attempting to put on Ephraim a light yoke, and then compelling him to submit to a heavy foreign yoke for his sins, as he would not submit to GOD’s light and easy one. “I passed over on her fair neck; I will make Ephraim to ride.” That is, I will make the yoke to ride on Ephraim’s neck—(the same word is used for “place hand on bow” in 2 Kings xiii. 16;)—or, I will set a rider on Ephraim who shall tame and subdue him. Then again, we have the expression, “I was to Ephraim as they that lift up the yoke on their jaws, but I laid

meat unto them." That is, GOD says, I was to them, in their sight, I was regarded by them, as One Who would pass the yoke over their jaws to place it on their neck; but I was really all the while placing meat before them to eat. "GOD seemed to Ephraim to be ever placing some new yoke or constraint upon him, but all the while He was really taking all manner of care of him, and providing for him all things richly to enjoy. He was regarded by Ephraim as One Who instead of laying food before him, was lifting the yoke over his jaws. GOD did them all good, and they thought it all hardship."<sup>1</sup> And again,—As GOD by Hosea thus figuratively addresses the men of Ephraim, so, in Amos iv. 11, He addresses the women of Ephraim in the same figurative language as used by Hosea to the men, "Hear this word, ye *kine of Bashan*, that are in the mountain of Samaria, which oppress the poor, which crush the needy, which say to their masters, Bring and let us drink." The matrons of Ephraim are as proud and selfish as the men; and when the Prophet Amos would upbraid them for being unfeeling to the poor, the wild kine, or unicorns, of Bashan, which roamed the forests of Manasseh, furnish him with the readiest illustration of fierceness, and of cruelty towards the poor; those who will bear no yoke themselves, being ever the readiest to impose it upon others.

Thus does the HOLY SPIRIT by the mouth of other holy Prophets echo the same complaint over the house of Joseph, which He spake first by the mouth of Moses, using from various points of view the same illustration, comparing it to a unicorn, or wild ox which will never wear the yoke, but fiercely refuses it. It is a melancholy picture, and GOD mourns over it. Everything was in

<sup>1</sup> Pusey ad loc. Pusey's interpretation is followed in the text.

Ephraim's favour,—in Egypt high birth, and all worldly advantages ; and at the same time GOD'S chastenings lest he should be corrupted by the pleasures of a court (1 Chron. vii. 21). And as he began so fair under Joseph in Egypt, so it was again under the great leader Joshua in Canaan, a leader of their own tribe, whom it was easy for even their pride to obey. Then the choicest portion of the Holy Land fell to their lot ; the most "precious things of heaven above, and of the deep that coucheth under ; the chief things of the ancient mountains, the precious things of the everlasting hills." A double, even a treble portion of those precious things was allotted to them. Some were allowed to choose their portion on the other side of Jordan, and not required to trust to the casting of the lot ; others who crossed over into Canaan were surrounded in their new home by sacred spots, every one of which recalled some memory of GOD, and of His goodness to their forefathers in old times. But the one lesson of humility which GOD would teach them they refused to learn. The Messiah was to come out of the tribe of Judah, and it was GOD'S will therefore to exalt that tribe above every other ; to give Judah Reuben's forfeited spiritual birthright, though He gave Joseph his temporal one of the double portion of the first-born. It was no doubt a hard lesson for the haughty house of Joseph, which had been brought up about the court of the great Pharaoh, to learn to give place to the house of Judah, a tribe which had toiled as humble shepherds in Canaan and in Goshen ; but it was necessary that that very haughtiness, the result of their Egyptian birth and training, should be subdued ; necessary for their own happiness, and for the welfare of the Church. But that one lesson they never would consent

to learn. They could not have the first place, they would not have the second, except when compelled to do so against their will. And so the envy of Ephraim never departed; Ephraim did not cease to envy Judah, nor did Judah cease to vex Ephraim (Isa. xi. 13). And so this haughty and jealous tribe fell from the proud height on which it once stood in the days of Joseph and Joshua, and its end was the end of all those who persistently despise GOD'S chastenings and refuse His corrections, whether as individuals or as nations. After the schism under Jeroboam, the tribe fell deeper and deeper into sin, and then its independence, its very existence, came suddenly to an end; a sudden and premature captivity first, and then a total oblivion, closed its career; the sentence went forth, "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." (Hos. iv. 17.) GOD broke "the bow of Israel," (the power i.e. of that tribe of Ephraim of which "the bow" was the symbol,<sup>1</sup>) "in the valley of Jezreel." Some day of terrible slaughter by the Assyrian host of Shalmanezar on the fatal field of Betharbel (Hos. i. 5; x. 14),<sup>2</sup> which in the first chapter of his prophecy Hosea foretold, and which, as we learn from the tenth chapter he himself lived to see fulfilled.

So accurate, so far-reaching was the historical fulfilment of the words of Moses,

"Joseph's glory is like the firstling of his bullock,  
And his horns are like the horns of an unicorn;  
With them he shall push the people  
Together to the ends of the earth:  
And they are the ten thousands of Ephraim,  
And they are the thousands of Manasseh."

<sup>1</sup> Such is probably the meaning of Ps. lxxviii. 9, compared with Gen. xlix. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Pusey on Hosea ad loc.

So far as the tribe of Ephraim is concerned (with which alone we have now to do), no better illustration could have been prophetically used of an ambitious tribe, a tribe quarrelling on every occasion with its neighbours and rulers, and finally throwing off the yoke of GOD Himself.

What principally strikes us, perhaps, in meditating on this prophecy and its fulfilment, is the close personal application which we are forced to make of the story, if we will only allow ourselves to listen to its teaching.

It has been well remarked that the word which the Apostle Jude uses, in the sixteenth verse of his Epistle, and which we translate "complainers," is *μεμφίμοιροι*, that is, "blamers of their lot," or "fault-finders with their lot :—" discontented with, murmuring against, and so finding fault with the lot assigned them by GOD's providence, which comes to the same thing as murmuring against GOD Himself. The children of Joseph, as they come before us in the story of Joshua xvii. 14—18, were "complainers" such as S. Jude refers to, and about whose "hard speeches against GOD" he tells us, Enoch prophesied. And those Christians who querulously find fault with the lot in life which Providence has assigned them and whom S. Jude calls "complainers" (and which of us has not been tempted in this way?) are like these children of Joseph who were murmurers against Joshua and against GOD. We do not, any of us, choose our own lot in life ; we find it as assigned us by GOD when we were born : but such "complainers" would have their lot altered though "the whole disposal thereof is from the LORD." (Prov. xvi. 33.) It is very probably because the old division of Canaan by lot had stamped itself on the thoughts and language of the Church, that we find the

inspired writers of the New Testament making the use which they do of the word *cleros*, or heritage, or clergy, or lot, as the word means ; that is, "heritage chosen by lot." Thus, for instance, it may be that in allusion to this we are said, in Eph. i. 11, to have obtained by lot our inheritance in CHRIST ; *ἐκληρώθημεν*. "In whom we were made a heritage," is the translation of the Revised Version. And the Church and clergy are spoken of by the same name. At any rate, if we contrast the spirit manifested by the children of Joseph with the language and Christian spirit inculcated in such passages as Phil. iv. 11, 12 ; 1 Tim. vi. 6—8 ; Heb. xiii. 5, we shall see the right use to make of the warning given by S. Jude, and by the first great sin of Ephraim. Whether the Apostle Jude had this old story of the children of Joseph in his mind, or not, when he wrote this word "complainers," we do not know ; but the connexion between these two passages in the Old and New Testament seems too evident to be passed by unnoticed. And the story of Ephraim, all down their history, has many voices, each with its particular lesson, for those whom S. Jude calls "complainers of their lot." There are few to whom this illustration of a restive animal impatient of a yoke, which the Old Testament Scriptures use when speaking of Ephraim, does not at some time or other come home. And to a world so tempted, so anxious to find rest, yet so unable to find it, our LORD speaks in words of the same figurative language in which He had so often addressed Ephraim,—language referring to a refractory animal unwilling, because unaccustomed, to bend its neck to the yoke, when He says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. *Take My yoke upon you*, and learn of Me ; for I



am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For *My yoke is easy*, and My burden is light." (S. Matt. xi. 28—30.) Here in the New Testament GOD addresses a sin-laden, sorrow-laden, world, in figurative language similar to that which He had addressed to Ephraim in the Old Testament ; for by nature we all shrink back from that yoke of His service, which, when taken, is perfect freedom. But there is this touching difference between the language used by GOD in the Old Testament and in the New. In the Old Testament GOD speaks as One Who has had long patience with a refractory animal unaccustomed to the yoke ; as One Who patiently tries to put it over his neck. But in the New Testament, after the Incarnation, our LORD speaks as occupying the place of one of the patient animals themselves, as Himself wearing the yoke and inviting each of us to share it. In those well known words, borrowed from the language of field-labour, He speaks, not as our atoning sacrifice (for the bullock set apart for the sacrifice could not be put to labour), but as our example, our example of patient labour and of suffering holiness. He thus stirs us up to follow the example of His patience that we may be made partakers of His Resurrection. By this sight of Himself wearing the yoke He calls on all mankind to follow the example of His great humility ; to work, and to suffer, and to obey, side by side with Him, as two patient animals bending their necks together under one yoke. He pleads with Ephraim how often, and how lovingly, and how gently, He had tried to make him bend his proud neck to the yoke. Now, after the Incarnation, He pleads with us to put our neck under the same yoke of obedience and suffering which He was Himself wearing when He spoke : CHRIST, though He

was GOD, took on Him the yoke of our humanity and servitude, and the burden of our suffering : He took on Him the form of a servant ; and now, though the same figurative language of a unicorn refusing the yoke still describes rebellious man in his unregenerate nature, the words of pleading are not now, " I will make the yoke to ride on Ephraim's neck," or, " I was to Ephraim as they that lift up the yoke on the jaws ;" but, " Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart ;" " My yoke is easy ; My burden is light ." " take it upon you, and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

" Christian soul, dost thou desire  
Days of joy, and peace, and truth ?  
Learn to bear the Yoke of JESUS  
In the spring-tide of thy youth.

" It may seem at first a burden ;  
But thy LORD will make it light ;  
He Himself will bear it with thee ;  
He will ease thee of its weight.

" Only bear it well ; and daily  
Thou wilt learn that Yoke to love ;  
Strength and grace it here will bring thee,  
And a bright reward above."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From the " Hymnal Noted."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### *JACOB'S BLESSING ON BENJAMIN.*

GEN. XLIX. 27.

“ Benjamin shall ravin *as* a wolf :  
In the morning he shall devour the prey,  
And at night he shall divide the spoil.”

ON this blessing Matthew Henry remarks, “ It is plain by this that Jacob was guided in what he said by a spirit of prophecy, and not by natural affection : else he would have spoken with more tenderness of his beloved son Benjamin, concerning whom he only foresees and foretells this, that his posterity should be a warlike tribe, strong and daring : and that they should enrich themselves with the spoils of their enemies ; that they should be active and busy in the world, and a tribe as much feared by their neighbours as any other : that he should tear in pieces as a wolf : that in the morning he should devour the prey, which he had seized and divided over night.” This remark is true ; but we may believe that even in Benjamin himself those points of character were developed, which afterwards appeared in his descendants, and which Jacob describes as wolfish, though we are not told so in Scripture.

There is a marked contrast between the blessing which Jacob pronounces upon Benjamin, and that given him

by Moses in his dying farewell to the tribes (Deut. xxxiii. 12). While Jacob says,

“ Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf :  
In the morning he shall devour the prey,  
And at night he shall divide the spoil,”

the blessing of Moses is as different as possible ; of Benjamin Moses said,

“ The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by Him :  
*And the Lord* shall cover him all the day long,  
And He shall dwell between his shoulders.”

It is very possible that Jacob more particularly predicted what was to be the beginning of Benjamin's career, and that Moses referred to the period of his history subsequent to his alliance with the house of David and the tribe of Judah. If we glance at the character and early history of the tribe of Benjamin we shall see that events fully justified Jacob's apparently severe prediction ; while in the later history the more favourable prediction of Moses was fulfilled.

Benjamin was pre-eminently the child of his father's old age. We are apt to think of Joseph as being much younger than his brethren, and he is sometimes so represented in pictures. But, with the exception of Benjamin, all Jacob's children were born during the period of his second seven years' servitude under Laban, that is, between the eighty-fourth and ninety-second years of Jacob's life ; Joseph, then, who was born at the end of that period was only some six years younger than Reuben his eldest brother. But Benjamin was not born till some sixteen years after Joseph, when his old father was in his one-hundred-and-seventh year. He was the only one

of the twelve patriarchs who was born in the Holy Land. His birth took place during that sad and eventful journey from Shechem<sup>1</sup> to Hebron described in Gen. xxxv. at one halting place of which Jacob buried his old nurse Deborah, and at another his beloved wife Rachel: at some place on the road along which the long caravan was travelling, a sacred spot somewhere between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, the distance of "a little piece of ground" from the latter place, Rachel died, and Benjamin was born: his mother called him Ben-oni, "child of my sorrow," but his father named him Ben-jamin, "son of the right hand;" and each name was prophetic of the future history of the tribe.<sup>2</sup>

When the patriarchs came down to Egypt, Benjamin must have been in his twenty-fourth year; as some twenty-two years younger than Reuben, he was looked on by the rest as a lad (Gen. xlv. 20), but he was a married man and the father of five sons when Jacob and his family settled in Egypt (Numb. xxvi. 38, compared with Gen. xlv. 21),<sup>3</sup> and now, seventeen years after (Gen. xlvii. 28), as he knelt down to receive his dying father's blessing, he must have been in his forty-first year. This is all that is told us of Benjamin; but the "fond

<sup>1</sup> The journey was undertaken after Jacob's ten years' residence in the vale of Shechem, which he was obliged to leave after the massacre of the Shechemites. These ten years, added to the last six of his servitude under Laban, intervened between the births of Joseph and Benjamin.

<sup>2</sup> "Son of my right hand" may mean "son of my strength," of which the right hand was a symbol. Another interpretation, that of Aben Ezra, &c., is that the name means *son of days*, son of Jacob's old age—Ben-jamin being for Ben-jamim.

<sup>3</sup> In Gen. xlv. some grandsons are included, and sons born in Egypt. (Wordsworth.)

endearment in which he stood to the rest, as the darling child of the whole family, so that even the harsh natures of the elder patriarchs relaxed towards him," shows that there must have been much that was very attractive in his character, though to the eye of Jacob other qualities may have developed themselves. And probably he was as much surprised and disappointed at hearing, as we are at reading, those words of his father,

" Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf ;  
In the morning he shall devour the prey,  
And at night he shall divide the spoil."

Nothing more is told us of the patriarch : henceforward the history of Benjamin is the history of the tribe. The tribe of Benjamin was through the greater part of its history identified with the tribe of Judah. Their steady faithfulness to the tribe of Judah and the house of David is very remarkable. It comes out in a striking way, e.g. in 1 Sam. xxii., where we find the Benjamites would not desert David for Saul, or in any way help to deliver him up, though Saul was of their own tribe. And again in 1 Kings xii. and 2 Chron. xi., where we find them faithful to Rehoboam, though Rehoboam belonged to the house of their brother Joseph, being a member of the tribe of Ephraim ; and in 1 Chron. xii. 29, where we find them sending large reinforcements to David ; and in 2 Chron. xvii. 17, when they furnish a body of two hundred thousand men to Jehoshaphat ; for though a small tribe they were a very warlike one. This close alliance between Benjamin and Judah may perhaps be accounted for by the fact that the temple at Jerusalem was the common property of both tribes ; the holy city and the temple being in Benjamin's territory,

though the city was the capital of the kings of Judah, and the temple was built by them.<sup>1</sup>

But while the tribe of Benjamin was so closely identified with the tribe and kingdom of Judah both before and after the captivity, we have two or three separate notices of it ; and two or three names in it make the tribe illustrious in itself, and shine with an independent brightness. Ehud, the second of the Judges, the deliverer of Israel from the Moabites, who with the Ammonites and Amalekites had entrenched themselves round Jericho, one of Benjamin's cities : Saul, the first king of Israel ; Jonathan, his son, a prince whose character is as blameless, loveable, and attractive as any in Scripture ; Urijah, the bold prophet of Kirjath-jearim, so cruelly murdered by Jehoiachin (Jer. xxvi. 20) : and later on, Mordecai and Esther, the hero and heroine of the Dispersion, by whom God in His providence wrought deliverance for the whole Jewish nation from Haman the Amalekite,—these were of the tribe of Benjamin. And later still, in the carefully preserved genealogies of this tribe the royal name of Saul once more appears in New Testament times. A hero of the tribe greater than Ehud, or King Saul, or Urijah the prophet, or Mordecai, or Queen

<sup>1</sup> Jerusalem stood on the territory of Benjamin, and its population belonged in great measure to that tribe. That the Jerusalem population were mostly Benjamites follows from Jer. vi. 1. In Ezek. xxxvii. 16, by "the children of Israel" are meant Benjamites. The southern part of the tribe of Benjamin, therefore, adhered to Judah, as far as Mizpeh and Geba (1 Kings xv. 22). But the northern half, including the revered sanctuaries of Bethel, Ramah, Gilgal and Jericho, remained, as heretofore, connected with the fortunes of Ephraim (1 Kings xii. 29 ; xv. 17 ; xvi. 34). See 1 Kings xii. 21. The Septuagint adds, "and the tribe of Benjamin," in 1 Kings xii. 20. (Geikie's Hours with the Bible, iv. 6.)

Esther, closes the list of its known and unknown worthies, that of Saul, who also is called Paul, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, who, as he has twice left on record with his own hand, was "of the tribe of Benjamin" (Rom. xi. 1; Phil. iii. 5).<sup>1</sup>

Other occasional notices show that Benjamin was a fierce and warlike tribe. It would seem from the following passages to have been the only tribe specially skilled in archery, and the use of the bow (1 Sam. xx. 20, 36; 2 Sam. i. 22; 1 Chron. viii. 40; xii. 2; 2 Chron. xvii. 17); though it is often said that in Psalm lxxviii. 9, it is implied that Ephraim was the tribe specially famous for its archers. The skill of the Benjamites in the sling also is mentioned in Judg. xx. 16, and 1 Chron. xii. 2. The word "lefthanded," as applied to celebrated descendants of him whose name means "the son of my right hand" (Judg. iii. 15, and xx. 16), has been explained to mean that these warriors could use both hands alike, as is said of some in 1 Chron. xii. 2. It is so explained in the Septuagint, and in the Vulgate; but the original for "lefthanded" is "shut of his right hand;" and seems to mean (as is implied in the context of Judg. iii.) that Ehud, and such other Benjamite warriors, were actually lefthanded, and without strength in their right hands. The dark side of the character of the Benjamites, who are prophetically described by Jacob as "ravening wolves," comes out on some memorable occasions; in

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Geikie thinks that the great prophet Isaiah also belonged to this tribe. He says, "Isaiah appears to have been a Benjamite," referring, for proof of this, to Nehem. xi. 7, and Jer. xxix. 21; and he adds that "Ithiel = Immanuel = 'GOD with us,' originally, the name of Isaiah's son. Isa. vii. 14; viii. 8." (Geikie's Hours with the Bible, iv. 282.) A more probable tradition is that he was of the blood-royal.



the tragedy of Gibeah, recorded in Judg. xix., and in the murder of Ishbosheth, the representative of their own tribe, by two Benjamites, Rechab and Baanah, mentioned in 2 Sam. iv., as well as in the well-known acts of cruelty of which Saul was guilty in his fits of frenzied madness and jealousy.

A careful study of Joshua xviii. 11—20 shows us the boundaries of the tribe as originally fixed by him; and in the verses following (Josh. xviii. 21—28), its cities are enumerated. Its territory consisted roughly of a lofty table land, guarded on the north by the mountain barrier of Ephraim, on the south by the steep slopes of the hills of Judah, its eastern boundary was the Jordan, on the west the powerful tribe of Dan intervened between it and the Philistines.

An examination of the position of the tribe, thus lying between Judah and Ephraim, and of the towns marked on the map, shows how many were the interesting events and places connected with it in Bible history. Though it is usually called "Little Benjamin," the sacred places within it were very many. As if in contrast to the fierceness of its inhabitants, the sacredness of its soil is such that almost "every spot is hallowed ground." It is probable that as Jacob, with a reference to the people of Benjamin, said,

"Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf,  
In the morning he shall devour the prey,  
And at night he shall divide the spoil;"

so it was with a reference to the land of Benjamin and its sacred places, that Moses said,

"The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by Him,  
And the LORD shall cover him all the day long,  
And He shall dwell between his shoulders."

Though Shiloh, where the tabernacle and ark of GOD were so long settled, was in Ephraim, Kirjath-jearim, with that "house of Abinadab on the hill," where the ark of GOD was during all the time that elapsed between the destruction of Shiloh and its triumphant removal by David to Jerusalem<sup>1</sup> (1 Sam. vii. 1, 2; 2 Sam. vi. 2, margin; 2 Chron. i. 4), was in Benjamin; so was also Gibeon, where were the tabernacle of the congregation and the brazen altar of burnt-offering (1 Chron. xvi. 39; xxi. 29; 2 Chron. i. 3). These spots, rendered sacred by the holy treasures which they contained, were under the guardianship of Benjamin. And other places of equal interest were within this tribe:—Bethel, or the "House of GOD," where the GOD of Bethel had twice revealed Himself to Jacob; Mizpeh, a great sanctuary of the nation in the early period of its history, its gathering place for solemn deliberation (1 Sam. vii. 5—12), called "a place of prayer for Israel" (1 Mac. iii. 46); Gilgal, the place of the first encampment of the Israelites under Joshua; Jericho, the first city that fell, and out of which Rahab was saved:—these were among the sacred places and events connected with Benjamin, which must have awakened solemn recollections

<sup>1</sup> In 2 Sam. vi. 3 Gibeah means "Gibeah Kirjath," (Josh. xviii. 28,) or the "Hill of Kirjath-jearim," where Abinadab's house stood. Kirjath-jearim means the "forest city," or "city of forests;" a meaning alluded to in Ps. cxxxii. 6. In 1 Sam. vii. 2, it is not meant that the ark was only twenty years at Kirjath-jearim (for it was there some fifty years), but that twenty years went by before Israel "lamented after the LORD" in true repentance. During these twenty years the ark was hidden and forgotten, till it was "found in the wood," in the "forest city," as the Psalmist says in Ps. cxxxii. 6, by a nation beginning to seek GOD. David placed it in the keeping of some one called Obededom the Gittite for three months on its way to Jerusalem. See also Ps. lxxviii.

in all faithful hearts, and added sanctity to that holy ground on which these cities stood, and where such events had happened. To some of them, as to GOD'S presence in the ark and the tabernacle, Moses may in his blessing have prophetically referred when he spoke of Benjamin's land as overshadowed by GOD'S presence.

But places more sacred still, and events more sacred than any of these are connected with this tribe, to which Moses may well have referred when he said that the LORD should dwell, tabernacle as in a tent, within Benjamin's territory. "The LORD," he said, "shall dwell between his shoulders." This was literally fulfilled. From Josh. xviii. 21—28 we learn that the Holy City itself, Jerusalem, was one of the cities allotted to Benjamin; and the "shoulders" spoken of by Moses may well mean the shoulders of those ravines which encompass the Holy City on the west, south, and east, and upon which the Temple, the dwelling-place of GOD, was built. Of all the sacred places in the Holy Land, the soil of the tribe of Benjamin was the most holy, and is the most holy still. There was the sacred land of Moreh, or the "valley of vision," where GOD manifested Himself to Abraham; and Mount Moriah, where the great act of the Crucifixion was foreshadowed by the offering up of Isaac; the Mount called "Jehovah-Jireh" (Gen. xxii.); that Mount on which the daily morning and evening sacrifice<sup>1</sup> was offered (2 Chron. iii. 1), and on

<sup>1</sup> Some commentators apply the words of Jacob as a mystical prophecy of the consumption of the morning and evening sacrifice on the brazen altar, which stood within those Temple courts, which were built on Benjamin's territory. The Chaldee paraphrase and the Jerusalem Targum both thus explain it, "In Benjamin's land

which, somewhere "without the gate" (Heb. xiii. 12) the Blood of "the Lamb of GOD which taketh away the sin of the world" (S. John i. 29) was shed for us. Within the precincts of the sacred soil of Benjamin were also the hallowed spots of Bethphage and Bethany; and the sacred Mount of Olives, which witnessed our LORD'S Ascension, and shall witness His return (Zech. xiv. 4, 5); and that most sacred spot of all in the Garden of Gethsemane, known only to the Angel of the Agony; and that other "Garden, where was a tomb," from whence, as from His tabernacle, the Sun of righteousness arose, "as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoicing as a strong man to run a race" (Ps. xix. 5).

Such are some of the places and events which give interest to the after history of the tribe of Benjamin. Let us now see how accurately that history brings out the fulfilment of that ancient prophecy of Jacob's.

"Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf;  
In the morning he shall devour the prey,  
And at night he shall divide the spoil."

The wolf is a member of the dog tribe; it is a species of wild dog, and it has been known, when tamed, to exhibit all the faithfulness and affection of that animal. It is well known for its obstinate ferocity and its swift energy. It exhibits these two characteristics above perhaps any other animal. Some well-known lines in Thomson's "Seasons" describe these characteristics with great accuracy. Speaking of wolves driven by hunger to

shall the Divine Majesty dwell, and in his possession shall the sanctuary be builded; at morning and at evening the priests shall offer oblations, and at eventide they shall divide the remainder of their portions of the things left which are sanctified."

come down from the Alps and the Apennines in pursuit of prey, he says,—

“Cruel as death, and hungry as the grave !  
 Burning for blood ! bony, and gaunt, and grim !  
 Assembling wolves in raging troops descend ;  
 And pouring o'er the country, bear along,  
*Keen as the north wind sweeps the glossy snow ;*  
 All is their prize ; they fasten on the steed,  
 Press him to earth, and pierce his mighty heart ;  
 Nor can the bull his awful front defend,  
 Or shake the murderous savages away ;  
 Rapacious at the mother's throat they fly,  
 And tear the screaming infant from her breast.”

This allusion to the wolf coming down from the mountains with a speed “keen as the north wind sweeps the glossy snow,” is very true to nature, and to the meaning and derivation of the word “wolf” in the original. The Hebrew word for wolf, *z'ehv*, זֶהָב, is said to be connected with a similar Arabic word which signifies to “run as the wind.” “Swift as the wind,” is the idea at the root of the word which we render “wolf;” the animal is so named from the impetuosity or swiftness of his motion. Such is the obstinate ferocity, such the swift energy of this animal. With such fierce irresistible impetuosity, such swiftness of energy, do hungry wolves rush on their prey, and with such obstinate ferocity do they hang upon it; their tenacity is such they cannot be shaken off, or turned from their purpose. “The wolf is weaker than the lion or the bear, and less courageous than the leopard; but he scarcely yields to them in cruelty and rapaciousness.” Necessity gives him courage. “When pressed with hunger he loses the idea of fear; he forces his way into houses with an obstinate perseverance peculiar to this animal; he seeks

the abodes of man ; he roams about the cottages, kills all the animals which have been left without, digs the earth under the doors, enters with a dreadful ferocity, and puts every living creature to death, before he chooses to depart and carry off his prey." "He becomes when hungry so perfectly furious by excessive exertions, that he generally falls a sacrifice to pure rage and distraction. When he is ravenous and starved, he runs about like a creature distracted, and pays no regard to his natural sagacity ; he is in this case mad and desperate, as it were ; he howls as he runs, terrifying every creature ; to appease hunger he will swallow indiscriminately everything he can find, and will, it is said by Pliny, devour the very earth on which he treads to satisfy his voracious appetite." Such is a hungry wolf,—or a ravening wolf, as may be learned from writers on natural history.<sup>1</sup>

The Scriptural allusions to the wolf refer to,—

Its ferocity,—Gen. xlix. 27 ; Ezek. xxii. 27 ; Hab. i. 8 ; S. Matt. vii. 14.

Its nocturnal habits,—Jer. v. 6 ; Zeph. iii. 3 ; Hab. i. 8.

Its watchful hostility to sheep and lambs,—Isa. xi. 6, and lxxv. 25 ; S. Matt. x. 16 ; S. Luke x. 3 ; S. John x. 12 ; Acts xx. 29.

To each of these characteristics of the wolf Jacob refers in his prophecy concerning Benjamin. He was an old shepherd himself, and in blessing Benjamin he refers to what he had seen of wolves. He refers to its ferocity, "Shall ravin," i.e. "shall tear in pieces ;" its nocturnal habits, "By night shall divide the spoil ;" its hostility to sheep, "Shall devour the prey,"—the flock of the shepherd is the wolf's prey.

<sup>1</sup> See Paxton's "Illustrations," Vol. II., p. 125, and authorities quoted by him.

Jacob specially refers to its ferocity in the word "ravin,"—in Hebrew, tah-raph,—which means to "tear in pieces." The same word is thus translated in Gen. xlv. 28 ; Deut. xxxiii. 20 ; Ezek. xxii. 12 ; Micah v. 8 ; Jer. v. 6 : and in Ps. xxii. 13, Ezek. xxii. 27 it has the same meaning, though translated "ravenging." It is applied to the vengeance of divine wrath in Ps. vii. 2 ; Hos. v. 14 ; Ps. l. 22 : there is nothing derogatory in applying it to Benjamin, when he predicts "he shall ravin as a wolf." The meaning of the words which follow,

" In the morning he shall devour the prey,  
And at night he shall divide the spoil,"

has been well explained by Bishop Patrick, who remarks that they mean that the ravenging wolves (to which Benjamin is compared) are here spoken of as pursuing, or devouring, or rending their prey, all night, not all day ; the prey must be divided before it is devoured, not after. Jacob says, Benjamin is as a wolf which from night-fall till the morning light is rending and devouring his prey ; "He shall be as a wolf who shall have his prey to eat till morning light, after he has divided it in the evening." As Jacob speaks of the ferocity of a single wolf in the word "ravin" or tear in pieces, so in these words "divide the prey" he may refer to a pack of wolves associating together for plunder. About this the great naturalist Bochart (quoted in Paxton's "Illustrations,") says, "The prey which the band has obtained by their common exertions they divide among themselves, and every one takes his part, which, if able, he forthwith devours, or reserves for a future meal ; this predatory expedition over, they separate, and each returns to his den." According to Xenophon also, wolves will form a league,

and set forth in bands to seek their prey; and while some are keeping off the shepherds, others will be carrying off the prey."<sup>1</sup> In his long experience as a shepherd Jacob may have witnessed some such habits of the wolf which Bochart and Xenophon thus describe, when he says, that "Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf," that in the morning he shall devour the prey, and that at night he shall divide it (the ordinary word for divide with others, or into portions, as in Isaiah liii. 12, Ps. lxxviii. 12).

Such is the animal to which the prophet Jacob compares the tribe of Benjamin.

The territory assigned by lot to Benjamin (see Josh. xviii.) was in itself admirably adapted to fulfil Jacob's prediction about the habits and character of this small but warlike tribe. It was made up of rocky eminences scored with intricate ravines. As the writer of "Sinai and Palestine" remarks, it was specially adapted for that sort of guerilla warfare here spoken of. It was a high, elevated plateau, defended on all sides by friendly tribes, by naturally hilly fortresses, and by narrow mountain passes or ravines, by which alone they could be approached from the plains on the western or eastern side. One of these passes was the road between Jericho and Jerusalem, so well known as the scene of the parable of the Good Samaritan: a pass thus described by another traveller: "It was a long, toilsome ascent of rocky stairs along the sides of dreary brown ravines, rifted and scarred by the violent winter torrents, the Dead Sea glittering beneath; the ascents so precipitous that the

<sup>1</sup> Pakt. Illus. ii. 129. Kalisch, however, says *פָּרַר* is not he *divides*, but he *rends*; not only because the wolf does not portion out or share his prey, but because that verb is parallel with *רָמַס*.



horses could or would only creep slowly along ; the rocks heated as in a furnace by the beating sun."<sup>1</sup> In this their secure retreat, Stanley adds, the tribe of Benjamin became warlike and indomitable. In his mountain-passes, the ancient haunts of beasts of prey (as some of their names testify),<sup>2</sup> "Benjamin ravined as a wolf" in the morning ; descended into the rich plains of Philistia on the one side and of the Jordan on the other, and returned in the evening to divide the spoil."

Such was Benjamin's territory, an elevated table-land situated on rocky and mountainous heights, defended by almost impassable gorges, ravines, and torrent-beds. It lay 2,000 feet above the level of the Mediterranean on the western side, and 3,000 feet above the deep valley of the Jordan on the eastern. The names which we notice in Joshua's list of Benjamin's cities testify to the great number of eminences and strongholds which crowned the plateau (Josh. xviii.), Gibeon, Geba, Gibeah, all mean "hill ;" Ramah means an eminence ; Mizpeh a "watch-tower." And with all its hills and passes warlike deeds of daring are associated. Down those defiles often fled the enemies of Israel in various periods of their history, as before the armies of Joshua, Saul and Jonathan, and Judas Maccabæus, &c. (1 Macc. iii. 16—22). It was in this broken and hilly country that "little Benjamin" (Ps. lxxviii. 27) learned by such guerilla warfare to become

<sup>1</sup> "Wanderings in Bible Lands," p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> Such as Zeboim, or, "the valley of hyænas" (1 Sam. xiii. 18) ; Ajalon, "the place of deer ;" Shual or Shaalbim, foxes or jackals (1 Sam. xiii. 17 ; Judg. i. 35). Such intricate ravines may well have harboured these and other wild beasts. Dean Stanley mentions having seen a hyæna in Palestine ; and the authoress of "Wanderings in Bible Lands" mentions having seen a wolf.

famous above the other tribes for its skill in archery, for its slingers, for its left-handed warriors. In the words of the author of "Sinai and Palestine," "There Benjamin retained a character of its own, eminently indomitable and insubordinate. The wolf which nursed the founders of Rome was not more evidently repeated in the martial qualities of the people of Romulus than the wolf, to which Benjamin is compared in his father's blessing, appears in the eager, restless character of his descendants. It furnished the artillery (so to speak) of the Israelite army, by its archers and slingers. For a short time it rose to the highest rank in the commonwealth, when it gave birth to the first king. Its ultimate position was altered when Jerusalem within its territory became the capital of the monarchy of Judah." (Sinai and Palestine, p. 265.)

In this way was Jacob's prophecy generally fulfilled. According to the prediction of Moses, indeed, the land of Benjamin was holy ground, overshadowed by the wings of the Almighty, in the ark at Kirjath-jearim, the tabernacle and altar at Gibeon, and in the temple at Jerusalem; but the character of the people, in harmony with that of the country, and of the beasts of prey which abounded in it, was wild and warlike.

If we had more information, we might know more instances in which eminent individuals of the tribe showed the characteristics predicted in Jacob's comparison, the swift energy, the restlessness, the ferocity, the obstinacy of the wolf. But one or other of these characteristics comes out plainly in the Bible stories already referred to; as e.g., in the exploit of Ehud in Eglon's summer-parlour at Jericho (Judg. iii. 20); in Saul's prompt relief of Jabesh-Gilead, and other military

exploits (1 Sam. xi. 6—11; xiv. 47, 48); in his ruthless massacre at Nob (1 Sam. xxii. 18, 19); in the assassination of Ishbosheth by two officers in his bed-chamber at Mahanaim (2 Sam. iv. 2—8); in the deliverance of their countrymen by Mordecai and Esther (Esther ii. 5; ix. 4, 5, &c.); and as it has been remarked, "of the obstinacy of the Benjamites there is a remarkable trait in 1 Sam. xxii. 7—18; when, though Saul was not only king of the nation, but the head of their own tribe, and David a member of a family which had as yet no claims on the friendship of Benjamin, yet the Benjamites resisted the strongest appeal of Saul to betray the movements of David to him."

But there can be no doubt that in the words of Jacob addressed to Benjamin the finger of prophecy was specially pointed at one dark deed of blood and rapine, which must for ever be a stain on the memory of the tribe, and which alone amply justifies the prophetic comparison which Jacob uses. That frightful transaction is recorded in Judg. xix. and xx. Though related near the end of the Book of Judges, as a sort of appendix, it happened not long after the death of Joshua (Judg. xx. 28), and it is the first event recorded in which the tribe of Benjamin comes prominently forward after the Exodus. Even at this distance of time the tale kindles our indignation as we read it. And terribly was it avenged: the punishment was as terrible as the crime. Out of the whole tribe only six hundred Benjamites survived the indignation of Israel, which was stirred from Dan to Beersheba. From these six hundred were descended all those Benjamites whose names afterwards figure in Scripture, from Ehud the judge downwards. When we look at the story there are some little incidents

casually noticed in it which make the comparison of Jacob peculiarly significant and remarkable. Minute points of resemblance come to the surface, and strike us while we read. The people of Gibeah, and the members of the tribe of Benjamin generally, seem to show in themselves those very characteristics of ferocity, cowardice, obstinacy, and mad infatuation, which, as we have seen, mark the wolf above all the other wild beasts. In the base and cowardly assault which the men of that city made, in the darkness of night, on the old labouring man and his daughter; in the incontrollable fury with which they fought and yelled round the door of the house in which the defenceless strangers had found a shelter, till they forced the Levite to deliver up his wife to their prey; in the malevolent hatred against the Levite, because he was a Levite, and because he was on his way to the tabernacle of God at Shiloh; in the persistency with which they tracked him to the old man's dwelling, and then, under cover of the night, wrought their deed of darkness;—in the reading of all these things we not only feel our indignation stirred, but we seem to see a wolfish ferocity and obstinacy which make Jacob's prophecy specially significant and remarkable. And when we read that the whole tribe obstinately defended such vile and prodigious wickedness, that they all made themselves partakers of the sin of Gibeah, a city which was such a nest of "wicked lewdness," we cannot but feel that no better illustration than that of "evening wolves" tearing from night to morning their defenceless prey, could have been used to describe beforehand a tribe which could be capable of such deliberate wickedness. And doubtless, after the fearful storm was over, and men could calmly compare the

event with Jacob's prediction of it, "all Israel would hear and fear."

This event in the history of the tribe of Benjamin was ever afterwards looked back upon by the prophets of Israel as a sad epoch in the annals of the nation. (Hosea ix. 9; x. 9.) After that tragedy of blood the tribe was, as it were, born again; and if the earlier part of its career is the history of "Benoni," the son of the Church's sorrow, the latter portion of it is the history of "Benjamin," the son of the Church's right hand; identified as it was (as was remarked above), with the history of the tribe of Judah, in that tribe's long continued faithfulness to God.

But one further point of interest connected with Benjamin must be noticed, though it has so often been noticed before.

When we recall the habits of the fierce animal to which the prophet Jacob compares his son Benjamin and his descendants, it is impossible not to recognise some of the characteristics of Saul the Pharisee, the most eminent member of this tribe. If children from generation to generation do keep up the characteristics of their ancestors, never was this more plainly seen than in the case of Saul the Pharisee and persecutor. When we think of the obstinate ferocity of the wolf, how it forces its way even into houses, tearing the very infant from its mother's breast; of the madness and uncontrollable fury into which hunger goads it; of its special hostility to the sheepfold; of the persistency and infatuation with which it pursues its prey, it is no fanciful criticism to notice how remarkably these characteristics of that tribe which was compared to a ravening wolf, are gathered up in S. Paul's character as it was before

his conversion. There was the fierceness of the wolf in his persecution of the Church, both of men and women ; there was wolfish ferocity in the way in which he forced his entrance into houses, "haling men and women, and committing them to prison." There was the hungry madness of this wild beast, when in his rage he "was exceedingly mad against" the Christians. There was this animal's obstinacy in the perseverance with which he refused to let go his prey till hurled to the earth by the light and the voice from Heaven. There was this animal's special hostility to the sheepfold ; the wolf came and scattered the sheep ; it was the voice of the Good Shepherd which said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"

But then came the great change : that event of which we sing in the hymn for the day of the Conversion of S. Paul :

" The ravening wolf rushed forward  
Full early to the prey ;  
But lo ! the Shepherd met him,  
And bound him fast to-day ;"

that change which must, some way or other, take place in "every one who is born of the Spirit : " in every one who is converted and becomes again as a little child. The ferocity of the wolf was changed into the gentleness of the lamb. Saul who once was "ravening as a wolf," in the morning devouring the prey, in the evening dividing the spoil," became S. Paul, "beloved of the LORD," "dwelling in safety by Him," the LORD, as it were, covering him all the day long, protecting him from his former friends but now furious enemies. And then the very same qualities which were once so active for evil, became, after his conversion, the most eminently useful

for the Church : the energy of the persecutor becomes the energy of the missionary. He who might once be seen hurrying on the road leading out of Jerusalem breathing slaughter against the disciples, might now be seen hurrying with the same speed to the same city, the bearer of alms and offerings to the poor saints who dwelt there : the obstinate perseverance, which once steeled him against all pity, makes him after his conversion proof against all tears and entreaties not to endanger that life among his enemies which the cause of CHRIST makes him willing to surrender. So, more or less, is this true of each who is taught in the school of CHRIST. More or less Jacob's words describe each one's fallen nature,

“ Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf,  
In the morning he shall devour the prey ;  
And at night he shall divide the spoil.”

More or less Moses describes the blessedness of each one's regenerate nature, when of Benjamin he said,

“ The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by Him :  
And the LORD shall cover him all the day long :  
And He shall dwell between his shoulders.”

Or, as it is expressed in the language of S. John, “ Who-soever shall confess that JESUS is the SON of GOD, *God dwelleth in him and he in God.*” (1 S. John iv. 15.) The once “ ravening wolf,” but now gentle lamb, the Good Shepherd henceforth carries, (oh how safely !) “ *on His shoulders, rejoicing*” (S. Luke xv. 5).

\* \* \* \* \*

With Jacob's blessing upon Benjamin this divine poem, which extends from the second to the twenty-seventh verse of Gen. xlix., concludes : in the twenty-eighth verse, which returns to the language of ordinary prose, it

is added, "All these are the twelve tribes of Israel : and this is that their father spake unto them, and blessed them ; every one according to his blessing he blessed them." This language teaches us that though some of Jacob's sons appear to us to have been rebuked, or even cursed, rather than blessed, yet in reality he "blessed them, every one according to his blessing." None of them was rejected, as Esau was ; the curse, where it fell, was either turned into a blessing, or into the chastening of a heavenly FATHER'S love, as we have seen in the histories of the several tribes. This comes out more clearly when we compare the blessings of Jacob with those of Moses in Deut. xxxiii., and they were all remembered of GOD afterwards ; their names are all held in honour in Scripture ; they were all carried on the high priest's heart and shoulders when he went in before GOD to the Holy of Holies (see Exod. xxviii. 21, 29) ; and were all seen inscribed on the gates of the heavenly Jerusalem in the visions of Ezekiel and S. John (Ezek. xlviii. 31—34 ; Rev. xxi. 12).

And we cannot but be struck with the great goodness and love of GOD in thus giving the different tribes these individual and minute predictions for themselves separately, over and above the general promise to Abraham of an inheritance in the Holy Land for the whole nation. So far from these minute prophecies being unworthy of being uttered so long beforehand by the great Creator and Ruler of all things, they give us just that teaching which brings GOD near to us : they are so exactly what the Old Testament Church needed to keep faith alive, they would give each tribe so exactly that comfortable assurance of GOD'S superintending providence which they needed, that we feel no difficulty in believing that they



were written long before, not long after, the events which they predict. They "have the witness in themselves" of their own inspiration: this moral end and purpose which they answered of furnishing a light in a dark place on which Old Testament believers might fix their gaze, taken in connexion with their "continuous fulfilment," extending as it did over many centuries, supplies perhaps the best answer to the cavil of unbelief which would explain away the marvellous fulfilment of these prophecies by saying that they were spoken after the events predicted in them.

To this moral purpose of these prophecies Dr. Pusey forcibly calls attention; "The tribes," he says, "had in these temporal blessings promised them, a perpetual memory not of the goodness only, but of the providence of God, Who brought about for each what He had promised to each. The vines of Judah; the exceeding fruitfulness of the portion of Ephraim and Manasseh; the olive groves of Asher, its iron and brass from its near Tyrian merchandise: the active commerce of Zebulun, and the glass of its sands: the resting enrichment of Issachar, through which that commerce passed; the enriching neighbourhood of the sea of Galilee to Naphtali;—these were no mere natural gifts of God's providence: their several blessings were, in a manner, the heraldic mottoes of each tribe, and spoke of God's foreordaining love. Still more those portions of the prophecy which portrayed the character of the tribes: they are the banners of God hanging over them, when faithful to Him. The lion-might of Judah, of Gad, and of Dan; Ephraim's horns of power; the swift energy of Benjamin;—these could be put forth on each occasion, as strength which God had pledged to them. . . . The blessing of Judah, 'Thou wilt

bring him back to his people,' was the abiding hope of the wives and mothers of Judah when its armies went forth to the field. Three tribes had for the misdeeds of their first fathers lost successively the primogeniture; but in the case of these three tribes the love of GOD is seen in His chastenings. Reuben's perilous pride was stayed by the prophecy of the fewness of his numbers: Simeon became the teachers of little children in Israel: the sentence on Levi, though unreversed, was turned into a blessing, and an occasion of greater nearness to GOD. So was there stamped on the history of the people the great law of the justice and love of GOD, that irreversible chastisement deepens on persevering impenitence, but, on repentance, became, through the rich exuberance of His mercy, the channel of His choicest favours."<sup>1</sup>

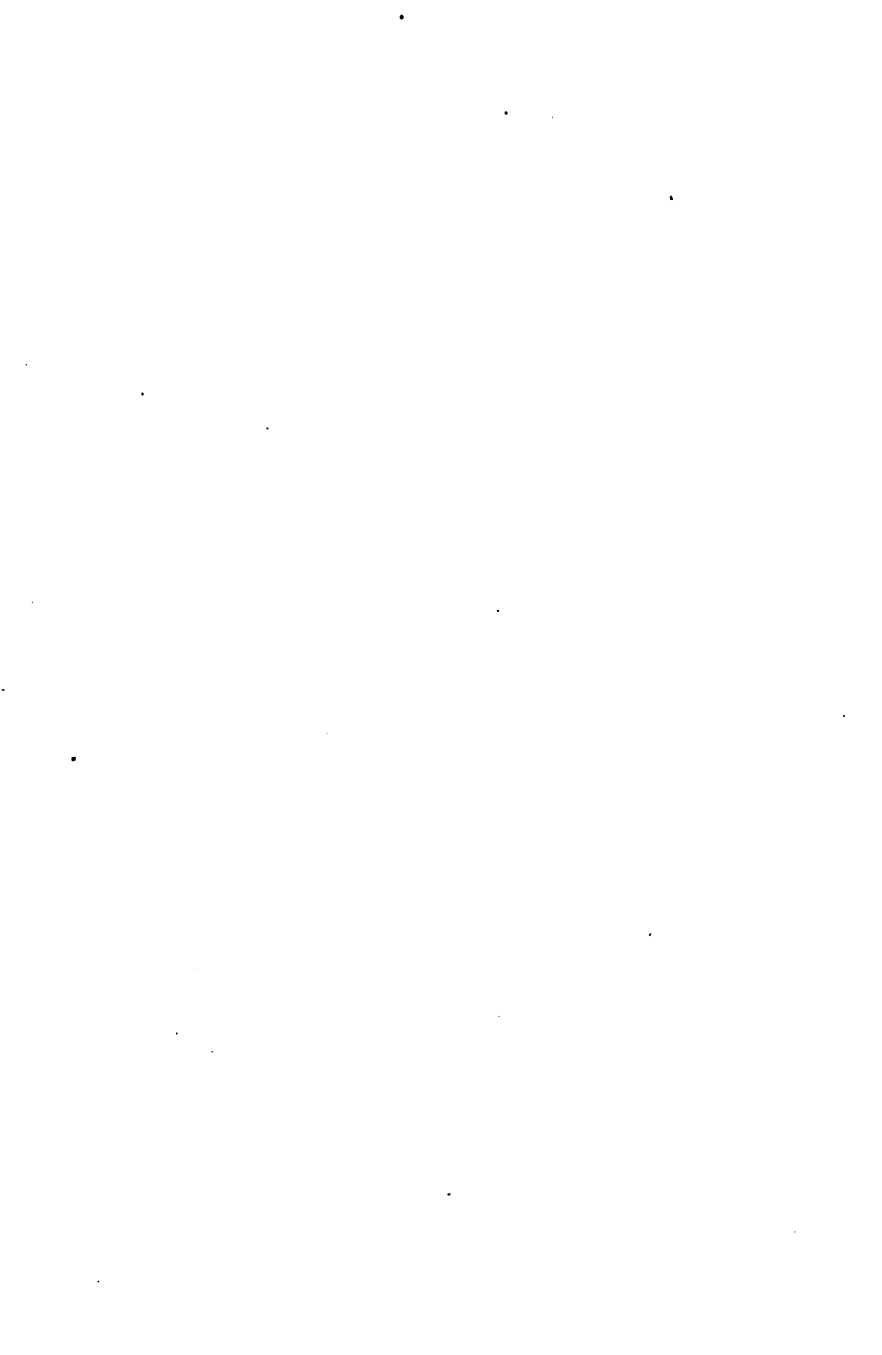
This moral end and purpose of these predictions is the most unassailable internal evidence of their inspiration; GOD told His Church "these things before they came to pass, that when they did come to pass they might believe." "These were no chance unsystematic predictions: varied, often minute, seldom repeated identically, they were one in their end and purpose, to fix in men's minds, that GOD held in His hands His creatures' destiny: that good and evil came from Him, and were apportioned by Him Who foretold them ere they came, good of His own free goodness, evil as drawn upon His creatures by their own evil."<sup>2</sup>

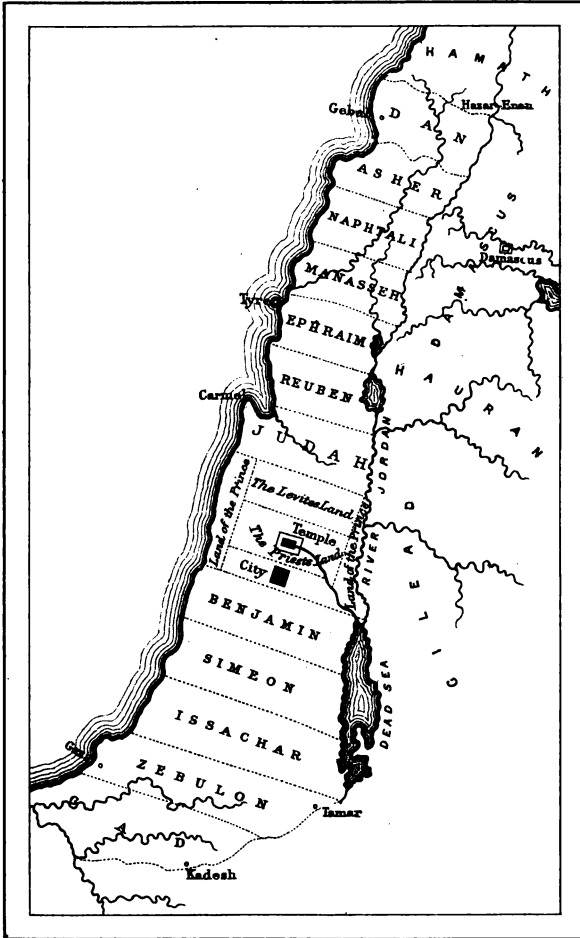
*Ne reminiscaris, Domine, delicta nostra,  
Vel parentum nostrorum!*

Remember not, LORD, our offences,  
Nor the offences of our forefathers!

<sup>1</sup> Pusey on Daniel, pp. 250—255.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. p. 250.





THE HOLY LAND,  
AS SEEN IN THE VISION OF EZEKIEL.

Chap. XLV. XLVII. XLVIII.

(Copied, by permission, from Bishop Wordsworth's commentary.)

## CHAPTER XIV.

### *AN INQUIRY INTO THE HISTORY OF THE "LOST TRIBES."*

AMOS IX. 9.

"For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as *corn* is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth."

WE may conclude our examination of the fulfilment of the prophecies of Jacob and Moses about the twelve tribes by an inquiry into the history of what are called "the Lost Tribes."

Out of the fact that in these prophetic benedictions God had a blessing for each of the tribes (Gen. xlix. 28), that not one of them was forgotten or cast off, by Him, the question naturally arises, is it correct for us to speak of any of them as "lost?" Is it true, as some people suppose, that the six or seven millions of Jews to be met with at the present day belong to the tribes of Judah, or Benjamin, or Levi, and that the remaining, or ten tribes, as they are commonly called, must be looked for and identified elsewhere? This is a very wide-spread notion, and gives rise to speculations as fascinating as they are fantastic. And the notion is nothing new. Many attempts have been made, from the very first, to discover the ten tribes existing as a distinct community.

Josephus believed that in his day they dwelt in large multitudes somewhere beyond the Euphrates, in Arsa-reth, according to the author of 2 Esdras xiii. 45. Rabbinical traditions and fables of the middle ages say the same. When the interior of Asia was less known, people thought that they were to be found there. The Jews imagined that they lay behind some mighty and fabulous river Sambatyon, or were fenced in by mountains. The imagination of Christian writers has discovered them in various places. Jewish features have been traced in the Afghan tribes; rumours are heard to this day of a Jewish colony at the foot of the Himalayas. The black Jews of Malabar claim affinity with them; elaborate attempts have been made to identify them with the Nestorians of Kurdistan; and, in the seventeenth century, with the Indians of North America.<sup>1</sup> And the latest theory is to identify them with the Anglo-Saxon race. It is gravely said that we ourselves are Ephraim. A literature has grown up among us which has for its purpose the discovery of the lost tribes in the Anglo-Saxon race; it has its preachers, and its tracts, and its dupes.<sup>2</sup> It will be well, then, to conclude our examination of the prophetic blessings given to Israel by Jacob and Moses by inquiring what light Scripture prophecies and Scripture history

<sup>1</sup> See Bible Dict. Art. "Captivity;" and Pusey on Hosea.

<sup>2</sup> In a bankruptcy case at Sheffield, reported in the "Times" for August 31, 1883, it was mentioned that the bankrupt was a member of the Anglo-Israel Society, which was established to look after the lost ten tribes, and that among the creditors were the subscribers to a fund called the Tara Trust Fund: this had been subscribed for the purpose of excavating the Tara Mount, county Meath, in Ireland, to recover the deeds that were given to the prophet Jeremiah when he purchased the land of Palestine. The Tara Trust Fund amounts at present to £227.

throw on this subject, and by a brief statement of the few plain facts mentioned in Scripture about it. The result will probably be a doubt if those tribes, which some are in search of, were ever lost at all.

And first, we may remark, that our examination of the manner in which these old prophecies of Jacob and Moses were fulfilled supplies in itself an answer to the question whether it is correct to speak of any of the twelve tribes as lost. The continuous fulfilment of many of these prophecies of Gen. xlix. and Deut. xxxiii. reached beyond the time of the return from the Captivity. The promise of Jacob to his sons in Gen. xlix. 1 is that he would tell them "that which should befall them *in the last days*," i.e., in the days of the Messiah, and this was addressed to all the tribes. If to each a prophecy was addressed which was not to be perfectly fulfilled till our LORD's time, then, if before His time many of the tribes were lost, many prophecies have remained unfulfilled. This could not be the case, and, as we have seen, was not the case. Some of these prophecies, as Dr. Pusey has remarked, were more plainly fulfilled in New Testament than in Old Testament times, and others perhaps only in New Testament times. The obedience of the heathen to "Shiloh," our Peace, the calling of the Gentiles by the northern tribes, where the LORD JESUS lived, and whence Apostles came, and which were the highway of Palestine; when Zebulun indeed "rejoiced in his going out," and with Issachar "called the people to the Mount," i.e. to the Holy Mount of GOD (Deut. xxxiii. 19);—the dwelling of the LORD JESUS in Capernaum, and His preaching by the Sea of Galilee, when Naphtali "gave goodly words," and was satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the LORD, and possessed the sea

and the south" (Gen. xlix. 21; Deut. xxxiii. 23);—these and other New Testament fulfilments of these prophetic blessings,<sup>1</sup> show that to the last the ten tribes shared GOD'S favour equally with Judah and Benjamin; that the ten as well as the two returned to their own land after the Captivity, and could not in our LORD'S time be looked upon as lost.

To turn then to what Scripture tells us about them.

"The supposed independent history of the ten tribes begins about the year 975 B.C., on their revolt from Rehoboam of the tribe of Judah, and the establishment of a separate kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam of the tribe of Ephraim.<sup>2</sup> This revolt was both political and religious; and the schismatical and idolatrous kingdom which he set up lasted till 721 B.C., presenting, as long as it lasted, a spectacle of licentiousness, cruelty, and general degradation. Of the nineteen kings who reigned over it, not one is, morally, even respectable; and the greater number attained the throne by usurpation and murder."<sup>3</sup> "The kings of Israel maintained no precautions against the entrance of idolatry, and in not a few cases actively favoured it. The Prophets, instead of being invited to counsel the throne, as Nathan and Gad had been by David, were ignored or violently resisted. Unrestrained by the checks still felt in Judah, the kings made no pretence of acting under the laws of the theocracy, but were guided solely by their own ideas of policy.

<sup>1</sup> For these interpretations of the blessings on the tribes, see Pusey on Daniel, pp. 250—256, and Wordsworth on Gen. xlix. and Deut. xxxiii.

<sup>2</sup> Tirzah was the capital of the northern kingdom under Jeroboam I. and his successors until the building of Samaria. (1 Kings xiv. 17; xv. 21; xvi. 8, 23.)

<sup>3</sup> Art. in *Church Quarterly Review* for July, 1880.



The conflict which Samuel had maintained with Saul was recommenced, therefore, almost at once, between his successors and the kings of Israel, constant revolutions being the result. Nor did it ever cease. For more than 250 years before the fall of the kingdom, there was a life and death struggle between the throne and the prophets, who having, under GOD, founded the monarchy, fought nobly to guide it in the right path. Dynasties rose and fell at short intervals, most of them in the second generation; only one surviving till the fifth. The succession became, in fact, elective rather than hereditary, with all the evils of that system. Denunciation by a prophet was fatal to a royal house; another rose at his word in its place. But, in spite of this, things drifted ever from bad to worse. The confusion of the old days of the Judges returned in a great degree by constant political revolutions; popular ignorance and superstition grew apace where all was unsettled; idolatry gradually took deep and wide root, and with it an immorality fatal to any people.<sup>1</sup> The fall of this "sinful kingdom" took place in 721 B.C.; Samaria, its capital city, was then taken by Sargon, king of Assyria,<sup>2</sup> after all the horrors of a three years' siege; Hoshea, the last king of Israel, was sent in chains to Nineveh, and the flower of the nation was carried away to Assyria, and placed in Halah, and other towns on the neighbouring banks of the Habor, a river of Gozan, or in the far off cities of the Medes (2 Kings xvii. 6).

This was not however the first blow struck at the

<sup>1</sup> Geikie's "Hours with the Bible," Vol. iv., pp. 9, 10.

<sup>2</sup> "They took it," in 2 Kings xviii. 10, means Sargon took it, as we know from the monuments. He is mentioned by name in Isa. xx. 1. Sennacherib was son of Sargon.

power of the kingdom of Israel, nor was it the last. A former invasion of Gilead and Galilee by Tiglath Pileser II. (the Pul of the Bible<sup>1</sup>), B.C. 741, had swept away great numbers of the tribes of Zebulun, Naphtali, Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh; and a subsequent invasion by the great monarch Esarhaddon, son and successor of the murdered Sennacherib, B.C. 677, gleaned of the remnant of their inhabitants, "the cities of Samaria" which the conqueror peopled with heathen colonists from Babylon and elsewhere, the progenitors of the Samaritans of our LORD's time.<sup>2</sup> (2 Kings xvi. 24; Ezra iv. 2, 10.) And then it was that those prophecies of the utter desolation, and utter depopulation, of the land and cities of the ten tribes, which we have in Isaiah xxiv. and other

<sup>1</sup> He was not of the royal family, but, after a succession of revolts, he seized the throne of Nineveh, B.C. 745. "His tactics, (as we learn from the monuments,) were those of his predecessors, to stamp out revolt by savage ferocity. He boasts of the multitudes killed in battle, or impaled when taken; of the pyramids of bodies he raised at the gates of cities he was besieging; of the desolation he made where those cities once stood, and of the throngs of prisoners of all ages, and both sexes, whom he led into captivity and slavery, with all their possessions, and their dishonoured gods." (Geikie's "Hours with the Bible," iv. 229.)

<sup>2</sup> This last and desolating invasion, which left the cities of Israel silent and deserted, is remarkable as having been the subject of a celebrated prophecy of Isaiah uttered sixty-five years before the event. Part of a message of consolation to the terrified inhabitants of Jerusalem, when "the heart of the king of Judah was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind;" to console them in their terror at the confederate kings of Syria and Israel (Isa. vii. 2, 8), GOD foretold the utter destruction of Ephraim, i.e. of the kingdom of Israel, by the Assyrians; that the rival power which they had so long feared should within sixty-five years be utterly broken, so that the people of Ephraim should not be a distinct and independent people any more, as the rival of

chapters, began to be fulfilled, and no doubt were fulfilled to the letter. Then, as Isaiah foretold (ch. vii.), the power of "Ephraim was broken, that it should not be a people" any more. Then, as Hosea had predicted, "the bow of Israel," that "bow of Joseph" which had so long "abode in strength," was "broken by GOD in the valley of Jezreel." (Hos. i. 5; Gen. xlix. 24.) Then "the mountains of Israel were desolate so that no man passed through them." (Ezek. xxxiii. 28.) The voice of man and beast was silent, neither the lowing of herds, nor the bleating of flocks, nor the song of the shepherd was to be heard upon them; while in the towns "every house was shut up, that no man might come in;" "all joy was darkened, the mirth of the land was gone." The very shadow of the great "day of judgment" fell upon the land, and rests, as it were, on that 24th chapter of Isaiah, which describes these events, so that in this 24th chapter of Isaiah, as in the 24th chapter of S. Matthew, we cannot always tell whether prophecy is speaking of the end of the Jewish kingdom, or of the end of the world. The LORD made the land of Israel empty, and made it waste; it was "utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled;" "the inhabitants were burned, and few men left;" the remnant that was left being "in the midst of the land among the people as the shaking of an olive tree, and as the gleaning grapes when the vintage is done." (Isa. xxiv. 1—13.) All this, we must observe, applies to the land of Israel as distinguished from that the house of David: "Thus saith the LORD GOD, . . . within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people." This prophecy, uttered 742 B.C., was fulfilled 677 B.C., as has been said. For computation of dates, which are corroborated by testimonies from the Assyrian monuments, as well as from Holy Scripture, see Pusey's Daniel, pp. 262, 263, and notes.

of Judah. There is no mention, as in the case of the somewhat parallel destruction of the kingdom of Judah, of "the poor of the land being left to be vine-dressers and husbandmen." (2 Kings xxv. 12.) "It was not an unusual thing with Oriental conquerors actually to exhaust a land of its inhabitants. Thus it is said in Herod. iii. 149, that the Persians dragged Samos as in a net, and delivered it up stript of all its men." (Bib. Dict.) This was done in the case of those "cities of Samaria" which were peopled by heathen colonists afterwards. Josephus expressly notices a difference in the cases of the ten and of the two tribes. He says that the land of the former became the possession of foreigners; but that this was not the case with the land of the latter. (Ant. x. 9, § 7.) The fate (or intended fate) of the unhappy captives in Assyria is recorded by the great king himself, "I caused crowds of them to work in fetters, making bricks; and pulled down the whole of the small palace, and caused much earth to be brought away in baskets from the fields, and threw it on the site of my new palace, and completed the mound on which it was to stand with stones of great size." "With captives young and old, male and female, I marched to the gate of Nineveh, and left them to stay in front of it for ever, with dogs and other beasts." (Annals of Esarhaddon, quoted in Geikie's "Hours with the Bible," v. 72.)

Such was the end of the separate history of the ten tribes. In this sense we can speak of them as "lost." They lost their independence and corporate existence when Samaria, the centre of their unity and cohesion, fell; in this sense they were scattered never to be reunited again under one sceptre as before,—distinct from that sceptre of Judah, which, as it was predicted (Gen. xlix. 10), did

not "depart till Shiloh came." The plain prophecy of Isaiah and others that Ephraim should "cease to be a people," seems to dispose of the idea that the English nation, or any other people can be Ephraim's descendants or representatives now; even if, on the other hand, the predictions that, as a tribe, it should be preserved from losing its individuality in that of any nation did not forbid the idea also. And if this were all that were told us, if the history of the ten tribes ended here, we might well despair of "tracing the footsteps of the departing race;" we might think of them as lost beyond hope of being found; we might suppose the prophecies of their restoration had never yet been fulfilled. But their history does *not* end here. "Ephraim, as a nation, indeed ceased to be a people; its separate existence was a curse, not a blessing; the offspring of rivalry, matured by apostasy, the parent of jealousy, hatred, and mutual vexation." But while "the kingdom" was passed and gone, "the children of the kingdom still remained heirs of the promises made to their fathers."

These promises predict two things. First, that a remnant shall remain on in Palestine, which shall not go into captivity: Secondly, that the exiles, who do go, shall be preserved in the different places of their captivity, and all be brought back to their own land, as they had been brought out of Egypt. We may first follow up the history of the remnant which survived the several invasions of the Assyrians; then that of the captive exiles.<sup>1</sup>

First, as to those who remained behind in Palestine. It is to be observed that large numbers belonging to the ten tribes escaped the fate which overtook their countrymen, from having been previously absorbed in the two

<sup>1</sup> As suggested by Art. in "Day of Rest," for November, 1880.

tribes which comprised the kingdom of Judah. That many from all the tribes attached themselves to Judah rather than forsake the Church of their Fathers, is plain from Scripture. "We find that immediately after the rebellion, Rehoboam could muster no more than 180,000 warriors (1 Kings xii. 21), but his son Abijah could oppose Jeroboam with 400,000 men (2 Chron. xiii. 3), while Asa commanded levies amounting to 580,000 men (2 Chron. xiv. 8). This enormous increase in the military force of the kingdom of Judah could not have been occasioned by natural increase of population, but rather by immigration of Israelites into Judah. In fact we are told as much in 2 Chron. xi. 16, where we read that the priests and Levites resorted to Rehoboam out of all their coasts, leaving all their suburbs and possessions; and that after them came to Jerusalem some out of *all* the tribes to sacrifice, so strengthening the kingdom of Judah. And in 2 Chron. xv. 9 it is said that there fell to Asa many from all the tribes, when they saw that the LORD his GOD was with him." Thus there was a constant immigration at times from the northern to the southern kingdom, and it would seem that this immigration continued all the time during which the kingdom of Israel existed.<sup>1</sup>

But further. That a large portion of the resident population of the northern kingdom also escaped being carried away into captivity, is apparent from the comparatively small numbers who actually went.

We have, naturally, exaggerated ideas as to the numbers who were led away captive into Assyria and Babylon. It is true, that as the prophets predicted, the mountain homes were left desolate, and the cities de-

<sup>1</sup> "The Ten Tribes: Where are they?" pp. 5, 6.

serted, and the houses shut up; but this was as much owing to the judgments of GOD (Ezek. xiv.), or to the flight of the inhabitants before the invading armies, or to their merciless slaughter, as to the numbers actually carried off in the several captivities. The numbers stated in Scripture to have gone into captivity are, after all, comparatively small. The population of the two kingdoms has been calculated from the number of troops they could bring into the field;<sup>1</sup> that of Israel may have amounted to four millions, that of Judah to three, making a population of seven millions altogether. The number of captives must then have been small, compared with the whole population. In an Assyrian inscription Sargon has himself recorded the number of captives which he took at the fall of Samaria, after its three years' siege. "I besieged the city of Samaria," he says, "and took it. I carried off 27,280 of the citizens; I chose fifty chariots for myself from the whole number taken; all the other property of the people of the town I left for my servants to take. I appointed resident officers over them, and imposed on them the same tribute as had formerly been paid. In the place of those taken into captivity, I sent thither inhabitants of lands conquered by me, and imposed the tribute on them which I require from Assyrians."<sup>2</sup>

From a comparison of 2 Kings xxiv. 14—16, and xxv.

<sup>1</sup> Jeroboam I., B.C. 957, could bring into the field 800,000 fighting men; and Asa, some thirty years after, could muster 580,000. Since then the LORD had "cut Israel short;" but these numbers give a proximate basis for calculation.

<sup>2</sup> Schrader, pp. 158, 160, quoted in Geikie's "Hours with the Bible," iv. 239. For a full account of the fall of the northern kingdom, see Geikie, *ib.* pp. 214—243.

12, and Jer. lii. 28—30, we learn that the numbers carried captive from Jerusalem at its final destruction were some 15,600. Of the numbers carried away from Galilee and Gilead by Tiglath Pileser, we are told nothing; but it has been inferred, perhaps correctly, that altogether some 200,000 Jews belonging to all the tribes went into Assyria, Media, and Babylon. A remnant there must always have been, small at first, but increased from time to time as returning fugitives joined it. Two facts at any rate appear from a comparison of 1 Chron. ix. 3 and 2 Chron. xxxiv. 9. First, that a considerable portion of the population belonging to the ten tribes retired to Jerusalem or its neighbourhood at the time of the Assyrian invasions, and thus escaped the fate of their countrymen: and secondly, that when the invading armies had retired, these Israelites returned and reoccupied the country in which they were resident. And so again from Jer. xl. 11, 12, we find after the destruction of Jerusalem many Jewish families scattered among the Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, and other countries which had offered them a friendly shelter, only waiting for an opportunity when they might safely return home. And this must have been the case with the ten tribes also. That this was so we gather from three glimpses which we get of the northern kingdom after its independent power had been utterly broken by the fall of Samaria. (1) The Passover which Hezekiah kept at Jerusalem after these events was attended by many members of the northern tribes. We thus find evidence that a "remnant" of these tribes was left in the land, or had returned thither when the invaders were gone: evidence of an Israelite population of the whole territory to the north of Judah. To this Passover Hezekiah invited



Ephraim and Manasseh "from Beersheba even to Dan" (2 Chron. xxx. 1, 5), addressing them in his letters as "the remnant of you that are escaped out of the hand of the kings of Assyria" (2 Chron. xxx. 6). The more part mocked (v. 10), yet divers of Asher, Manasseh, and of Zebulun came at once; and afterwards many of Ephraim and Issachar, as well as Manasseh and Zebulun (2 Chron. xxx. 10, 11, 18). This happened two or three years after the fall of Samaria. (2) But we get another glimpse of the ten tribes in Josiah's time, about a century after this mention of them. His reformation extended to "all the countries that pertained to the children of Israel" (2 Chron. xxxiv. 33). We find "Manasseh and Ephraim, and all the remnant of Israel" taking part in the Passover which he held, and in the subscription which he raised for repairing the Temple (2 Kings xxiii. 17, 19, 20; 2 Chron. xxxiv. 3, 7—9; and xxxv. 18). This happened some fifty years after Esarhaddon's last and sweeping invasion. All this, then, points to a considerable country population of members of the ten tribes who had escaped the chastisement of the captivity, or who had fled before the invaders, and since returned. (3) And again we get a third and very interesting glimpse of this remnant of the ten tribes, some three months after the final destruction of Jerusalem itself, in Jer. xli. 5. We there read of a band of pious pilgrims, or devotees, some fourscore in number, going up with clothes rent, and shaven beards, and other signs of passionate grief, apparently at the season of the Feast of Tabernacles, to bring offerings to the holy and desolate city, and to mourn over the ruins of the Temple. This notice is interesting<sup>1</sup> from the fact that the pilgrims came

<sup>1</sup> They were coming in the seventh month (v. 1), that of the

from "Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria," all cities in the tribe of Ephraim, showing how a common national sorrow was already beginning to heal national rivalries, and to fuse together the ten tribes of Israel and the two tribes of Judah; that the captivity was already beginning to fulfil Isaiah's prophecy, that "Ephraim should not envy Judah, and Judah should not vex Ephraim" (Isa. xi. 3), and Ezekiel's predicted union between the "stick of Joseph" and the "stick of Judah." (Ezek. xxxvii.)

So far, then, from the ten tribes being lost, or disappearing from view, at the period of their captivity in Assyria, we thus see that an ever increasing number of them lived on in their old homes in the Holy Land, or returned thither. And there their descendants were in the times of the Maccabees, and in New Testament times. (1 Macc. v. 9, &c.) The unfaithful remnant, who had not kept their lineage pure, became in time merged in those heathen Samaritans who had been transplanted among them by Esarhaddon; at first frightened out of their idolatry by the lions which God sent among them (2 Kings xvii. 25), they became a half Jewish, half heathen people; and subsequently, being joined by a renegade priest, they renewed in another form the schism of Jeroboam. In our LORD'S time they were the bit-

Feast of Tabernacles; and carrying the meat-offering usual at this feast. (Lev. ii. 1-16.) Though the Temple was in ruins, the site was holy. Their outward signs of grief, though forbidden in the law (Lev. xix. 28, and xxi. 5; Deut. xiv. 1), probably as being heathen (1 Kings xviii. 28; Isa. xv. 2), were nevertheless common enough (Jer. vii. 29; xvi. 6; Isa. xxii. 12; Ezek. vii. 18; Amos viii. 10; Micah i. 10). They came thus in token of sorrow for the desolation of the Temple (Jer. xlvii. 5, and xlvi. 37). See Wordsworth, *ad loc.*

terest enemies of that Jewish Church and worship from which they had seceded, and they gave the name of Samaria to the central portion of the Holy Land, that part which had formed the inheritance of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh ; but their faith, though defective, was unincumbered by those traditions of the southern Jews, which made the word of GOD of none effect ; they anxiously expected the Messiah ; and in one of their cities eagerly welcomed Him when He came. (Ezra vi. 21 ; S. John iv. 12.) The more faithful remnant, whose lineage was kept purer, were, on the other hand, known by the name of Galilæans. (1 Macc. v.) On these, after seven centuries of waiting, the Light of the World first shone. Our LORD opened His ministry among them ; they were those "lost sheep of the house of Israel," to whom He was specially sent, and to whom He first sent His Apostles. (S. Matt. x. 5, 6, and xv. 24.)

Having thus traced into New Testament times the history of those of the ten tribes who remained on in the Holy Land, we must now, lastly, follow up the after history of those exiles who were carried into captivity, or who, scattered into various lands, were known as "Jews of the Dispersion." (S. John vii. 35.)

We may begin by inquiring what prophecy had predicted about them, for there are many prophecies specially addressed to the ten tribes. Predictions specially addressed to them are too plain and numerous to be misunderstood. We are here, moreover, on certain ground ; for we know that these prophecies either have been, or will be, fulfilled. If we study them we find, then, that the return of the ten tribes of Israel is, if possible, more plainly and more lovingly promised than that of the two tribes of Judah.

(a.) In some prophecies it is foretold generally that all the tribes shall be gathered from all places whither GOD had driven them. See e.g. Isa. xliii. 5, 6; Jer. xxiii. 3, 7, 8, and xxxii. 37; Ezek. xxxiv. 11—13; xxxvi. 24. See also Ezek. xlvii. 13; xlviii. 1—7, 23—27; Rev. vii. 4—8.

(b.) In others the ten tribes and the two tribes are both mentioned in the same prophecy, but as two distinct bodies of captives, and a promise of restoration is given to each body separately. See e.g. Isa. xi. 12; Jer. iii. 18; xxxi. 27; xxxiii. 13, 14; l. 4, 17—20; Ezek. xxxvii. 19, 21, 22; Hos. i. 10, 11; Obad. 18—20; Zech. x. 6—10.

(c.) In other prophecies the ten tribes are expressly mentioned by themselves, under the names of Joseph, Samaria, Ephraim or Israel, and a special promise is given to them beforehand, or sent to them in their banishment, of restoration to their own land. See e.g. Jer. iii. 11, 12, and xxxi. 5, 20, 21; Ezek. xvi. 53, 55, and xxviii. 25, 26, and xxxvii. 16, 17; Hosea xi. 11; Amos ix. 9; Obad. 20; Zeph. iii. 10.

In some of these last prophecies, addressed specially to the ten tribes, the promises are peculiarly definite and distinct; even plainer than in the case of Judah; and figurative language, touchingly expressive of the love and compassion of GOD for them, is often used, such as we look in vain for among the prophecies addressed to the two more faithful tribes: as if the sin of the ten tribes having been greater, and their punishment greater, than that of the other two, the love of the FATHER came out more strongly in expressions of full pardon to His returning prodigal (e.g. Jer. xxxi. 20). In some cases language of terrible denunciation gives place almost im-

mediately afterwards to words of mercy which fall upon the ear in cadences of tenderest pathos, a manner of speech only to be met with in our LORD'S addresses to the multitude on Tuesday in Holy Week, in which His woes against the Pharisees suddenly give place to His pathetic lamentation over Jerusalem (S. Matt. xxiii.), and forcing conviction that the speakers in the Old and New Testament are the same : as in the same prophecy, that of Hosea, "the Almighty at the opening of the book declares the sentence of punishment on the ten tribes irreversible, and then in divine pity recalls His own sentence towards the end of the book."<sup>1</sup> In one prophecy the return of the ten tribes is specially promised in the figurative language of a dove returning to her nest, a figure expressly used to foretell the certainty of their return from the far-off lands of their captivities, the dove being a bird proverbial for returning to her cot from any distance whither she might be carried.<sup>2</sup> In another it is promised that the ten tribes shall return as travellers asking their way, "one of a city, or two of a family," as they who had been scattered so widely, would, and doubtless did, return, attaching themselves here and there to some chance caravan as it offered (Jer. iii. 13, 14).

In some prophecies, moreover, the different lands to be reoccupied by the different tribes belonging to the northern kingdom are mentioned by name. The northern tribes are to reoccupy Carmel and Lebanon, and Zidon and Zarephath : Ephraim and Manasseh are to plant their vines on the mountains of Samaria : Gad is to recover his cities of Gilead, of which the Ammonites sought to dispossess him in his absence. (Jer. xxxi., and xlix. 1, 2 ; Obad. 18—20.) And though Obadiah seems

<sup>1</sup> Pusey on Hosea.

<sup>2</sup> See Pusey on Hosea xi. 11.

to foretell that Judah and Benjamin are to have a larger portion than formerly in Palestine on their return (Obad. 19, 20), yet in Ezekiel's visions of the Holy City, and temple, and land, the twelve tribes are seen one by one returning and reoccupying different portions of the Holy Land, while each of the gates has the name of one or other of the tribes inscribed on it : visions which, whatever be their spiritual meaning, must first be so far understood literally as predictions, fitting in with so many others, that no tribes are to be lost ; that each is to have his portion in the inheritance of GOD ; that not one of their names is forgotten by Him (Ezek. xl.—xlviii.) ;<sup>1</sup> as in his vision of the dry bones Ezekiel had seen all the tribes rising from their graves in the various places of their banishment : and in the symbolical act of binding two sticks together he foretells the binding together in one of the ten tribes and the two, so making a united nation and kingdom and Church. (Ezek. xxxvii.)

But no prophecy bears on the subject so clearly as the well-known words of Amos ix. 9 : " Behold the eyes of the LORD GOD are upon the sinful '*kingdom*,' and I will destroy '*it*' from off the face of the earth ; saving that I will not utterly destroy the '*house*' of Jacob, saith the LORD. For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the '*house*' of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." Rightly understood and translated, these words

<sup>1</sup> There is of course this difference, that in Ezekiel's vision of the Holy Land, reoccupied by the various tribes, all have portions on the West of Jordan. This is Bishop Wordsworth's interpretation ; and Ezek. xlvi. 18 (Heb. and Sept.), seems to imply that the Jordan was the eastern boundary ; in Ezekiel's vision the new temple occupies the most conspicuous place ; S. John in his, expressly says, " I saw no temple therein." (Rev. xxi. 22.)

show us in what sense the ten tribes are lost, and in what sense not lost ; they are spoken (in the first instance at any rate), not of all the Jews, but of the ten tribes, called here, as elsewhere, "the house of Israel." The prophecy of Amos speaks exclusively of the kingdom of Israel, not of that of Judah at all, except once in chap. ii. 4, 5.<sup>1</sup> He was expressly called to predict the coming downfall of the kingdom of Israel, then at the height of its power under Jeroboam II. And now, speaking of the ten tribes, he pointedly draws a distinction between the "kingdom of Israel" and the "house of Israel." Of the first, GOD says by him, "The eyes of the LORD GOD are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth." Of the second, He says, "I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, for, lo, I will command, and I will cause to move the house of Israel among all nations, like as [earth] is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least stone [of the house] fall upon the ground." This is the exact rendering, as will be seen by a glance at the margin in our Bibles. It is a prediction that while the "sinful," because idolatrous, "kingdom" of the ten tribes shall perish, not the least tribe of them all shall be lost. This, so far as the words themselves go, may well be the meaning of the passage : for the words "the least stone," or "the least grain," might very well be translated "the least tribe, or family : " the word "tribe" would give the sense of the original very exactly : better than either "stone" or "grain." The word translated in our Bible "grain," and in the margin "stone," is a peculiar one, and is used here with an evident design. It comes from a verb meaning to "bind up closely," or to "confine closely together : " to

<sup>1</sup> Pusey on Amos.

bind up several things in a bundle (as in Exod. xii. 34 ; Josh. ix. 4 ; Hosea xiii. 12 ; Prov. xxx. 4, and xxvi. 8 ; Isa. viii. 16). So the word itself means a bundle, or a bag : a collection of things, or persons, united together. It is only translated "stone," as that is a piece of solid matter bound hard together, or closely cohering by the compression of its particles. There is no connexion at all with the idea of "stone" or "grain" in the original. The word is not an uncommon one. It is elsewhere translated "bundle," as in Gen. xlii. 35 (twice), "bundle," or "bundles of money;" in 1 Sam. xxv. 29, "the bundle of life;" in Cant. i. 13, a "bundle of myrrh;" in Prov. xxvi. 8, "bind a bundle in a sling." (Heb.) Or it is translated elsewhere "bag," as in Prov. vii. 20 ; Job xiv. 17 ; Hagg. i. 6. Once in 2 Sam. xvii. 13, "a small stone," meaning the least "heap of stones," that is, the "least knot or collection of persons." There is, then, no reason why we should not understand the word in the same sense in Amos ix. 9, as in all other places where it occurs : no reason why it should have a different meaning there from what it has elsewhere, and which it also must have from the very derivation of the word. If it means elsewhere a collection of things or persons bound up together in one parcel or community, so it does here : and no word as applied to the families of Israel could better express that meaning than our word "tribe," which means many persons bound together under one chieftain. The inspired writer might well have used the ordinary word for stone or grain if he had meant that ; as it is, there is nothing fanciful in supposing that the use of this peculiar word had in it a message of consolation for the Israelites in their captivity, when it came to them there : it may well mean that no "tribe"



should be lost, no "family" of the ten tribes be overlooked, in any of those dispersions which should scatter the Israelites in different detachments among the various nations of the earth.<sup>1</sup>

This, then, is what prophecy said about the ten tribes: it leads us to expect that not one of them would be lost: that the same special Providence would watch over them all in the most distant places of their captivity, which Jacob, on his death-bed, had predicted should overshadow them in the Holy Land. And if we turn now from prophecy to history, we shall find a few facts stated which show that these prophecies have been, or will be, fulfilled.

To turn, then, to the history of the exiles so far as we can trace it: Samaria had fallen B.C. 721, and the ten tribes had gone into captivity; one hundred and twenty-four years passed; and B.C. 597 they had been joined in their captivity by their brethren from Judah and Benjamin. Some portions of the ten tribes had been placed in various cities of Assyria and Media (2 Kings xviii. 11); another colony from Jerusalem, in Chaldæa, further south, along the banks of the Chebar (Ezek. i. 3); others in Babylon itself (2 Kings xxv. 7). There were easy communications between these places. "From Tel-abib, on the river Chebar, where, as we know, one colony from the tribe of Judah was settled, to Habor, the city and district of Media, where (2 Kings xvii. 6) some

<sup>1</sup> The word "corn" is not in the original. The word "sift" means, as translated elsewhere, "to cause to wander." Numb. xxxii. 13; 2 Sam. xv. 20 (margin). The word "sieve" is "a piece of ground," Gen. xxxv. 16; Gen. xlviii. 7; 2 Kings v. 19 (only). Not the same as Isa. xxx. 28. The whole earth is as one vast sieve in which Israel is shaken, or caused to wander.

portions of the nine tribes were placed by Sargon, is something under 250 miles. Nor does this even represent fully their real contiguity, for the one was on the upper waters, and the other on the lower, of the great river Euphrates, the highway of the district, so that communication was the simplest and most ordinary thing possible. We may be sure also that the intervening country was speedily *bridged*, as it were, by a series of Jewish colonists. Who can doubt that there was constant communication between the one and the other parties of exiles, who were separated by no more than about the distance between London and Durham?"<sup>1</sup> They were all now, moreover, members of one united empire. Two mighty revolutions had swept over the East since the fall of Samaria. Both those "rods of God," Assyria and Babylon, by which God had chastised His people, had been broken, now that their work was done. First Nineveh, the scene of the captivity of Hoshea, king of Israel, had fallen before Cyaxares, king of Media; and then Babylon,<sup>2</sup> by whose waters Judah was weeping, had been taken by Cyrus the Persian: and now it was under him one united empire, reaching from Palestine to India. The empire, then, being one, there were easy communications<sup>3</sup> both between the captive

<sup>1</sup> Art. in *Church Quarterly Review* for Oct., 1883. Some Anglo-Israel theorists imagine the ten tribes in their captivity separated from the two by a thousand miles, by rivers, and deserts, and mountains, making union between Israel and Judah impossible.

<sup>2</sup> The Chaldean or Babylonian supremacy scarcely lasted longer than the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, the greatest of its kings. "His reign comprised more than half the duration, and all the glory, of the Babylonian empire."

<sup>3</sup> Travelling seems to have been quite safe under the Chaldeans; and it had been the same under the Assyrians. This is illustrated

exiles and those left behind in Judæa ; and between the different colonies of the exiles themselves : we find letters easily passing between Jerusalem and Babylon ; Jeremiah sends a letter from Jerusalem to Babylon, advising the exiles to settle down there and to quietly await a restoration to their own land (Jer. xxix.) ; and this restoration, as appears from Tobit xiii. 5, and xiv. 5, the devout among the ten tribes confidently expected.

Such was the condition of the exiles when B.C. 536, the proclamation of Cyrus was suddenly issued through the length and breadth of what was now the Persian Empire, in those stirring words : " Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD GOD of Heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth ; and He hath charged me to build Him an house at Jerusalem, which *is* in Judah. Who *is there* among you of all His people ? His GOD be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD GOD of Israel " (Ezra i. 2, 3). This edict for Israel's return, which Cyrus was moved by GOD to utter, was addressed not to Judah and Benjamin only, but to all the people of Israel : all the tribes, the ten tribes of Israel, as well as the two tribes of Judah, were included in this invitation : and it is evident from Scripture that it was accepted by both Israel and Judah. The first return caravan was organised and directed by Zerubbabel (or Sheshbazzar), the grandson of king Jehoiachin, and by Jeshua, a grandson of the last high priest, Jozadak, B.C. 535. A second caravan returned

by the long journey which Jeremiah twice took : first, when he went to hide his girdle in a cleft of the rocks bordering the river Euphrates : and again when he returned to dig it out of the place where he had hidden it. Jer. xiii. 1-7. See " Hours with the Bible," v. 377, 452.

under Ezra, B.C. 458; and others with Nehemiah B.C. 445. When we look at these dates, and remember that since the first captivity of the ten tribes by Shalmaneser, B.C. 741, some three centuries had now passed away, we cannot be surprised if people who had been settled in their homes in Media, Assyria, and Babylonia, some two or three centuries, did not care to return to Judæa again. From the fact stated in Ezra ii. 36, that only four out of the twenty-four courses of priests cared to return, it has been inferred that the whole number of exiles who chose to continue in Assyria, &c., may have been about six times the number of those who returned; but that a large number belonging to the ten tribes returned in the caravan with Zerubbabel seems plain from the following statements of the numbers composing it. We are thrice told the number of those who returned with him: it is given in Ezra ii. 64, 65; Nehem. vi. 66, 67; 1 Esdras v. 41, 42. The numbers are stated to have been 42,360, besides 7,337 men-servants and maid-servants, and 245 singing men and singing women, making 49,942 altogether. These numbers include only the males above twelve years of age (1 Esdras v. 41, 42), except when the women-servants and singers are expressly mentioned; if we add the wives and female children, the number would be perhaps more than 100,000 who returned, out of the 200,000 who, as was calculated, went from all the tribes into captivity; at any rate some 42,000 males are said to have returned. But in these 42,000 some 12,000 clearly belonged to the ten tribes: for in each of the three lists the total number of returning exiles is stated to have been 42,000; yet it is remarkable that, in each case, when we add together the carefully given numbers of the men of Judah, Benjamin, and Levi, according to

their genealogies, their numbers do *not* make up that amount, but fall short of it by some 12,000, the total numbers, including servants, being put down as 49,942; whereas the actual numbers, when we add them together ourselves from the genealogies amount to only 29,818, or 30,143, or 31,089; showing some 20,000 unregistered families of the returning exiles (or at least 12,000) which must have belonged to the ten tribes: in other words, a considerable proportion of the returning families belonged to the ten tribes.<sup>1</sup>

There are other reasons for concluding that considerable numbers of the ten tribes returned with their brethren.

The returning exiles are called "children of the province" of Judæa (Ezra ii. 1; Nehem. vii. 6), one of the 127 provinces of the Persian Empire (Esther i. 1, and viii. 9). This expression must include all Israelites from all parts of Palestine. These children of the province are called Israelites (Ezra ii. 2, vi. 16). They dedicate the temple as representing the twelve tribes; they sacrifice for all Israel twelve he-goats, according to the number of the twelve tribes (Ezra vi. 17); and "twelve leaders" of the returning exiles are expressly mentioned by name in Nehem. vii. 7. In the books of the Maccabees the armies of Israel, described as "a very great host," are made up not of men of Judah, but of Galilee, Samaria, &c., indicating that great numbers of all the tribes were settled in all parts of the Holy Land.

Taken together, these facts prove that great numbers of Israelites belonging to the ten tribes returned to their

<sup>1</sup> This seems the only possible explanation, as suggested by the Article in the *Church Quarterly*, from which many of the facts here stated, and the arguments based on them, have been borrowed.

own land at the time that Judah, Benjamin, and Levi, returned with Zerubbabel, and also on subsequent occasions, as in the second caravan of returning exiles under Ezra, B.C. 458.

And as to the rest, we cannot tell how or when they returned. We know from prophecy and the books of the Maccabees that many from the ten tribes did return; and Josephus says, Judah gave the name of Judæa to the Holy Land because it was the *first* tribe to return thither; an expression which he would not have used if he had meant it was the *only* one which returned. They would go back, as prophecy foretold, "One of a city, two of a family," coming back in small parties as chance offered: at any rate, the fact seems clear, some from all the tribes returned; many of all the tribes remained behind.

Meanwhile in the Apocrypha we get glimpses of the exiles, which are interesting as explaining why more did not return, and as giving prophetic traditions of a future history yet in store for the dispersed Jews before the end of the world. Two such notices of the exiles in the books of Tobit and of Esdras, deserve close attention.

First: In the book of Tobit we get a glance at the inner life of a family of captives of the tribe of Naphtali, among the captives whom Shalmaneser brought to Nineveh, B.C. 741. From this we learn the following facts: the great body of the tribes before their captivity had become "worshippers of the heifer Baal" in their own land; i.e., of the calf at Dan (Tobit i. 5, 1 Kings xii. 30); and in their captivity, adopting the religion and customs of the Assyrians, they "did eat of the bread of the Gentiles" (Tobit i. 10); all the more devout Jews

observed the law of Moses, (Tobit i. 6, 7; xiv. 9,) and retained in their exile a knowledge of their genealogies, though the relations and distinctions between the tribes were perhaps somewhat confused (Tobit v. 10—12). It appears also from ch. xiv. 5, that the devout among the ten tribes confidently expected that restoration to their own land for which Jeremiah's prophetic letter (Jer. xxix. 4—7), bid the exiles wait; while prophecies from Amos are more than once referred to, and seem to have afforded special consolation to the captives at Nineveh; doubtless that of Amos ix. 9 was often talked of among them.

But the next and the most singular Apocryphal notice of what are called the lost tribes occurs in 2 Esdras xiii. 39—46. This is interesting as furnishing traditions of a future history yet in store for the dispersed Jews; it points to a tradition that to avoid the pollutions of heathenism the ten tribes migrated very far eastward beyond the limits assigned in Scripture to the lands of their captivity, from whence they were one day to return. The Apocalypse of Esdras consists of a series of angelic visions and revelations, and in this passage the angel Uriel is explaining to Esdras a dream which he had dreamed of the end of the world, and of the coming of the SON of GOD in judgment, and is addressing him on the subject of the future restoration of Israel. In his dream Esdras had beheld the nations of the earth gathered together in battle against CHRIST the Messiah. Then, after their destruction, he had seen our LORD standing on Mount Zion, surrounded by a great multitude, called a "peaceable multitude" (verses 12, 34, 35, 39). This the angel thus explains:

"Thou sawest that He (the Messiah) gathered another

peaceable multitude unto Him : these are the ten tribes, which are carried away prisoners out of their own land in the time of Osea the king, whom Shalmanasar the king of Assyria led away captive, and he carried them over the waters, and so came they into another land. But they took this counsel among themselves, that they would leave the multitude of the heathen, and go forth into a further country, where never mankind dwelt, that they might there keep their statutes, which they never kept in their own land. And they entered into Euphrates by the narrow passages of the river. For the most High then showed signs for them, and held still the flood, till they were passed over. For through that country there was a great way to go, namely of a year and a half; and the same region is called Arsareth. Then dwelt they there until the latter time; and now when they shall begin to come, the Highest shall stay the springs of the stream again, that they may go through: therefore sawest thou the multitude with peace. But those that be left behind of thy people are they that are found within my borders. Now when He destroyeth the multitude of the nations that are gathered together, He shall defend His people that remain.”<sup>1</sup>

Whatever the value of this vision may be, it no doubt gives us traditions currently believed among the Jews of that day, and amongst others, as we have seen, by Josephus. And much is here in accordance with the visions in the Revelation of S. John, and, as endorsed by him, is to be believed by us. In this dream, e.g., Esdras beholds the nations of the earth gathered together in battle against the SON of GOD; then their destruction by Him; and, after this, he sees CHRIST standing on Mount

<sup>1</sup> See article in *Church Quarterly*, where the quotation is given.



Zion, surrounded by a great multitude, which great multitude, he is told, is "the ten tribes" which were carried away in the time of Hoshea by Shalmaneser, and which shall in the end return from some vast region, or regions, called Arsareth (or lands),<sup>1</sup> beyond the Euphrates, that river having parted to allow them to pass, as it shall part to allow them to return. Here, then, we have much in the Apocrypha which in slightly different fashion is revealed to S. John in the Apocalypse :

The great day of His wrath. (Rev. vi.)

The drying up of the Euphrates for the way of the kings of the East. (Rev. xvi. 12, &c.)

The sealing of the tribes of Israel. (Rev. vii. 3—8.)

The Lamb on Mount Zion. (Rev. xiv.)

And, as has been said, whatever value we may put on these dreams and their interpretations, this passage in Esdras may certainly be taken to represent a general tradition among the Jews that some of the ten tribes had wandered far away into eastern lands, and a general belief and expectation that numbers of them, having preserved their faith and nationality, would be alive at CHRIST'S second coming, and would be restored to their own land. So much in the vision and prophecy is endorsed by S. John, that we may accept the whole as containing a large substratum of truth.

And additional light of much value is thrown on them by passages already referred to in Tobit xiii. 5, and xiv. 5. If these passages are examined, it will be found that they point also to a general belief among the exiled Jews of a day of restoration of all the tribes to their own land, before the end of the world, but in close connexion with that event. They predict very definitely the

<sup>1</sup> If it be, as has been suggested, the Hebrew ~~arsareth~~—lands.

return of a Jewish remnant; the building by them of the second Temple; its continuance till the end of the Old Testament dispensation; its destruction, followed by another dispersion of the Jews; and afterwards,—some time before the end of the world,—the restoration of all the families of Israel from all parts of the earth; and finally the building of a “new Jerusalem,” and new Temple, which shall never pass away: “He will gather us out of all nations. . . . Our brethren which lie scattered in the earth shall return and build a temple, but not like to the first, until the time of that age be fulfilled. Afterwards they shall return from all places of their captivity, and build up Jerusalem gloriously; the House of GOD shall be built in it for ever with a glorious building, as the prophets have spoken thereof.” (Tobit xiii., xiv.)

These references in the Apocrypha to the ten tribes are very interesting as traditions of the past, but more interesting also as traditions of the future restoration of the Jews to what is still their own land, and of a bright future yet in store for them after long centuries of chastisement. The opinion that all the tribes of Israel are thus to be restored again is held by some to be plainly taught in Holy Scripture, and by others is looked on as visionary.<sup>1</sup> But here at least is historical evidence<sup>2</sup> that since the days of their first captivity and dispersion they

<sup>1</sup> That in the latter days they will be restored to their own land is generally inferred from Jer. xxiii. 7, 8; Hos. iii. 4, 5; Rom. xi. 25, 26, and other such passages. From a comparison of Rom. xi. 25, 26 with Isa. lix. 19, 20 (the passage quoted by S. Paul) it seems plain that it is of a future, not a past event, that such Scriptures are speaking.

<sup>2</sup> The Book of Tobit was probably written about 350 B.C. The Second Book of Esdras 30 B.C.

themselves have looked forward to a literal fulfilment of the promises that they shall so return before the end of the world; that their horizon of prophecy was not bounded by the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans eighteen centuries ago. And when after reading these expressions of their national hopes and longings so deeply cherished in the lands of their exile, we then turn to those parts of the Revelation of S. John which treat of the events predicted in the Apocrypha, we seem to read them with fresh interest, and to see another reason for that Book having been written. It is as if S. John had been inspired by GOD to do for the future events surrounding CHRIST'S second coming, what S. Luke in the opening of his Gospel tells us he was inspired to do for the events surrounding CHRIST'S first advent: to give certain information instead of uncertain, to gather up into one authentic prophecy what was true out of a mass of floating traditions and uncertain interpretations, that we might "know the certainty of things most surely believed, forasmuch as many had taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of them."

At any rate one thing is plain,—of the Jews scattered by various dispersions we cannot speak of any of the tribes as lost, the promise of Amos ix. 9 has ever followed them. It is a curious fact (mentioned in the *Church Quarterly*) that in India there are large numbers of Jews known as Beni-Israel, and refusing to be called Jehudin or Jews, who have only those parts of the Hebrew Scriptures which were written before the captivity, and who do not observe "Purim," nor the festival of the dedication of the Temple, nor the commemoration of its destruction, all of which were instituted after the captivity. This is one of the many striking illustra-

tions of the fulfilment of the prophecy concerning the ten tribes in Amos ix. 9. The writer of the pamphlet, "The Ten Tribes; Where are they?" also remarks, "I am very much inclined to believe that a great part of the Persian Jews are descended from the ten tribes. The geographical position of their country favours this hypothesis. I have, while travelling among them, been struck with the circumstance, that while the Jews in Arabia and Turkey will generally speak of themselves as Jews—Yehoodi, the Persian Jews almost invariably call themselves Israél." The bulk of the tribes,—in so far as they are not merged in the rest of Israel, called at present Jews,—are still to be found in the country whither they were originally exiled by the kings of Assyria. It is evident that though great numbers returned under Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah to their own land, greater numbers remained behind. And that those who returned, and those who did not, represented, though in different proportions, the ten tribes of Israel as well as the two tribes of Judah. Not one was "lost," though they were scattered in different places in the far East; as the Book of Esther several times tells us, they were to be found in every one of the 127 provinces of the vast Persian Empire. They were able to go "every one to his own city" in Palestine when the general taxation ordered by the Romans required it (S. Luke ii. 3); Genealogies of all the tribes were preserved till, our LORD being born of a royal maiden of the tribe of Judah, the purpose of keeping them had been fulfilled. And of those who never returned, who were known as "the dispersed among the Gentiles" (S. John vii. 35), none were lost either. We know from Acts ii. 9 that there were still Jewish communities existing in Parthia, Elam, Media,

Mesopotamia, those very countries to which the ten tribes had been carried captive, and from which there were representatives present at the Feast of Pentecost at Jerusalem. In Acts xxvi. 7, S. Paul speaks of the Jewish nation as one body<sup>1</sup> composed of twelve tribes, "he had no conception of ten of them having been lost or merged in heathenism;" and to these twelve tribes S. Peter and S. James address their Epistles. So it has ever been; all down the ages the words of the Prophet have been fulfilled, "Lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as *gravel* is sifted in a sieve; yet shall not the least stone fall upon the earth."

All these facts are so many strong arguments in support of the statement made by Josephus and the Apocrypha, that a migration of the ten tribes took place in a South-Eastern direction from the regions of their captivity. The very positions of the several places from whence the foreign guests who were present at Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Pentecost in A.D. 33 (Acts ii. 9) came,—Parthia, Media, Mesopotamia, the Persian Gulf—the facts that there are masses of "Beni-Israel" at the present day in India; that in Malabar alone the "white" and "black" Jews number not less than half a million; that the Afghans are thought by many, with good reason, to have a large infusion of Israelite blood in their veins; that similar claims are made for communities of Nestorian Christians in the districts around Lake Urûmiah:<sup>2</sup>—all these facts are in favour of a south-easterly migration

<sup>1</sup> He uses the singular number, "Our community-of-twelve-tribes hopes to come."

<sup>2</sup> As by an American writer, Dr. Grant, and by the writer of the pamphlet on the Ten Tribes, quoted above.

of the ten tribes, and opposed to a westerly migration of them, such as the Anglo-Israel theory supposes to have taken place. "A reason for assuming a migration south-eastward to have taken place is the evident fact of the continuous existence in one age after another, and indeed, in some instances, to this day, of large communities of Israelitish descent in the far South-East, who afford proof positive that such emigration did actually take place."<sup>1</sup>

The Jews themselves do not believe that any tribes were lost, neither should we. In New Testament times the ten tribes had not been lost, neither are they lost now, nor blended with other nations. In many nations they are indeed a detested race, but let us, as a Church and nation, not cease to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem;" for the words are still true, "They shall prosper that love thee" (Ps. cxxii. 6); though "as concerning the Gospel they are still enemies for our sakes, as touching the election, they are still beloved for the fathers' sakes." (Rom. xi. 28.) Zion is still saying in her desolations, "The LORD hath forsaken me, and my LORD hath forgotten me." But to her He is still saying in words, first spoken in a figure, but now spoken without any figure, not to her only, but to each of us, who, as Christians, are "Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. iii. 29), "*Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands.*" (Isa. xlix. 14, 16.)

Time, the great interpreter, has enabled us to see the meaning of those dim and ancient prophecies, uttered so long ago by Jacob on the banks of the Nile; and the same interpreter may enable us hereafter to interpret the even

<sup>1</sup> Art. in *Church Quarterly* for October, 1883.

more obscure prophecies afterwards uttered by Ezekiel on the banks of the Chebar. But, meanwhile, the study of prophecies respecting Israel's mysterious past, and no less mysterious future, alike reminds us of a duty on which we are all agreed, the duty of offering to GOD that intercessory prayer for Israel which we know to be acceptable to Him. (Isa. lxii. 6, 7.) Events on the political horizon are now forcing us, as a nation, to take an interest in the future of Palestine more real and more abiding than that felt in the times of the Crusades. But our duty as churchmen is clear, independent of all views as politicians, or even as theologians. Our Good Friday Collect for the conversion of the Jews,—for which the whole of the Western Church prays at her altars on that most sacred day of the Christian year,<sup>1</sup>—brings very clearly before us this duty of constant intercessory prayer for a

<sup>1</sup> On Good Friday in all Roman Catholic churches a long series of Orisons, closely resembling the Oriental ectené, is recited after the Passion in the "Mass of the Pre-Sanctified." The 14th and 15th of these are for the conversion of the Jews; the 16th and 17th for that of the Pagans. And it is well known that the 2nd and 3rd of our three Good Friday Collects are adapted from this old series of eighteen intercessory prayers; our first Collect, "Graciously behold," &c., not being said at the Mass with the others, but at the Hours on that day. The present Roman use in this matter of prayers for the Jews on Good Friday is peculiar. Two Collects are offered for the removal of the veil of unbelief from their hearts, that they may recognise CHRIST as the Light of truth,—but neither Priest nor people kneel down before these prayers for the Jews, as they do at the other Collects. All are said standing (this being the Good Friday use); but these two are said without that genuflexion which accompanies all the others. This is done (it is said) to mark the Church's sense of the perfidy and treachery of the Jews. There are no intercessions for the Jews in the Greek Offices for Good Friday in the Holy Eastern Church.

people to whom we owe a debt never to be repaid. And a prayer which our great hymn writer has given us, which breathes the very words and spirit of S. Paul in Rom. xi., well sets before us what the subject of our intercession should be,—

“ FATHER of faithful Abraham, hear  
Our earnest suit for Abraham's seed !  
Justly they claim the softest prayer  
From us, adopted in their stead,  
Who mercy through their fall obtain,  
And CHRIST, by their rejection, gain.

“ Outcasts from Thee, and scattered wide,  
Through every nation under heaven,  
Blaspheming whom they crucified,  
Unsaved, unpitied, unforgiven ;  
Branded, like Cain, they bear their load,  
Abhorred of men, and cursed of GOD.

“ But hast Thou finally forsook,  
For ever cast Thine own away ?  
Wilt Thou not bid the murderers look  
On Him they pierced, and weep, and pray ?  
Yes, gracious LORD, Thy word is past,  
All Israel shall be saved at last.

“ Come, then, Thou great Deliverer, come !  
The veil from Jacob's heart remove !  
Receive Thy ancient people home !  
That, quickened by Thy dying love,  
The world may their reception find,  
Life from the dead for all mankind.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wesley's Hymns, No. 451.



EXPLANATORY NOTE ON THE MAP ILLUSTRATING EZEKIEL'S  
VISION.

IF the Jews were not allowed to read the opening chapters of Genesis, the Song of Solomon, and the closing chapters of Ezekiel, till they were thirty years of age (which represents even a more advanced age among us), these parts of Holy Scripture should be read and commented upon with great caution and reverence by ourselves. In prefixing Bishop Wordsworth's diagram of Ezekiel's Vision to the chapter on the Lost Tribes, it is not, therefore, intended to attempt any explanation of the meaning of that vision, of which, perhaps, time alone can be the true interpreter. What is now attempted is to set before the reader what Scripture itself tells us Ezekiel actually saw, leaving the interpretation to the reader's own judgment and meditation. The vision has an interest for us here, because, in all probability, the prophet Jacob must have had a vision of Israel's first settlement in the Promised Land on his death-bed, somewhat similar to what Ezekiel had on the banks of the Chebar; and because both prophetic visions show that each tribe was equally remembered by GOD: (See Ezek. xlviii. 19.) In meditating on its, no doubt, many-sided meanings, the reader may either, with some, take the vision literally, as a prophecy of the literal return of the Jews, tribe by tribe, to their own land, with a renewal of their sacrificial worship in a restored temple and city: or, he may, as Bishop Wordsworth and most others do, spiritualize its meaning; in which case he may take it as a vision either of the spread of the Christian Church throughout the world between the first and second Advents of CHRIST, with its perpetual celebration of the Christian Liturgy going on; or as a vision of Heaven itself, the true Canaan; of the "many mansions" of our FATHER's house; of that city for which the Patriarchs looked, that "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is GOD" (S. John xiv. 1, Heb. xi. 10), like what S. John saw in the Revelation. (Rev. xxi. xxii.)

Whatever the Vision may mean, a study of the text shows us that the tribes of Israel were seen in it as "occupying a territory far surpassing the limits of the literal Palestine," which was but some 140 miles long by (on an average) 40 miles wide. We observe also in it that all the tribes are in Canaan proper, two and a half being no longer separated from the rest by the River Jordan; that the Temple, city, and holy portion are not in any particular tribe, but appertain to all: and that (according to Bp. Wordsworth's interpretation) this holy portion equals about one-fifth of the whole. More particularly:—In the Holy Land, stretching away in vision before him, Ezekiel sees,—

(1.) A central portion, called "the Oblation," set aside for GOD and His worship; it covered an area which was four-square, and it measured 25,000 reeds, or about 60 miles, each way, i.e. nearly as far from South to North as on a map of Palestine would be represented by the distance from Jerusalem to Nazareth; and it extended equally from East to West. It is thus subdivided,—

(a) In the midst was the Temple and its courts; this strip, running from east to west, belonged to the Priests.

(b) North of it, and parallel to it, and of equal length and breadth, was a portion for the Levites.

(c) South of it, and parallel to it, was another strip for the city.

(d) On the east and west of these parallel strips, at right angles to them, so as to flank and defend them all, was the land of the Prince.

Each of the portions belonging to the Levites, the Priests, and the city, was 25,000 reeds from east to west, though they varied in breadth. Within this holy area Ezekiel, therefore, saw,—

(2.) A City lying four-square, and measuring ten miles each way. The city being not called Jerusalem (a name which does not occur), but "Jehovah-Shammah," or "the LORD is there." In S. John's Vision, it will be remembered, the "New Jerusalem" which he saw, was a city also lying four-square, but measuring each way 12,000 furlongs, i.e. 1,500 miles. Then Ezekiel saw,—

(3.) A Temple, much the same in size as Solomon's, but extending, with its courts, &c., one mile each way, some four and a half miles round; being thus in circuit larger than the city of Jerusalem itself. Into other details we need not enter.

## APPENDIX.

### A.

#### SEPTUAGINT VERSION OF GEN. XLIX. 1—28.

1 ἘΚΑΛΕΣΕ δὲ Ἰακώβ τοὺς υἱοὺς αὐτοῦ, καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, Συνάχθητε, ἵνα ἀναγγείλω ὑμῖν, τί ἀπαντήσεται ὑμῖν ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν.

2 Συνάχθητε, καὶ ἀκούσατέ μου, υἱοὶ Ἰακώβ· ἀκούσατε Ἰσραὴλ, ἀκούσατε τοῦ πατρὸς ὑμῶν.

3 Ῥουβὴν πρωτότοκός μου, σὺ ἰσχύς μου, καὶ ἀρχὴ τέκνων μου, σκληρὸς φέρεσθαι, καὶ σκληρὸς αὐθάδης.

4 Ἐξέβρισας ὡς ὕδωρ, μὴ ἐκζέσῃς, ἀνέβης γὰρ ἐπὶ τὴν κοίτην τοῦ πατρὸς σου· τότε ἐμίανας τὴν στρωμνὴν, οὐ ἀνέβης.

5 Συμεὼν καὶ Λεὺὶ ἀδελφοί

1 And Jacob called his sons and said to them, Assemble yourselves, that I may tell you what shall happen to you in the last days.

2 Gather yourselves together and hear me, sons of Jacob, hear Israel, hear your father.

3 Ruben, thou *art*<sup>1</sup> my first-born, thou my strength, and the first of my children, hard to be endured, hard and self-willed.

4 Thou wast insolent like water, burst not forth<sup>2</sup> with violence, for thou wentest up to the bed of thy father, then thou defiledst the couch, whereupon thou wentest up.

5 Symeon and Levi, bre-

<sup>1</sup> Or, "Thou my firstborn," &c., *nom.* and *voc.* not being always regularly distinguished in the LXX. *Vid.* Heb. i. 8, δ Θεός.

[<sup>2</sup> "Boil not forth, or, over," would be a closer rendering.]

συνετέλεσαν ἀδικίαν ἐξαιρέσεως  
αὐτῶν.

6 Εἰς βουλὴν αὐτῶν μὴ ἔλθοι  
ἡ ψυχὴ μου, καὶ ἐπὶ τῇ συστάσει  
αὐτῶν μὴ ἐρίσαι τὰ ἥπατά μου·  
ὅτι ἐν τῷ θυμῷ αὐτῶν ἀπέκτειναν  
ἀνθρώπους, καὶ ἐν τῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ αὐ-  
τῶν ἐνευροκόπησαν ταῦρον.

7 Ἐπικατάρατος ὁ θυμὸς αὐτῶν  
ὅτι ἀθάβης, καὶ ἡ μῆνις αὐτῶν  
ὅτι ἐσκληρύνθη· διαμεριῶ αὐτοῦς  
ἐν Ἰακώβ, καὶ διασπερῶ αὐτοῦς  
ἐν Ἰσραήλ.

8 Ἰούδα, σὲ αἰνέσασαι οἱ ἀδελ-  
φοί σου· αἱ χεῖρές σου ἐπὶ νότου  
τῶν ἐχθρῶν σου· προσκυνήσουσί  
σοι οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ πατρὸς σου.

9 Σκύμνος λέοντος Ἰούδα· ἐκ  
βλαστοῦ υἱέ μου ἀνέβη· ἀναπε-  
σὼν, ἐκοιμήθη ὡς λέων, καὶ ὡς  
σκύμνος· τίς ἐγερεῖ αὐτόν;

10 Οὐκ ἐκλείψει ἔρχων ἐξ

thren, accomplished the in-  
justice of their cutting off.<sup>1</sup>

6 Let not my soul come  
into their counsel, and let  
not mine inward parts con-  
tend in their conspiracy, for  
in their wrath they slew men,  
and in their passion they  
houghed a bull.

7 Cursed be their wrath,  
for it was wilful, and their  
anger, for it was cruel. I  
will divide them in Jacob,  
and scatter them in Israel.

8 Juda, thy brethren have  
praised thee, and thy hands  
shall be on the back of thine  
enemies, thy father's sons  
shall do thee reverence.

9 Juda is a lion's whelp,  
from the tender plant, my son,  
thou art gone up, having  
couched, thou liest as a lion,  
and as a whelp: who shall  
stir him up?

10 A ruler shall not fail

<sup>1</sup> [The Alex. reading "ἐξ αἰρέσεως" is perhaps the correct one, in which case the meaning is "accomplished iniquity from their deliberate choice [of evil]." Schleusner, approving this reading, renders it, "sponte sua." Compare 1 Macc. viii. 30, ποιήσονται ἐξ αἰρέσεως αὐτῶν—will do it at their pleasure—Vulg. "facient ex proposito suo." If the LXX. had our present Hebrew before them, it was מְצֻפִּים in the sense of "compacts," "concerted plans," &c. Obbard suggests that ἐξαιρέσεως means *thoughts, plans, plots*. "Cutting off" must be wrong. The true meaning may possibly be "taking forth," i.e. from the womb; and it may thus = birth, natural disposition.]

Ἰουδα, καὶ ἡγοῦμενος ἐκ τῶν μηρῶν αὐτοῦ, ἕως ἐὰν ἔλθῃ τὰ ἀποκείμενα αὐτῷ· καὶ αὐτὸς προσδοκία ἐθνῶν.

11 Δεσμῶν πρὸς ἔμπελον τὸν πῶλον αὐτοῦ, καὶ τῇ ἔλικι τὸν πῶλον τῆς ὄνου αὐτοῦ· πλυεῖ ἐν οἴνῳ τὴν στολὴν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἐν αἵματι σταφυλῆς τὴν περιβολὴν αὐτοῦ.

12 Χαραρκοιοὶ οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτοῦ ὑπὲρ οἶνον, καὶ λευκοὶ οἱ ὀδόντες αὐτοῦ ἢ γάλα.

13 Ζαβουλὼν παράλιος κατοικήσει καὶ αὐτὸς παρ' ὄρμον πλοίων, καὶ παρατενεῖ ἕως Σιδῶνος.

14 Ἰσάχαρ τὸ καλὸν ἐπεθύμησεν, ἀναπαυόμενος ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν κλήρων.

15 Καὶ ἰδὼν τὴν ἀνάπαυσιν ὅτι καλὴ, καὶ τὴν γῆν ὅτι πῶν, ὑπέθηκε τὸν ὄμω αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸ πονεῖν· καὶ ἐγενήθη ἀνὴρ γεωργός.

16 Δὰν κρινεῖ τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ, ὡσεὶ καὶ μία φυλὴ ἐν Ἰσραήλ.

17 Καὶ γενηθήτω Δὰν ὄφις ἐφ' ὄδοῦ, ἐγκαθήμενος ἐπὶ τρίβου, δάκνων πτέρναν ἵππου· καὶ πεσεῖται ὁ ἵππεὺς εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω,

from Juda, nor a prince from his loins, until there come the things stored up for him, and he is the expectation of nations.

11 Binding his foal to the vine, and the foal of his ass to the branch<sup>1</sup> of it, he shall wash his robe in wine, and his garment in the blood of the grape.

12 His eyes shall be more cheering than wine, and his teeth whiter than milk.

13 Zabulon shall dwell on the coast, and he *shall be* by a haven of ships, and shall extend to Sidon.

14 Issachar has desired that which is good, resting between the inheritances.<sup>2</sup>

15 And having seen the resting-place that it was good, and the land that it was fertile, he subjected his shoulder to labour, and became a husbandman.

16 Dan shall judge his people, as one tribe too in Israel.

17 And let Dan be a serpent in the way, besetting the path, biting the heel of the horse, (and the rider shall fall backward,)

[<sup>1</sup> Or "tendril."]

[<sup>2</sup> Rather "midway between the inheritances."]

18 Τὴν σωτηρίαν περιμένουν Κυρίου.

19 Γὰδ, πειρατήριον πειρατεύσει αὐτόν· αὐτὸς δὲ πειρατεύσει αὐτόν κατὰ πόδας.

20 Ἄσθρ, πίων αὐτοῦ ὁ ἔρτος· καὶ αὐτὸς δώσει τρυφήν ἔρχουσι.

21 Νεφθαλεὶμ στέλεχος ἀνεμῆνον ἐπιδιδούς ἐν τῷ γεννήματι κάλλος.

22 Τὶς ἠξήμενος Ἰωσήφ, υἱὸς ἠξήμενος μου ζηλωτὸς, υἱὸς μου νεώτατος· πρὸς με ἀνάστρεψον.

23 Εἰς ὃν διαβουλευόμενοι ἐλοιδύρου, καὶ ἐνεῖχον αὐτῷ κέριοι τοξενμάτων.

24 Καὶ συνετριβή μετὰ κρότους τὰ τόξα αὐτῶν· καὶ ἐξελύθη τὰ νεῦρα βραχιόνων χειρὸς αὐτῶν, διὰ χεῖρα δυνάστου Ἰακώβ· ἐκείθεν ὁ κατισχύσας Ἰσραὴλ παρὰ Θεοῦ τοῦ πατρός σου.

18 Waiting for the salvation of the LORD.

19 Gad, a plundering troop shall plunder him, but he shall plunder him *pursuing him* closely.<sup>1</sup>

20 Aser, his bread *shall be* fat, and he shall yield dainties to princes.

21 Nephthalim is a spreading stem,<sup>2</sup> bestowing beauty in its fruit.

22 Joseph is a son increased, my dearly beloved son is increased, my youngest son ; turn to me.

23 Against whom men taking evil counsel reproached *him*, and the archers pressed hard upon him.

24 But their bow and arrows were mightily consumed,<sup>3</sup> and the sinews of their arms were slackened by the hand of the mighty one<sup>4</sup> of Jacob, thence is he that strengthened Israel from the GOD of thy father.

[<sup>1</sup> Rather "at his heels;" literally, "upon his feet *or* traces."]

[<sup>2</sup> Rather "luxuriant," or "freely growing:"—stems do not spread. Our Hebrew pointing (which the LXX. evidently had not before them) necessitates our rendering, "a hind let loose" (see p. 185 *supra*). It is, besides, highly improbable that in his prophetic history of the tribes, Jacob should have passed over in silence the great national episode of their war of independence under Barak.]

[<sup>3</sup> Better rendered "broken with might." ] [<sup>4</sup> Or "ruler." ]

25 Καὶ ἐβοήθησέ σοι ὁ Θεὸς ὁ ἐμός· καὶ εὐλόγησέ σε εὐλογίαν οὐρανοῦ ἄνωθεν, καὶ εὐλογίαν γῆς ἐχούσης πάντα, εἵνεκεν εὐλογίας μαστῶν καὶ μήτρας,

26 Εὐλογίας πατρός σου καὶ μητρός σου· ὑπερίσχυσεν ὑπὲρ εὐλογίας ἡρέων μονίμων, καὶ ἐπ' εὐλογίαις θινῶν ἀενάων· ἔσονται ἐπὶ κεφαλὴν Ἰωσήφ, καὶ ἐπὶ κορυφῆς ὧν ἠγήσατο ἀδελφῶν.

27 Βενιαμὴν λύκος ἄρπαξ τὸ πρωῒν ἔδεταί τι, καὶ εἰς τὸ ἔσπερας δίδωσι τροφήν.

28 Πάντες οὗτοι υἱοὶ Ἰακώβ δώδεκα· καὶ ταῦτα ἐλάλησεν αὐτοῖς ὁ πατὴρ αὐτῶν· καὶ εὐλόγησεν αὐτούς· ἕκαστον κατὰ τὴν εὐλογίαν αὐτοῦ εὐλόγησεν αὐτούς.

SEPTUAGINT VERSION OF DEUT. XXXIII. 6—25.

6 ΖΗΤΩ Ῥουβὴν, καὶ μὴ ἀποθανέτω, καὶ ἔστω πολὺς ἐν ἀριθμῷ.

7 Καὶ αὕτη Ἰούδα· εἰσάκουσον Κύριε φωνῆς Ἰούδα, καὶ εἰς τὸν λαὸν αὐτοῦ ἔλθοις ἕν' αἱ χεῖρες

25 And my GOD helped thee, and he blessed thee with the blessing of heaven from above, and the blessing of the earth possessing all things, because of the blessing of the breasts and of the womb,

26 The blessing of thy father and thy mother,—it has prevailed above the blessing of the lasting mountains, and beyond the blessings of the everlasting hills, they shall be upon the head of Joseph, and upon the head of the brothers of whom he took the lead.

27 Benjamin as a ravening wolf shall eat still in the morning, and at evening he gives food.

28 All these are the twelve sons of Jacob, and their father spoke these words to them, and he blessed them, he blessed each of them according to his blessing.

6 Let Ruben live, and not die, and let him be many in number.

7 And this is *the blessing of* Juda: Hear, LORD, the voice of Juda, and do thou visit his

αὐτοῦ διακρινοῦσιν αὐτῷ, καὶ  
βοηθὸς ἐκ τῶν ἐχθρῶν ἔσθ.

8 Καὶ τῷ Λευὶ εἶπε, Δότε Λευὶ  
δήλους αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἀλήθειαν αὐ-  
τοῦ τῷ ἀνδρὶ τῷ δσίῳ, ὃν ἐπειρα-  
σαν αὐτὸν ἐν πείρᾳ· ἐλοιδόρησαν  
αὐτὸν ἐφ' ὕδατος ἀντιλογίας·

9 Ὁ λέγων τῷ πατρὶ καὶ τῇ  
μητρὶ, Οὐχ ἑώρακά σε, καὶ τοὺς  
ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἐπέγνων, καὶ  
τοὺς υἱοὺς αὐτοῦ ἀπέγνων· ἐφύλαξε  
τὰ λόγια σου, καὶ τὴν διαθήκην  
σου διετήρησε.

10 Δηλώσουσι τὰ δικαιώματά  
σου τῷ Ἰακώβ, καὶ τὸν νόμον σου  
τῷ Ἰσραήλ· ἐπιθήσουσι θυμίαμα  
ἐν ὀργῇ σου διαπαντός ἐπὶ τὸ θυ-  
σιαστήριόν σου.

11 Εὐλόγησον, Κύριε, τὴν ἰσ-  
χὴν αὐτοῦ, καὶ τὰ ἔργα τῶν χει-  
ρῶν αὐτοῦ δέξαι· κάταξον ὀσφύς  
ἐχθρῶν ἐπανεστηκότων αὐτῷ, καὶ  
οἱ μισοῦντες αὐτὸν μὴ ἀναστή-  
τωσαν.

12 Καὶ τῷ Βενιαμὴν εἶπεν, Ἦγα-  
πημένος ὑπὸ Κυρίου κατασκηνώσει  
πεποιθώς, καὶ ὁ Θεὸς σκιδῆσει ἐπ'  
αὐτῷ πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας, καὶ ἀνα-  
μέσον τῶν ὤμων αὐτοῦ κατέπαυσε.

13 Καὶ τῷ Ἰωσήφ εἶπεν, Ἄπ'

people : his hands shall con-  
tend for him, and thou shalt  
be a help from his enemies.

8 And to Levi he said,  
Give to Levi his manifesta-  
tions, and his truth to the holy  
man, whom they tempted in  
the temptation ; they reviled  
him at the water of strife.

9 Who says to his father  
and mother, I have not seen  
thee, and he knew not his bre-  
thren, he refused to know his  
sons ; he kept thine oracles,  
and observed thy covenant.

10 They shall declare  
thine ordinances to Jacob,  
and thy law to Israel : they  
shall place incense in *the*  
*time of thy wrath* continually  
upon thine altar.

11 Bless, LORD, his  
strength, and accept the  
works of his hands ; break  
the loins of his enemies that  
have risen up against him,  
and let not them that hate  
him rise up.

12 And to Benjamin he  
said, The beloved of the  
LORD shall dwell<sup>1</sup> in confi-  
dence, and GOD overshadows  
him always, and he rested  
between his shoulders.

13 And to Joseph he said,

[<sup>1</sup> Literally " shall tabernacle."]



εὐλογίας Κυρίου ἡ γῆ αὐτοῦ, ἀπὸ  
ὠρῶν οὐρανοῦ καὶ δρόσου καὶ ἀπὸ  
ἀβύσσων πηγῶν κάτωθεν,

14 Καὶ καθ' ὧραν γεννημάτων  
ἡλίου τροπῶν, καὶ ἀπὸ συνόδων  
μηνῶν,

15 Ἀπὸ κορυφῆς ὄρεων ἀρχῆς,  
καὶ ἀπὸ κορυφῆς βουνῶν ἀενάων,

16 Καὶ καθ' ὧραν γῆς πληρώ-  
σεως· καὶ τὰ δεκτὰ τῷ ὀφθέντι ἐν  
τῇ βάτῳ ἔλθοισαν ἐπὶ κεφαλῇ  
Ἰωσήφ, καὶ ἐπὶ κορυφῆς δοξασθεὶς  
ἐπ' ἀδελφοῖς.

17 Πρωτότοκος ταύρου τὸ κάλ-  
λος αὐτοῦ· κέρατα μονοκέρωτος  
τὰ κέρατα αὐτοῦ· ἐν αὐτοῖς ἔθνη  
κερατιεῖ ἅμα, ἕως ἀπ' ἔκρου γῆς·  
αὐταὶ μυριάδες Ἐφραΐμ, καὶ αὐταὶ  
χιλιάδες Μανασσῆ.

18 Καὶ τῷ Ζαβουλὼν εἶπεν,  
Εὐφράνηθι Ζαβουλὼν ἐν ἐξοδίᾳ  
σου, καὶ Ἰσάχαρ ἐν τοῖς σκηνώ-  
μασιν αὐτοῦ.

19 Ἔθνη ἐξολοθρεύσουσι· καὶ

His land is of the blessing  
of the LORD, of the seasons  
of sky and dew, and of the  
deeps of wells below,

14 And of the fruits of  
the changes of the sun in  
season, and of the produce  
of the months,

15 From the top of the  
ancient mountains, and from  
the top of the everlasting hills,

16 And of the fulness of  
the land in season: and let  
the things pleasing to him  
that dwelt in the bush come  
on the head of Joseph, and on  
the crown of him who was  
glorified above his brethren.<sup>1</sup>

17 His beauty is as the  
firstling of his bull,<sup>2</sup> his horns  
are the horns of a unicorn;  
with them he shall thrust the  
nations at once, even from  
the end of the earth: these  
are the ten thousands of  
Ephraim, and these are the  
thousands of Manasse.

18 And to Zabulon he said,  
Rejoice, Zabulon, in thy go-  
ing out, and Issachar in his  
tents.

19 They shall utterly de-

[<sup>1</sup> Perhaps ἔστω is to be understood after ἀδελφοῖς; "Let him be glorified above his brethren."]

[<sup>2</sup> His bull, should rather be "a bull." "His" is not in Bagster's text, nor in Tischendorf's.]

ἐπικαλέσεσθε ἐκεῖ, καὶ θύσετε ἐκεῖ θυσίαν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι πλοῦτος θαλάσσης θηλάσει σε, καὶ ἐμπόρια παράλιον κατοικοῦντων.

20 Καὶ τῷ Γὰδ εἶπεν, Εὐλογημένος ἐμπλατύνων Γὰδ· ὡς λέων ἀνεπαύσατο, συντρίψας βραχίονα καὶ ἔρχοντα.

21 Καὶ εἶδεν ἀπαρχὴν αὐτοῦ, ὅτι ἐκεῖ ἐμερίσθη γῆ ἀρχόντων συνηγμένων ἅμα ἀρχηγοῖς λαῶν· δικαιοσύνην Κύριος ἐποίησε, καὶ κρίσιν αὐτοῦ μετὰ Ἰσραὴλ.

22 Καὶ τῷ Δὰν εἶπε, Δὰν σκύμνος λέοντος, καὶ ἐκπηθήσεται ἐκ τοῦ Βασάν.

23 Καὶ τῷ Νεφθαλ εἶπε, Νεφθαλ πλησμονῆ δεκτῶν· καὶ ἐμπλησθήτω εὐλογίας παρὰ Κυρίου· θάλασσαν καὶ Λίβα κληρονομήσει.

24 Καὶ τῷ Ἀσὴρ εἶπεν, Εὐλογημένος ἀπὸ τέκνων Ἀσὴρ· καὶ

stroy the nations, and ye shall call<sup>1</sup> there, and there offer the sacrifice of righteousness; for the wealth of the sea shall suckle thee, and so shall the marts of them that dwell by the sea coast.

20 And to Gad he said, Blessed be he that enlarges Gad; as a lion he rested, having broken the arm and the ruler.

21 And he saw its first-fruits, that there the land of the princes gathered with the chiefs of the people was divided: the LORD wrought righteousness, and his judgment with Israel.

22 And to Dan he said, Dan is a lion's whelp, and shall leap out of Basan.

23 And to Nephthali he said, Nephthali has the fulness<sup>2</sup> of good things; and let him be filled with blessing from the LORD: he shall inherit the west and the south.

24 And to Aser he said, Aser is blessed with children;

[<sup>1</sup> Rather "summon."]

[<sup>2</sup> Nephthali has the fulness:—"has" does not express the meaning, which is, Let fulness of good things belong to Naphtali.—Νεφθαλ, as undeclined, may be in the dative. "West" should be "sea."]

ἔσται δεκτὸς τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς αὐτοῦ·  
βάψει ἐν ἐλαίῳ τὸν πόδα αὐτοῦ.

and he shall be acceptable  
to his brethren : he shall dip  
his foot in oil.

25 Σίδηρος καὶ χαλκὸς τὸ ὑ-  
πόδημα αὐτοῦ ἔσται ὡς αἱ ἡμέραι  
σου, ἡ ἰσχὺς σου.

25 His sandal shall be  
iron and brass, as thy days,  
so shall be thy strength.

From *Bagster's Septuagint Version of the Old Testament, translated by Brenton*. Suggested corrections have been added in brackets.

## B.

## TARGUM OF ONKELOS ON GEN. XLIX.

And Jacob called his sons, and said, Gather together, and I will show you what will befall you in the end of the days ; assemble and hearken, O sons of Jakob, and receive instruction from Israel your father.

Reuben, thou art my first-born, my strength, and the beginning of my power,<sup>1</sup> thine should it have been taking to take the three portions,—the birthright, the priesthood, and the kingdom ; but because thou hast proceeded perversely,<sup>2</sup> behold, as water outpoured thou wilt not prosper, neither wilt thou receive the excellent portion ; because thou wentest up to thy father's place of sleep ; then, my son, didst thou become profane, when thou wentest up to my bed.<sup>3</sup>

Shimeon and Levi are brothers ; mighty men in the land of their sojourning, they did mightily.<sup>4</sup> My soul was not in

<sup>1</sup> Sam. Vers., " the beginning of my time."

<sup>2</sup> Or, " deceitfully."

[<sup>3</sup> The Targum of Palestine has it, " I will liken thee to a little garden in the midst of which there enter torrents swift and strong, which it cannot bear, but is overwhelmed. Be repentant then," &c. Dr. Benisch translates the Hebrew, " Thy precipitancy is like the waters."]

<sup>4</sup> Sam. Vers., " they accomplished the fraud of their covenant."

their secret ; into their company to come I would not have descended from mine honour. For in their anger they slew a slaughter, and in their wilfulness they razed the wall of their enemy. Accursed<sup>1</sup> was their anger, for it was strong, and their wrath, for it was relentless. I will divide them in Jakob, and I will scatter them in Israel.

Jehuda, thou art praise and not shame, thy brethren shall praise thee ;<sup>2</sup> thy hand shall prevail against thine adversaries, thine enemies shall be dispersed : they will be turned backward before thee, and the sons of thy father will come before thee with salutations. The dominion shall be (thine) in the beginning, and in the end the kingdom shall be increased from the house of Jehuda, because from the judgment of death, my son, hast thou withdrawn.<sup>3</sup> He shall repose, and abide in strength as a lion, and as a lioness, there shall be no king that may cut him off. He who exerciseth dominion shall not pass away from the house of Jehuda, nor the saphra from his children's children for ever, until the Meshiha come, whose is the kingdom, and unto whom shall be the obedience of the nations (or, whom the peoples shall obey). Israel shall pass round about in his cities ; the people shall build his temple, they will be righteous round about him, and be doers of the law through his doctrine. Of goodly purple will be his raiment, and his vesture of crimson wool with colours.<sup>4</sup> His mountains shall be red with his vineyards, and his hills be dropping with wine : his valleys shall be white with corn, and with flocks of sheep.

Zebulun will dwell nigh the haven of the sea ; he will subdue provinces with ships, and will eat the good of the sea, and his boundary shall come unto Sidon.

Issakar,<sup>5</sup> rich in substance, will have his heritage between

<sup>1</sup> Sam. Vers., "proud."    <sup>2</sup> Sam. Vers. "love thee."

<sup>3</sup> Or "gone up."

<sup>4</sup> Or, "wool dyed with bright colours."

<sup>5</sup> Sam. Vers. "Issakar, an ass sojourning, lying down between two burdens."

the boundaries ; and he, seeing his portion that it is good, and the land that it is fruit-bearing,<sup>1</sup> will subdue the provinces of the people, and disperse their inhabitants, and they who remain of them will become servants to him and bringers of tribute.

From the house of Dan will be chosen and will arise a man in whose days his people shall be delivered, and in whose years the tribes of Israel have rest together. A chosen man will arise from the house of Dan, the terror of whom shall fall upon the peoples ; (a man) who will smite the Philistines with strength, as the serpent, the deadly serpent,<sup>2</sup> lurking<sup>3</sup> by the way, he will slay the mighty of the Philistines' host, the horsemen with the foot ; he will weaken (loosen) the horses and chariots, and throw their riders backward. For thy salvation have I waited, O LORD !

From the house of Gad will armed hosts go over the Jarden before their brethren to the battle ; and with much substance will they return unto their land.

The land of Asher will be good ; and he shall be nourished with the dainties of kings.

In a good land will the lot of Naphtali be cast, and his inheritance be fruitful ; over them will they give praise and benediction.<sup>4</sup>

Joseph is my son who shall increase, my son who shall be blessed, as a vine planted by a fountain of waters. Two tribes will come forth from his sons, and they shall receive a portion and inheritance. The mighty men, the men of division, were bitter against him ; they afflicted him, and sorely grieved him ; and his prophecy shall be fulfilled in

<sup>1</sup> Sam. Vers. "fat."

<sup>2</sup> *Churman*. "Species serpentis ad cuius morsum nulla est medicina." Castell. Root, *charem*, "to devote to destruction."

<sup>3</sup> Sam. Vers. "erecting itself."

<sup>4</sup> Sam. Vers. "Naphtali is a hind sent forth, giving words of freedom."

them, because he was faithful to the law in secret, and set his confidence firmly. Therefore was gold laid upon his arm, and the kingdom was strengthened and confirmed. This was to him from the mighty GOD of Jacob, who by his Word pastureth the fathers and the children of the seed of Israel. The Word of the GOD of thy father shall be thy Helper, and the All-Sufficient shall bless thee, with the blessings of the dew that descends from the heavens above, with the blessings that spring from the depths of the earth beneath, with the blessings of thy father and of thy mother. The blessing of thy father shall be added upon the blessing with which my fathers blessed me ; which the princes who are of the world have desired ; all of them shall be upon the head of Joseph, and upon the man who was separated from his brethren.

Benjamin, in his land will dwell the Shekina, and in his possession will the sanctuary be builded. In the morning and evening will the priests offer the oblation, and at evening divide the remaining portions of the residue of the sacred things.

EXTRACTS FROM TARGUM OF PALESTINE WHERE IT  
VARIES FROM PRECEDING.

Zebulun shall dwell upon the banks of the sea, and have dominion over the havens : he will surmount the breakers of the sea with ships, and his border will extend unto Zidon.

Issakar is an ass in the law ; a strong tribe, knowing the order<sup>1</sup> of the times ; and he lieth down between the limits of his brethren. And he saw the rest of the world to come that it is good, and the portion of the land of Israel that it is pleasant ; therefore bowed he his shoulders to labour in the law : and unto him shall come his brethren bearing presents.

<sup>1</sup> Or "intention."

From the house of Dan is there to arise a man who will judge his people with the judgment of truth. All the tribes of Israel will hearken to him together. A chosen man will arise from the house of Dan, like the basilisk which lieth at the dividing of the way, that biteth the horse in his heel, and the master from his terror is thrown backward. Even thus will Shimshon bar Manovach slay all the heroes of Philistia, the horsemen and the foot : he will hamstring their horses and hurl their riders backwards.

When Jakob saw Gideon bar Joash and Shimshon bar Manovach, who were established to be deliverers, he said, I expect not the salvation of Gideon, nor look I for the salvation of Shimshon ; for their salvation will be the salvation of an hour ; but for thy salvation have I waited, and will look for, O LORD ; for thy salvation is the salvation of eternity.

The tribe of Gad with the rest of the tribes will, armed, pass over the streams of Arnona, and subdue before them the pillars of the earth, and armed will they return into their limits with much substance, and dwell in peace beyond the passage of Jardena ; for so will they choose, and it shall be to them to receive their inheritance.

Happy is Asher, whose fruitage is plenteous, and whose land aboundeth in balsams and costly perfumes.

Naphtali is a swift messenger, like a hind that runneth on the tops of the mountains, bringing good tidings : he it was who announced that Joseph was living : he it was who hastened to go into Mizraim, and bring the contract of the double field in which Esau had no portion ; and when he shall open his mouth in the congregation of Israel to give praise, he shall be the chosen of all tongues.

Benjamin is a strong tribe, (like) the wolf (with) his prey. In his land will dwell the Shekina of the LORD of the world, and the house of the sanctuary be builded in his inheritance. In the morning will the priests offer the lamb continually

until the fourth hour, and between the evenings the second lamb, and at eventide will they divide the residue remaining of the offering, and eat, every man, his portion.

EXTRACTS FROM TARGUM OF ONKELOS ON DEUT. XXXIII.

Let Reuben live in life eternal, and not die the second death : and let his children receive their inheritance according to their numbers.

Of Levi he said : With perfections and lights clothe thou the man who is found holy before thee ; whom thou didst try in the temptation, and he was upright, and whom thou didst prove at the Waters of Contention, and he was faithful.

Of Benjamin he said : The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him : the shield shall be over him all the days, and the Shekina will dwell in his land.

Rejoice, Zebulun, when thou goest out to war against thy adversaries, and thou, Issakar, when thou goest to compute the time of the festivals in Jerusalem.

Blessed shall be Asher with the blessings of children : let him be acceptable to his brethren, and be nourished with the dainties of kings : strong shalt thou be as iron and brass, and as the days of thy youth shall be thy strength.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From *Etheridge's translation of the Targums*. The Targums are the Aramaic Versions of the Old Testament. Aramaic being "the vulgar tongue" of the Jews after the captivity, the Scriptures since that event, after being read in the synagogues in Hebrew, were translated or paraphrased into it. These Targums, then, whenever committed to writing, doubtless embody oral expositions of Scripture of a very great antiquity, and value. Their testimony to the Messianic interpretations of prophecy is unimpeachable.



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