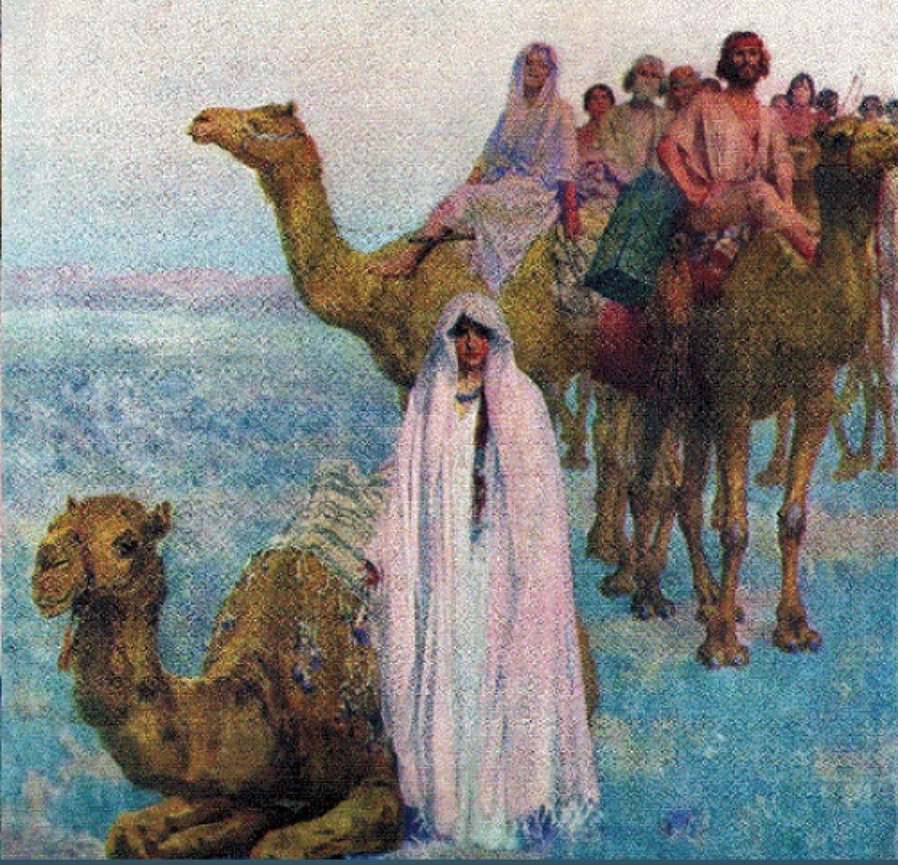


Stories of the The Holy Land and the Middle East

World History Series

Selected Authors

Stories of the Holy Land and the Middle East

By Selected Authors

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Stories of the Holy Land and the Middle East

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Ancient History Told to Children

by

Susan M. Lane

Nimrod the Hunter

From 2600 to 1993 B.C.

There was a man in former times in Asia so passionately fond of the chase, that he spent his whole time in hunting deer in the forests.

He was called Nimrod the Hunter, and was supposed to be a descendant of Ham.

Now you must not believe that Nimrod's only idea was to kill wild beasts. Under this pretext, he collected around him a large number of robust young men, who, always armed for the chase, became used to a rude and laborious life, and learned to obey the chief, who directed them in their hunting. They finally proposed to Nimrod to make him king; and he, as he surpassed all his comrades in courage and skill, gladly consented.

Then the great huntsman ceased to ride over the country in pursuit of game. He taught his subjects how to cut down the forests with which the land was still covered, and he persuaded them to build a city in the place where the sons of Noah had undertaken the famous Tower of Babel, which they were not allowed to finish.

Here Nimrod laid the foundations of one of the greatest cities which ever existed, and gave it the name of Babylon. He built it on the banks of the Euphrates, near the great land of Sennaar. The people living in the country near Babylon were called Chaldeans.

In the beautiful climate of Asia, where the sky is always pure and serene, it was the custom of the shepherds who pastured their flocks on the plains of Chaldea to pass their

nights in the open air without any other shelter than a light tent made of skins or of boughs of trees.

These shepherds, in their solitude, learned to study the stars. They found that these stars could assist them in finding their way in the journeys they were obliged to make across the vast plains of Chaldea, and from their observations were formed the first notions of astronomy,—a science now indispensable to navigation and geography.

These Chaldeans, then, were the first astronomers; the early discoveries they made were carried into Egypt, and successively into the other countries of the world where men devoted themselves to carrying on the study.

But this study, which should have made these people comprehend the infinite power of God, the Creator of the wonders they were observing, made them, on the contrary, fall into a gross error.

Filled with admiration and respect for the luminous bodies above them, they began to worship them as divinities: and thus arose a false religion called Sabianism, which is nothing but the worship of the stars.

They erected altars to the sun, which they worshipped under the name of Baal; which means, in their language, king or lord. They afterwards rendered the same honors to the princes who had governed them, or to the ingenious men who had given them some useful knowledge. The good hunter, Nimrod, was put among the gods, and was confounded with Baal.

One of the oldest temples in the world was built by the Chaldeans, where, in a lofty tower, their priests continued their astronomical observations.

Such was the origin of the idolatry into which the Israelites allowed themselves to fall; and if you have studied mythology you can easily recognize the source of many of the fables with which it is filled.

About the same time another man, named Assur, also a native of the country of Sennaar, built, on the banks of the Tigris, a new city, to which he gave the name of Nineveh. The surrounding country took the name of Assyria.

Thus, nearly at the same epoch and in the same part of the world, two empires were founded by the descendants of Ham. That of the Chaldeans was not of long duration; and a few years after the death of Nimrod, a king of Nineveh, named Belus, seized Babylon, killed the reigning prince and all his family, and subjected the kingdom of Babylon to the Assyrian rule.

Ninus, King of Assyria.

From 1968 to 1916 B.C.

The son of Belus was a no less illustrious prince than his father. Under his empire the rule of the Assyrians was extended over a great part of Asia, which he conquered by force of arms.

Seconded by a neighboring people called Arabs, he conquered Egypt and Syria, as well as several other countries we shall know about by and by, and collected great armies which had several thousand chariots armed with scythes. Thus the men who, only a few centuries before, had learned to build houses, were already acquainted with the art of making sharp weapons to kill each other.

The Arabs, who seconded Ninus in all his enterprises, and contributed to the increase of Assyrian power, were the descendants of Ishmael, the son of Abraham, whom his mother Hagar took into the wilderness in obedience to the command of God, as related in the Bible.

Ninus, having reached the height of grandeur, chose Nineveh for his capital, and took pleasure in adorning it with magnificent palaces and sumptuous edifices. There he collected his armies when he wished to undertake new wars and add new countries to his kingdom.

One day when this prince was besieging the city of Bactres, he perceived upon the walls a woman so marvellously beautiful, that he wished to know immediately who she was. They told him that her name was Semiramis, and that her husband was the ruler of the city; they also related to him that in her childhood she was abandoned by her parents in a forest,

and was fed miraculously by doves. In the language spoken in that part of Asia, Semiramis means a dove.

This story only increased the desire of the prince to make the acquaintance of this woman, and he regretted that she had a husband. The city was taken a few days after, and Ninus, having been informed that the governor perished in the combat, hastened to marry the beautiful widow, by whom he had one son, named Ninyas.

This handsome woman, who was gifted with so many brilliant qualities, had, however, terrible faults,—she was proud and ambitious. When she was seated by the side of her new husband, on the most powerful throne in the world, she wished to reign alone; and the poor Ninus, who had believed himself the happiest of men in being her husband, was soon cruelly punished for his imprudence.

This clever woman, having expressed a desire to govern, alone, the empire of Assyria for five days only, in order to better appreciate the pleasures of reigning, the king, who did not know how to refuse her any thing ordered that, during that time, all the officers of his palace and his States should immediately obey Semiramis, whatever she might command. But the imprudent Ninus had no sooner given this order, than this perfidious princess caused him to be seized by his own guards and thrown into a dark prison, where, a few days after, he was put to death.

After this odious crime, Semiramis found herself one of the greatest queens on earth. But unhappiness sat upon the throne with her, for insupportable remorse poisoned this grandeur she had so much desired; and she thought she saw incessantly before her the pale and angry face of the unfortunate Ninus, who reproached her for her ingratitude.

This cruel image never quitting her day or night, she took a fancy to consult an oracle; that is, one of the priests of the false gods of Babylon. She begged him to tell her what she must do to escape this insupportable torture; but the oracle, instead of consoling her, told her that her son Ninyas would be the cause of her death.

Then this princess acknowledged that the fate with which she was threatened was a just punishment for her cruelty to Ninus; and she detested a power which had nothing but bitterness for her. A bad action always leaves regrets behind.

Semiramis.

From 1916 to 1874 B.C.

The remorse of Semiramis, and the recollection of the cruel crime she had committed, did not, however, prevent her from making her reign illustrious by many important deeds.

She adorned the city of Babylon with a great number of monuments, of which some remarkable ruins still exist. The temple of Belus, begun by the Chaldean priests to continue their astronomical observations, was surrounded by a high and strong wall, and became the depot of the riches and treasures she received from all the provinces of her empire. She had it surmounted with eight towers, placed one above the other, that formed an elevation from which all that took place at a great distance could be easily seen.

These towers contained a multitude of statues, tables, ornaments, vases, and gold and silver censers, no less beautiful in design than in material. It is said that one of these statues alone, in massive gold, was not less than forty feet high. But you must not believe all these wonderful stories. They are too much like fairy tales, where carbuncles, rubies, and diamonds are as common as pebbles in a river.

One of the most famous works of Semiramis, at Babylon, was the construction of magnificent terraces, covered with rich verdure. They were called hanging gardens, and must have been very beautiful. Trees, planted as if by enchantment at a prodigious height, formed in the air balmy forests, where hundreds of birds sang day and night. Water was carried up by ingenious machinery, and flowed in limpid brooks. Superb

staircases led to these gardens, and there was an abundance of the most beautiful flowers and the finest fruits.

The walls of Babylon, begun by Nimrod, were finished by Semiramis. Although of a great height, they were so wide that two or three chariots could ride abreast. She also built a magnificent bridge over the Euphrates. With all these labors, she did not neglect her armies: several times she led them to war herself, and her discipline was very severe.

But the time was drawing near when the prophecy which threatened her through her son was to be fulfilled. She learned with grief, that some of the officers of her own palace, thinking to ingratiate themselves with Ninyas, had formed a plot against her life. Remorse made the weight of empire each day more insupportable. She resolved to withdraw secretly to the tomb of Ninus to weep over her crime, and to pass the rest of her days in mourning. A few days after she disappeared: nobody knew what had become of her; and Ninyas, who bitterly mourned for his mother, did not, for years, know her fate. He rendered her funeral honors, and caused a sumptuous temple to be erected, where she was worshipped as a divinity by the Assyrians.

Her body was put into a magnificent tomb in Babylon. She had ordered them to engrave upon it, after her death, this inscription, which she wrote herself:—

"Nature gave me the body of a woman. My actions have made me equal to the bravest men. I have governed the empire of Ninus, which extends over almost all of Asia. Before me, none of the Assyrians had seen a sea. I showed them four, so far away that no one before had visited them. I turned the courses of the rivers to water sterile lands, which were thus made fertile. I built fortresses, and cut roads through impracticable rocks. I led my war-chariots

by roads which even the wild beasts could not climb, and with all these labors I still found time for my pleasures and my friends."

This inscription, boastful as it seems, is, however, an exact picture of the grandeur of Semiramis. The four seas which she claims to have been the first to make known to the Assyrians, are the Mediterranean, the Caspian, the Euxine, and the Red. She raised the Assyrian power to a greater height than all the kings who reigned over Asia, before or after her.

The Death of Sardanapalus.

From 1874 to 759 B.C.

The kings of Assyria who succeeded Semiramis did not resemble this great princess; and her own son Ninyas, instead of displaying his mother's courage and activity, passed his life in indolence, shut up in his palace at Nineveh, and never seen by his people, who soon learned to despise him. The thirty kings who reigned after him were no better but the last of all was the most unworthy of the position in which he was placed.

This prince of the Assyrians was called Sardanapalus; and his only pleasure consisted in passing his days in his palace, surrounded by women and slaves. He loved to imitate the dress and the occupations of women, was constantly adorned and painted like them, and he even learned to spin.

Now, in that time, the ordinary work of the women of all ranks was spinning wool and linen, from which the clothing of the men and even of the kings was made. The finest wool was dyed purple, as it was called. It was a beautiful red obtained from a shell-fish; it was used for the mantles of kings and other great personages: this precious stuff was obtained from Tyre, a celebrated city of Asia.

The cowardly Sardanapalus had indeed adopted a disgraceful life. He was never seen like the valiant Nimrod, enjoying the pleasures of the chase, or appearing at the head of his troops mounted on a spirited horse. On the contrary, he slept all day in a dark room, and passed the nights in singing and dancing with his slaves. The sound of the trumpet would have rent his ear, accustomed to soft and languishing music;

and what he feared above all was the dust and the sun, which would have ruined his complexion.

Even the first officers in the empire had never seen their king. At last Arbaces, governor of Media, one of the principal provinces of Assyria, was introduced into the apartment of Sardanapalus. I leave you to judge what must have been his indignation in seeing this monarch, his face painted in several colors, and his head decked with a thin veil of linen instead of a tiara, a high head-dress by which the Assyrian kings were distinguished from their subjects. As to a sword, Sardanapalus never wore any; for he thought he had not the strength to endure its weight.

Arbaces, on leaving the palace, could not conceal from his companions the disgrace of the king. They were very angry to think that so many brave men should obey so contemptible a prince, and determined to bear it no longer.

However, the king, in the midst of his pleasures, had sometimes the idea that a great danger threatened him; and, following the custom of the time, he sent to consult an oracle. The oracle replied that Nineveh could not be taken until the Tigris should fight on the side of his enemies.

Now the Tigris, as you know, was the river upon whose banks Nineveh was built, with its high walls and its brass gates.

But suddenly the prediction of the oracle was accomplished. The waters of the river rose to such an extraordinary height as to throw down a part of the walls, thick as they were; and Arbaces and his comrades entered the city, and besieged Sardanapalus in his own palace.

The king, contemptible as he was, had, however, some valiant soldiers who were willing to defend the last successor of Nimrod. There were some terrible combats; and several times

the friends of Arbaces talked of withdrawing, when Belesis, a Chaldean priest and astronomer, retained them by telling them that he had read in the stars that, if they were willing to persevere in their enterprise for five days longer they would certainly succeed.

Before the fifth day had passed, Sardanapalus tired of fighting, and remembering the oracle by which he was threatened, caused an immense funeral pile to be lighted in one of the courts of his palace, upon which he threw himself, with his women and all his treasures.

Do not these predictions, which were always accomplished at the time named, seem very marvellous to you? I think they were invented after the events, to make the people believe that their priests had the power to predict the future.

After the death of Sardanapalus, they erected a statue to him in derision. He was represented in the attitude of a dancer half drunk, and below was written in large letters,—"EAT, DRINK, AMUSE YOURSELF: ALL THE REST IS NOTHING." Every one reading these words recognized Sardanapalus, for it was his own language.

With this prince ended the great Assyrian empire founded by Belus, and made so powerful by Semiramis. It was divided into three kingdoms: Arbaces took Media, for his share; Belesis, the Chaldean priest, whose artifice had retained the friends of Arbaces when they were about to desert him, became king of Babylon; and a prince named Phul governed the kingdom of Nineveh.

The Median Empire

From 759 to 690 B.C.

Some time after this, the Medes, who, after the death of Sardanapalus, had been governed by Arbaces, found themselves without a king.

They stole each other's flocks, and committed many acts of injustice, until this anarchy became no longer endurable. There was a man named Dejoces living in one of the villages of Media, who was so respected by his neighbors, that, when any dispute arose, instead of quarrelling violently, the disputants went to find him and begged him to settle their differences. The people never ceased to praise his prudence and justice.

This gave the idea to the other Medes to choose him for a judge of their quarrels, and gradually they became accustomed to obeying him in all his commands; for wisdom is always an authority.

Dejoces, who, under an air of modesty, concealed a great ambition, soon wearied of being only a simple judge in a village. He pretended to withdraw into another country, that he might be no longer tormented by the crowds that came to consult him. He had no sooner gone than new quarrels arose, many of which ended in fights and murders.

Then the wisest inhabitants of the different villages went and found Dejoces, and begged him on their knees to become their king. He at first refused; but he would have been very sorry if they had taken him at his word. He finally accepted the kingdom, and soon showed that he was not unworthy of it.

He became a powerful king, and made Media one of the most flourishing monarchies on the earth.

He made his subjects leave the cabins they had lived in until then, and built a large city called Ecbatana, where he lived with his family, his treasures, and a part of his people, and which he made the capital of his kingdom.

In his palace, which was surrounded by seven walls painted in different colors, between which was built an infinite number of houses, he was informed from hour to hour of all that took place in the different provinces, which were governed by faithful and prudent officers.

He made the empire rich and formidable; and when he died, after a long and glorious reign, he left his crown to his son Phraortes, with whom soon perished the power built up by the wisdom and skill of Dejoces.

The Invasion of the Scythians

From 690 to 625 B.C.

Phraortes might have lived peaceably at Ecbatana as his father did. But he was not content with the kingdom of Media, and was imprudent enough to go seek a quarrel with Nebuchadnezzar, king of Nineveh, who was a warlike prince.

At this time Nebuchadnezzar I governed the kingdoms of Nineveh and Babylon, of which his father had taken possession a few years before. He commanded great armies; and, indignant to learn that the Median king dared to attack him, he marched against Phraortes, resolved to make him repent of his audacity.

The two armies met on a vast plain named Ragau, situated on the banks of the Tigris; and a terrible battle took place. The issue was fatal to the Median prince. His cavalry took flight, his chariots were overturned, and he himself was pitilessly killed with arrows, by the cruel Nebuchadnezzar.

After this the conqueror withdrew to Nineveh, and remained there four whole months, giving himself up to good cheer and repose with those who had aided him in the expedition. But a new danger threatened him.

Cyaxares, son of Phraortes, who had succeeded his unfortunate father, profiting by the effeminacy of the Assyrians, collected a new army and appeared unexpectedly before Nineveh, of which he flattered himself he should soon be master, when a barbarous race called Scythians, who lived on the borders of a lake called Palus Mæotis, crossed over the Caucasian mountains, which separate Europe from Asia, and overran the whole of Media.

These Scythians were a terrible people. They laid the countries waste which they crossed; and although they neither knew the value of riches nor how to make use of them, they carried away all they found on their route, sometimes leading whole nations into slavery.

Cyaxares, hastening to meet them with his army, flattered himself that he should drive them from Media. After one battle, in which the Medes in vain displayed great valor, the Scythians became masters of the country, and spread all over Asia. Cyaxares, a fugitive, was reduced to waiting for better times; and it was some years before he again mounted his throne.

The Scythians were invited by the Medes to some entertainments to take place on the same day and at the same hour in all the houses of the country. These barbarians accepted the invitation with eagerness; for they were passionately fond of wine and good cheer, and the drunkenness of the Scythians had passed into a proverb.

But when they were thus separated into each family, at a concerted signal the Medes fell upon them, and slaughtered them without mercy. The few who escaped withdrew to other countries, and this perfidy restored to Cyaxares the throne he had lost.

He now renewed the plan he had before formed, of revenging upon Nebuchadnezzar the defeat and death of his father Phraortes. Having persuaded the governor of Babylon, Nabopolassar, to assist him by promising him the empire of Assyria, they marched together against Nineveh. After a bloody battle, they were victorious, and entirely destroyed the city. Thus fell this great city, of which Assur had been the founder; and the powerful Babylon where Nabopolassar

mounted the throne became the only capital of the kingdom of Assyria.

Nebuchadnezzar's Dream

From 625 to 562, B.C.

The story that I am now going to tell is almost incredible; but as it is told in the ancient books, you ought not to be ignorant of it.

The most famous of the kings of Babylon was the son of Nabopolassar, Nebuchadnezzar II, who, after having destroyed Jerusalem and its temple, led the people of Israel into slavery. He also made war upon the Egyptians, and seized the proud city of Tyre, from which the ancients obtained the precious purple dye.

The city of Tyre was situated on the seashore in a province of Asia called Phœnicia. The Phœnicians were the first navigators and the first merchants. The invention of the letters of the alphabet is also attributed to them, which they afterwards communicated to the Egyptians. They also founded the celebrated city of Carthage. Nebuchadnezzar took Tyre after a long and memorable siege; and the inhabitants were obliged to build again in another place, where the sea protected them from a similar misfortune.

Nebuchadnezzar then devoted his time to adorning Babylon with magnificent monuments, as Semiramis had done. In the midst of incredible prosperity, a frightful dream filled him with terror.

He dreamed of seeing an immense tree whose branches reached to the clouds, and were loaded with excellent fruit. All the beasts of the earth lived under the shade of this large tree, and an infinite number of birds perched in the branches. Then a terrible voice, appearing to come from the heavens, was

heard, and said: "Cut down the tree, cut off the branches, and scatter the fruit, but let the roots remain in the earth: let him be bound with iron chains in the grass of the field, let him feed upon grass like a wild animal; take away his man's heart, and give him, for seven years, the heart of a beast."

This dream might well seem extraordinary to Nebuchadnezzar, who could no more conceive than you and I how a tree could feed upon grass and have a man's heart.

Nebuchadnezzar, much troubled, sent for the priests of Babylon to interpret his dream; but they were obliged to confess they could not understand it. Daniel alone, the young Israelite saved by a miracle from the lion's den, as you have read in Sacred History, could explain it.

"Prince," replied Daniel, when the king had summoned him before him, "the voice you have heard which came from heaven, is the voice of God himself. He has warned you that, in punishment of your pride, you will be reduced to the condition of the beasts, and will feed upon grass, like an ox, for seven years; nevertheless, your kingdom will be preserved for you, and at the end of that time you will become again a powerful monarch as you are to-day."

Nebuchadnezzar at first only laughed at this explanation; but, in spite of himself, he felt troubled.

Hardly a year had passed when, walking one day in his palace, from which he could see the superb edifices with which Babylon had been embellished by his care, he cried in a new transport of pride, "Behold this Babylon which I have made so magnificent, and which will be for ever a monument of my glory!" Saying these words, he was almost tempted to believe himself a god.

But a terrible punishment showed him that he was only a man, and a man guilty in the sight of God; for he suddenly lost his reason, rushed from his palace, and was reduced to feeding upon grass for seven years, according to Daniel's prophecy. His hair grew and covered his body like eagles' feathers, and his nails were like birds' claws.

After the time set by the prophecy of Daniel was accomplished, the officers of the crown went to find him; then he recovered at the same time reason and the human form, and became again an able and formidable prince. His pride was corrected, and he recognized that God was greater than any earthly potentate. His reign was more glorious than ever; and when he died, his son Belshazzar succeeded him.

The Ring of Gyges

From 708 to 680 B.C.

Beside the three great empires of which I have now told you, there were several other kingdoms in Asia; and that of Lydia was the largest. It comprised the greater part of Asia Minor, a part of Asia nearly surrounded by the sea, and separated from the rest of that part of the world by the course of the Euphrates, and by lofty mountains known under the name of Mount Taurus.

They tell a marvellous story about one of the most ancient kings of Lydia, named Candaules, which I will relate.

This prince was the husband of a princess so beautiful that he never ceased to boast of her beauty to all comers, and to pride himself upon it.

In almost all parts of Asia even now, it is customary for the women to wear veils; and they never show their faces uncovered before any man except their fathers or their husbands. They rarely go out of their houses, where they are carefully watched, and never allowed to chat with any one; and the greatest insult that can be offered a woman is to force her to raise her veil.

Candaules had a friend whom he preferred above all others, and to whom he boasted so often of the beauty of the queen, that Gyges (for that was his name) felt a violent desire to see her face. On his part, the king, glad to show Gyges that his admiration was not exaggerated, promised one day to hide him in a closet so that he could see the queen when she raised her veil before her husband.

Candaules had the imprudence to perform his promise, but he soon had reason to repent it; for the queen, having seen Gyges when he was leaving his hiding-place, was so exasperated against her husband, that she resolved to be avenged.

She sent secretly for the curious Gyges, and gave him the choice to expiate his fault by his own death or by that of the king. Imagine the astonishment of this man in hearing her words. The queen did not leave him time to deliberate, and he promised to destroy Candaules as soon as he could without danger.

This Gyges possessed, they say, a remarkable ring. When he turned the diamond in it away from his face, he became immediately invisible to all eyes, while he was still able to see all that was going on.

It is not necessary for me to tell you in these days that no one ever possessed such a ring; but formerly this story was fully believed.

This perfidious friend then killed the unfortunate king with the help of the queen, who married him, and gave him the crown. Gyges, after this murder, reigned peaceably over Lydia.

Crœsus and Solon

About 559 B.C.

When people talk of some very rich person, you often hear the remark, "He is as rich as Crœsus." Now I am going to tell you the story of Crœsus, who was also a king of Lydia, and one of the successors of the invisible Gyges.

This king had one real merit. He loved learned men, and took pleasure in drawing them around him. But he had been so spoiled by fortune, that he at last believed that riches alone could take the place of every thing else, and that there is no other blessing on earth like that of opulence.

A wise man named Solon arrived one day in the village of Sardis, the capital of the kingdom of Lydia. He was born in Athens, that famous city which Cecrops the Egyptian had founded in Greece, many years before. Crœsus, delighted to receive so celebrated a man, paid him great honors, and displayed the greatest magnificence before him. But Solon did not appear astonished at it, as he esteemed men for their virtues and not for their riches.

The next day Crœsus, wishing to enjoy the society of this able man, summoned him before him to taste the pleasure of his conversation. The sage graciously complied, although he did not like to make a parade of his learning; but he hoped to be able to give the king some useful advice.

Crœsus talked, as usual, of his treasures, his palaces, his vast kingdom, and finally asked Solon if he believed that there existed, in the whole world, a man happier than himself.

Solon, instead of remonstrating with him, contented himself with telling him this little story.

"There lived, a little while ago, in my native country, a man who, all his life, enjoyed unutterable happiness. He was a simple citizen of Athens, called Tellus. He passed his youth in doing good to his fellow-creatures, helping the poor, consoling the afflicted, giving only good example and wise advice. Having reached a ripe old age, and having seen his children and grandchildren grow up, he died, gloriously fighting for his country."

Crœsus smiled with pity at this story; for he could not see what happiness this obscure man had had, who possessed neither power nor riches. But he politely asked Solon if, at least after this Tellus, he himself should not be regarded as the happiest of men.

"I once knew in Greece," replied the wise man, "two young men whom everybody loved for the tender care they lavished upon their mother, who was very infirm. One day when this good woman was going to the temple of the gods for some ceremony, the oxen that were to drag her chariot keeping her waiting, her two sons, who were strong and vigorous, harnessed themselves to the chariot and dragged it to the temple, where they arrived amidst the acclamations of the people, who congratulated their mother for having given to the world such virtuous children. She was so much touched by hearing such praise of her sons, that she prayed the gods to grant them as a reward the best thing possible for men. Her prayer was promptly granted; for the sacrifice was hardly finished when the two brothers fell into a gentle sleep, and died a tranquil death. Statues were erected to them in the temple itself, and their memory was honored by all mothers who wished to have such sons."

This time Crœsus could not help shrugging his shoulders; and he cried, "Must one then die in order to know if he has lived happily? and is not my happiness greater than that of these young men so soon snatched away from life,—I, a great prince possessed of immense treasures?" and he began again the enumeration of his power and his riches.

"O king of Lydia!" interrupted the sage, "you must not believe the happiness eternal which you enjoy today, and nobody can call himself happy before his last day." Solon then withdrew, and left Crœsus more astonished by this lesson than disposed to profit by it.

We shall soon see what reason Solon had for speaking in this way to Crœsus, and the service he rendered to the king, who could not help admiring his wisdom.

Æsop in Lydia

From 559 to 548 B.C.

About this time it happened that the inhabitants of the island of Samos, near the kingdom of Crœsus, offended this king, who prepared to punish them severely by sending against them a large army. These people, struck with fear, sent to beg his pardon, by an ambassador famed for his intelligence.

This ambassador was called Æsop. He was a little man, with limbs entirely distorted. He had, besides, a head of enormous size; and his mouth was disproportionately large. But badly formed as was his exterior, he was gifted with so lively a wit and with so good a character, that he was beloved by all who knew him.

Although on this day Æsop was dressed in a superb mantle, which hid a part of his deformities, Crœsus, on seeing him, could not help starting back with surprise and fright. "How is this?" cried he. "Did the people of Samos mean to trifle with me by sending me such an ambassador?" But his anger soon gave way to admiration, when he had permitted Æsop to unfold the subject of his embassy, Æsop prostrated himself before him, according to the custom of the people of Asia, and related to him the following fable:—

"A man who was amusing himself in his field by catching locusts, accidentally found a grasshopper. He was going to kill it as he had killed the locusts. 'What have I done to you?' said the grasshopper, 'that you should treat me so harshly? I do not eat your grain, and I do you no harm; for I have only my voice, which I use innocently to sing with, morning and night.'

"Great king, you are the man in search of locusts, while I am but the wretched little grasshopper. I have only my voice, and I will take good care not to use it to offend you."

Crœsus was charmed with this story, and kindly helped Æsop to rise; but he complained bitterly of the people of Samos, for he was very angry with them. Then Æsop related to him this fable, which gave him so much pleasure that he entirely forgot his anger:—

"One day the wolves and the sheep, wearied with making war upon each other, concluded a treaty of peace. The wolves promised the sheep that they would allow them to graze quietly in the meadows, if they would deliver up the dogs that guarded the flock. The credulous sheep consented; but as soon as the wolves had the dogs in their power, they soon killed them, and falling upon the sheep, which had no longer their faithful guardians, they devoured them even to the last one.

"You, O king! are the wolf; and I am the faithful dog, the guard of the people of Samos. Would you now be willing to punish this people when their guardian is in your hands?"

The king was much amused with this fable, which he begged Æsop to write out for him, as well as several others which he had composed; for Æsop was the author of a great number of these pretty fables, where he makes animals talk for the instruction of man. Crœsus, out of consideration for Æsop, pardoned the Samians, and begged Æsop to remain in Lydia, where he overwhelmed him with kindness.

This man, deformed as he was, deserved this good fortune for his wit and his learning. In his youth he was only a poor slave, whom every one despised on account of his ugliness. But his merit freed him from slavery and was the cause of the favors Crœsus heaped upon him. This king had never any reason to

regret his kindness; for Æsop faithfully helped him with his knowledge and advice, and showed, as long as he lived, a profound gratitude.

This Æsop, of whom I have told you, is the author of a book of fables with which you are all undoubtedly familiar, and when you read them over again, you must recall to mind that this ingenious writer not only gives us good lessons in his fables, but that he also set a good example in his own life.

The Youth of Cyrus

From 599 to 560 B.C.

Astyages, king of the Medes, who succeeded his father Cyaxares I, the destroyer of Nineveh, married his daughter Mandana to the king of the Persians, a neighbor and friend.

At that time Persia was not, as it afterwards became, a vast and powerful empire. On the contrary, it was a little country, which would have been considered very insignificant if it had not been inhabited by robust and courageous men.

Among the Persians, it was the custom to bring up the children from the tenderest age in the public schools, where they became expert in the use of arms. They were carefully taught docility, patience, and sobriety. This latter quality was the principal object of the lessons of their masters; and in order to accustom them to it early, these young Persians had no other food than bread, water, and water-cresses, a little plant of an acrid taste, growing near springs of water.

Now it happened that the princess Mandana gave birth to a little boy, whom she named Cyrus.

This child, from his earliest age, showed the happiest disposition, which Mandana, like a good mother, did not fail to cultivate, having him brought up in the public school with the other little Persians. We shall soon see whether the young prince profited by the lessons given him.

When Cyrus had reached the age of twelve, Mandana took him to his grandfather Astyages, who tenderly received him, and found him amiable and well brought up.

Cyrus, on the contrary, was greatly surprised to see his grandfather with his face painted in different colors, his

eyebrows elevated, his eyes tinted, and his head loaded with false hair. Besides this, the old man was clothed in a long purple robe, and weighed down with necklaces and bracelets, according to the custom of the Medes.

At the sight of this ridiculous style of dress, Cyrus, who had never seen any thing like it in his own country, was greatly surprised; but he was too discreet and respectful to express his astonishment before his grandfather, lest it might pain him.

His pretty ways and his repartees amused the old king so much that he felt a great desire to keep the child with him, and every day offered him some new amusement.

One day, when Astyages had ordered a magnificent repast to be served for his grandchild, Cyrus, looking disdainfully upon the delicate viands with which the table was covered, the king asked him kindly if he had no appetite. "Grandpapa," answered Cyrus, "I am not accustomed to such magnificent repasts; and in my own country, when we are hungry, we are satisfied with bread and water-cresses."

Astyages smiled at this, and, to see if it were true, he allowed him to distribute to the officers all the dishes that were on the table. Cyrus needed no second order; and, without showing the least regret, he divided among all those present, viands so exquisite that they would certainly have tempted any other child of his age. An officer called Sacas was the only one who received nothing from the little prince.

Now this Sacas was the king's cup-bearer. Astyages, feeling troubled that Cyrus had affronted this officer, told him that no one else was so skilful as this man in pouring out his glass of wine, and, on that account, he could not do without his services, and was very fond of him.

"Is this all that is necessary to deserve your good opinion, grandpapa?" said Cyrus. "I shall soon gain it then, for I guarantee to serve you even more skilfully than he."

The young Cyrus is immediately dressed like a cup-bearer; and he comes forward gravely, with a napkin on his shoulder, holding delicately between his three fingers the royal cup, which he presents to Astyages with a grace with which all the lookers-on are charmed. Cyrus, jumping for joy, shouts, "Poor Sacas! I am going to be cup-bearer in your place!" His grandfather, calling him to his side to embrace him, said, "My boy, I am much pleased with you: you are a skilful cup-bearer; but you have forgotten an important ceremony, that of tasting the wine before helping me to it."

"It was not forgetfulness," replied Cyrus, "but I was afraid this liquor was poison." "Poison!" cried the king: "how so?" "Yes, grandpapa; for not long ago in a feast you gave to the lords of your court, after they had drank this red liquor, the heads of all the guests seemed turned. One cried, another sung, they all talked at random. Your guests seemed to have forgotten that you were their king, and you that they were your subjects. At last you tried to dance, and your limbs would not sustain you."

"What!" answered Astyages: "have you never seen your father in such a condition?"

"Never," replied the child. "Why not?"— "Because he only drinks to quench his thirst."

Astyages was delighted with the wisdom of his grandson, who thus gave to the Median lords and to himself a good lesson in temperance, which they soon forgot, however, when they found themselves again at table with the good wine of Assyria.

The little Cyrus remained some time longer with his grandfather, to perfect himself in the art of riding horseback, which he could not acquire at home; for Persia was an arid country, and intersected by lofty mountains, where they could not keep horses as in the pasture lands of Media.

The Battle of Thymbra

From 560 to 548 B.C.

Cyrus, having become king of the Persians after the death of his father, was, as we should have supposed from what we know of his youth, an accomplished prince of fine qualities. He made his subjects happy; and by his courage in war he became, later, the founder of the most powerful empire which had existed since the time of the first Assyrians.

The king of Babylon having had a quarrel with the king of the Medes, the latter called upon his nephew Cyrus for help. The old Astyages was dead, and had left his crown to his son Cyaxares II, brother of Mandana.

Cyrus immediately started with his army, small indeed, but composed entirely of those young Persians who had been brought up with him in the public schools, and whom he knew, every one, by name. He was worshipped by these soldiers, whose companion and friend he had been, before being their king. Cyaxares received them with great joy, and both prepared to march against the Babylonians, whom Crœsus had joined,—the king of Lydia, of whom you have already heard. Unfortunately for him, his pride had led him to join in this war; for he despised the Persians on account of their poverty, and the Medes for their effeminacy.

Cyrus, having learned that the king of Lydia had collected a large army in a place called Thymbra, near the city of Sardis, where the treasures of Crœsus were kept, hastily advanced; and although he knew his enemies were at least twice as numerous as his own soldiers, he did not hesitate to engage in a furious battle, which caused the total ruin of the kingdom of Lydia, and

divided the empire of Asia between the Babylonians and the Persians.

In this terrible battle of Thymbra Cyrus displayed great valor; but his horse having been knocked down in the mêlée this courageous prince came very near being taken or killed by his enemies. However, this accident only delayed for a few moments the defeat of the Lydians. As soon as he appeared again at the head of the Persians, the enemy took flight and were scattered before him. Their war chariots, armed with sharp scythes, were broken to pieces, their movable turrets filled with soldiers were overturned. Crœsus himself, after having fought valiantly, was obliged to abandon the field of battle, and to seek an asylum behind the walls of Sardis, where he soon learned that his treasures were no longer valuable to him.

Cyrus, pursuing him, presented himself quickly before the walls of this city; and while Crœsus was trying to defend himself in his palace, the conqueror made himself master of all the gates, and ordered all the inhabitants of Sardis to bring him their gold and silver, promising if he were obeyed that he would do no harm to any.

I ought to tell you here, that in those days it was the custom, when a city was taken by the enemy, for the conqueror to take possession of all that was valuable. The inhabitants themselves were divided among the soldiers, who reduced them to slavery, and sold them afterwards as if they were beasts of burden, to those who wished to buy them.

Cyrus showed himself very generous in granting these people life and liberty.

In the midst of this terrible disaster, Crœsus, wishing at least to die gloriously, determined to try once more the fate of

arms. In the mêlée Persian soldier, who did not know Crœsus, lifted his sabre above his head, and would have killed him at one blow, when a young son of Crœsus, dumb from his birth, seeing his father threatened by so great a peril, made an effort which seemed to loosen his tongue and cried out, "Soldier, kill not Crœsus!"

The soldier immediately dropped his sword; and, contenting himself with disarming Crœsus, he led him before the king, from whom he hoped to receive a great reward.

The poor child, who until then had never been able to articulate a word, was rewarded for his tenderness to his father; for from that moment he continued to talk as well as you and I.

The royal prisoner was led before Cyrus, who received him with all the consideration due to so great a sufferer. Crœsus soon felt that his pride had blinded him, and that the love of riches had made him forget that it is not enough for a man to possess treasures, unless he is at the same time wise enough to make a good use of them.

Unfortunately the custom of that barbarous time condemned the captive king to be burned alive, and Crœsus prepared to mount the funeral pile, when he recollected the beautiful lesson Solon once gave him, assuring him that no man could be called happy before his last day, and he could not help crying out several times, "Solon! Solon! you told me well!"

Cyrus, who was present, having heard this exclamation, wanted to know what it meant. He caused Crœsus to be brought before him, who told him in a few words the excellent advice he had received from Solon, adding that, if he had followed it, he should not have been reduced to so cruel an extremity.

"I," cried Cyrus, "will be more just to you than fortune; for I will not only give you life, but I will give commands that you shall always be honored as a great king should be."

Crœsus, re-established in his palace where the friendship of Cyrus followed him, soon learned that he had never been happier than after he was free from the care of guarding the treasures which had led to his ruin.

Thus Solon had the honor of having saved the life of one king by his wise counsels, while giving to the other the opportunity of doing an action more glorious than a great victory or the conquest of an empire.

This story teaches us that wealth is a true benefit only when we know how to make a good use of it, and that if it inspires us only with a foolish pride, it makes us insupportable to all who surround us.

Belshazzar's Feast

From 548 to 530 B.C.

Nothing more was wanting to satisfy the ambition of Cyrus but to become master of Babylon; for this warlike prince was not exempt from this fault, which sometimes makes men illustrious, but which often causes great disasters to nations.

The king of Babylon, at that time, was Belshazzar, son and successor to Nebuchadnezzar II. He was an effeminate prince, given up to wine and debauchery, with all the vices which had so disgraced Sardanapalus. The fatigues of war and the cares of government were alike insupportable; and he knew no greater misfortune than to lose one of the magnificent feasts which he had served in his palace every night, in spite of the approach of the victorious army of Cyrus.

One evening, when he was entertaining sumptuously the great lords and the most lovely women of his court, he took a fancy to use the drinking vessels of gold and silver, which Nebuchadnezzar, his father, had taken away formerly from the temple at Jerusalem. But hardly had they been brought, when suddenly a hand was seen tracing upon the wall mysterious characters, which none present could decipher.

Belshazzar, terrified at the sight, sent for the Magi, the priests of the fire which the Babylonians worshipped, and also for the soothsayers and astrologers; but none of these pretended wise men could read the characters the miraculous hand had traced on the wall.

Then the queen Nitocris, Belshazzar's mother, who had run into the festive hall at the noise, begged her son to send for

the wise Daniel, who had formerly explained Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

Daniel had become an old man, but he had not lost the gift of interpreting things unintelligible to other men. As soon as he cast his eye upon the mysterious inscription, he said it was written in Hebrew and that these were the words:—

"Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin."

Belshazzar urged Daniel to explain to him the sentence.

"It means, O king!" replied Daniel, "that God has appointed the end of your reign; that you have been weighed in his balance, and that your kingdom shall be divided between the Medes and the Persians."

You may suppose that this answer did not tend to dissipate the fears of the assembly, and the guests gazed at each other in consternation; but Belshazzar, who did not believe that such great misfortunes were at hand, ordered them to go on with their amusement, and forbade them, all that night, to concern themselves about serious matters. He himself set the example by returning to his wine, and in the palace and gardens were heard only laughter and music.

In the mean time, the soldiers of Cyrus, who had reached the gates of the capital, having learned that this very night all Babylon, in imitation of her king, was plunged in dissipation, profited by this favorable circumstance, and, entering the city suddenly, in the midst of this disorder, made themselves masters of it, almost without a skirmish.

Belshazzar, half drunk, wishing to go to meet the enemy who had thus surprised him, was killed by the Persians, with most of those who had been guests.

Thus the prophecy of Daniel was immediately realized; and the famous Babylon became the prey of the Medes and

Persians, who destroyed many of its remarkable edifices. The successors of Cyrus made a park of it, where they shut up wild beasts, in order to give themselves the pleasures of the chase.

The death of Belshazzar put an end to the second empire of Assyria, which the astronomer Belesis had founded after the fall of Sardanapalus. Cyrus re-united it to Persia and to Media, which he inherited a little while after by the death of his uncle, Cyaxares II. This prince thus became one of the most powerful kings of the earth, and he gave to this magnificent empire the name of the kingdom of the Persians.

His first care, after the taking of Babylon, was to summon the wise Daniel, whose merit he had often heard extolled; and, in consideration of him, he permitted the Israelites, whom Nebuchadnezzar II had led into captivity seventy years before, to return to their own country, where he allowed them to rebuild the temple of Jerusalem.

Cyrus, by his numerous excellent qualities, was truly worthy of his high fortune. His whole life was marked by praiseworthy and generous actions; and, as he had been temperate and frugal in his youth, he preserved, even to the most advanced age, all the vigor of his mind, and all the activity of a robust body.

His life is so remarkable that it should be studied with care; and you could not say you had heard much of ancient history, if you were not able to recall the great deeds of Cyrus.

Cambyses in Egypt

From 530 to 522 B.C.

Cyrus, dying, had left two sons; the elder named Cambyses, and the younger Smerdis.

Cambyses, who succeeded his father upon the throne of Persia, resembled him in no respect. He was a brutal, passionate prince; and seemed to unite all the defects which make bad kings. Besides this, instead of imitating the simplicity of Cyrus, in his dress and food, he had adopted, and introduced among the Persians, all the customs of the Medes and Babylonians, which had formerly seemed so ridiculous to the young Cyrus, at the court of his grandfather, Astyages.

Cambyses never showed himself in public without his face painted. He was loaded with gold chains and bracelets of precious stones, and clothed in a trailing robe of purple, elegantly embroidered. His head-dress was generally a tiara, ornamented with large diamonds, and precious stones of all colors. This taste for ornaments and magnificence passed quickly, as it always does, from the palace even to the lowest of his subjects; and in a few years the Persians became as effeminate and contemptible as the enemies they had conquered.

Cambyses sent to the king of Egypt to demand his daughter in marriage. Amasis, this was the name of the prince, knowing the bad character of the king of the Persians, formally refused.

Cambyses, indignant at such a refusal, which he considered a mortal affront, swore vengeance; and one of his first cares, after mounting the throne, was to carry war into this country,

with an army accompanied by thousands of chariots, loaded with magnificent tents, and all the things necessary for the enjoyment of life. Cambyses had carefully seen to it that nothing was wanting in his kitchen, which was carried upon camels, and was always well stocked with provisions.

To penetrate into Egypt, the Persians were obliged to traverse the deserts of Arabia Petræa, which separated the two empires; and this great army would have inevitably died of thirst on the journey, if an Arabian king had not engaged to furnish them with water whilst they crossed this country, where they could not find a single spring, nor even a brook. It was the same desert where the Israelites wandered forty years, and where Moses made the water burst from the rock of Horeb, as told in Sacred History.

The camels were obliged to carry a great distance, in leathern bottles, all the water necessary for this great number of men and horses, marching painfully over the burning sands of Arabia. With this help, Cambyses succeeded in reaching the frontier of Egypt, where he learned that his enemy, Amasis, was dead; but that his son Psammenitus, who had succeeded him, had prepared to fight the Persians with a large army.

The two kings soon met; and Cambyses availed himself of a stratagem which threw disorder among his enemies, and gave him the victory. He placed before his soldiers an infinite number of cats, dogs, and other animals, which the Egyptians honored as divinities.

The Egyptians, not daring to use their arms to kill one of their gods, were easily routed by the Persians, with great slaughter.

This victory, which opened Egypt to Cambyses, was followed by the taking of Pelusium; and almost all the cities of

that country, and Psammenitus himself, with his son, fell into the power of the conqueror.

The king of the Persians sent a herald to Memphis, to invite the inhabitants of that great city to yield without a combat. These people, transported with anger against the Persians, threw themselves upon the herald, and tore him to pieces, as well as those in the vessel which had brought him up the Nile.

Now you must know, that, among the most barbarous nations, the person of a herald is sacred; and that it is a frightful crime to do him the least harm.

Cambyses, on hearing of this deed, burst into a rage, and ordered ten times as many Egyptians slaughtered, as there had been Persians on the herald's vessel. One of the sons of Psammenitus was among the victims; and this prince, whom Cambyses had at first treated kindly, was condemned to drink of bull's blood, which killed him instantly. The city of Memphis, in punishment for this crime, was treated with extreme rigor.

This terrible example having terrified the rest of Egypt, Cambyses soon found himself the possessor of this kingdom, which long remained one of the provinces of the empire of Persia.

Impatient to satisfy the hatred which he still bare to the memory of Amasis, he ordered his body torn from the pyramid where it had been laid, according to the custom of Egypt, and burnt with ignominy. This was the greatest insult that could be offered to an Egyptian, who attached so high a value to funeral honors. This violation of a tomb, an object of respect among all nations, was the action of a madman, to whom nothing is sacred.

In another fit of passion, seeing a bull, Apis, to which, as you know, the Egyptians rendered divine honors, he threw himself upon this animal, and wounded it so severely with a blow of his sword, that it soon afterward died. This enraged the whole nation against Cambyses.

The invasion of Egypt had given Cambyses a taste for new conquests; and he determined to send a part of his army against the Ammonians, whose country was separated from Egypt by deserts like those of Arabia Petræa.

Immense plains of sand, dried by a burning sun, without tree or shelter, or even a drop of water to quench one's thirst, should have preserved the Ammonians from invasion by the Persians.

But hardly had these soldiers advanced into the vast solitude, when troubles of every sort assailed them. Suffering from heat, or dying of thirst, they kept on their way for several days through these dry sands. Then they fell in great numbers, never to rise again. The most robust pursued their enterprise alone, sustained by the hope of reaching the country of the Ammonians, where they had been assured the soil was covered with rich verdure, and produced abundantly the succulent fruit of the date, and the palm-tree. But they marched in vain; still marching they reached not the limit of their fatal journey.

Sometimes, as if to add to the horror of the situation, some would cry out that they saw in the distance a lake, or a large river, whose banks were shaded by green forests. One drop of this water might save their lives. They would all immediately run in a crowd; but when, panting, they arrived at the place where they expected to find it, they saw nothing but white sand,—sand as far as the eye could reach,—which, at a distance, had seemed like a sheet of water.

This phenomenon is common in the deserts of Africa, where it is called a mirage.

Sometimes terrible whirlwinds rise suddenly, and, raising mountains of sand, stifle the travellers exposed to it.

Cambyses' army had no enemy to contend against but the Libyan desert; but not a soldier was left to carry back to Egypt the news of the disaster. The whole army was buried in its sands.

In the mean time, the mad Cambyses was sending to the king of the Ethiopians presents in use among the Asiatics, consisting of gold bracelets, vestments of purple, and precious perfumes, to which he added some flasks of the most exquisite wine. But the barbarous king made no use of the gifts, with the exception of the wine, which he tasted with pleasure. On account of the heat of the climate, the purple vestments were useless to him; the gold bracelets seemed to him like vain ornaments for women. As to the perfumes, the Arabs had sent him some far preferable.

However, the Ethiopian wished, in his turn, to make Cambyses a present; and sent him a bow so large and hard, that it would take a man of prodigious strength to draw it; warning him at the same time, that the Persians need not think of conquering the people of Ethiopia until they could make use of this, which they themselves used with terrible effect.

Cambyses, enraged at this message, marched against the barbarians, and for once he had not even the satisfaction of seeing them; for finding himself without provisions, in a barrren country, his army was at first obliged to feed upon roots and herbs; then upon the horses and beasts of burden. At last, some of the Persians were reduced to the horrible extremity of feeding upon each other.

As to Cambyses, as the camels which carried his kitchen followed him everywhere, his table continued to be magnificently served, whilst his poor soldiers were dying with want. He persisted in marching forward, until at last, finding himself almost alone, he was obliged to return in haste to Egypt, for fear of falling into the power of the Ethiopians, who were advancing to finish with arms what hunger had begun.

Smerdis, brother of Cambyses, had accompanied him on the beginning of this perilous journey; and he was the only one of the Persian court who could draw the bow the king of Ethiopia had sent. On this account, Cambyses conceived a great jealousy for this young prince; and as he knew that Smerdis was tenderly beloved by the soldiers, whose fatigues and privations he had shared, he sent him back to Persia, where, soon after, he had him secretly assassinated by a lord named Prexaspes, to whom he promised a great reward. After this murder, knowing no limit to his folly, Cambyses resolved to marry one of his sisters, called Meroe; which became afterwards a custom for the kings of Persia and Egypt. But some time after, in a fit of anger, he killed this princess with his own hand.

At last, in mounting his horse, he pierced his thigh with the same sword which had killed the bull Apis. A deep wound was made, of which he died a few days after. The Egyptians rejoiced at his death; and looked upon this accident as a just chastisement for the murder of their god.

Smerdis the Magian

522 B.C.

Cambyses, on leaving for Egypt, had put the government of Persia into the hands of a great lord, called Patisithes, who was also chief of the Magi.

This Patisithes was at first faithful to the king, but afterwards, seeing that every one despised him, on account of his fits of anger; and having discovered the death of the young Smerdis, which, until then, had been kept secret by Prexaspes, he conceived the idea of putting one of his own brothers in the place of the second son of Cyrus.

This false Smerdis, a Mede, was also one of the priests of the fire. This is why he is commonly called Smerdis the Magian. He greatly resembled the brother of the king.

It was not difficult among the Persians to make such a fraud succeed; for only a small number of lords approached the person of the king, whose face was, besides, almost hidden by the ornaments of his tiara.

Smerdis, the Magian, was then proclaimed king of Persia; and it can truly be said that he did not make a bad use of his power. His brother Patisithes watched carefully that the imposition might not be discovered; and when they heard that Cambyses had died in returning from Egypt, they felt assured of the success of their enterprise.

It was the custom in that country for the kings to have a great number of wives. Smerdis had married all he found in the palace of Cambyses; amongst whom was one named Phedyma, the daughter of Otanes, one of the principal lords.

Otanes, who had some reason to suspect that the new king was not the brother of Cambyses, asked his daughter secretly, if she had ever seen her husband with his head bare. He told her that the Magian Smerdis had had his ears cut off, in his youth, by the order of the last king, for some crime.

This woman did not forget the lesson; and the first time that the king took off his tiara before her, she saw that this pretended prince had no ears. Otanes, soon warned of this discovery, confided it to several of his friends. They all resolved, with one accord, to put an end to this fraud by killing the false Smerdis, and his brother. Some among them still hesitated to strike a decisive blow, when an unforeseen event decided them to delay no longer.

Prexaspes, who, as I told you, had assassinated the true Smerdis, by the order of Cambyses, without doubt stung by remorse, mounted a high tower, and, addressing himself to the people, formally declared that the brother of Cambyses had perished by his hand, and that the one who took his name was an impostor. Then he threw himself down from the top of the tower, and was killed on the spot.

As soon as this was known in the country, seven Persian lords, indignant that a Mede, and, above all, a Magian, should dare to sit on the throne of Cyrus, went to the palace, and, surprising the Magian with his brother, killed them both, in spite of their resistance, and threw their bloody heads out of the windows of the palace.

When the people heard how they had been deceived by the Magian, they were very much enraged against the priests of the fire, whom they accused of having favored this deception, and they massacred all indiscriminately. The anniversary of the day when this terrible execution took place became a feast day

among the Persians, when no priest dared show himself in public.

Then the seven lords, who had killed the false Smerdis, found themselves very much embarrassed to know to whom the crown belonged. They agreed to leave it to chance.

Among them was a young Persian called Darius, son of Hystaspes, one of the principal lords of the country, who had certainly contributed more than any other to the success of the plot, for he was the first to strike the Magian with his sword. He was, besides, gifted with many fine qualities, and the people ardently desired to have him for their king.

The conspirators agreed that they should all meet the next day, at sunrise, in a certain place near the city; and that the one whose horse neighed first should have the kingdom.

Now, you know, perhaps, that horses, when they know that others with which they are used to living are near, begin to neigh. Darius took care to have concealed behind the trees near the rendezvous, the horse of his esquire, which commonly travelled by the side of his own; of course his animal neighed first, and his master was immediately recognized as king by his comrades, who, instead of being jealous of him, always remained his friends and counsellors.

Darius I (this was the title the son of Hystaspes took on ascending the throne), in order to show his gratitude to these lords, permitted them to wear a tiara as high as his own, with this sole difference, that his aigrette was worn quite erect, while theirs was bent forward.

Darius in Scythia

From 522 to 485 B.C.

Not many years after Darius had succeeded to the throne, he heard that the inhabitants of Babylon, who after the time of the great Cyrus had always belonged to his successors, had revolted against their governor, and had slaughtered all the Persians who were in their city.

At this news, the prince could not restrain his anger; and, having collected a formidable army, he marched against Babylon, resolved to punish this rebellious city in a terrible manner, by entirely destroying it. But the Babylonians defended it with so much courage, that, after a desperate siege of eighteen months, the Persians were about to renounce the hope of victory, when a young satrap, named Zophyrus, whom Darius tenderly loved, sacrificed himself to satisfy the resentment of his master.

Zophyrus, without confiding his plan to any one lest he might be prevented from executing it, cut off his own nose and ears, and covered his whole body with terrible wounds. Then, escaping secretly from the Persian camp, he presented himself at one of the gates of Babylon, and cried to those who were guarding it, that king Darius had made him suffer this brutal treatment; and he swore to them, that, if they were willing to receive him into their city, as long as life remained, he would use it in fighting against this cruel prince.

The Babylonians believed his story, which seemed confirmed by the bleeding wounds Zophyrus displayed before their eyes; and, persuaded that such a man must be impatient to avenge himself, they immediately confided to him the guard

of their ramparts. Zophyrus introduced the soldiers of Darius into the besieged city, and the king became master of Babylon, which he treated with the utmost rigor. Three thousand of the leading rebels were put to death by his order; and the famous walls of that city, founded by Semiramis, were almost entirely thrown down.

The king was greatly pleased with the happy issue of this enterprise, which he owed to the devotion of his dear Zophyrus. But he could never be consoled for the disfigurement of his poor friend; for although his wounds were cicatrized, as he had neither nose nor ears, he was really so frightful that no one could look at his face.

Darius had often heard of the Scythians, who, in the time of Cyaxares II, had invaded Media, as I have told you; and he resolved to punish this barbarous nation for the ravages they had formerly committed in Asia.

The country they inhabited was separated from the kingdom of Persia on one side by a range of lofty mountains, called the Caucasus, and on the other by a vast sea, then known as the Euxine, now called the Black. Darius having made his soldiers cross the Thracian Bosphorus, a narrow arm of the sea, separating this part of Asia from Europe, came to the banks of a great river, which the ancients called Ister, now known as the Danube. On the other side of this river was Scythia.

Now this savage race had neither cities nor houses. Their habitation was the vast desert which they continually traversed; their wives and children travelling in a multitude of chariots. They drove before them numerous flocks of sheep and horses, which they pastured where they stopped to pitch their tents and rest. Darius did not know of the poverty of this nation, but nothing could stop him; and when he had arrived

at the banks of the Ister, he ordered his soldiers to cross, upon a bridge which he threw over the river.

I will tell you how they throw a bridge across the river so quickly. They begin by planting several piles in the river bank, which are sharpened at the end, and which they bury in the ground, with all the strength possible. A boat is strongly fastened to these stakes with strong ropes. Then a second is bound to the first in the same way, and so on, until they have arrived at the opposite bank of the river, where stakes are again planted, to fix the last boat to the river bank.

When all this work is finished, they put upon this floating bridge long and strong planks, over which the soldiers can easily pass, with their horses and their war chariots. This operation is sometimes interrupted by the violence of the waves.

It was upon a bridge like this, that Darius made his army cross the Ister to invade Scythia. He left his bridge under the guard of some Greek soldiers, commanded by Hysticus and Miltiades, two officers of that nation.

The king, after having crossed the river, advanced rapidly over the vast plains, which extended as far as the eye could reach; flattering himself that he should see the Scythians run to meet him, and submit themselves to his power. After several days of painful marches, he was quite astonished that no one appeared, either to fight or to beg for mercy.

The Scythians, informed of his approach, had taken good care not to wait for him. Following their wandering habits, they had driven their flocks before them, and had fled so far away that the Persian army could never reach them.

Darius, however, continued to follow them, although a great many of his soldiers fell with fatigue and hunger; and no

city offered them shelter or food. Soon another calamity crowned all which the Persians had already endured. They were on the point of dying of thirst; for the Scythians, in spite of the haste of their retreat, took the pains to fill up all the springs and wells.

Darius himself would not have escaped this privation, by which the greater part of his soldiers perished, if he had not had a camel, which followed him everywhere, laden with leathern bottles filled with water. The king was so grateful to this animal, which he brought back from this disastrous expedition, that, on his return to Persia, he had a stable built for him in one of the richest provinces of his empire, which he called Gangamela, or the camel's house.

In this extremity, the soldiers of Darius brought in to him a Scythian, who had come to them, announcing that he had something very important to communicate to the king. When this man was in the king's presence, he presented him with a bird, a mouse, a frog, and five arrows; and he then wished to withdraw. But Darius ordered him to explain immediately what this message meant. The fearless savage replied, that the Scythians had sent this present to let the Persians know, that, if they could not fly in the air like the bird, or hide in the ground like the mouse, or plunge in the water like the frog, no human power could save them from the arrows of the Scythians.

Darius, having listened patiently to this explanation, ordered them to set the man free, without doing him the least harm; for he saw that it would be wiser for him to take back the remnant of his army into his own kingdom than to wait for the barbarians to carry out their threats. He immediately returned to the Ister.

During this disastrous campaign, he had incurred a great danger, which he did not know about until later. Miltiades, the Athenian, one of the Greek chiefs, whom he had left on the banks of the Ister, had proposed to his companion, Hysticus, to destroy the bridge, so that the whole Persian army might perish; but Hysticus, who was sincerely attached to Darius, rejected his proposition with scorn, and the king was fortunate enough to escape safe and sound, from a country where the greater part of his army perished.

Queen Amestris

From 485 to 472 B.C.

The son of Darius, who succeeded him, was called Xerxes I. He was a proud and violent prince, who fancied that the whole world was made to obey him, so superior did he believe himself to other men. You will read in Greek history how he was punished for this self-love; and I will content myself with telling you what happened in his family, as much by his own weakness, as by the wickedness of his wife, Queen Amestris.

Xerxes had a brother, called Maristus, the husband of a beautiful and virtuous princess, with whom the king liked to converse; and as the society of this woman pleased him more than that of Amestris, the queen became excessively jealous of her sister-in-law. You will now see all the evils this terrible passion caused.

One day, in a visit which Xerxes paid to his sister-in-law, he was dressed in a magnificent robe, embroidered by Amestris, with her own hands. This robe was so rich and beautiful, that the young Artainta, daughter of Maristus, felt a passionate desire to possess it. In the course of the visit, Xerxes was so imprudent as to promise the young princess any thing she wanted; and she asked for the robe. The king objected, telling her the queen would certainly be angry, as she had embroidered it herself; but Artainta begged so earnestly, that he at last gave it to her. It was a fatal gift; for, when she appeared with it in public, Amestris immediately recognized it.

This queen was not the woman to forget such an affront; and, looking upon the demand of Artainta as only the desire of a young girl, she turned her fury against the mother of the

princess; and upon this poor woman she resolved to wreak a horrible revenge.

It was the custom in Persia, on the king's birthday, for him to grant the queen all she asked. The custom had been formerly established so that this princess might obtain a pardon from her husband for an innocent person, or help for some unfortunate one. But Amestris had other plans in her head; and, when the day arrived, she publicly demanded of Xerxes, the wife of Maristus, to dispose of as she saw fit.

The king, on hearing this demand, was struck with terror. He knew the queen too well not to guess at her horrible intentions. Vainly he begged her to make another request: she would not yield. We see with astonishment, that Xerxes had the weakness to yield to her request, begging her not to abuse her power.

But the pitiless Amestris had no sooner obtained the permission of the king, than she ordered her guards to seize the princess, and cut off her nose, her ears, and her lips, which she made them instantly throw to the dogs, in her presence; after which she sent this unhappy creature to the king, thus reaching the climax of her barbarity.

This crime, horrible as it was, was not the only one this execrable princess committed; for, having learned that Maristus was collecting an army to avenge this atrocity, she caused him to be followed by a troop of horsemen, who murdered the unfortunate prince with all his family.

Was there ever in the world a woman as cruel as this Amestris, whose jealousy caused so many disasters? But what can we say of the incredible indolence of Xerxes, who tolerated these crimes, whilst with one word he could have prevented them? He finally received his punishment.

One day, when drunk at a feast, he ordered one of the principal lords of his court, named Artabanus, the captain of his guards, to kill Darius, his eldest son, with whom he was angry. Artabanus, hoping the king would revoke this barbarous decree, when the fumes of the wine were dissipated, was in no hurry to obey. But the next day, Xerxes having warned him not to defer any longer the execution of his orders, this officer, not doubting that he had every thing to fear from a man who would thus shed the blood of his own son, resolved to strike a bold blow, and perhaps mount the throne himself, by destroying the whole family.

The next night, Artabanus, who had won over a domestic of the king by the promise of reward, entered the royal apartment, and stabbed the sleeping king with a poniard. Immediately running to Artaxerxes, the third son of Xerxes, and feigning an air of fright, he told him that Darius, his elder brother, had killed his father.

In the first transport of grief, Artaxerxes, believing his story, rushed to his brother's apartment, and, without giving the unhappy prince time for explanation or defence, ordered him to be killed by the guards who had followed him.

Artaxerxes, by this event, succeeded his father; but, having learned the double perfidy of Artabanus, he feared he might become himself the victim of this traitor, and caused him to be put to death with his accomplices.

Artaxerxes Longimanus

From 472 to 424 B.C.

Several princes by the name of Artaxerxes reigned in succession over Persia; and they are commonly distinguished by surnames. The son of Artaxerxes received that of Longimanus, the Long-Handed, because his right hand was longer than the other. But as this deformity was not very apparent, it did not prevent him from being one of the handsomest men of his time.

One day, when Artaxerxes Longimanus was in his palace of Susa, one of the principal cities of his kingdom, where the Persian kings ordinarily passed the winter, a stranger demanded an introduction to him; and, having prostrated himself before his throne,—

"You see at your feet, O great king!" said he, "Themistocles, the Athenian, whose name has perhaps reached you. It was I who conquered the army of Xerxes, your father, when it came to fall upon Greece; and, now that my fellow-citizens have banished me from my native country, I come to put myself in your hands, and beg of you an asylum."

This Themistocles was one of the most skilful and courageous of the Grecian generals, as you will learn, when you study the history of that country. It was he who put to flight the Persians, whom Xerxes led against him; but at last, the Athenians, jealous of this great man, had been so ungrateful as to exile him, and had even pursued him into the country where he had retired. He then decided to seek a refuge with the king of Persia, whose kindness and magnanimity he had heard everywhere praised.

Artaxerxes could not love Themistocles, who had caused such misfortunes to the Persians, in his father's reign; and he had, himself, once promised a great reward to any one who would deliver him up, alive or dead. But when he saw this great leader, a suppliant at his feet, he would have blushed to be ungenerous to a man who came to put himself under his protection; and he ordered Themistocles to present himself at the palace the next morning, to learn his decision.

The next day, having caused the stranger to be introduced into his presence, "Themistocles," said he, "I had promised a reward to whoever would give you up, alive or dead; and, as you have won it by coming to put yourself in my hands, I am going to order it paid to you immediately; further, as you wished to be the guest of the king of Persia, I give you four large cities of my kingdom; one of which shall furnish you bread, another food, the third wine, and the fourth clothing."

Themistocles was overwhelmed with gratitude at these words. The munificence of Artaxerxes never wavered a moment He often retained him at court, to have the pleasure of conversing with him, and granted him all the favors he could desire.

Artaxerxes showed the greatest generosity in thus treating one of the most dreaded enemies of Persia. You will read, some day, that Themistocles was not unworthy of his good fortune, since he preferred to die rather than to fail in gratitude to his benefactor, or to bear arms against the country which had banished him.

The Family of Artaxerxes Mnemon

From 424 to 401 B.C.

I have but little to tell you about the three sons of Artaxerxes Longimanus, who occupied successively the throne of Persia. Two reigned a few days only; and Darius Nothus, their brother, having seized the crown, governed the empire gloriously for many years, and died at an advanced age.

This prince left two sons: the elder called Artaxerxes, to whom they gave the surname of Mnemon, on account of his prodigious memory; the second called Cyrus, whom his mother tenderly loved, on account of his amiable qualities.

Unhappily, these two princes were jealous of each other; Artaxerxes, because Cyrus was his mother's favorite; and Cyrus, because his brother had inherited the empire of Darius Nothus, their father.

It was then the custom in Persia, for each king, on mounting the throne, to go to the city of Pasargades, formerly built by the great Cyrus, and where he was buried, to consecrate himself by religious ceremonials.

The new monarch was obliged to take off his own robe, and put on one which Cyrus had worn, preserved by the Magi, at Pasargades, with great veneration. This signified that the king who thus clothed himself with the robe of Cyrus would henceforth wear his beautiful qualities and his lofty virtues.

After this, a drink composed of vinegar and milk was offered to the king, which he was obliged to swallow at one draught to teach him that the sweets of royalty are very often mingled with bitterness.

The young Cyrus, who went to Pasargades to be present at the ceremony of consecration, could not see Artaxerxes thus take peaceful possession of the empire. He dared to form a plan to murder his brother, at the moment when he was taking off his robe in the temple. All was arranged for the commission of the crime, when a priest, who was in the secret, warned the king, who ordered his guards to immediately seize Cyrus, and put him to death.

I cannot tell you the grief of the queen, Parysatis, on hearing this. After having vainly begged for the pardon of this beloved son, quite beside herself she covered him with her tresses, and clung to him, until at last, by her prayers and tears, she finally obtained the promise of the king, that no harm should be done him. The only punishment which Artaxerxes inflicted upon his brother was to banish him to a distant province, of which he gave him the government, forbidding him to appear at court.

It was at Sardis, the ancient capital of the kingdom of Lydia, that the young Cyrus fixed his dwelling, after his disgrace. There, appearing to forget his thirst for power, he occupied himself with embellishing his gardens, and decorating his palace. He had a great deal of wit and learning, and enjoyed the society of distinguished men.

One day, he received the visit of a Greek general, called Lysander, who, knowing the animosity of Cyrus to his brother, hoped, by exciting the jealousy of this hot-headed youth, to cause troubles in Asia, from which the Greeks could reap an advantage.

This Lysander added to the qualities of a valiant leader an extreme cunning, and great skill in flattering the passions of men, when he thought he could profit by it. Hardly had he been

introduced to Cyrus, when he saw that this prince bore impatiently the useless kind of life to which he was condemned; and that pride was his principal defect.

"This is a very beautiful walk," cried Lysander, when walking with Cyrus in his gardens.

"I laid it out," replied the prince, with a satisfied air.

"This parterre is delightful," continued the Spartan; and its thousand flowers exhale a perfume which charms and intoxicates me."

"All these flowers," said Cyrus, "were selected by me."

"These fruit-gardens seem filled with excellent fruit," added this wily individual. "I intended," said the prince, "to collect here the rarest kinds."

Finally, they entered a grove, where the trees offered an inpenetrable shade from the heat of the day.

"I never saw more beautiful trees," cried Lysander, in a tone of admiration.

"I planted them with my own hands," said Cyrus, with pride.

"What! prince," said the Spartan, surveying him from head to foot, "you wear a purple robe, bracelets of gold, buskins richly embroidered; you live in the midst of perfumes and essences, and have made a gardener of yourself!"

Cyrus blushed with shame, on hearing these words. He lowered his eyes before this man who had so piqued his self-love; and swore to himself, that he would rather die a hundred times than to lead this useless life any longer, and to leave his brother the crown he considered himself more worthy to wear.

Soon after, having collected a great army at Sardis, he resolved to dispute the empire with Artaxerxes; and, to insure a victory, he engaged in his service thirteen thousand Greeks,

who were then the best and bravest soldiers in the world. We shall soon see what became of this army, and of the young Cyrus himself, whom an inordinate pride pushed to his own destruction.

The Retreat of the Ten Thousand

From 401 to 399 B.C.

The empire of Persia was so vast, that six whole months were necessary for the young Cyrus to advance with his army from Sardis even to the province of Babylon, where he knew that Artaxerxes was collecting large forces to fight against him. It is true that Cyrus's army had many difficulties to encounter, in traversing this great extent of country. They crossed rivers, mountains, and defiles, with a courage and patience worthy of a better cause.

At last, the two armies, commanded in person by these unfriendly brothers, met in a place called Cunaxa, near Babylon, where one of the most terrible battles recorded in history took place. The young Cyrus, aided by his thirteen thousand Greeks, fought with such valor, all that bloody day, that victory seemed to incline in his favor, when, having distinguished his brother Artaxerxes in the mêlée, he threw himself upon him in his rage, and received from his brother's hand the death-blow he was trying to give.

Thus fell this prince, whose ambition was his destruction, regretted by nobody but his mother, who had increased his pride by her indulgence.

The body of Cyrus having been recognized among the slain, a soldier cut off his head and his right hand, which a servant of the king, called Mesabates, took into Artaxerxes' palace, where they were exposed several days.

The brave Greeks, who had fought so valiantly for this unfortunate prince, found themselves six hundred leagues

from their own country, surrounded by enemies, and separated from the rest of the world by broad rivers and lofty mountains.

At first, Artaxerxes, fearing the bravery of these terrible warriors, consented to allow them to cross his empire; but, soon repenting of his moderation, he drew their general, Clearchus, and his principal officers into a trap, and had them all killed by cowardly treachery. But such brave men as the Greeks knew how to surmount the difficulty in which they found themselves. They immediately selected new commanders, and put at their head an officer named Xenophon, who preserved the history of this campaign, to which he gave the name of the Retreat of the Ten Thousand, because fatigue and combats had reduced their army to this number.

You would hardly believe the frightful toil to which these ten thousand Greeks were subjected to reach again their native country. Sometimes they were stopped by the great rivers Tigris and Euphrates, which they could not cross because they had no boats; sometimes they were forced to take refuge in the mountains, where an infinite number of men and horses were buried in the snow, whilst the Persian army constantly pursued them, not allowing a day to pass without harassing them.

At last, these brave soldiers, overcome by fatigue and privations, reached again their beloved country.

The Retreat of the Ten Thousand taught the Greeks the secret of their strength, and the Persians that of their weakness. You will not forget how the former showed themselves superior to their enemies, who outnumbered them, perhaps, a hundred to one; and you will easily understand how, some years later, a handful of Greeks, led by the greatest captain of

his age, named Alexander, sufficed to overthrow the immense empire of the Persians.

The Vengeance of Parysatis

From 399 to 397 B.C.

In the mean time, Artaxerxes Mnemon, hardly delivered from the fear which his brother Cyrus had caused him, saw his family and his kingdom rent by new misfortunes. His mother, Parysatis, the most pitiless woman ever yet seen, with the exception of queen Amestris, revenged, in a terrible manner, the death of her beloved son.

One of her first cares was to take vengeance upon Mesabates, the domestic to whom Artaxerxes had given the order to carry the head and the hand of the young Cyrus into his palace at Cunaxa. Lest her son might oppose it, she employed a wicked stratagem to attain her ends.

She feigned to be reconciled to Artaxerxes, and, under the pretence of amusing him when he was alone, she often went to play with him some game in fashion at that time. It was certainly not at cards; for playing-cards were invented long after, for the amusement of a poor king of France, who had lost his reason.

Whatever it was, Artaxerxes and his mother playing against each other one evening, this princess proposed to him to put up as a prize some one of their domestics, at the choice of the winner. The king willingly consented. The wily woman at first pretended to lose; but, when Artaxerxes became much interested in the play, she skilfully took her revenge, and found herself mistress to choose the domestic she preferred among all those in the palace. She immediately designated Mesabates, whom the king gave up to her, without any suspicion; but, as soon as she had him in her power, she delivered him up to the

executioner, who burned him alive. Artaxerxes was very indignant; but the vindictive Parysatis only laughed at his anger, which she did not fear.

There remained but one more upon whom this wicked woman wished to wreak her vengeance, the queen Statira, wife of Artaxerxes, whom she mortally hated, because this princess had openly rejoiced at the defeat and destruction of Cyrus. She could not subject the queen, whom Artaxerxes tenderly loved, to the sad fate of the poor Mesabates; but she attained her end by employing another stratagem, none the less wicked.

In order to succeed, she appeared to forget her resentment against Statira, and showed her a thousand attentions. She continually invited her to feasts, where she simulated a true friendship for her. But as these two women mutually mistrusted each other, they always took care to eat of the same viands, to make sure that the dishes served were not poisoned. But, in spite of it, Parysatis knew how to elude these precautions of her enemy.

One day, a rare bird was served upon the table, which seemed prepared with particular care. Parysatis, cutting it in two with her knife, gave half to her daughter-in-law, and gayly ate the other half. But hardly had Statira tasted of it, when she fell in horrible convulsions, and expired immediately, with all the symptoms of poison.

Artaxerxes, overwhelmed with grief, did not, at first, suspect his mother of so horrible a crime; but one of her slaves revealed the frightful mystery to him, by telling him that she had, herself, by the order of Parysatis, rubbed with a violent poison one of the sides of the knife which Parysatis used to cut the bird of which Statira had accepted half.

Thus had this wicked princess exposed herself to a frightful death, to satisfy her hatred; and she had the satisfaction of surviving her enemy.

The king, on hearing this, in his anger ordered the cruel Parysatis to withdraw immediately to Babylon, forbidding her to leave it during the rest of her life; and he swore that he would never go near that city. As to the slave, she was condemned to the punishment for poisoners, which consisted in having her head crushed between two stones.

This great prince, who ruled over so many people, did not see, in all his empire, a single man so afflicted as himself; and perhaps he then regretted that he had not fallen, as his brother Cyrus did, on the battle-field of Cunaxa.

The Sons of Artaxerxes

From 362 to 336 B.C.

The king Artaxerxes Mnemon, following the custom of the Persians, had a great many wives. When he was old, he found himself the father of one hundred and fifty-three sons, all mutinous and impatient youths, the greater part of whom wished for the death of their elder brothers, in order to rule themselves.

Now the eldest of these princes was called Darius; and the old monarch, foreseeing that, at his death, his children would fight with each other for the possession of the crown, resolved to give him the title of king, and to allow him to wear the royal tiara. But this young prince was not contented with a brilliant head-dress and a useless title; and, in his impatience to reign, he formed a conspiracy against the life of his father, which he made fifty of his brothers join.

The poor king, having escaped death at the hands of his brother Cyrus, saw his old age threatened by the son whom he had chosen to rule after him. This frightful parricide was not accomplished; for, the plot having been discovered, the king showed himself as pitiless towards them, as they would have been to him, and ordered the whole fifty put to death, as they deserved.

Artaxerxes, already overwhelmed by so many, bitter sorrows, could not bear this new affliction, and died, weary of life, after a long and glorious reign, during which, however, misfortune never ceased to pursue him.

Among the sons who survived him was one called Ochus, either more deceitful or more lucky than the others.

He was the only witness of his father's death, and he succeeded in concealing this event from the whole empire for six months. During this time, he constantly gave orders to all the governors, in the name of the dead king, and did not allow the deception to be made known, until he had found an opportunity to do away with all the princes of the royal family, lest some of them might dispute the throne with him.

In order to do this, he collected, by a stratagem, into an interior court of his palace, not only the hundred and one remaining brothers, but, besides, his uncles, his cousins, and all his nephews, whom he had killed with arrows, as they could not defend themselves.

His own sister, Ocha, whom until that day he had appeared to love, having dared to deplore such a horrible act, was buried alive. One princess alone, of the royal family, called Sisygambis, was so fortunate as to save from this massacre her little son.

The first acts of Ochus announced to the Persians a sanguinary and terrible reign. What else could one expect from a prince who attained empire by murdering all his relatives? I must, however, tell you, that, in that country, the brothers, uncles, nephews, and cousins of the king, hardly knew each other, and consequently could not love each other.

Ochus, as soon as he came to the throne, found himself burdened with care. Egypt, that beautiful country which the kings of Persia had almost always possessed, since its seizure by the furious Cambyses, revolted again; and Ochus was forced to march against it with an army.

At that time, the kings of Persia could easily collect an immense number of soldiers. After the conquests of Cyrus and Cambyses, their power extended over almost all Asia; and the Greeks themselves sometimes helped them.

Ochus led a large army into Egypt. In a single battle near Pelusium, he scattered the Egyptians, and forced their king to take refuge in Ethiopia, where he must have perished, for he was never heard of again.

The conqueror made himself master of Memphis, and all the other cities, and exceeded even Cambyses in extravagance.

He overthrew temples, burned cities, murdered the priests, and finally surpassed all his other barbarities by having the bull Apis served, roasted, at a feast which he gave to his courtiers.

The bull Apis was certainly nothing but an animal; but you know the veneration of the Egyptians for it, and you will not be surprised at the indignation they felt at what seemed to them like a frightful sacrilege.

Among the generals of the Persian army was an officer named Bagoas, who was skilful and courageous. Bagoas was an Egyptian by birth; and, enraged at this sacrilege, he resolved to be revenged. This man had been one of the favorite servants of the king, and possessed his confidence, so that he found a way to poison him at a feast. When he was dead, Bagoas was not satisfied; but he caused his flesh to be devoured by the dogs, as Ochus had made his courtiers eat that of the bull Apis.

Besides this, he ordered knife-handles made from his bones, which he used at table, to show that the sacrilege had been punished where the crime was committed.

After this revenge, it would have been easy for Bagoas to put the crown on his own head. But he preferred making kings, to becoming one; and he selected, at first, the youngest son of Ochus, named Arses; but afterwards dissatisfied with his pupil, whom he judged capable of walking in the footsteps of his father, and learning that Sisygambis had saved her son from the

massacre of the royal family, he put this prince on the throne, and gave him the name of Darius Codomanus.

You have seen that three Persian kings bore the name of Darius. The first was Darius, the son of Hystaspes; the second, Darius Nothus, who succeeded his father, Artaxerxes, the Long-Handed; and, lastly, Darius Codomanus, chosen by Bagoas, and certainly the most unfortunate of all, since the Persian empire perished with him.

The Fall of Darius

From 336 to 323 B.C.

Darius III, or Codomanus, brought up in seclusion by his mother, Sisygambis, a wise and virtuous princess, to whom he twice owed his life, was worthy of his brilliant position. From his youth, he displayed great courage in war; and, when he came to the throne, his only desire was to make his people rich and happy. Unfortunately, he had not time to realize his good intentions; and we shall see how much better it would have been for him, if he had never accepted the throne.

The ambitious Bagoas, who had already made and unmade two kings, at first flattered himself that Darius would yield to his will, and that he alone should govern Persia, under the name of the prince. But he soon saw that the new king would not yield to his caprices; and he resolved to get rid of him by poison, as he had of Ochus.

Darius, more subtle than Ochus, discovered the plot; and, having changed cups with his minister, the latter, swallowed the poison which he had himself prepared. His death delivered Darius from a dangerous enemy; and no one could accuse him of ingratitude, since Bagoas was the author of his own destruction.

However, a peril greater than this threatened both Darius and his empire. The Greeks, that warlike people, whose valor had been proved by the first Darius and his son Xerxes, and whom the Retreat of the Ten Thousand had caused to be feared in all Asia, were again collected under one chief, and were bringing war into the kingdom of Persia. Their leader was

Alexander, king of Macedonia, whom they had surnamed the Great.

I shall not tell you here the marvellous history of this prince, who, with a handful of men, attacked the most powerful empire in the world, and overthrew it completely. After several bloody battles gained by the Greeks, the mother, the wife, and all the family of Darius, fell into the power of the conqueror; and the poor king himself was assassinated by a traitor named Bessus.

By these victories, Alexander the Great made himself master of the vast kingdom of the Persians; and he would have become the most powerful king that had ever existed, if a premature death had not arrested him in the midst of his good fortune.

Alexander lived but a few years longer than the unfortunate Darius, but the Persian empire never rose again; founded by the great Cyrus, it perished with Darius Codomanus.

When the first Assyrians gave themselves up to idleness and luxury, their power was crushed under Sardanapalus. Babylon perished with its king, Belshazzar, in the tumult of a feast; and Darius Codomanus could not defend his empire against the Macedonians, because the Persians, enervated by the customs of the Medes, did not at all resemble the companions of the great Cyrus, brought up on water-cresses and water.

So you will always see empires founded by courage and sobriety, and perishing through cowardice and intemperance.

Alexander's Successors

From 323 TO 305 B.C.

After Alexander died, it was found that there remained, of all his family, only one prince, almost imbecile, named Arrhidæus, whom they first put upon the throne, because he was brother of this great king. But, a few months afterwards, Roxana, Alexander's widow, bore a boy, who received the name of Alexander, and was made king with his uncle, Arrhidæus.

Now at the head of Alexander's army were several generals, who had shared his glory and his toils, and who were all men of courage. The most famous among them was Perdiccas, who, out of respect for the memory of his master, wished Arrhidæus and Alexander to occupy the throne, although they were quite incapable of governing. At the same time, the great ambition of Perdiccas, led him to hope that their authority would be merely nominal, and that he himself would be the true king.

Next, came Ptolemy, son of Lagus, whom Alexander loved like a brother, and to whom he had given the government of Egypt; then Antipater, Seleucus, Lysimachus, Antigonus, and Eumenes,—the latter, they say, the most honest man of all. Perdiccas at first gave governments to each one of these generals, to content them, hoping that they would be as faithful to their new masters, as they had been to Alexander himself. But he soon saw that he had been deceived, for all these ambitious men revolted at once; and, simple governors as they were, they wished, in their turn, to become kings of the countries which had been confided to them.

A great war followed, in which Perdiccas was massacred by his own soldiers; and, soon after, Eumenes, who had embraced with him the cause of the kings, Alexander and Arrhidæus, was put to death by Antigonus, his old friend.

Nobody dared to shed the blood of Alexander's family, until a woman first set the example. At that time, queen Olympias, mother of the conqueror, was still living. She was a proud and vindictive woman, who, instead of making every effort to re-establish peace in the empire, aggravated the public troubles by the inplacable hatred she bore to Arrhidæus. This imbecile prince, and his wife Eurydice, were murdered by her orders, with a hundred of their principal friends, so that the title of king of Macedonia might fall on the little Alexander. This cruel princess was soon punished for her crime; for, having fallen into the power of Cassander, son of Antipater, a ferocious and pitiless man, this chief, under pretext of avenging the murder of Arrhidæus, condemned her to death, and caused the prison where she was confined to be surrounded by two hundred soldiers, charged with murdering her. Two hundred soldiers to kill a feeble woman, you will say, was a useless number; but such was the respect these rude men cherished for the blood of Alexander, that not one of them dared raise his hand against her who had been his mother. Cassander was obliged to call upon the relations of those she had had killed with Arrhidæus, and they did not spare her.

Such was the end of this princess, who had been the daughter, sister, wife, and mother of kings, and whom no one could pity, for she had been pitiless towards her own family. Cassander, who seized at the same time Roxana and her son,

shut them up, at first, in a close prison, and, soon after had them strangled.

Thus, twelve months after the death of Alexander, there remained none of his family.

It was said, however, that, in the midst of such horrors, even those who exterminated Alexander's race, still trembled at the sight of the statue of this great man who had once been their master, and turned their eyes away from it in terror.

Though the unhappy Darius was soon avenged, Asia was for many years longer a prey to many calamities.

Cassander, Ptolemy, and all Alexander's old companions in arms, who also were ambitious to become kings seeing that the royal family was extinct, divided his immense heritage between them; and, Antigonus having become the most powerful of them all, disputes arose; his rivals united against him, and enriched themselves with his spoils.

The Colossus of Rhodes

From 305 to 301 B.C.

Antigonus had a son, named Demetrius, who was not less to be feared than his father. He was so valiant a warrior, that they had given him the surname of Poliorcetes, which in Greek means The Besieger of Cities.

At that time the inhabitants of a famous island called Rhodes, near Asia, who had formerly submitted themselves to Alexander, revolted after his death, and, having massacred, in one day, the whole Macedonian garrison, undertook to make themselves independent.

At first, they seemed to succeed in their design; but Demetrius, having ordered them to send him soldiers and money, they refused to obey, and forced this prince to come and besiege them with a great army, and a prodigious number of machines of war, which threw stones and arrows. The ancients were not acquainted with the use of fire-arms.

On their side, the Rhodians displayed incredible means of defence; but they would finally have been forced to yield, in spite of their courage, if Ptolemy had not come to their help. He obliged Demetrius to spare this unfortunate city, already nearly exhausted by an obstinate and bloody siege, which had lasted more than a year.

The Rhodians, grateful to Ptolemy, who had rescued them from so great peril, gave him the surname of Soter, which means Saviour; and they declared they would never take up arms against a prince who had rendered them so great a service.

As to Demetrius, The Taker of Cities, who was not, however, able to take this one, as his heart was too generous to

preserve the least resentment against the Rhodians, he presented them, before leaving their island, with all the machines of war which he had employed against them.

The inhabitants of Rhodes, attributing their deliverance to the protection of Apollo, god of the sun, to whom they had not ceased to offer sacrifices during the siege of their city, thought they would make use of these immense implements to raise a statue to their pretended divinity.

For this purpose, they sold to foreign merchants all the copper, iron, and other metals belonging to these machines; and, with the money they received, they built, at the entrance of their port, an enormous brazen image of the god, so high that the largest ships could pass, under full sail, between his legs, his two feet being placed on widely separated rocks.

This gigantic monument was more than a hundred feet high, and it is said that no man could clasp its ankle with his two arms. It is commonly called the Colossus of Rhodes, and, like the pyramids of Egypt, was reckoned as one of the wonders of the world. Twelve years were spent in building it, and it had stood but little more than sixty years, when a terrible earthquake, which destroyed several cities in Asia, visited the isle of Rhodes; and the famous Colossus was overturned and broken to pieces.

It remained in this state a great many years, when an unfriendly chief, who had seized Rhodes, sold the wreck of the Colossus to Jewish traders, who loaded nine hundred camels with the ruins.

Demetrius had hardly rejoined his father, Antigonus, in Persia, when these two princes learned that Ptolemy, Lysimachus, Seleucus, and Cassander were advancing against them with large armies. The father and son, at first, gained

some brilliant victories over these dreaded enemies; but, having met once more in a place in Asia Minor called Ipsus, a bloody battle took place. Antigonus lost his life; and Demetrius, unable to rally the remains of his army, was obliged to take flight, and abandon to his rivals the greatest part of the provinces he possessed.

This battle of Ipsus decided the fate of the empire of Alexander, which the conquerors divided into four kingdoms. Ptolemy remained master of Egypt, and was the first of a long line of kings; Seleucus took possession of the kingdom of Syria; and Lysimachus founded the kingdom of Thrace, which comprised a portion of Asia Minor. Cassander became king of Macedonia, as the great Alexander had been. Demetrius Poliorcetes alone, after having fought so bravely, found himself without kingdom, and almost without a shelter, as I shall tell you hereafter.

Demetrius and the Athenians

From 301 to 284 B.C.

Before his defeat at the battle of Ipsus, Demetrius Poliorcetes had been powerful, and feared by all the neighboring people. But he had only made good use of his fortune, lavishing kindness on many cities; and Athens, in Greece, had been particularly favored.

Demetrius, therefore, in setting out for the war, had left his wife and children with the Athenians, thinking that his family could nowhere be safer. But, as you know, he lost the battle of Ipsus, and was forced to take flight. As soon as the Athenians found they had nothing more to hope for from this fugitive prince, they were ungrateful enough to refuse him an entrance to their city, and even sent back to him his wife and children, under pretext that they would not be safe from his enemies, with whom they immediately hastened to ally themselves.

Demetrius felt keenly the ingratitude of this people whom he had loaded with kindness.

Some time afterwards, fate seemed to smile on this valiant prince. He conquered several of his enemies; and, having collected a new army, he marched against the Athenians, who prepared to defend themselves obstinately against their former benefactor.

He besieged their city, and, having surrounded it on all sides with his troops, reduced the inhabitants to all the horrors of famine, which they bore patiently for several months, in the hope that their new allies would not desert them in their peril. But a fleet, which Ptolemy Soter sent to help them, as he had helped the Rhodians, having been put to flight by Demetrius,

this prince immediately made himself master of Athens, which he seemed disposed to treat with extreme rigor.

The conqueror ordered all the heads of families to assemble on the public square, where he caused them to be surrounded by soldiers, holding drawn swords in their hands.

Great was the terror of these poor wretches, when they saw themselves thus threatened by a prince whom they had so unworthily treated. They did not doubt that they had been gathered together to be destroyed; and they preserved a mournful silence, although the pallor of their faces showed the agony they felt.

Demetrius, mounting his tribunal, instead of showing them an angry countenance, gently represented how ungrateful they had been to him; and, unable to restrain his tears at the sight of this frightened assembly, cried out, "I wish the terror you have felt, to be your only punishment; each one of you can now retire to his home. Whilst you have been here, my soldiers, by my orders, have carried into your houses the grain necessary to feed your families; and I shall be sorry if my victory should cost a tear to a single Athenian."

It would be difficult to describe the transports of joy which burst forth from those present, at hearing these words. Each one returned to his home, blessing the clemency of Demetrius, who, to fulfil his promise, caused a hundred thousand measures of wheat to be distributed among the Athenians.

This generous prince certainly deserved a prosperous career, as he knew so well how to pardon injuries. But fortune was not long faithful to him; and, after new combats, he fell into the hands of Seleucus, king of Syria.

Seleucus did not dare to kill him; and he contented himself with shutting him up in a chateau, where, although a captive,

he could enjoy the pleasures of life, and even hunt in a beautiful park. But so brave a warrior could not long endure such an idle, inglorious existence. At the end of three years, consumed with ennui and chagrin, he died of grief.

His son, Antigonus Gonatas, more fortunate than himself, drove the son of Cassander from the kingdom of Macedonia, which his posterity retained for many years; and, if Demetrius Poliorcetes did not have the good fortune to obtain a crown, of which he was worthy, his posterity, at least, was called to reign over a great kingdom.

The Library of Alexandria

From 301 to 283 B.C.

After the battle of Ipsus, which had strengthened Ptolemy Soter on the throne of Egypt, he thought of nothing but rendering this beautiful country flourishing. He succeeded in a few years, in spite of the wars he was forced to undertake.

This prince, warlike as he was, was fond of the sciences, and of learned men, because he knew that the most glorious actions of the people and the kings, would be soon forgotten, if there were no historians to preserve the recollection of them.

So he called around him the most learned men of his time, and collected in the city of Alexandria, which Alexander the Great had founded in Egypt, an immense quantity of books, with which he formed the first library that ever existed.

Printing had not then been invented; and they were obliged to write upon papyrus, a long and difficult process. These books were called manuscripts, which means books written by the hand.

This papyrus, thus written upon, was not made into volumes, like those we now use; but they were put into rolls, which were unrolled with great precaution.

The Alexandrian library, founded by Ptolemy Soter, was carried by his successors up to seven hundred thousand volumes, all manuscripts. Unfortunately, in a war which took place in Egypt, the greater part of this vast library was burnt by accident, and with it perished incredible treasures of science; an irreparable loss.

Afterwards, in this same city, another library was formed from the wreck of this, increased by manuscripts brought from

all parts of the world. You must read, elsewhere, the fate of this immense collection.

Ptolemy also built, near his capital, a celebrated tower, for a long time counted among the wonders of the world. It was very high, and built of white marble, on a little island called Pharos, near the shore; and each night they lighted fires, to serve as a guide to the navigators, who could see them at a great distance at sea. The word Pharos is sometimes used now for light-house.

Ptolemy, to immortalize himself by this useful work, wished to have his name inscribed, in large letters, on the very marble of the tower. But he was deceived in this by the architect who built it. This man, instead of engraving the king's name on the marble, made use of a coating, which the weather soon destroyed. Then, instead of the name of Ptolemy, only that of Sostrates, the Greek architect, was visible.

Sixteen kings succeeded, who all bore the name of Ptolemy, distinguished from each other by surnames. I shall not try to tell you their history here. It was customary among them to marry their sisters, in order to raise them to the throne; and the famous Cleopatra, queen of Egypt, was both wife and sister of the last two Ptolemies.

The Kingdom of the Seleucidæ

From 301 to 278 B.C.

While Ptolemy Soter was establishing his kingdom in Egypt, Seleucus, who had created the kingdom of Syria in Asia, was occupying himself with founding a great number of cities, of which several became afterwards celebrated. Antioch soon reached the highest degree of splendor, and there he established the seat of his empire.

Even in the midst of such occupations, Seleucus still preserved an old jealousy against Lysimachus, the king of Thrace, although they had been companions in war, and had united their armies, to overwhelm Demetrius Poliorcetes, before and after the battle of Ipsus.

These two princes marched against each other, with large armies, and met on a plain in Asia, called Cyropedion,—that is, the field of Cyrus,—where a bloody battle took place. Lysimachus lost his life in the struggle; and Seleucus, who took then the surname of Nicanor, or Victorious, made himself master of Thrace, Macedonia, and the provinces which Lysimachus possessed in Asia Minor, so that the kingdom of Syria extended from Greece to the river Indus. But Seleucus did not long enjoy the fruits of his triumph; for, a few years after, as he was offering a solemn sacrifice in the temple of the gods, he was stabbed at the foot of the altar itself, by a king of Egypt, called Ptolemy Ceraunus, or the Thunder, on account of the impetuosity of his character. The murderer soon proclaimed himself king of Thrace and Macedonia, and the empire of the Seleucidæ was limited to Asia.

But the ferocious Ceraunus had hardly reigned a year over his double kingdom, when some barbarians, called Gauls, led by a chief named Belgius, spread over Macedonia, and threatened all Greece with a formidable invasion. Ptolemy marched at the head of his army to arrest their ravages; but having been conquered, and taken by Belgius, that chief ordered his head to be cut off, and it was carried on the end of a lance into the camp of the barbarians.

The defeat of Ceraunus, and the approach of the Gauls, spread terror over all Greece, for there was no longer an army to oppose their ravages. But the eagerness of the barbarians for pillage became the cause of their destruction.

One of their leaders named Brennus, having succeeded Belgius, who was killed in a second combat against the Macedonians, had often heard of the immense treasures deposited in a temple where there was also a celebrated oracle, which people came to consult from all parts of the world. This temple was at Delphos, and you will read of it in Greek history.

Now, as Brennus drew near Delphos to pillage the riches of the temple, a violent storm suddenly arose, accompanied by such large hail, that a great number of his soldiers were immediately killed. At the same time a frightful earthquake loosened enormous rocks from the mountains, which, in their fall, crushed the barbarians by hundreds.

The fright and darkness threw such disorder into their ranks, that they fell upon and killed each other by mistake, thus completing their own destruction.

The Greeks did not fail to attribute to the divinity they worshipped the destruction of this army. Most of these men, finding themselves in an unknown country, obliged, during a

severe season, to sleep, at night, on ground covered with snow, died on the painful march.

A small number succeeded in crossing the Thracian Bosphorus, and settled in a province of Asia Minor, called Galatia ever after.

About this time, the descendants of the ancient king of Persia founded another kingdom, to which they gave the name of the empire of the Parthians, or the Fugitives. These Parthians became afterwards a powerful people.

The kingdom of Syria remained many years in the family of the Seleucidæ, which retained the throne until the Romans seized that part of Asia.

Aratus and the Achaians

From 278 to 243 B.C.

Whilst Asia Minor and Macedonia were ravaged by the successors of Alexander, almost as barbarous as the Gauls, a disunion took place among the Greek cities, which formed into as many little republics, or states where there were no kings. These cities became very jealous of each other.

After the death of Ptolemy Ceraunus, Antigonus Gonatas, son of Demetrius Poliorcetes, succeeded to the throne of Macedonia; and, as he had no less ambition and courage than his father, he hoped to profit by the discord reigning in Greece, to reduce it to submission.

You will see, by a map of ancient Greece, that this country, almost entirely surrounded by the sea, is divided into two unequal parts by a narrow tongue of land called the Isthmus of Corinth, on which was built a rich and populous city of that name. Each of these two parts had received a particular name. The first was Greece proper, containing Macedonia, Epirus, Attica, Ætolia, and several other provinces besides. The second bore the name of Peloponnesus, because the young Pelops, whom his father Tantalus had wickedly put to death, to try the divinity of the gods, had reigned there several years, after being recalled to life. Peloponnesus contained several distinct provinces, of which Achaia, Argolis, Messenia, and Laconia were the principal.

There were in Achaia a dozen little cities, whose inhabitants had sworn to defend each other against all who might come to attack them; and they called this union the Achaian League.

Sicyon, one of the oldest cities of the Peloponnesus, did not form a part of the Achaian League. It had been long governed by cruel and proud men, called by the Greeks the Tyrants. If a man seized the power in a city, without the consent of the people, his fellow-citizens gave him this title. Sicyon was under the rule of such a tyrant, when a generous citizen, named Clinias, drove him out, and the people gratefully chose Clinias for their chief magistrate.

Clinias, by his wisdom and virtue, had already begun to make his country happy and flourishing, when some wicked men, who regretted the tyrants, having killed him, with all his friends and relatives who fell into their hands, re-established the tyranny, and confided the government to one of their number called Nicocles, whom everybody hated, on account of his harsh conduct to the people.

The unfortunate Clinias had left a little boy called Aratus, who was only seven years old when his father was murdered. The poor child, not knowing where to hide from the soldiers of the tyrant who were hunting for him to kill him, ran through the city, and had the presence of mind to go to the own sister of Nicocles to beg for an asylum. He told her who he was; but the kind-hearted woman took pity on the orphan, and sent him secretly to a neighboring city, where he was carefully brought up by the friends of his father, and became in a few years a courageous and enterprising man.

Aratus could never forget the fate of his father, and he cherished a profound hatred for the tyrants of his country. When he was twenty years old, he resolved to take revenge on these cruel men, and, in his turn, to drive them from Sicyon.

A short time after, Aratus, having collected some old friends of his family, and some courageous young men, led

them secretly under the walls of Sicyon, surprised the city in the night, forced the tyrant Nicocles to seek safety in flight, and, before any of the partisans of this cruel man had time to take up arms, he caused it to be announced with a trumpet through the city, that "Aratus, son of Clinias, calls the citizens to liberty." At this news, all the people ran to look upon their deliverer; and Aratus had the happiness of seeing his country wrested from the yoke of the tyrants, without shedding a drop of blood.

Young as he was then, Aratus possessed rare prudence and great firmness. In order that Sicyon might be no more exposed to such misfortunes, he begged the Achaians to admit him into their league. The Achaians, full of admiration for his wisdom and courage, not believing it possible to find a better magistrate, chose him as leader of their league, and gave him the title of Strategus, meaning Leader in War. For thirty-five years he ruled over the Achaian cities at their own request.

Antigonus Gonatas succeeded, however, partly by artifice and partly by strength, in establishing his dominion over a portion of central Greece, made himself master of Corinth, and was threatening Argolis, when Aratus called upon the inhabitants to unite with the Achaians for defence in case of need. Most of the cities joyfully consented; and all that port of Greece, with the exception of Sparta and Laconia, declared itself against the king of Macedonia.

There was on the Isthmus of Corinth a strong castle, built on a high mountain which overlooked the city. It was called the Acro-Corinthus; that is, the citadel of Corinth. Antigonus commonly kept a strong garrison in it, by means of which he could, at his pleasure, keep the Greeks of the Peloponnesus from communicating by land with the rest of Greece. Aratus,

first of all, turned his attention to this formidable post, thinking that the loss of the Acro-Corinthus would be the signal for the expulsion of the king of Macedonia, to whom no city was willing to submit.

But the taking of this citadel was a very difficult enterprise; for no one could reach the summit of the mount where it was built, except by climbing almost inaccessible rocks. Aratus would not allow himself to be rebuffed by the difficulties of the undertaking, and he tried to obtain by stratagem what he could not hope to get by strength. Among the soldiers of the garrison of the Acro-Corinthus, was a Macedonian named Diocles, a covetous and contemptible man, who secretly made a proposition to Aratus to show him, in consideration of a large sum of money, a footpath by which it would be easy to reach and seize the citadel.

Aratus joyfully accepted the proposition of the traitor; and, as he had not money enough at his disposal to satisfy the man's demands, he secretly sold all the gold vessels he possessed, as well as his wife's jewels; and the man engaged to lead him to the place the next night, with a body of Achaian soldiers.

A complete success was the reward of the generous Aratus. Diocles, under cover of darkness, led him to the citadel by a footpath so narrow, that the hundred soldiers who followed him could march only one by one. As soon as they had entered, profiting by the surprise of the Macedonians, they killed all who tried to defend themselves, and forced the rest to fly.

Great was the anger of Antigonus Gonatas, when he learned, at one time, that the Acro-Corinthus, the true key to the Peloponnesus, had fallen into the power of his enemies; and that several cities of Attica, that fear had retained under his rule until then, were ready to enter into the Achaian League,

which became more powerful each day. This unexpected reverse was a fatal blow to the ambitious prince, who fell sick and died when he was trying to raise new enemies against the Achaians.

Aratus, delivered by this event from his most dreaded adversary, pursued the enfranchisement of Peloponnesus, calling the people of Greece to liberty, as he had formerly called those of Sicyon. He destroyed successively all the tyrants the Macedonians had established in the different cities; and this title became so odious to all the Greeks, that several of those who still exercised tyranny, renounced the power they had usurped, and returned to the class of simple citizens.

About this time, there arrived at Corinth, for the first time, some Roman ambassadors, charged with soliciting the help of the Achaians against some pirates, whose vessels infested the neighboring seas. The name of Rome was then hardly known in Greece; and they were far from thinking that these strangers would become, in less than a hundred years, the masters of Greece, and later, of the whole world.

The Story of the Chosen People

by

H.A. Guerber

Preface

In this little volume the author has tried to give a consecutive story of the Jews, or Chosen People, as objectively as the Stories of the Greeks and of the Romans, with which it forms a series. The narrative has been written in the simplest style, so as to enable even the youngest child of the third or fourth reader grade to understand it.

Not the least attempt has been made to dwell upon the strictly religious side of the subject, for, owing to the mixed population in our large cities and schools, such an attempt would be impracticable. The sole aim of this very elementary work is to familiarize children, be they of Jewish, Protestant, Roman Catholic, or Freethinker parentage, with the outline of the story contained in the Old Testament, so that they can understand the allusions which appear even in juvenile literature, and can look with intelligent appreciation upon the reproductions of works of art which are now to be found in nearly all our books and magazines.

I have found that, when told to young children, these historical narratives prove a source of much interest, and that the elementary knowledge then obtained remains so clear and vivid that even when they are grown up, and able to enter into the subject more thoroughly, the impression of the story as first heard is the one which is most permanent.

While it may seem that, with all the facilities which the country affords to rich and poor alike, such instruction in schools would be superfluous, the fact remains that, with the exception of a few well-known stories, the children have no idea of the contents of the Old Testament. This lack of general

information on the subject is often a great drawback to teachers in the course of their instruction, as references are constantly made to the Bible.

Although this is a juvenile history of the Jews, it has not been written without much research; and, in order to make it as brief, comprehensive, and accurate as possible, many authorities beside the Bible, Josephus, and the Bible dictionaries, have been consulted.

It is hoped that an inkling of the story of the Jews will stimulate the children's interest, will early imbue them with a taste for history, and will give them the desire to gain further and more complete information on the subject when they grow older.

The Tower of Babel

The Bible tells us that the descendants of Noah's sons spread, in the course of time, all over the face of the earth. In a few words it says that Japheth's race included all the Gentiles (people who were not Jews). One of the descendants of Ham was Nimrod, a mighty hunter and king, and the founder of a great city called Bab'y-lon. Some of Nimrod's descendants built the city of Nin'e-veh also, and formed the great As-syr'i-an Empire.

The only one of Noah's sons whose story is given at length in the Bible, is Shem, the ancestor of the Jewish race. In his days "the whole earth was of one language, and of one speech," and we are told that the people generally wandered about in search of good pasture for their large flocks, which were their chief possession.

Journeying thus from place to place, Shem's descendants came at last to the plain of Shi'nar, where Nimrod lived. Here the soil was mostly clay, so the people soon learned to make bricks, and to use them for building houses.

There were plenty of building materials on the plain of Shinar, so the people soon fancied that it would be a fine thing to join Nimrod and found a world-wide empire, with a great city as its capital. Nimrod, it seems, was at the head of this plan, and greatly encouraged them. He hoped that if all the people were banded together, he would be able to prevent them from being scattered all over the face of the world, as God had said he intended to have them.

The work of building was therefore begun, and by Nimrod's orders a huge tower was erected near the new city.

But "the Lord came down to see the city and the tower, which the children of men builded;" and it did not please him. To defeat their plans, God confused the tongues of the builders, so that they spoke different languages; and then, as they could no longer understand one another's speech, the men left off working together.

People who do not understand one another are sure to quarrel, and before long the builders went off in different directions, in search of new homes, where they could speak their own language in peace. Thus Nimrod's plan to found a great empire came to an end, and the Tower of Ba'bel (confusion) was never completed.

Terah, the father of Abraham, was the eighth in direct descent from Shem, son of Noah. Besides Abraham, he had two other sons, Na'hor and Ha'ran, who were probably much older than Abraham. The brothers all married, and for some time dwelt in the ancient city of Ur; but before long God called to Abraham, and bade him go into a new land which would be given to him. In obedience to this call, the whole family set out, and made their home east of the Eu-phra'tes River, where Terah died when Abraham was seventy-five years old.

Nahor, the oldest living son of Terah, claimed the land where they had settled as his inheritance; and, after a second call from God, Abraham continued his journey, traveling southward with his wife Sa'rah, and his nephew Lot. They were going in search of the land promised by God, for Abraham fully trusted in these words which the Lord had spoken:

"I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

These last words, as you see, contained a new promise of a Redeemer, like the one made to Adam, and God now added the information that this Redeemer would bless even the Gentiles, that is to say, the people who did not belong to the Chosen Race.

Abraham now crossed the Euphrates River, and hence received the name of He'brew, which is borne by his descendants, and which means "the man who has crossed the river." He passed through the desert, crossed the river Jor'dan, and entered the Holy Land, where he rested for a while.

From there Abraham wandered on in search of pasture, until he came at last to the rich land of Egypt. Here he was in a strange country, among a strange people. He was afraid they would kill him to obtain possession of Sarah, his wife, so he coaxed her to say that she was only his sister.

The people, thinking that Sarah was an unmarried woman, carried her off to the king's palace to be his wife; but, as soon as she arrived there, a terrible disease visited all the family of the king. At first no one knew the cause of this sickness, but finally the king found out that it had been sent to punish him for trying to take another man's wife.

He had no intention of doing so wicked a thing, so he at once sent Sarah back to her husband, and reproved Abraham for deceiving him. He also bade Abraham leave the country, saying that he did not wish to keep a man who had brought him nothing but harm.

Thus forced to wander on, Abraham traveled northward until he came to Beth'el, in the Holy Land, where he had once rested, and where he rebuilt the altar to worship God.

His cattle had now become so numerous that it was very hard indeed to find pasture enough for all his flocks. One day a

quarrel arose between the shepherds of Abraham and those of Lot; and, to prevent a renewal of it, the uncle and nephew decided to part. As Lot was the son of an elder brother, Abraham gave him the first choice; and he passed down the valley to the eastward, where the pasture seemed the best. Then Abraham, still trusting in the promises of God, moved a little way towards the south, where he again rested and built another altar.

The Birth of Ishmael

After parting from his uncle, Lot went down into the fertile valley of the lower Jordan, and pitched his tents near the five rich cities of the plain, among which were Sodom and Gomorrah. These cities were ruled by five kings, and in them dwelt men who were as wicked as wicked could be.

Lot, who was a good man, did not enjoy the neighborhood of these wicked people; but, instead of going away, he lingered there until a war broke out between the five cities and a powerful king who claimed tribute from them.

A battle was fought, in which the Kings of Sodom and Gomorrah were killed. Their cities were then robbed; and Lot, being found on their lands, was carried off into captivity with all the rest of the people, and all his possessions were taken away from him.

The news of Lot's peril was brought to Abraham. As soon as he heard it, he hastily gathered together the three hundred and eighteen men of his household, and, accompanied by the Amorites, his friends, he hurried off to rescue his unlucky nephew.

This small troop overtook the victors near the sources of the Jordan. There, by cleverly dividing his forces, and surprising the enemy in the middle of the night, Abraham managed not only to beat them, but to free Lot and to get back all the spoil they had taken.

The little army then came home in triumph, and Abraham gave back the spoil to the new King of Sodom. He kept only the tenth part for the King of Salem, a priest of the Lord, who came to meet him, and gave him bread and wine, and blessed him.

Abraham, having thus saved Lot from the hands of his enemies, went home, where he was soon made happy by a vision from God. This time the Lord repeated all the promises he had already made, and told Abraham that he would have a son. Then pointing upward, God said that Abraham's descendants would be as many as the stars shining in the blue sky above them.

Now the patriarch was over eighty years old, and had already waited many years in vain for the son whom God had promised him, but yet he believed these words. He also listened respectfully while God foretold that the Hebrews would be treated as slaves in a foreign land for four hundred years, but would finally escape, with larger numbers and greater riches, to take possession of the promised land.

Another time, God bade Abraham practice a religious rite called circumcision. This rite was observed by all the Jews after that, and it finally became the mark of the Hebrew nation, just as baptism is the outward sign of a Christian.

Abraham's faith in God's promises was tried by another long period of waiting. His wife Sarah became so sure that God would never give her a son that she finally persuaded her husband to accept Hagar, her servant, as a second wife. It was not at all unusual in those days for a man to have several wives at the same time; and you will soon see that more than one of the patriarchs followed this custom.

Hagar, Abraham's new wife, soon became the mother of a son called Ishmael, whose birth was foretold by an angel. The messenger of God came to Hagar one day, and told her that this child would be "a wild man;" and it is said that he became in time the ancestor of a wandering race which we now call Bedouins, or Arabs.

Fourteen years after the birth of Ishmael, three strangers came to Abraham's tent; and it is supposed that they must have been angels. After they had rested and eaten, these angels told Abraham that Sarah would have a son. The patriarch believed them, for he had not lost faith in God's promise even yet; but Sarah, who was standing behind the door, laughed at them.

The messengers reproved her for doubting their words, and set out with Abraham toward the cities of the plain. On their way, one of these strangers told Abraham that God was weary of the wickedness of the people in Sodom and Gomorrah, and was about to destroy them in punishment for their sins.

Abraham was horrified when he heard this, and he humbly asked whether God would destroy the guilty cities if fifty good persons could be found within them. When told that fifty good men would save the towns, Abraham inquired whether forty, thirty, twenty, or even ten righteous men would not be enough, and each time the stranger answered, "Yes."

It was so unlikely that even ten righteous men should be found there that Abraham sadly returned to his tent, while his visitors passed on to the city of Sodom, to find out whether the people were really all wicked, and whether they deserved death.

The Birth of Isaac

While Abraham had been pleading with one of the strangers to spare the wicked cities, the two others had gone ahead, and had entered the city of Sodom. Lot, the only good man in the whole place, invited them into his house to spend the night.

But the people of Sodom, hearing that there were strangers at his house, rushed there, and asked that these should be delivered up, so that they might be put to the torture. Lot refused to give up his guests, and began to defend them with all his might.

The Sodomites, however, were so great in number that Lot would not have been able to resist them had not the strangers struck them with sudden blindness. The rude men now groped their way helplessly through the streets, little suspecting that this attempt to injure strangers had settled their own fate.

As Lot was a very good man, and had not sinned, the strangers now bade him leave the city, with his wife and daughters and all that he had. In hopes of saving some of the people from the threatened ruin, Lot lingered there, until the angels led him out with his wife and daughters, bidding them all not to look behind them, but to escape to the mountains lest they should be burned.

Lot and his daughters obeyed, and did not turn their heads when the fire from heaven rained down upon the cities, and destroyed them and their inhabitants. But Lot's wife, prompted by curiosity, disobeyed. In punishment, she was changed into a pillar of salt.

The place once occupied by these flourishing cities is now covered by the waters of the Dead Sea, and the land all around there is very barren, and shows signs of having once been a prey to a raging fire. Near there are great mountains of rock salt, and the waters of the Dead Sea are so briny and bitter that no fish can live in them.

Although Lot had been saved from destruction, he too sinned greatly soon after this, and gave way to the vice of drunkenness. In punishment for this sin, God made him the ancestor of two wild races, the Ammonites and the Moabites, who took these names from Ammon and Moab, the sons of Lot's two daughters. These two tribes, as you will see later, were destined to cause many sufferings to the Jews.

After staying a long while at his home, where the three strangers had visited him, Abraham again moved toward the southern boundary of the Holy Land, and came to a place called Beersheba. Here lived the Philistines, who were then ruled by a king named Abimelech. Abraham, fearing him, again declared that Sarah was his sister; so the king thought that he would marry her.

Warned by God in a dream that Sarah was Abraham's wife, Abimelech gave her back to the patriarch, and added many gifts of great value. When Abraham saw how generous the heathen were, he regretted that he had deceived them, and prayed God to bless them. This prayer was soon granted, and the Philistines began to enjoy great prosperity.

It was during Abraham's sojourn at Beersheba that his faith in God's promises was rewarded; for Sarah bore him a son named Isaac. When this child was old enough to be weaned, Sarah saw Ishmael, the son of Hagar, mocking him. In her anger she begged Abraham to send mother and son both away.

He was at first unwilling to do so, but God comforted him with the promise that Ishmael would be the ancestor of a mighty nation.

Provided with a scanty supply of food and a skin bottle full of water, Hagar and Ishmael were sent away from Abraham's tent, and wandered out into the desert. Here their provisions soon gave out, and Hagar, seeing no hope of saving the life of her son, left him lying under one of the desert shrubs, and went off a little distance because she could not bear to see him die.

But God had not forgotten his promise. While Hagar was weeping in despair, an angel bade her fear nothing, repeated the promise that her son Ishmael should be the ancestor of a mighty people, and then pointed out a well whence she might draw water to refresh him. Thus saved from death, Ishmael grew and dwelt in the wilderness, and finally took a wife from the land of Egypt.

Abraham's Sacrifice

Abraham had already undergone many trials, and his faith had been tested in many ways; but the greatest test was made when Isaac, his son, was about twenty years of age. God now asked him to offer up this son, upon whom rested all his hopes.

In those days a man had the right of life and death over his wife and children, and human sacrifices were not uncommon. Abraham's conscience, therefore, did not trouble him about killing Isaac in this way; but what almost broke his heart was that he was called upon to give up the dearest thing he had on earth, the son for whom he had waited so long.

In spite of his grief, he nevertheless prepared to obey the command which he had received; and he "took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac, his son." The young man strode ahead without any fear, while his aged father slowly followed him up the mountain, carrying the fire, and also the knife which was to be used for the sacrifice.

Isaac, who had often gone with his father in such journeys, soon noticed something unusual, and said: "Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

His father's heart must have been wrung with anguish at this innocent question; but his faith in God made him strong, and prompted the answer which he now gave to Isaac: "God will provide."

When they came up on the mountain, and the wood had been properly laid upon the altar, Isaac allowed himself to be bound and placed upon it. The last moment had come, and Abraham "took the knife to slay his son."

But an angel of the Lord stopped him, crying: "Abraham, Abraham, lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him; for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me."

Looking up at these welcome words, Abraham saw a ram in the thicket near him, and, as God commanded, he now took it and offered it up in sacrifice instead of his son. The Lord had provided a victim, and the patriarch's heart overflowed with joy as he gave thanks with Isaac beside him.

Then the angel of the Lord spoke again, repeating the promise which had already been made to Abraham about his seed, or descendants: "Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son . . . in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven and as the sand which is upon the seashore; . . . and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my voice."

The spot where Isaac was thus nearly sacrificed in obedience to God's command, was later the site of the Temple of Jerusalem, of which you will hear much. Abraham now said that it should have for its name the Hebrew words meaning "the Lord will provide." Then he joyfully wended his way down the mountain, with the son who had been given back to him from the dead, and returned to his home at Beersheba.

While he was still living there, Abraham heard of the death of his brother Nahor, who left twelve sons. A few years later Sarah died, when she was one hundred and twenty-seven years old. To bury her, Abraham bought the cave of Machpelah, and thus his first real possession in the promised land was a family tomb.

After Sarah had died, Abraham's chief care seems to have been to find a good wife for Isaac, his son. As he did not wish the young man to marry any of the heathen women around there, he finally bade Eliezer, his faithful steward, journey to Mesopotamia, where his kinsmen still lived, and bring back a wife from there.

When Eliezer reached the country where the sons of Nahor dwelt, he sat down by a well. He was perplexed and did not know how to make a good choice. In his trouble he began to pray with great fervor, and said:

"O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee send me good speed this day, and show kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold, I stand here by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water; and let it come to pass that the damsel to whom I shall say, 'Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink;' and she shall say, 'Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also,' let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shown kindness unto my master."

The Mess of Pottage

In answer to this fervent prayer, Eliezer, the servant of Abraham, soon saw the girls come out of the city with their great water jars; and when he asked them for a drink, Rebecca, the granddaughter of Nahor, gave him water and slaked the thirst of his camels also.

Eliezer felt sure that this was the maiden whom God intended for Isaac; so he now made known his errand, and offered her the trinkets which he had brought with him. Rebecca accepted them, and led him to her brother Laban, who gave his consent to the marriage, and on the next day Eliezer bore her away.

Isaac was out in the fields at eventide, when he saw the returning caravan. He went eagerly forward to welcome his unknown bride, and then led her unto Sarah's tent; and for the first time he felt comforted for his mother's loss. Isaac was about forty years of age when he married Rebecca, but Abraham was then still hale and hearty, and shortly after this he married a new wife called Keturah.

Abraham and Keturah had many children, but the father sent them all eastward, after giving them large flocks. He did not wish them to stay near his home, lest they should some day lay claim to the inheritance which was intended for Isaac only.

Ten years after Isaac's marriage, Shem, the son of Noah, died, and ten years after that Rebecca bore twin sons, Esau (the hairy) and Jacob (the supplanter). These two boys quarreled even during infancy, and this was the first sign of the enmity that was to exist between the two nations which sprang from them, the Israelites and the Edomites.

The twin brothers were as different in looks as in character. Esau was rough, hairy, and violent-tempered, and loved the excitement of the chase; but Jacob was handsome, smooth-faced, and gentle, and quietly watched his flocks of sheep.

The brothers were so unlike that it is no wonder they did not love each other; but their natural dislike was increased by their parents, who, instead of treating them alike, had each a favorite. Isaac loved Esau most, because he ate of this son's venison, but Rebecca preferred the gentle Jacob.

The brothers' quarrels, however, were not very serious at first, and Isaac paid no heed to them. His attention was all taken up by his father, Abraham, who fell sick at about this time. Soon after, the old patriarch died at the age of one hundred and seventy-five, and was laid to rest in the cave of Machpelah by his two sons Isaac and Ishmael.

After Abraham's death, Isaac was the head of the Chosen Race, and we read in the Bible that God blessed him.

Isaac's twin sons were about thirty-two years old, when Esau one day came back from the hunt almost famished, and found Jacob with a smoking dish of lentil pottage.

In those days it was not easy to get food at a moment's notice, and Esau was so hungry that he eagerly offered Jacob his birthright, or place as eldest son, in exchange for the pottage. Jacob accepted, and thus, although he was the younger son, he became his father's heir, and could claim as his share the promised blessing that "in his seed all families of the earth should be blessed."

Ever since then, when any one sells anything very precious for a mere trifle, people are apt to say, "He has sold his birthright for a mess of pottage." This is because they remember how Esau gave up the hope of being the ancestor of

the promised Redeemer, simply that he might satisfy the cravings of his hunger.

At first Isaac knew nothing of this exchange, but Rebecca was well aware of it. Shortly after the bargain had been made, a famine came, and Isaac was forced to leave home, and to wander southward, into the territory of the Philistines.

He was about to go farther still, and even journey down into Egypt, when God appeared to him, bade him remain where he was, and solemnly renewed all the promises that he had made to Abraham.

While Isaac was dwelling here among the Philistines, he repeated the mistake twice made by his father. When asked who Rebecca was, he replied: "She is my sister." This falsehood was soon found out by the Philistine king, but he nevertheless allowed Isaac to stay in his land.

When the Philistines saw how very prosperous Isaac was, they became jealous of him and said: "Go from us, for thou art much mightier than we." Then, seeing that he did not depart, they tried to drive him away, by claiming in turn each new well that he dug. Isaac was almost in despair, but he finally made a treaty with them and thus obtained peace.

Jacob's Ladder

Isaac was more than one hundred years old, and was nearly blind, when he made up his mind to give his solemn blessing to his heir. This ceremony would make known to all men that this was the son chosen to continue the race which was in time to give birth to the Redeemer.

Isaac intended to give his blessing to Esau, and bade him prepare a venison feast for the occasion. While Esau was away hunting, Rebecca made up her mind to secure the birthright for her favorite Jacob; for she knew that her eldest son had given it up of his own free will.

As she did not dare claim it openly, she tried a fraud. Jacob's smooth hands and arms were covered with hairy goat skin, so that they would seem like his brother's to the touch, and a savory stew was prepared. Isaac, believing that it was Esau whom he touched, then gave to Jacob his solemn blessing before Esau came home from the chase.

Esau, upon entering the tent, found out what had been done, and realized then for the first time how great was his loss. Falling at his father's feet, he cried wildly, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!"

But it was too late. The solemn blessing, once given, could not be recalled. Isaac could not give back to Esau the first place, forfeited by weakness; nor could he make Esau the ancestor of the Messiah. Nevertheless, the father blessed his elder son also, and promised him much worldly prosperity to take the place of the greater blessing which he had lost forever.

Now, although it was all his own fault, Esau could not forgive Jacob for taking his place; and he secretly made up his

mind to kill his brother as soon as Isaac had passed away. Rebecca found out these evil intentions; and, to prevent any harm to Jacob, she sent him to visit her brother Laban in Mesopotamia, under the pretext of finding a wife among the daughters of his own race.

Esau was very angry when he heard that Jacob was out of reach, and about to marry in a way that would please his father so greatly. To win back his father's favor, Esau sent away his heathen wives, and married a daughter of Ishmael; but he did not give up all hopes of killing Jacob, and getting back his inheritance.

Jacob, in the mean while, had journeyed on; and when night overtook him he lay down upon the hard ground, with a stone for a pillow. While he was slumbering thus, he had a marvelous dream, and fancied that he saw a great ladder leading from earth to heaven.

On this ladder were "the angels of God ascending and descending," and "the Lord stood above it and said: 'I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac.'" Then God promised that he would give the land to Jacob's descendants, and would be with him and take care of him wherever he went.

When Jacob awoke, he piled up in the form of a rude altar the stones near where he lay. Then he poured oil upon them to consecrate them, and called the spot Bethel (the house of God), before he continued his journey.

Jacob was about seventy years old when he came to Mesopotamia, and sat down near the selfsame well where Eliezer had found his mother, Rebecca. Here Jacob first saw Rachel, Laban's daughter, who invited him into her father's house, where he tarried for a month as a guest.

During this month, Jacob daily saw Rachel, and learned to love her very dearly; and he soon entered into an agreement with Laban whereby he would obtain her hand in marriage at the end of seven years, in exchange for his faithful services as shepherd.

Such was the love which Jacob felt for Rachel that these seven years of servitude "seemed unto him but a few days." As soon as they were ended, however, he went to seek Laban, and eagerly claimed his bride.

Laban prepared for the wedding, but, instead of giving up Rachel, he married Jacob to his eldest daughter, Leah. The bride was so closely veiled during the ceremony that Jacob did not find out the fraud until it was too late. He was very angry indeed at this deception, and refused to be pacified until Laban promised to give him Rachel also; but this was on condition that Jacob should continue to serve his father-in-law for another term of seven years.

As in those days it was quite customary to have several wives at once, Jacob consented, and soon married Rachel. Then, at the request of Rachel and Leah, he also married their handmaidens. During the seven years which followed, Leah and the two servants gave birth to ten sons, Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, and Asher. Leah also had a daughter named Dinah; but Rachel, Jacob's favorite wife, had no children at all.

Jacob's Return Home

As we have seen, Rachel was the only one of Jacob's wives who had no children. She was much grieved to have no son, because every Jewish woman was anxious to have one, as he might be the Redeemer promised in the Garden of Eden. Rachel mourned greatly, but it was only when the second term of Jacob's servitude was near its end that she became the mother of Joseph.

As this son was the child of his favorite wife, Jacob loved him more than all the others; and, immediately after his birth, the father tried to leave Laban, and become his own master once more. But Laban would not let him go, and promised that if he would only serve for a third term of seven years, he should receive a certain part of the produce of the flocks.

Jacob consented, and during these seven years his herds prospered remarkably well. The time was nearly at an end, when he was favored by a vision, in which he was told to go back to the place where he was born, with his wives, children, and all the wealth that he had won.

As he feared that Laban would again try to detain him, Jacob got ready in secret, and stole away during the night. Thus, twenty years after he had left his father, he again crossed the desert, and came to the Holy Land.

Laban was very much displeased when he found that Jacob was gone. In his anger he set out to pursue his son-in-law, and soon overtook him. Then he reproached Jacob for going away without taking leave of him, and asked him to give back the household gods, which Rachel had carried off.

Although Laban was at first so angry, he parted peacefully with Jacob, because God warned him not to do his servant any harm. While still on the homeward journey, Jacob had another vision, and saw the angels camping around him, to keep him from all harm.

As he drew near home, his memory of the past grew clearer, and he remembered that he had parted from his brother Esau in anger. He now began to fear that his brother might still wish to kill him, and, hoping to disarm Esau's wrath, he sent a messenger to say that he was coming.

This man soon came back and said that Esau was coming to meet his brother, with an escort of four hundred fighting men. Jacob was terrified when he heard this. In his distress he called to God for help, and then, knowing that a man who wishes aid should exert himself, he got ready to meet the coming danger.

First, he sent a princely present of fine cattle to Esau; and then he placed his caravan so that Rachel and his best-loved child should be in the rear, and thus run less risk in case he was obliged to fight. Thus the caravan slowly passed over the ford of a little river; and Jacob, after seeing the people all cross in safety, staid near the edge of the stream.

Here he met a stranger, who fell upon him and wrestled with him all night. It was only near morning that Jacob found out that his opponent was an angel; for the stranger touched the sinews of one of Jacob's thighs and lamed him for life.

In spite of this bodily injury, Jacob clung fast to the angel, crying: "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." Thanks to his perseverance, he obtained the blessing he wanted, and the angel told him that he would henceforth be called Israel, or soldier of God.

Limping onward, Jacob soon overtook the caravan. Then, hastening to the head of it, he ran forward to meet his brother, Esau, whose anger he hoped to dispel by falling down upon his face before him, and begging his pardon.

Esau, however, had entirely forgotten his wrath. He put his arms around his brother's neck, kissed him, and proposed that they should always live side by side. Jacob was very glad to be on good terms with Esau once more, but he refused this kind offer, because he knew that their servants would never agree.

This meeting over, Jacob continued his journey, passed over the Jordan, and came to Shechem, where he bought a piece of land. Here he pitched his tents, and built an altar to God, and here his daughter Dinah was carried off by the Shechemites.

Simeon and Levi, two of Jacob's sons, were anxious to punish these men for robbing them of their only sister. In doing so, however, they behaved so cruelly that Jacob was angry with them, and said that they had forfeited their right to inherit the blessing which he had received from his father Isaac.

Joseph's Dreams

Jacob did not remain very long at Shechem, but soon passed on to Bethel, where he renewed his covenant with God. While on a journey from this place, his beloved wife Rachel died, after giving birth to a second son, named Benjamin. Rachel was buried near Bethlehem, and over her grave still rises a rude dome, which is called her tomb, and is often visited by Jews, Christians, and Mussulmans.

At the next resting place, Reuben, Jacob's oldest son, forfeited his birthright by doing wrong; and soon afterwards the caravan reached Isaac's encampment. Here they found the patriarch still alive, although he was now one hundred and sixty-five years old; and here Jacob sojourned until his father's death, fifteen years later.

Jacob and Esau buried their father, Isaac, in the cave of Machpelah, where Abraham, Sarah, and Rebecca already lay; and then Esau journeyed away to seek pasture for his flocks. His family is little mentioned in the Bible, but we are told that his descendants were the Edomites, who became the enemies of the Chosen Race.

Jacob went on dwelling in the Land of Canaan, and because he "loved Joseph more than all his children," he was very partial to him. To show his affection, he gave this favorite child a princely robe of many colors.

When Jacob's other sons saw that their father preferred Joseph, they grew angry and envious. These wicked feelings grew worse when Joseph told about two dreams which he had had, and which were as follows:

In the first dream he thought he was in the midst of a harvest field, where he and his brothers were binding grain, and he said that he saw their sheaves bow down and do homage to his, which alone stood boldly upright. In the second dream, "the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance" to him.

These dreams were, according to the custom of the time, considered as signs of the future; and they were thought to mean that Joseph would rule over his brothers.

The jealousy of the elder brothers was made still greater by this way of interpreting the dreams; and they began to plot how to get rid of Joseph. They soon had a chance to do what they wished; for, before long, Jacob sent Joseph alone to Shechem, to inquire how his sons and flocks were getting along there.

The brothers recognized Joseph from afar by his bright robe, and hastily consulted together how they might kill him. Reuben alone wished to save Joseph, but he did not dare oppose his brothers openly; so he now suggested that instead of shedding the lad's blood it would be better to put him into an empty cistern near by.

The wicked brothers agreed, and after taking off Joseph's coat of many colors, they lowered the poor boy into the cistern, whence he could not escape without aid. Then they stained his colorful garment with the blood of a kid, and sent it back to Jacob, who thought that his favorite son had been devoured by the wild beasts, and bitterly mourned his loss.

Before Reuben could carry out his kind intentions, and release Joseph from the empty cistern, the other brothers sold him to a caravan of passing merchants for twenty pieces of silver; and when Reuben came back, after a short absence,

Joseph was already well on his way to Egypt, where he was to be sold as a slave.

We are told very little about the after lives of the older sons of Jacob, although they married and had many children. The story now follows Joseph into Egypt, where he became the slave of Potiphar, an officer at the king's court. Here Joseph worked so faithfully that he was soon promoted to the office of steward, or overseer of all the slaves of the household.

He had not forgotten his father's teachings during this sojourn in a heathen land, and when Potiphar's wife tempted him to do wrong, he refused to listen to her. This made her so angry that she had him sent to prison, where, in due time, Joseph became the jailer's assistant.

Pharaoh's Dreams

In the course of his daily work in the prison, Joseph often talked with the captives, and thus he once heard the king's baker tell a strange dream. This man said that as he was passing along with three baskets of freshly baked loaves on his head, the birds of heaven swooped down and ate them up.

As the baker seemed anxious to have an explanation of his dream, Joseph told him that the three baskets stood for three days; and that within this time he would be hanged, and his body left a prey to the birds of the air.

The king's chief cupbearer also related a dream, in which he fancied that he pressed the juice of the grapes from three branches into the king's cup, and gave it to his royal master. Joseph then told him that his dream meant that in three days' time he would be back in the palace; and Joseph begged the cupbearer to urge Pharaoh (as the king was called) to set him free also.

Both these predictions came true. The baker was hanged, and the cupbearer was recalled to the palace, where he entirely forgot Joseph. But two years later the king himself was haunted by a dream which none of the learned men at his court could interpret.

The cupbearer now ventured to suggest that perhaps Joseph could be more fortunate than the wise men, and the king at once sent for him. When Joseph appeared, Pharaoh said that he had seen seven fat cows and seven lean cows rise up out of the river. The lean cows ate up their fat companions, but seemed no larger than before.

This dream was followed by another, in which a stalk of branching Egyptian wheat brought forth seven full ears which were at once consumed by seven empty ears.

When called upon to give an interpretation of these two strange dreams, Joseph said that the seven fat cows and the seven full ears meant seven years of plenty, but the lean cows and the empty ears stood for seven years of drought and famine which would follow the seven years of plenty. During this time all the grain left over from the good harvests would scarcely serve to keep the people alive.

Awed by this explanation of the dreams which had baffled his wisest men, Pharaoh now asked Joseph what he had better do. In answer, the young Hebrew advised the king to appoint a prime minister, who should buy all the surplus grain, during the years of plenty, and store it away for future use; and Pharaoh was so pleased that he gave this office to Joseph.

Raised thus suddenly from the position of a mean slave and prisoner to the very highest rank, Joseph was given full power to carry out the wise plan that he had suggested. All honor was shown him, and he was even married to an Egyptian princess, who became the mother of his two sons, Manasseh and Ephraim.

During the seven years of plenty, Joseph bought all the surplus grain, and stored it away carefully in the large provision houses that were built by his orders in different parts of the kingdom. So, when the years of plenty were over and the famine began, the Egyptians knew no want, thanks to Joseph's wise foresight.

The famine spread not only over Egypt, but also all through Canaan, Syria, and Arabia; and at the end of two years, all the money of the Canaanites and the Egyptians had flowed

into the king's treasury. Then, by Joseph's advice, Pharaoh accepted the cattle and lands of his people, in exchange for grain; and thus when the famine was ended, money, cattle, and lands all belonged to him.

Still guided by Joseph, the Egyptian king then divided this land among the people, who in payment were to give him one fifth of the produce. This method made the king very rich indeed, and helped the people not only to live through the time of famine, but also to begin cultivating the soil again as soon as the drought was ended.

Although the Egyptians did not suffer much during the time of famine, the misery in all the countries round about was very great. Jacob heard that grain could be bought in Egypt, so he decided to send ten of his sons thither, in search of food for their families and flocks. He kept Benjamin at home, for he was afraid that something might happen to him.

The ten brothers started out, with camels and donkeys, and came before Joseph, who at once knew who they were. Seeing that they did not know him, he questioned them with pretended severity, and made believe to consider them as spies. But finally he let nine of them go home with a supply of grain. He kept Simeon a prisoner, however, and said that he would not let him go, or give them any more grain, until they brought their brother Benjamin with them, as proof that the story which they had told was true.

Jacob in Egypt

On their way home with the grain they had bought, Joseph's brothers found out that their money had been put in their sacks with the grain, and they wondered greatly. The food which they brought from Egypt was soon eaten up, for their family was a very large one. As the famine was still raging, they soon saw that they would be obliged to go to Egypt to get some more grain.

They did not dare appear before Joseph without Benjamin, so they begged their old father to let him go with them. Jacob would not let him go at first, but finally he yielded to the brothers' entreaties, and the little caravan again went down into Egypt.

Joseph looked with pleasure upon his little brother, who, of course, did not know him; and then, wishing to find out whether his elder brothers could now be trusted, he made up his mind to try them. By his order the travelers were feasted in his own palace, where he sent all the best dishes to Benjamin, and then the eleven brothers were sent away with full sacks of grain.

They had not gone very far before an Egyptian officer came riding up in haste, and accused them of stealing one of Joseph's silver cups. Although they indignantly cried that they were not thieves, the officer searched their bags carefully, and found the silver cup in Benjamin's sack, where it had been hidden by Joseph's order.

The officer seized Benjamin to put him in prison, and the elder brothers went back with him to Joseph's court. There they offered to remain in prison in Benjamin's stead, if Joseph

would only allow him to go back to Jacob, who, they said, would die of grief if his youngest son did not return.

Touched by their affection for their old father and young brother, and sure that they were sorry for the past, Joseph now made himself known to his brothers. He kissed Benjamin, shedding tears of joy, and freely forgave the ten others when they fell at his feet and begged his pardon. Then he let them go home, giving them many messages for Jacob, who was invited to come down into Egypt, with all his family, and stay there as long as the famine lasted.

When Jacob heard that Joseph was not dead, as he supposed, he was very happy indeed. Then, as God told him in a vision to go down into Egypt, and said that his descendants should be brought up again into the promised land, he set out with all his family.

By this time, Jacob had seventy-five sons and grandsons; for his children were all married and so were some of his grandchildren. The caravan soon reached Egypt, where Joseph tenderly welcomed his old father, and even presented him and five of his sons to the Egyptian king.

Pharaoh received the Israelites (as they were called from Jacob's new name of Israel) very graciously indeed, and gave them the best pasture land in Egypt; and Joseph continued to supply them with all the grain they needed, as long as the famine lasted.

Here in Egypt were spent the last years of Jacob's pilgrimage; for he, like all the patriarchs, said that he was but a pilgrim and a stranger upon earth. Jacob dwelt with his sons in peace and plenty, and he lived long enough to see his family increase greatly.

Feeling that his end was near, he finally called all his sons, gave them his blessing, and spoke a prophecy about what was to happen to their descendants, who, he said, would form twelve tribes bearing their names. Joseph and his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, first received a special blessing, and then came the turn of the other sons.

As Reuben, Simeon, and Levi had been deprived of their birthright in punishment for their sins, Judah was selected to receive the chief blessing, and his father told him that the power should remain in the hands of his family until the prophecies came true.

Then, having bidden his sons bury him in the cave of Machpelah, where his ancestors lay, Jacob died when he was one hundred and forty-seven years old. Joseph had his father's body embalmed, after the Egyptian fashion, and then, having obtained Pharaoh's permission, he and his brothers carried it to Machpelah.

When they came back to Egypt, the brothers began to fear that Joseph would avenge himself for his injuries, now that his father was dead. Joseph soon perceived this fear; so he "comforted them, and spake kindly unto them," for he did not owe them a grudge for what they had done.

Joseph lived fifty-four years after his father's death, and saw his children to the fourth generation. Before dying, he gave orders that his body should be embalmed, and carried back to the promised land when the Israelites went back there to live, as God had foretold.

The Story of Job

The grandest Hebrew poem ever written, and the oldest that is preserved, is supposed to belong to this period. You will find it translated in the Bible, where it is called the Book of Job. It tells the story of a chief in the land of Uz, who was very rich.

This man Job is described as a good and honest man, of whom God himself said that he was without his like in all the East. Satan, the tempter, appears again in this poem, and, after visiting all the earth, presents himself before God, who inquires:

"Whence comest thou?"

"From going to and fro in the earth," answers Satan, boldly.

God next asks him whether he has seen Job, and whether he does not admire the man for his great goodness. As Satan would like all men to be as wicked as himself, he answers that Job is good only because he is so prosperous, and that if he were only tried he would soon forget his piety, and even curse his Maker to his face.

To prove the loyalty of his servant Job, God now gives Satan permission to try him in every way, and poor Job suddenly finds himself without wealth or children. But his patience is quite as great as his losses, and although he weeps for his children, he humbly says: "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

As Satan has failed in this test, he now gets permission from God to inflict terrible bodily sufferings upon Job, and to make his wife torment him greatly. But, although Job is racked with pain, he merely says: "What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

The second test having also failed, Satan now sends Job's three friends to him, and they talk to him, and insist that he must have committed some great sin, or he would not suffer so much.

These friends go on reasoning with him for many days, and they ask him many questions, all of which he answers very patiently. Indeed, through all their long talk, Job remains so gentle that it is customary even now to describe great patience by saying that a person is "as patient as Job."

After Satan has done his very worst, and has tormented the poor man in every way, God comes to reprove the friends, and to defend Job. God now restores him to health, wealth, and prosperity, giving him seven sons and three daughters, and allowing him to live long enough to see his descendants to the fourth generation.

The story of the Book of Job has been told here because it is probably much older than the Book of Exodus, the second book of the Old Testament. The first book of the Bible ends with the story of Joseph; and in the Book of Exodus you will hear how the descendants of his father Jacob, or Israel, escaped from Egypt after living there about four hundred years.

The Ten Plagues

At this time, the Egyptian king, or Pharaoh, was a man who had never seen Joseph, and cared but little for his kinsmen. He was a very stern ruler, and was afraid that the people of Israel would either join his enemies, or leave his land, where they were doing him good service. So he made them his slaves, and had them watched by Egyptian overseers.

The Pharaohs were all great builders, and this one employed the Israelites in making bricks for the erection of two great treasure cities. While they were thus forced to work hard, the Israelites were very unkindly treated; but they had many children, and were steadily increasing in numbers. Pharaoh, seeing this, now gave orders that all their male children should be killed as soon as born.

The nurses who received these orders were God-fearing women, and did not obey them. Then Pharaoh sent his officers to throw all the boy babies into the Nile River.

There was, in those days, a descendant of Levi, who married and had two children,—Miriam and Aaron. Shortly after Pharaoh had given orders that all the boy babies should perish, a third child was born to this Levite. As this baby was a son, the anxious mother hid him for three months, lest the officers should find and kill him.

At the end of that time the mother felt that she could not keep the babe hidden much longer. So she placed him in a little ark, or cradle, among the reeds by the side of the river, and bade Miriam stand close by to watch over her baby brother.

Soon after, Pharaoh's daughter, the haughty Egyptian princess, came down to the river to bathe. Her glances were

caught by the strange object in the bulrushes; and when it was brought to her, and she saw the smiling baby, she said that she would adopt it.

Miriam then stepped forward and offered to find a nurse for the child. Her offer was accepted, and thus the boy Moses grew up in the king's palace under the care of his own mother, who had saved her child to become one of the greatest men the world has ever known.

We know nothing about the early youth and manhood of Moses, but his mother must surely have taught him to honor God. She also told him the story of his adoption, and of the Chosen Race of Israel, to which he belonged.

Moses received an Egyptian education in Pharaoh's palace, where he became "mighty in words and in deeds." He was about forty years of age, when he once saw an Egyptian overseer beating one of the poor Israelites, whose lot had daily grown harder to bear.

In a fit of anger, Moses fell upon the cruel Egyptian, and killed him. No one saw the murder, but the deed was soon found out, and Moses fled into the desert, near the Red Sea. Here he took refuge among the Midianites, who were descendants of Abraham and his last wife, Keturah. While there, Moses saw that some rude shepherds would not allow Jethro's daughters to come near the well to water their sheep. He helped the maidens, and then went home with them and became their father's shepherd. Soon after this Moses married one of these girls, and became the father of two sons.

Moses remained here in the desert forty years, and during that time the Egyptian king died and was followed by another Pharaoh fully as cruel as he. This new ruler oppressed the people of Israel so greatly that they began to pray to be set free;

and God, remembering his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, prepared to help them.

One day, when Moses was alone with his sheep, he saw a bush near him all wrapped in flames. Strange to relate, however, the dry branches were not burned up; so Moses drew near in wonder to examine the bush.

Suddenly he heard a voice, telling him to take off his shoes, because the ground whereon he stood was holy. Then God spoke to him, gave him a message for Pharaoh, and bade him go and lead the chosen people out of the land of Egypt, and into the desert.

This was a very hard task, and Moses, who had grown old and prudent, was afraid to undertake it. As he did not dare to refuse openly, he began making excuses; but God now cut these excuses short and bade Moses throw down his rod. As soon as he had done so, God changed the stick into a serpent. Then he restored it to its usual form, and made Moses a leper. God soon cured him of this loathsome disease, however, and promised to perform many miracles to help him.

Moses was encouraged by this promise, and by the permission to have his brother Aaron act as his spokesman, for he himself was slow of speech; so he now undertook to carry out the Lord's commands. Armed only with rods, he and Aaron presented themselves before Pharaoh. There they told the king that the Lord had ordered them to lead the Israelites into the desert, to celebrate a feast.

The King of Egypt, who did not worship God, haughtily asked, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?" And he said that he would not let the people go.

To force him to obey God's command, Moses raised his wand, and called down, one after another, ten terrible plagues

upon the Egyptians. Thus the waters were changed into blood; frogs overran all the land; lice, flies, and sickness tormented man and beast, and all the people suffered tortures from boils.

Then came terrible plagues of hail, locusts, and darkness so intense that people still use the expression "as dark as Egypt." The king, frightened by each new plague, always promised to let the people go as soon as it was removed; but, when all danger was over, he as often broke his promise, and kept the Israelites at work.

Finally, God sent an angel to kill all the firstborn of the Egyptians, and in the darkness of the night this messenger passed from door to door, doing as the Lord had commanded. By Moses' order, all the Israelites had smeared their doorposts with the blood of a lamb; so wherever the angel saw this sign he passed over the house without doing any harm to the people in it.

Pharaoh lost his firstborn too, on this occasion, and now he no longer dared resist, but gave Moses permission to lead the Israelites into the desert.

The Crossing of the Red Sea

The Israelites, having finally got Pharaoh's permission to go out into the wilderness, made ready to start. First they borrowed all the golden ornaments of the Egyptians, and then they roasted and ate the lambs whose blood had marked their doorposts.

When they set out, they carried with them some dough which had not had time to rise; and they baked bread from it at their first halting place. In memory of this flight from Egypt, the Jews, at the yearly celebration of the feast of the Passover, still eat the flesh of a lamb and unleavened bread.

The Israelites numbered more than six hundred thousand men, without counting the women and children; but they all followed Moses into the desert, the Lord himself showing them the way by going before them in a pillar of cloud by day, and in a pillar of fire by night.

The Israelites had not been gone long when Pharaoh regretted having allowed them to depart. So he gave orders that an army should set out in pursuit of them, with "six hundred chosen chariots, and all the chariots of Egypt, and captains over every one of them."

The Egyptian cavalry soon came in sight of the host of fugitives, who had stopped near the shores of the Red Sea. Pharaoh rejoiced, for he imagined that it would now be a very easy matter to force them to turn around and come back.

But the Israelites, who had never been very anxious to leave their homes in Egypt, although they had been so badly treated, were terrified when they saw the sea in front of them, and Pharaoh's army behind them. In their fear, they began to

murmur against God, and found fault with Moses for bringing them there only to perish.

But when Moses raised his rod, the waters of the sea parted, and allowed the Israelites to go across dry shod. The waters were held back by a high east wind which God had sent for that purpose, and the gale blew all night, until all the people had passed over.

Morning came, and Pharaoh and his army pursued the fleeing host. But now the wind ceased to blow, and the waters, no longer held back, rushed upon the Egyptians and drowned them all.

The Israelites, who had seen the "great work which the Lord did," now believed the Lord and his servant Moses; and the latter celebrated their deliverance by a grand song of triumph and thanksgiving.

Next Moses led the people southward, into the wilderness, where they suffered greatly from thirst, because they could find no water. At last they came to Marah, where there was water in abundance; but they were greatly disappointed when they found that it was bitter and not fit to drink.

The people began to murmur sorely, but Moses, advised by God, sweetened the water by a miracle, so that they could drink to their hearts' content. From Marah the Israelites now wended their way through the desert once more, until they came to an oasis, where they rested for a while.

When they began their journey again, they passed into another part of the wilderness, where the food which they had brought with them soon gave out. As the Lord did not wish his people to starve to death, he now sent them plenty of quails, and rained down their daily bread from heaven in the form of Manna.

On this occasion God reminded the Israelites that they were to do no work on the Sabbath, for no manna fell then, while a double portion was given them the day before.

By Moses' order a measure of this heavenly food was gathered and carefully kept, so that the Israelites, in years to come, might show their children a sample of the wonderful food upon which they had fed all the time that they were in the desert. Strengthened by this food, they journeyed on in comfort, until they again began to suffer from lack of water.

The ground was hard and dry, and there was not a stream to be found where the people could quench their thirst. They were in despair, and Moses, not knowing what else to do, began to pray for water. In answer to this prayer, God bade him strike a certain rock with his wonderful rod. As soon as Moses had done so, there gushed forth from it a stream of pure water. The people, who saw this miracle with delight, could now satisfy their great thirst, and as they did so they thanked God for giving them plenty of water in time of need.

Danger of death from lack of water was scarcely over, when the Israelites saw the army of the Amalekites coming to meet them. As soon as Moses saw these foes, he bade his captain, Joshua, lead the fighting men against the enemy, while he himself knelt on a hill near by, fervently praying for victory. There he soon noticed that as long as his hands were uplifted his people were strong, but that the Amalekites had the best of the fight as soon as he let his hands fall. So, fearing that his arms might drop from weariness, Moses bade his brother Aaron and another man stand on either side of him, and support his hands, while he fervently prayed until the victory was won.

The Golden Calf

Shortly after the battle with the Amalekites had been fought, Moses' father-in-law, Jethro, came to the Israelite camp, bringing Moses' wife and sons to him there. He then gave Moses very good advice, and bade him select judges, who would help him to govern his followers.

After parting from Jethro, Moses and his people resumed their journey, and in the third month after their flight from Egypt, they reached the awful wilderness around Mount Sinai. There they lingered at the foot of the mountain, while "Moses went up unto God," and received a solemn promise that if the Israelites would only obey him, he would make of them "a peculiar treasure ... above all people ... a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation."

The elders, in the name of all the people, promised obedience, and after three days of purification "Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire." The people, frightened at this sight, drew back from the mountain in terror, crying, "Let not God speak with us lest we die."

As they were afraid to hear the voice of God themselves, they asked Moses to go up on the mountain, and speak with the Lord. There, on Mount Sinai, Moses received from God the ten commandments, and when he came down he bade the people build an altar, and offered up a solemn sacrifice.

Then, leaving Aaron and another man to govern the people during his absence, Moses went up the mountain once more, where he staid without food for forty days and forty nights. This time he received many directions from God concerning

the Tabernacle, or holy tent, and the way in which he wished the people of Israel to worship.

At the end of the forty days, Moses came down the mountain side, carrying two stone tables, upon which God himself had written the ten commandments that he wished his people to keep.

Moses had just come within sight of the camp, when he dashed these tables on the ground at his feet; for there, before him, he saw Aaron and the people worshiping a golden calf, which they had made from the spoil they had carried away from the Egyptians.

Moses was very angry when he saw that the people had already disobeyed God's first command. He burned the idol, ground its charred remains to powder, cast this into the water, and made the people drink of it. Then, bidding those who were on the Lord's side come over to him, he made them take their swords and kill three thousand of the Israelites who had worshiped the idol.

After bidding the people purify themselves afresh, Moses again went up the mountain, where, by his entreaties, he obtained God's forgiveness for the erring Israelites. In punishment for their disobedience, God now refused to go before them in person, as he had promised to do if they kept his commands; but he said that he would send his angel instead.

When Moses again came down the mountain, he removed the sacred tent, or tabernacle, to a place outside of the camp. There all the people saw a pillar of cloud descend to its very doors, and heard the Lord speak "unto Moses, face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend."

After a new journey up the mountain, Moses brought down two new tables of stone, upon which the finger of God had traced the ten commandments. He had been close to God, and the heavenly glory made his face shine so brightly that the people dared not look at him until he drew a veil over his head.

The commandments were again recited in presence of the people, who now brought gifts for the tabernacle; and Aaron and his sons were made priests of God. Then Moses offered up a sacrifice, and God showed his acceptance of it by sending down fire from heaven to consume it.

The Twelve Spies.

While the Israelites were stopping at the foot of Mount Sinai, several miracles took place. For instance, two of Aaron's sons dared to put common fire into their censers, in spite of God's command; and they were burned alive by a "fire from the Lord" which fell upon them.

As they had died in punishment for their sin, Moses forbade the people to mourn for them; and because their disobedience had been caused by a moment of drunkenness, he forbade the priests ever to touch any strong drink. Soon after this, a man who took the Lord's name in vain was stoned to death as the new law commanded.

By God's order Moses now counted the grown men, who numbered six hundred and three thousand, five hundred and fifty. This host was divided into four camps, and each tribe had its own captain and place.

The tabernacle was placed in the center of the camp, under the care of the Levites, who were the only priests. Then, when all these arrangements had been finished, Moses again gave the signal for departure, and the Israelites moved on through the wilderness, under the protection and shadow of a cloud sent by God.

Before they had gone very far, the Israelites began to murmur; and in punishment for this they were burned by a raging fire which swept all through the camp, and never ceased its ravages until Moses won God's pardon for his disobedient people.

Some time later the followers of Moses became weary of manna, and again longed for flesh. So God sent them quails;

but instead of eating moderately, they feasted upon them so greedily that they became very sick, and many even died.

During this halt Moses chose seventy elders to help him govern the people; and this council is considered the beginning of the Jewish tribunal called the Sanhedrin, of which you will hear further mention in the New Testament.

In their next stopping place, Miriam and Aaron tried to oppose their brother Moses; for, as they were older, they claimed that their authority was greater than his. Moses was so meek that he did not resist; indeed, his gentleness was so great that it has passed into a proverb, and you will often hear the expression, "as meek as Moses."

Instead of insisting on his right to rule the people, he remained quite still, and God himself took up his defense. Aaron and Miriam were called into the tabernacle, where God rebuked them for their bad behavior, and, to punish Miriam, made her a leper.

This horrible disease was contagious, and Miriam was forced to leave the camp. She was not allowed to return until she was cured by the prayers which Moses made for her recovery.

The long procession of Israelites now wended its way northward, until they came to Kadesh, not very far south of the Dead Sea. There twelve men, one from each tribe, were chosen to go ahead and spy out the land which they were approaching, and which God had promised to give them.

These twelve men set out eagerly. They went far up the Jordan River, then came south again, and passed through a rich valley, where grew luxuriant vines. They brought back samples of the produce of the country, and, among other fruits, a bunch

of grapes so large that it had to be carried upon a stick between two men.

The spies came back to Kadesh at the end of forty days, and were much pleased by the beauty and fertility of the land, which, as God had said, was "flowing with milk and honey." But although they praised the soil so highly, they alarmed the people by their description of the great walls which were built all around the cities, and by their stories about the size and strength of some of the inhabitants, beside whom they felt like grasshoppers.

The Israelites were frightened by what the spies said, for only one of them, Caleb, refrained from talking about the strength of the inhabitants. Indeed, the people were so discouraged that they began to express their discontent at having traveled so far in vain. Then they broke out into open rebellion against Moses and God, and even proposed to return to Egypt.

Moses and Aaron, in despair, tried to persuade the people that they would triumph if they only believed in God's strength; but it was all in vain. The Israelites murmured until "the glory of the Lord appeared in the tabernacle," and his voice was heard saying that he would disinherit his ungrateful and disobedient children.

At this threat the terrified people were sorry for what they had done, and Moses interceded for them till God relented. He again promised that the Israelites should have the land, but he said that instead of entering it immediately, they would be forced to wander in the wilderness for forty years. He added that none of the rebels should ever be allowed to enter into the land, but that it would be given only to their children.

The Brazen Serpent

The people of Israel were very angry when they heard that their wanderings were to last so long, so angry that they began to fight the Amalekites and Canaanites, so as to force their way into the promised land. But they soon had cause to repent of this rash behavior, for they were defeated with great slaughter, and driven back into the desert.

Here they wandered about for forty years, fed by the heavenly manna; and, by a merciful miracle, their garments, which they could not replace, did not wear out in all that time.

Very few events are recorded as having happened during those long, weary years; but we find that a man was stoned because he failed to keep the law, and picked up sticks on the Sabbath Day. Another time three men rebelled against Moses and Aaron, and wished to offer up sacrifices on the altar, although God had said that only the sons of Aaron should be his priests.

In punishment for their disobedience, these three men were swallowed up alive by the earth, which opened wide beneath their feet. Then, too, their followers were all burned to death by a fire which came out of the tabernacle.

As the Israelites murmured because these men had been punished for their disobedience, they, too, were called upon to suffer. A frightful plague killed more than fourteen thousand of them, and ceased only when Moses begged God to spare his mistaken people.

To show the Israelites once for all that the house of Aaron was to serve as priests, God now bade the head of each tribe bring his rod, or staff, and lay it upon the altar in the tabernacle.

On the next day when Moses entered the holy tent, he found Aaron's rod all covered with buds and blossoms, while the others were only dry sticks as before.

In memory of this miracle, Aaron's rod was placed in the Ark of the Covenant, or sacred chest, which also contained the pot of manna and the stone tables of the law; and this ark, as you will see, was carefully treasured up for many years by the priests who served the Lord.

Terrified into submission by all these signs and wonders, the Israelites gave no more trouble for some time. They walked on and on, and in the fortieth year from the time of the Exodus, or "coming out" of Egypt, they again reached the wilderness near Kadesh.

Thus they had been wandering around the desert in a circle, and now they came back to their former resting place. Here Miriam, the aged sister of Moses, sickened, died, and was duly buried. Here, too, the people who were suffering from thirst murmured again, so God bade Moses speak to the rock and thus procure water.

Instead of doing exactly as he had been told, Moses lifted his rod and struck the rock. The waters gushed forth, but God punished Moses for his impatience by telling him that he would never be allowed to enter the land which had been promised to the Chosen People.

Still advised by God, Moses now led the Israelites to Mount Hor, where Aaron died and was buried. Eleazar, his son, became high priest in his turn, and it was he who now offered up sacrifices for the people.

After mourning thirty days, the Israelites started on again, but they had not gone far when new murmurs were heard. They were punished for this lack of faith by a host of serpents,

which bit and poisoned them all. The people died in great numbers, until God, in pity, bade Moses make a brazen serpent, and set it up in the midst of the camp. God then told Moses that he would cure the bites of all those who gazed upon the serpent, thus showing that they wished to be healed.

This brazen serpent was long preserved as a relic by the Israelites. When they forgot the worship of God, they set it up as an idol, and bowed down before it until it was thrown down and broken by order of one of their kings.

We are told that the fragments of the serpent were preserved, and in time passed into the treasury of the Turks. An ambassador from Italy saw them there, four hundred and seventy-one years after the time of Christ and it is said that he carried them off to the church of St. Ambrose at Milan, where the brazen serpent is still gazed at by travelers from every clime.

The Death of Moses

The Israelites, delivered from the poisonous serpents, next went through the country east of the Dead Sea, and fought against the people who refused to let them pass. They won a brilliant victory this time, and gained possession of part of the land which was to belong to them. This battle was soon followed by another, in which they defeated the giant king Og, and killed his children and people. The Israelites also won much spoil from him, among other things an iron bedstead thirteen and a half feet long, which they kept as a proof of his great size.

Then the Chosen People encamped in the desert plain of Moab, to the great dismay of Balak, the king of that country. He did not dare attack such powerful enemies openly, so he sent for Balaam, a prophet of the true God, and promised him a large sum of money if he would only curse the people of Israel.

Balaam, tempted by the offered reward, consented, but God spoke to him and said: "Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people; for they are blessed." But in spite of this warning, Balaam was so anxious to get the money promised him that he set out with Balak, intending to curse the Israelites, although God warned him to do only as he was told. On the way to the heights upon which he was to stand while speaking this curse, the ass which Balaam rode shied twice, and each time saved him from the sword of an angel. But Balaam did not see why the ass stopped in a gateway, and he beat the poor animal until it turned and spoke to him. At the same

moment God opened Balaam's eyes, so that he saw the angel with the sharp sword.

Balaam was so frightened then that he would gladly have gone home, but the messenger of God told him to go on, warning him, however, to speak no words except those which the Lord would put into his mouth.

Balak and Balaam went up three hills, one after another, and three times Balaam opened his mouth to speak the desired curse. But each time God changed the words of this curse into a blessing, because he was watching over the people of Israel, whom he still loved in spite of all their sins.

Then, still speaking as God wished, Balaam foretold the coming of the promised Messiah, or king, and the victories and conquests of the Israelites. Although he had thus been forced, against his will, to foretell the greatness of the Israelites, and although he knew that God was with his people, Balaam soon made a second attempt to harm them, by tempting the men to disobey God's orders, and to take wives from among the Moabites.

To punish the people for this disobedience, God sent another terrible plague, which carried off twenty-four thousand Israelites. Indeed, it did not stop raging until Moses made a law whereby all those who disobeyed were punished by immediate death.

By God's order, Moses now took a second census of the men of Israel. In spite of all the sufferings they had endured in the wilderness, he found that they numbered only eighteen hundred and twenty less than when they left the land of Egypt forty years before.

Joshua was now chosen and publicly named as the successor of Moses; and the tribes of Reuben and Gad received

the land which had just been conquered. Before it was given to them, however, they had to promise that their best warriors should march at the head of the Israelite army until all the land was won.

The work of Moses was finished. He therefore bade the people come together to receive his last blessing and made them a solemn farewell speech. In it he reminded them of all that God had done for them in the wilderness. He repeated the prophecies about their future, and the law, and then broke out into a grand song of thanksgiving.

Moses next blessed the awed and waiting people, and then, having received his last summons, he went up Mount Nebo, from whose top God pointed out to him the land promised to his people.

It was here, on the lonely mountain top, that Moses, the servant of God, died; and we are told that God himself laid his body to rest. No one ever knew the place where Moses was buried, but the people mourned him for thirty days before they thought of making their way into the beautiful land which he had seen, although he was never allowed to enter it.

The Walls of Jericho

Moses, the great lawgiver of Israel, was succeeded by Joshua, the great captain, whose mission it was to conquer the promised land for God's people.

Joshua was already eighty years of age, but he had shown his skill as captain in the beginning of his career by winning a victory over the Amalekites, and lately by conquering the land east of the Jordan. As he had always obeyed, and had never murmured, and as he had been faithful when all the rest were faithless, he was allowed to enter the promised land, and was well fitted to be the leader of the people.

As soon as the thirty days of mourning for Moses were ended, God appeared to Joshua, and bade him lead the people over the Jordan, into the land where spies had already been sent to see how the land lay. These scouts went to the walled city of Jericho, and entered the house of a woman named Rahab. Their strange looks excited the suspicions of the people, who hastily closed the gates of the city so that they could not escape, and began to search for them in order to put them to death.

But Rahab hid the spies so cleverly that no one could find them, and sent the pursuers off on a false track. When they had gone, and all danger was over, she lowered the Israelites in a basket from one of the windows of her house, which was built in the thick walls of the city.

The spies were so grateful to Rahab for helping them that they promised to save her life in their turn. They bade her tie a scarlet thread to the window of her house, so that they would be sure to recognize it; and they promised that the persons in

it should escape from all harm when the Lord gave the city into their hands.

By a roundabout way the spies then went back to camp, and made their report to Joshua. Early the next morning, the priests, carrying the Ark, went down to the banks of the Jordan, whose tide was much swollen at this season by the melting of the mountain snows. But as the Levites reached the water's edge, the river divided; "the waters which came down from above stood and rose up," while the remainder flowed down to the Dead Sea. Thus a wide channel was left bare, and the people could pass over dry shod.

By Joshua's command, the priests halted in the middle of the river until all the people had passed over. He also gave orders that twelve men, one from each tribe, should take stones from the river bed with which to build an altar. Then the priests also left the river bed, and the waters, no longer stopped in their course, again rushed downward to the Dead Sea. The army marched on to Gilgal, where the Israelites erected the altar of twelve stones, and celebrated the first Passover in the land which had been promised to them, forty years after their fathers had kept it before leaving Egypt.

Here all the people were circumcised, a religious ceremony which had been omitted during their desert wanderings. Here, too, the supply of manna ceased, and the people baked bread from the grain of the land which was soon to belong to them.

While, Joshua was planning how to take the strong city of Jericho, an angel of the Lord appeared to him, and bade him march around the city once a day for six days, with all his host, and seven priests blowing the seven sacred trumpets as they marched before the Ark. The seventh day the army was to march around the city seven times; and when the last circuit

was made, they were to blow a loud blast on the trumpets and to raise a sudden shout, at the sound of which the Lord would make the walls fall down flat.

All these directions were carried out with great care. The Israelites marched around the city daily, and when the seventh round had been finished on the seventh and last day, a mighty shout rent the air, and the strong walls of Jericho tottered and fell, as God had promised.

All the people, except Rahab and those whom she sheltered in her house, were killed; their property was destroyed, and the city razed, and Joshua pronounced a solemn curse upon any one who should attempt to rebuild it.

In reward for the good turn she had done the spies, Rahab was given in marriage to an Israelite. In time she became the mother of Boaz, the great-grandfather of David, a well-known king of the Israelites, or, as they are also called, the Jews.

The Conquest of the Promised Land

God had ordered that all the property of the inhabitants of Jericho should be destroyed. Only one man dared transgress this command, by keeping back a small portion of the spoil. He hid it, and fancied that his disobedience would remain unknown and unpunished. But when the Israelites next tried to take a city, they were defeated. Joshua knew that this misfortune would never have happened if the people had obeyed God's commands; so he now fervently prayed that the sinner might be revealed.

Lots were drawn, first among the twelve tribes, then among the divisions of the tribe on which the first lot had fallen, and lastly among the families. By this means the sinner was discovered. He confessed having saved two hundred shekels, or pieces of silver, and was punished by being stoned to death with all his family.

This signal example having been made, Joshua again led the people against the city, which they succeeded in taking by stratagem. Thus the Israelites won all the passes from the valley of the Jordan; and, marching on to Shechem, they erected an altar upon which they inscribed the law.

While the Chosen People were tarrying at Shechem, the neighboring nations made a league against them; but the Gibeonites pretended to be friendly with them. Hoping to make the Israelites believe that they lived very far away, the Gibeonites came in tattered garments and worn foot gear, and brought no provisions but moldy bread.

Without consulting God, the Israelites now made an alliance with them; but when they found out the fraud three

days later, they marched against Gibeon, and made all the people their slaves.

Shortly after this, Joshua's troops were attacked by the combined forces of five allied kings, and he would have been overwhelmed by their numbers had he not been helped by a violent hailstorm. Such was the fury of the storm, that there "were more which died with hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword."

Joshua began to pursue the fugitives, and seeing that daylight would fail him before the victory was really assured, he commanded: "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon." In obedience to this order both sun and moon stood still until Joshua had won a great victory.

Joshua pursued the people to a place where the five kings, his enemies, were hiding in a cave. These monarchs were dragged from their retreat and led away and hanged, just as the sun at last went down and closed the longest day which has ever been known.

By a few more battles Joshua became master of all the southern half of the country, and now he prepared to march northward, and subdue another king, who had an army "as the sand that is upon the seashore in multitude." In spite of this array of warriors, Joshua defeated the king, burned his principal city, put the inhabitants to death, seized their property, and then took possession of all the northern part of the promised land.

Although Joshua had thus conquered all the promised land, many of his enemies were not entirely subdued, and the Canaanites and Philistines still owned much territory. The conquest of their land, however, was reserved for another

leader; for Joshua was now very weary and old, and he felt that his end was near.

He therefore called the heads of the remaining ten tribes to him, and portioned out by lot the land which he had conquered. The city of Hebron, however, was given as a reward to Caleb, a man who had never murmured, and who was now the only one left of the twelve spies that had visited the Holy Land forty years before.

The only tribe which received no province at all was that of Levi, because the Levites were chosen to serve the Lord. They were to receive a certain amount from all the people, and the Lord himself "was their inheritance."

Peace now reigned everywhere, and the two tribes of Reuben and Gad, which had received their portions long before, prepared to recross the Jordan, and go home. As soon as they reached the other side of the river, they began to build an altar. Their brethren, fearing that they were about to forget God and worship idols, immediately sent Phinehas, the son of the high priest, to inquire what it meant.

This messenger soon came back, and the people were greatly relieved when they heard that the new altar was not for the worship of foreign gods. The men had built it merely to remind their children that they too belonged to the Chosen Race, although they were separated from the rest of it by the Jordan's rushing tide.

When all these matters had been satisfactorily settled, Joshua called the heads of the people together, and exhorted them "to keep and to do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses." He prophesied that, if they dared serve other gods, they would lose the land which their God had given them.

Then, after receiving a solemn promise from all the people to remain faithful, and after writing the history of his time, Joshua died peacefully, at the age of one hundred and ten. He was buried in the country which he had won for Israel, a country which is called the Promised Land, the Holy Land, or Palestine.

The Death of Sisera

Joshua's death was soon followed by that of the high priest Eleazar, who was succeeded by his son Phinehas. It was at this time, also, that Joseph's remains, so carefully brought from the land of Egypt, were buried at Shechem.

Now all the people went on serving God faithfully as long as the elders lived. This period lasted about forty years, at the end of which time there arose another generation who "knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel;" so the people of the Lord forgot him, and began to worship the heathen gods.

In punishment for their idolatry, they were given over into the hands of the people whose gods they served, and were forced to endure much ill treatment.

But, although punished, they were not utterly forsaken; for, whenever it was necessary, God always provided judges, who freed them from their oppressors.

No sooner were the Israelites free again, however, than they would return to their old sins, worship false gods, and refuse to obey the law. It was because of this oft-renewed unfaithfulness that God delayed the full accomplishment of his promise to drive all the heathen nations out of the country. The story of these troublous times is written in the Book of Judges, which begins with an account of the efforts made by the tribes of Judah and Simeon to drive out the Canaanites and the Perizzites.

The two tribes of Israelites won a victory and captured the tyrant who ruled over their enemies. This was a man who openly boasted of having cut off the thumbs and great toes of

seventy kings, and of having amused himself in watching their vain efforts to pick up the crumbs that fell from his table. In punishment for such deeds of cruelty, the Israelites treated him in the same way, and then killed him in the city of Jerusalem.

Many other attempts to drive the heathen out of the land are recorded in the Book of Judges: but none of them were entirely successful. Indeed, it was not long before the Israelites, in punishment for their sins, were allowed to fall into the hands of the King of Mesopotamia. They suffered under his tyranny eight years, before the Lord heard their cries of distress, and sent them a deliverer in the person of Othniel, a nephew of Caleb.

Othniel ruled the people wisely, and died forty years after Joshua. But as soon as he was gone, the Israelites again fell into idolatry, and because they did so, they were conquered by the Moabites and Amalekites, their old foes, who tyrannized over them for eighteen years.

When their woes had become unendurable, another deliverer arose—Ehud, who was a left-handed man. This fact proved fatal to the Moabites, for Ehud killed their king with his left hand while delivering a pretended written message with his right.

This murder was not discovered till Ehud had escaped. He at once rallied the Children of Israel around him, led them on to battle, and completely routed the Moabites.

Shamgar the next judge, delivered the Israelites from the hands of the Philistines, and showed his unusual strength by killing six hundred of his foes with an ordinary oxgoad.

As the people had fallen back into idolatry, they were next given over to the cruel treatment of the King of the Canaanites, who allowed his captain, Sisera, to oppress the land for twenty

years. At the end of that time, the Lord sent a woman named Deborah to the rescue of his people. This Deborah was a prophetess, and as she herself could not go forth and fight, she sent Barak, the fourth judge, against the enemy.

The two armies met, and once more the Israelites won a great victory. They owed this victory in part to a great storm, which injured the troops of Sisera only. Terrified by the fury of the elements leagued against them, Sisera's soldiers fled, but they were soon overtaken and killed by the Israelites.

Sisera, the captain, escaped alone and on foot, and finally took refuge in the tent of a woman named Jael. There he was given a drink of milk, and after telling the woman to keep his hiding place secret, he lay down and went to sleep.

While he thus thought himself safe, Jael armed herself with a tent pin and a hammer, crept up close to her sleeping guest, and with one terrible blow drove the pin right through his temples and deep into the ground. Then she ran to meet the pursuing host, and, leading Barak into her tent, showed him what she had done. The Israelites had again won the victory, and the history of this epoch closes with Deborah's song of triumph, in which she relates how Sisera was defeated and slain.

Ruth and Naomi

We are told that not very long after the death of Sisera, an Israelite named Micah stole eleven hundred shekels of silver from his mother. She, little suspecting that the thief was her own son, cursed the robber, and solemnly vowed to make a molten and a graven image, should she ever recover her property.

Oppressed by remorse for his guilt, Micah finally confessed his theft. He gave back the silver, and helped his mother set up the images in his house, where one of his sons acted as priest.

Still, as the priesthood had been strictly confined to the family of Levi, Micah was not satisfied with this arrangement. He knew no rest until he had secured the services of a young Levite, who, for a certain hire, promised to serve as priest to the images, although he knew that it was against the law.

Five spies from the tribe of Dan paused at Micah's house, when on their way to Laish, and there consulted the Levite. As he predicted that they would be successful, the Danites rewarded him by taking him and the images with them to Laish. They soon became masters of that city, and changed its name to Dan; and then the Levite was established there as their priest.

Another episode belonging to this epoch, is the story of a Levite, who, deserted by his wife, followed her to her father's house, and prevailed upon her to return to him. They set out upon their homeward journey late in the day, and were forced to spend the night at Gibeah where an old man entertained them hospitably in his own house.

Now the people of Gibeah belonged to the tribe of Benjamin, but they had grown as wicked as the Sodomites of old. They no sooner heard that there were helpless strangers in the city, than they attacked the house and forced the old man to give up the woman. Then they ill-treated her so shamefully that, when morning came, the Levite found her dead on the doorstep.

This crime roused her husband's wrath to such an extent that he cut her body into twelve pieces, and sent them to the twelve tribes of Israel, with a full account of the wrongs he had suffered at the hands of the Benjamites.

The result was a general uprising of the people, who sallied forth four hundred thousand strong, and killed nearly all the Benjamites. Only a few among them managed to escape to the mountains, whence they returned, in time, to their old homes.

Here they married the maidens taken from a city which was destroyed; but as these were not enough to supply wives for them all, they got two hundred more by kidnaping the maids of Shiloh when they came out of their city to dance at one of the great national festivals.

The story of Ruth, which is told at length in the book bearing her name, is one of the most beautiful episodes of this age. It seems that a certain man of Bethlehem was driven by famine into the land of Moab, with his wife, Naomi, and his two young sons.

While in the land of the Moabites, these young men married two native women, Orpah and Ruth, and here father and sons died, leaving three widows to mourn their early death. Naomi was very poor, and in her grief she prepared to return to her own country and people.

When her daughters-in-law heard of this plan, they both offered to go with her, so that she need not make the journey alone. They all three started out on foot, but they had not gone very far when Naomi urged both young widows to go back to their father's house, where they would, in time, forget their sorrow, and even marry again.

Orpah listened to this advice, and after taking a tearful leave of Naomi, she slowly went home. But Ruth clung to her mother-in-law, crying: "Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God. Where thou diest will I die, and there will I be buried."

As Ruth would not leave her, Naomi now took her to Bethlehem, her old home; and the two widows came there at the time of the barley harvest. They had no money wherewith to buy food, so Ruth, who was young and strong, went out into the country to glean; that is to say, to pick up the stray ears of grain which fell from the full sheaves.

She soon came to the harvest fields of Boaz, a rich kinsman of her father-in-law; and when this man saw the poor young woman's efforts to secure some grain, he kindly bade the reapers drop a few handfuls, so that she might have something to eat.

Gideon's Fleece

Ruth gleaned all day in the harvest field, and when evening came she went joyfully home to show Naomi how much grain she had gathered, thanks to the kindness of that charitable man, Boaz.

When Naomi heard this name she started, and at once told her daughter-in-law of his relationship to them. Ruth worked at gleaning every day, and at the end of the harvest time she was greatly surprised when Naomi bade her go back to the field, enter the booth where Boaz and his workmen slept, and lie down at his feet. When he awoke, she was to remind him of the law which commanded that a widow was bound to marry her husband's nearest kinsman, whose duty it was to take care of her.

Although this custom seemed very strange to a Moabite woman, Ruth immediately obeyed. When Boaz awoke and asked her what she was doing there, she told him that she was the widow of his relative, and asked that he should give her her rights.

Boaz then sent Ruth away with a promise that he would do justice to her, although there was a man more nearly related than he. Early the next day, he found out that this man was willing to give up all claim to the young widow; and then he publicly took Ruth to wife.

Thus freed from want, Ruth soon grew happy in her new home; and she became the mother of a son named Obed, the grandfather of David, a great king of whom you will hear much. But Ruth, the Moabite woman, was not the only one of David's ancestors that was not an Israelite; for Boaz, as you will

remember, was the son of Rahab, who was spared from the general massacre when the Chosen People took Jericho.

The Israelites, in the mean while, had again misused the peace they had won, and soon after the death of Deborah and Barak, they again began to worship idols. In punishment for this sin, they were now allowed to fall into the hands of the Midianites and the Amalekites, who came in great numbers, being "as grasshoppers for multitude."

The enemy took possession of the land, and drove the Israelites to the caves and dens in the mountain side. Whenever the people of God came down into the valley, they were ill-treated and oppressed; and only at the end of seven years did the Lord consider that they had been punished enough, and prepare to deliver them.

The judge sent to save them this time was Gideon, a "mighty man of valor." He was secretly threshing wheat near his father's barn, to save it from the Midianite thieves, when an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared before him, and bade him rescue Israel from the hands of the enemy.

Gideon at first tried to excuse himself, saying that he was neither worthy of such an honor, nor capable of winning it; but the angel repeated the command, and the man, seeing that he was talking to an angel, now wished to offer up a sacrifice to him.

The angel, however, refused this act of worship, which was due to God only, and bade Gideon lay the victim on a rock. When all was ready, the angel touched the rude altar with his staff, miraculously setting fire to the victim, and then disappeared.

Gideon knew that the spot had been made holy by the presence of a divine messenger, so he set up an altar there. That

selfsame night, the Lord visited Gideon in a dream, and bade him overthrow the altar of the heathen god Baal, where the people had worshiped, cut down the sacred grove, and offer up his father's bullock in sacrifice to the true God.

When he awoke, Gideon did as the Lord had commanded, and called all the people together. While waiting for their coming, the young leader prayed God to show by a sign that he would save Israel. For this purpose, Gideon spread out a fleece upon the threshing floor, and asked that it should be wet with dew, while the ground all around it staid dry.

When Gideon came on the morrow, he found the fleece so wet that he could wring a great deal of water out of it, while the ground all around it was perfectly dry. But he was not quite satisfied with this one miracle, so he now prayed that the fleece might remain dry and the ground be wet.

This second sign was granted also, and when Gideon saw the dry fleece and wet ground, he believed all that the Lord had told him, and with a force of Israelites, numbering thirty-two thousand men, he marched off to meet and overwhelm the enemy.

Defeat of the Midianites

Gideon, as we have seen, had a very large army. But all his men were not needed on this occasion; for it seems that the Lord wished to prove to his Chosen People that they needed only to rely upon him and all would be well.

God therefore spoke to Gideon, and in obedience to his command the general made a proclamation, saying, "Whosoever is fearful and afraid, let him return." Twenty-two thousand men gladly seized the opportunity thus given to leave the army, and hastened away to a place of safety.

Then, seeing that the army was still too large, God bade Gideon lead his men down to the river to drink, and select from among them all those who lapped the water. When counted, these were found to number three hundred men. They were to be Gideon's only army, and with this handful of men he was to drive away all the Midianites.

That same night God bade Gideon go alone with his servant and reconnoiter the enemy's camp. Under cover of the darkness, Gideon and his attendant drew near the camp unseen. There, crouching out of sight, they overheard a soldier relating a dream that he had just had. This man said that he had dreamed that a barley cake had come rolling into their camp, with such force that it had overthrown a Midianite tent.

One of the soldier's companions then began to interpret this dream, and said that the barley cake stood for the sword of Gideon, and that it was plain that the Midianites would be conquered. Gideon, seeing that these soldiers were already a prey to superstitious fears, now hastened back to his own camp, and roused his men. He divided them into three companies,

armed them with trumpets and empty pitchers containing lighted lamps, and bade them noiselessly follow him and imitate his every movement.

Silently he now went back to the Midianite camp, followed by all his men, and a little before midnight he gave the signal for attack. At the same moment he and all his men blew their trumpets and broke their pitchers.

The sudden din, the crash, and the blinding light so terrified the Midianites that they all "cried and fled," and in their panic they even fell upon each other with drawn swords.

The Israelites, urged by Gideon, now pursued the fugitives, and slew many of them; but when they came to the towns of Succoth and Penuel, they vainly tried to obtain food. As this was refused to them because the people feared to incur the anger of the Midianites, Gideon cursed the inhabitants of both cities.

He could not pause, however, and rushed on after the fugitives. But when all pursuit was ended, and the Israelite army returned in triumph, Gideon ordered that the men of Succoth should be beaten and the tower of Penuel pulled down. Next, he killed the princes who had refused to help him by giving him food.

In their joy over the successes they had won, the Israelites now came to Gideon and asked him to be their king; but he refused the honor, saying, "The Lord shall rule over you." He did this because he knew that the government of the Chosen People was to be what is called a Theocracy; that is to say, a government in which God is the ruler.

The only reward which Gideon would accept for his services was the golden earrings worn by the slain Midianites.

These were collected for him, and amounted to the value of seventeen hundred shekels of gold.

With this precious metal, and the ornaments taken from the king's camels, Gideon made an Ephod, a rich garment for the priest; and it was not long before the ignorant people began to worship this, forgetting the commandment which they had first heard from Mount Sinai in the days of Moses.

Gideon, the fifth judge of Israel, ruled forty years, and during all that time the Midianites did not dare renew their oppression. But when he died, at a good old age, the people again went back to the worship of Baal, and entirely forgot the Lord who had delivered them so many times from the hands of their enemies.

Jephthah's Daughter

Although Gideon had refused the royal power, it was claimed after his death by Abimelech, one of his sons. This young man secured the help of the Shechemites, and, to prevent any one from disputing his claim to the throne, he killed seventy of his relatives.

A prophet was sent to reprove the Shechemites for helping Abimelech, and he did so by telling them a parable, or lesson taught by a story, which is probably the oldest in the world.

He told them that the trees once decided to elect a king, and chose the olive; but the olive tree refused to leave its fatness, to serve other trees. The fig tree, which was next chosen, refused to give up its sweetness, and the vine, its power to cheer; and all the trees and shrubs found some good excuse to decline the honor of being king.

At last the charge was accepted by the worthless bramble, which said: "If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow, and if not, let fire come out of the bramble and devour the cedars of Lebanon."

You see, all the other trees were good for something, and had something to live for and to do; but the worthless bramble, which could produce nothing and was only fit for the fire, was ready enough to accept the crown, although it could not even furnish shadow enough to protect any one, and knew that the other trees would suffer if they came near it, and would perish in the fire to which it was condemned.

The prophecy contained in this parable was fulfilled three years later; for Abimelech,—the worthless bramble,—having grown angry with his former friends the Shechemites, came

against them with an army, defeated them, and set fire to one of their principal towers, where many people had taken refuge.

He next passed on to Thebez, where he again tried to set fire to the walls with his own hand. But while he was thus occupied, a woman threw a fragment of a millstone down upon his head, and broke his skull. Abimelech did not die right away, but had just time to call his armor-bearer, and bid the man kill him, so that it might never be said that a woman had slain him.

This Abimelech is reckoned as the sixth judge of Israel, although he never did any good to the people, and thereby differed greatly from the judges who came before and after him.

We are told that the civil wars ended with the death of Abimelech, and that the two succeeding judges ruled peacefully over the Israelites. But, as usual, the people soon took advantage of this prosperity to relapse into idolatry, and, as usual, they suffered for this sin by falling into the hands of their enemies.

This time they were conquered by the Philistines and the Ammonites, who tormented them for eighteen years. But when the Israelites had suffered enough, and were thoroughly humbled, God took compassion upon them, and sent Jephthah, the ninth judge, to lead their armies against the foe.

Anxious to obtain a glorious victory, Jephthah made a rash vow, promising to offer up in sacrifice "whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon."

Thanks to the help of God, who delivered the enemies into his hands, Jephthah won a grand victory, secured twenty towns, and so terrified the Ammonites that they did not dare rise up again until long after, in the days of Saul.

Jephthah now returned to his house, but all his joy was turned to sorrow when he saw his daughter come forth to welcome him. Then only did he remember his rash vow, and realize that he would be obliged to give up his beloved child.

When the girl heard of her father's vow, she made no resistance, and only asked that she might have two months' grace. At the end of two months, she came down from the mountains of Gilead, where she had mourned with her companions. Whether her father really made a human sacrifice, which was not unheard of at that day, or whether he merely shut the maiden up in a sort of a convent, where she would spend all her time in prayer, remains a mystery to this day; for we are only told that he "did with her according to his vow which he had vowed."

Samson's Riddle

When Jephthah went forth to fight the Ammonites, he did not ask any help from the Ephraimites. They resented this oversight bitterly, and behaved so insolently that the followers of Jephthah made war against them, and defeated them in a pitched battle.

When the fight was won, Jephthah was afraid that some of the Ephraimites might cross the Jordan, and, returning home, give a wrong impression of the quarrel and stir up their whole tribe to war; so he and his followers decided not to let a man of the conquered army escape.

To make sure of this, they placed a guard at all the fords of the Jordan, with orders to make every man who wished to cross pronounce the word "shibboleth;" for the Ephraimites could not pronounce this word.

After judging Israel six years, Jephthah died in Gilead, where he was buried. He was succeeded by three judges in turn, after whose rule the disobedient Israelites fell into the hands of the Philistines. This time their bondage lasted forty years, and Samson, who lived during the first half of this period, has been called the thirteenth judge of Israel.

Born in the days when Eli was high priest, Samson was the son of a Danite. Before his birth, an angel had appeared to his mother, telling her that she would have a son, who was to be dedicated to God by a special vow, and hence called a Nazarite.

The woman was so amazed at this prophecy that she called her husband, and the angel repeated it to him before vanishing. The child Samson was born as the angel had foretold, and his mother duly dedicated him to the service of the Lord, and

never cut off his long hair, which was the outward sign of a Nazarite.

All the tribes of Israel were now under Philistine oppression, and when Samson became a man, the spirit of God began to move him, and revealed itself principally in the matchless strength and courage with which he was endowed.

As this strength all depended on the keeping of his vow to be a Nazarite, the Bible tells us that Samson's strength was in his hair. The young man, conscious of his unusual power, was very brave indeed, and tried hard to provoke a quarrel with the oppressors.

With this purpose in view, he once asked for the hand of a certain Philistine woman. On his way to visit her, a lion rushed out upon him from a neighboring thicket, and would have eaten him up, had not the spirit of God come upon him at the moment of greatest need, and enabled him, although unarmed, to seize and tear the lion to pieces

Some time after, when passing along the same road, Samson saw a swarm of bees building their honeycombs in the lion's sun dried carcass; and he ate some of the honey. As it was customary to ask riddles at marriage festivals, he gave the following to the Philistines when his own wedding took place:

"Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness."

The Philistines made vain efforts to find the answer of this riddle, and thus secure the prize of garments which Samson had promised them. At last, however, they coaxed the young man's bride to reveal the answer, and, going to him, triumphantly cried:

"What is sweeter than honey, and what is stronger than a lion?"

Samson, of course, was surprised to hear that they had solved his riddle; but when he found out that they had done so only by fraud, he was very indignant, and resolved to take his revenge. To pay the promised reward, therefore, he slew thirty Philistines, and gave their spoil to the wedding guests.

A few months later, when Samson would fain have claimed his wife, and taken her home, he was told that she had been given in marriage to another. To avenge this insult he tied firebrands to the tails of three hundred captive foxes, and then let the animals loose in the ripe grain fields. The grain soon caught fire, and all the Philistine harvest was destroyed.

In anger, the Philistines now burned Samson's wife and her father, and thereby so enraged the young man that he fell upon them, and "smote them hip and thigh with a great slaughter." Then he went and took refuge on the top of the rock of Etam in the territory of Judah.

The False Delilah

We left Samson on top of a steep rock, where he had taken refuge after killing many Philistines to avenge his wife's death. Here he staid until he was captured by an army three thousand strong.

To prevent the escape of this prisoner, the men bound him securely with new ropes; but Samson broke them almost without effort. Then, seizing the jawbone of an ass lying near at hand, he wielded it so vigorously, and to such good purpose, that he soon stretched one thousand Philistines dead at his feet, and put to flight the remainder.

These superhuman efforts left Samson very weary, and he was so thirsty that he longed for a drink. To satisfy this want, a spring of fresh water suddenly and miraculously sprang out of the jawbone, and the thirsty hero was able to refresh himself.

This massacre of the Philistines was a cause of great rejoicing among the Israelites, who raised Samson to the rank of judge. In spite of this dignity, however, Samson continued to live as before, and he once ventured into Gaza, one of the enemy's strongholds, to pay a visit there.

The Philistines, hearing that their foe was within their walls, closed the city gates, intending to find and kill Samson in the morning. But the hero, starting on his homeward journey at midnight, and finding the gates closed, lifted them off their hinges, and bore them off to the top of a neighboring mountain, whence the people of Gaza had much trouble in bringing them down once more.

Shortly after this adventure, Samson married another Philistine woman named Delilah. She had been secretly bribed

by his enemies to discover the source of his great strength, and to deliver him into their hands securely fastened with bonds which even he could not break.

When first asked by his bride what bonds would hold him, Samson told her that he could not break green withes. So she once bound him thus, while he was asleep, and then awakened him by crying that the Philistines were coming; but he snapped his bonds as if they had been threads.

Delilah now made two other efforts to bind him,—once with new ropes, and once with seven strands of his own hair,—but these also failed to hold him. Then she pouted and coaxed until the giant told her that the real secret of his strength lay entirely in the keeping of his vow, and hence in his unshorn locks.

Delilah therefore cut off Samson's abundant hair while he was sound asleep, bound him, and delivered him bodily into the hands of the cruel Philistines. They put out his eyes, and made him grind wheat in their prison.

Samson suffered untold agonies while thus in the enemy's power. But God had not entirely forsaken him; for, as his hair grew long again, he gradually felt his wonted strength come back.

His enemies, wishing to taunt him, once had him brought into the temple of their god Dagon. The heavy roof of this building was supported by large stone pillars. As it was a great festival, several thousand Philistines were assembled there on that occasion, and about three thousand were on the flat roof.

After breathing a short, silent prayer for divine help, Samson threw his powerful arms around two of the columns, gave them a mighty wrench, and thus tore them down. As they fell, the heavy roof which they supported came crashing down

upon the heads of the luckless Philistines, whose taunts were still ringing in their victim's ears.

All the people assembled there perished, and Samson's body, taken from the ruins, was buried with his family in their ancestral burying ground.

The Ark Captured

Samson was succeeded by Samuel, the last judge of Israel, and the first prophet of a long series which was continuous until the return from captivity in Babylon, as you will see.

Samuel was the son of a Levite and his wife, Hannah. This woman, having remained childless for many years, once went up to Shiloh to worship the Lord. She prayed so fervently before the altar that Eli, the high priest, concluded from her excited gestures that she must be the worse for strong drink.

He was about to turn her out of the holy place when she told him the cause of her grief. Eli then blessed her, and promised her a son. When Samuel was born, Hannah rejoiced greatly, but remembering the vow she had made to give her child to the Lord, she brought him to the temple as soon as he was weaned.

There the mother left her only son in the care of Eli, the high priest, and went home, where God rewarded her for her sacrifice by giving her three other sons and two daughters to cheer her old age.

Eli, the high priest, was a very good man, but very weak. Instead of training his sons, Hophni and Phinehas, in the way they should go, he treated them with such indulgence that they soon took to evil ways.

When the father saw this, he called his sons to him, reproached them for their bad conduct, and sadly compared them to Samuel, who "was in favor both with the Lord and also with men." But this reproof came too late, and the young men went on doing wrong, until a prophet came to tell Eli that both

his sons would die on the same day, and that instead of them God would find a priest worthy of serving him.

Eli was already very old and nearly blind. He dwelt in the temple, where he once laid himself down to sleep in his chamber. Near him, but in another room, lay Samuel, and there the voice of the Lord suddenly called the child.

With cheerful readiness, Samuel answered, "Here am I." He thought that the aged high priest had called him, so he ran into Eli's room to ask his wishes. But Eli sent Samuel back to bed, thinking that he had been dreaming. The call was twice repeated, and at last the priest bade Samuel answer, should he hear the voice again, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Once more the voice fell upon Samuel's listening ear, and when he had answered, according to Eli's orders, the Lord said that he would execute judgment upon the sons of Eli, who would die in punishment for their sins.

When morning came, Eli called Samuel to him, and asked what the Lord had said. Samuel now reluctantly repeated the words he had heard, and the old man, whose heart was broken with grief, bowed his head and cried: "It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good."

From that day Samuel was a prophet of the Lord, and he silently watched the Israelites, who were gathering their forces together; for they had decided to make a great effort to free themselves from the hated yoke of the Philistines.

In the very first battle, however, the Israelites were defeated, and lost four thousand men. Eli's sons, Hophni and Phinehas, thought that they might be more successful if they only had the Ark in their midst; so they now brought it into camp, although they had no authority for doing so.

The Israelites, who remembered the miracle of the Jordan and the falling of the walls of Jericho, received the Ark with loud shouts of joy. But this gladness was soon turned into mourning; for, in the very next battle, the Philistines, fighting with the energy of despair, killed Hophni and Phinehas, together with thousands of their followers, and gained possession of the precious Ark.

They bore this treasure off in triumph,—for they knew the immense importance it had in the eyes of the Israelites, and placed it as a trophy in the temple of Dagon, their principal god, who was half man and half fish.

The news of the Israelites' defeat and great loss was quickly carried to Shiloh by a soldier who managed to escape from the general massacre. He presented himself before Eli, with torn garments and with earth on his head, in token of great mourning.

The high priest was silent and apparently unmoved, as he heard of the death of his sons and the destruction of the army; but when the messenger added that the Ark of God had fallen into the enemy's hands, Eli fell back from his seat and died.

That same day, the young wife of Phinehas heard the mournful tidings, and gave birth to a son, whom she called Ichabod ("where is the glory?"), because with the loss of the sacred Ark she said, "The glory is departed from Israel."

The Return of the Ark

The Philistines, who had won such a brilliant victory, and had secured such a fine prize, were beside themselves with joy. But when they again entered their temple, this joy was changed into amazement; for they found their god lying in fragments at the foot of the Ark.

Soon after, all the men of the city became ill, and hosts of mice overran the land, causing great damage. They soon blamed the Ark for these misfortunes, and carried it elsewhere; but wherever it went, plagues and calamities went with it. Weary of suffering, the Philistines finally made up their minds to send the Ark back to the Israelites.

Under the direction of their priests, they made golden emblems of their plagues, placed them in a coffer of precious wood, and set it with the Ark upon a new cart, to which they harnessed two young cows that had never yet borne the yoke.

These animals were allowed to go as they pleased, and soon turned into the road leading to Bethshemesh, slowly followed by five Philistine lords, who wished to see what would happen. The cart passed near some harvest fields, where the Israelites were working, and when they saw the Ark they rejoiced aloud.

Then the Levites came forward and took possession of the treasure. They used the cart for firewood and the cows for victims, and offered up a sacrifice of thanksgiving for the miraculous return of the Ark which they had lost.

But some of the men, having ventured to peer into the Ark in idle curiosity, were slain. When the people of Bethshemesh saw this, they were afraid to keep the Ark among them, and

begged the men of Kirjathjearim to take it into their city. This request was cheerfully complied with, and the Ark remained there for many years, causing many blessings to fall upon the house under whose roof it had found shelter.

The Israelites had failed to shake off the Philistine yoke as easily as they expected; so they now gladly listened to Samuel's advice, and began to repent of their sins. To recover the favor of God, they set aside the idols which they worshiped. Then they came together at Mizpeh and implored Samuel to pray aloud in their behalf.

In the very midst of this prayer, their old enemies, the Philistines, fell upon them. But this time the Lord was with his people, and he sent a sudden and timely thunderstorm, which filled the hearts of the Philistines with superstitious dread. They were so terrified that they turned and fled, and thus the Israelites won an easy victory.

This battle put an end to the Philistine oppression, which had lasted forty years; and Samuel, growing old, now judged Israel with the help of his two sons. The prophet dwelt at Ramah, where the people often came to consult him, because they knew that he could give them very good advice.

The end of Samuel's long life was clouded on account of the bad behavior of his sons, and because of the persistent request of the elders that he would give them a king. They said that they wanted such a ruler to defend them in case of new attacks on the part of their enemies.

Samuel vainly tried to convince the elders that God was the best king, and that the theocracy under which they lived was the very best system of government for them; they would not believe him. So Samuel, warned by God that it would be well

to give the people their own way, finally told them that he would soon choose a king for them.

A few days later, a young man named Saul came to the prophet to ask where he could find his father's asses, which had wandered out of their pasture and were lost.

Advised by God, Samuel led the man into his own house, told him that the asses were already found, and, after detaining him over night, started out with him on his homeward journey on the morrow.

Saul, King of Israel

Samuel and Saul had not gone very far before the prophet bade the young man send his servant on ahead. When the man had gone, and they were alone, Samuel told Saul to stop, and took out "a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him." This was to show that he took Saul for his king.

As Saul seemed to be somewhat amazed and doubtful, Samuel told him that he had been made king by God's will, and that as a proof he would soon hear of the safety of his father's asses, would receive a present, and would be inspired by the spirit of the Lord to utter a prophecy.

All these things happened just as Samuel had foretold; and the people, hearing Saul prophesy for the first time, exclaimed in wonder: "Is Saul also among the prophets?" The new king did not immediately assume his royal state, however, but returned quietly to his father's house.

Not very long after this event, Samuel called all the elders of the people together, and bade them select their king by lot. Their choice also fell upon Saul; but when his name was called, he was nowhere to be seen, although he was taller than any one else. It seems that he had hidden himself through modesty; but the people at once began to search for him, and he was soon forced to come out from his hiding place.

Saul was led into the very midst of the assembled people and was welcomed with the cheer: "God save the king!" So far as we know, this is the first time that writers mention this cry, which has since been heard many times and in many countries.

Escorted by a volunteer bodyguard, Saul went home to Gibeah, where he quietly staid until the people of another town

begged him to save them from the hands of their enemies, the Ammonites, who kept them closely besieged.

Prompted by the spirit of God, Saul now collected an army of three hundred and thirty thousand men, fell suddenly upon the Ammonites, and completely defeated them. Then he went to Gilgal, where Samuel publicly laid down his charge as judge, and gave the people over to Saul's care.

Although the great army had gone home, Saul soon raised a new force of three thousand men, with which he proceeded to make war on the enemies of Israel. In this work he was greatly helped by his son Jonathan, a young man of great valor.

Saul's small army was once encamped at Gilgal, when they became frightened at the numbers of the enemy, and postponed an attack, intending to wait until Samuel could come and offer up a prayer in their behalf. But Samuel did not come as soon as he was expected; so Saul became impatient, and decided that he would offer up the sacrifice, although he knew that he had no right to do so.

Saul had just finished this religious ceremony when Samuel appeared. The prophet, who knew that the king had done wrong, now reproved him, and foretold that in punishment for this sin the crown would not long remain in his hands, and would never belong to his children.

When Saul heard these words, he was troubled and ashamed, and did not dare to begin the war. The Philistines, seeing this, spread rapidly over the country, and took away all the weapons that the Israelites had. Then they carried away all the smiths, and thus forced the Chosen People to come into their enemy's camp to have even their tools sharpened.

This tyranny soon became so unbearable that Jonathan resolved to end it. Accompanied only by his armor-bearer, he

boldly entered the Philistine camp, and slew many men. A timely earthquake, occurring at the same moment, bewildered the Philistines so sorely that they fell upon one another with drawn swords. Their own work of destruction was then finished by the Israelites, who crept out of the caves where they had taken refuge, and joined in the slaughter with hearty good will.

This massacre was finally seen from Saul's camp, and he gave his men orders to follow the fugitives, rashly adding: "Cursed be the man that eateth any food until evening." Saul said these words, intending to show his men that they must pursue the enemy without stopping for rest or refreshment; and he little thought that the curse would fall upon his own son.

It seems that Jonathan had not heard his father's command; and, in passing through a forest, he dipped his rod in a honeycomb, and put it to his mouth. This act of disobedience was soon discovered by Saul, who would have punished it by death, as he had vowed, had not all the people insisted that their favorite Jonathan must live.

The Anointing of David

The campaign against the Philistines was followed by a long series of victories over the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, and Amalekites, and Saul, having subdued all his enemies, could at last assume the royal state. But even in the midst of his splendor he could not forget Samuel's prophecy, and kept wondering how he could secure the crown to his descendants.

From time to time the prophet Samuel still appeared at the king's court, to bring him God's commands, and on one occasion he bade Saul fight the Amalekites, and utterly destroy them and all their possessions. Instead of obeying this order faithfully, Saul carried it out only in part; for he divided the best of the spoil among his people, and spared the life of Agag, the King of the Amalekites.

But on the way home Saul was met by Samuel, to whom God had said: "It repenteth me that I have set up Saul to be king." When Samuel reproved Saul for his disobedience, the king vainly tried to excuse himself by saying that he had saved the cattle to offer up in sacrifice; but the prophet would not listen to him.

Then Samuel went on to tell Saul that on account of his disobedience, he would no longer be helped by God. Terrified by these words, the king now clung to the prophet's mantle, imploring forgiveness for his sins, until a piece of the garment was torn off and remained in his hands.

The prophet made use of this accident to illustrate the meaning of his words, and said: "The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee this day, and hath given it to a

neighbor of thine that is better than thou." But before leaving court, Samuel himself saw that God's commands were fully obeyed, by sending for the captive king Agag, and cutting off his head.

This was Samuel's last visit to Saul, whom the Lord had now forsaken; but the prophet mourned this king's disobedience so sorely that God reproved him. At the same time the Lord bade Samuel take a vial of oil, and go to the house of Jesse, the grandson of Ruth, where he would find the new king.

Samuel obeyed, and when he had reached Jesse's house, he asked to see the man's sons. Seven of Ruth's stalwart great-grandsons passed before the prophet, but it was only when David, the eighth and youngest, appeared, that the divine voice spoke to Samuel, saying: "Arise, anoint him, for this is he."

No sooner had this future king been anointed, in the midst of his family, than the spirit of the Lord forsook Saul and fell upon David. From that moment, too, Saul seemed possessed at times by an evil spirit which drove him to wild acts.

The anointing of David was Samuel's last public deed before he finally withdrew to his home at Ramah. But David resumed his peaceful occupation as shepherd, and learned to sing and play, a talent which later won for him the title of "Sweet Singer in Israel." Then, too, he gave the first signs of the dauntless courage which was to distinguish him all through life, and bravely defended his flocks from the attacks of lions and bears, and even of Philistine thieves.

All through the reign of Saul, the Israelites were forced to contend with the Philistines. These enemies of the Chosen People grew bolder and bolder, and when the spirit of the Lord forsook the king, they began to get the better of him.

Encouraged by success, they finally assembled all their forces at a mountain in the Israelite territory, where Saul came with his army to oppose them.

In the ranks of the Israelites there were three of Jesse's sons, and David frequently came down to visit them. It was in the course of one of these brief sojourns with the army, that he once saw a Philistine giant step forth, and heard him boastfully challenge the Israelites to single combat.

No one accepted the challenge, until, moved by the spirit of the Lord, David offered to fight the giant. As soon as this offer was made known, David was led into the presence of Saul, where he firmly declared that God, who had "delivered him out of the paw of the lion and out of the paw of the bear," would surely save him from the hand of the giant Philistine.

David and Goliath

When Saul heard David firmly, yet modestly, assert his trust in the help of the Lord, he no longer dared oppose the youth; so he not only allowed David to go forth and fight, but even offered to lend him some costly armor, and helped him to put on the cuirass and helmet.

The young shepherd, however, was not used to the weight of arms, and he staggered and nearly fell when in full battle array. Seeing that such an outfit was not for him, David now said that he would rather meet the giant with nothing but his shepherd's staff and the sling which he handled with great skill.

After choosing a few smooth stones down by a brook, the boyish champion went boldly forth to meet the Philistine warrior, whose name was Goliath. This giant viewed David's approach with great scorn, and began to taunt him, but all his boasts were soon silenced by a swift stone from David's sling, which pierced his forehead and sank into his brain.

When Goliath fell, David sprang forward, and, seizing the giant's huge sword, used it to cut off his head. The Philistines, seeing that their champion warrior had fallen, turned and fled in sudden dismay; but they were soon pursued and slaughtered without mercy by the Israelite army.

David's courage and skill roused the admiration of all the nation, and even of Saul's daughter, whose hand was promised him in marriage in reward for his bravery. The marriage was not to take place at once, however, and in the mean while David was called upon to soothe the king's outbursts of wrath by the sweet tones of his voice and harp.

At first Saul listened to his harper with delight, but little by little he grew jealous of the bright youth whom everybody praised. Soon he overheard the people exalting the young warrior, and saying: "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands," and then his wicked envy gained the upper hand.

In a fit of rage the mad king therefore once flung his spear at the youth, while he was playing his harp, but fortunately the weapon missed the mark. A second similar attempt was equally fruitless; and Saul, seeing that he could not kill David, now resolved to insult him.

Instead of giving David his daughter's hand in marriage, as he had promised, Saul bestowed her upon another suitor. Then, finding that Michal, his younger daughter, had fallen in love with David, he told the youth that he might have her if he would kill one hundred Philistines. This condition was made because Saul hoped that David would fall by the hand of the enemy; but the young man went forth, slew two hundred Philistines, and, securing their spoil, came and laid it at Saul's feet, claiming his promised bride.

As no further pretext could be found to delay the marriage, Saul gave his daughter Michal to David, as he had promised.

But although he had thus been forced to acknowledge David's services, Saul still hated his son-in-law, and he once bade his courtiers and his son Jonathan kill the young hero.

Jonathan was faithful to David, his chosen friend, and therefore interceded for him, and succeeded in partly disarming Saul's wrath. But when a new fit of madness came upon the king, his anger all returned, and he hired assassins to steal into David's room and murder him in his sleep.

Warned by Michal of the threatening danger, David fled secretly and by night, while his wife deceived the murderers by making the image of a man and placing it in her husband's bed.

David's Flight

David had narrowly escaped death on several occasions, as we have seen, and now he did not dare return to the king's palace. He therefore withdrew to a place near Ramah, where Saul's messengers soon came to take him prisoner. They did not dare do so, however; for on the way the spirit of the Lord came upon them, and forced them to prophesy against their will.

When Saul heard of the utter failure of this attempt to secure David, he himself went out in search of him; but being overcome on the way by the spirit of the Lord, he too dared do no harm, and merely invited his son-in-law to return to court.

David did not know whether he could trust to Saul's apparent friendship, so he had a secret interview with Jonathan. The king's son gladly offered to find out whether it would be safe for David to return, and to give him timely warning should any immediate danger threaten him.

Jonathan, feeling sure from his father's actions that David was still viewed with dislike, soon went out into a field where he knew that David was hiding. As he did not dare seek his friend openly, he made believe to practice shooting; for he had agreed with David that his orders to the lad who picked up his arrows would be intended as information whether or not the king could be trusted.

David, therefore, listened attentively, and learned that he must fly; but after the lad had gone, Jonathan drew near the hiding place, to take a brief but affectionate farewell of his dearest friend.

In obedience to the advice which he had thus obtained from Jonathan, David quickly fled. As he was unarmed and without provisions, he made use of a stratagem to secure food and a sword. He entered the house of the high priest, and pretended that he was the bearer of a message from Saul, and that his servants were waiting for him near by. Then he asked for and obtained the sword of Goliath, and five of the sacred loaves of shewbread, which the priests alone were allowed to eat.

Thus armed and refreshed, David made his way to the court of a certain Philistine king, where a new danger threatened him, and where he escaped death only by pretending to be crazy.

From this place David soon passed on to the cave of Adullam, where he dwelt for some time. He was joined here by his brothers, and by a large force of Israelites, who, displeased with the actions of their king, now took sides against him.

To prevent Saul's harming his parents in any way, David secretly led them into the land of Moab, where he left them under the protection of the king. Then, fearing nothing for himself, he set out with four hundred men to wage war on his own account with his old enemies, the Philistines.

While he was thus an outcast and a wanderer, David met with many adventures, only a few of which are recorded in the Bible. For instance, three of his followers once cut their way through the Philistine camp, which surrounded them on all sides, merely to get some water to quench his thirst.

But David was too generous a man to enjoy a drink secured at the risk of his friends' lives; and, to prevent their ever venturing forth thus rashly again, he poured it all out on the

ground, exclaiming reproachfully: "Shall I drink the blood of these men that have put their lives in jeopardy?"

While he was living in the cave of Adullam, David once received a visit from the prophet Gad, who bade him go into the land of Judah. But no sooner had David done so, than Saul came after him to make another attempt to kill him.

On the way, Saul heard for the first time that the high priest had seen David, and had helped him in his flight. In his anger at this news, Saul had the priest and eighty-five of his assistants slain, as well as all the citizens of the unfortunate town where they lived.

Only one of them, Abiathar, son of the high priest, managed to escape from the general massacre. Fleeing for his life, he joined David, who now bitterly repented of his deception, and mourned over the terrible consequences which had resulted from it.

Advised by Abiathar and Gad, the high priest and the prophet, David began to fight against the Philistines. He defeated them with great slaughter, and then remained at the city of Keilah until warned by God that the men of that place were about to betray him into Saul's hands.

David's Generosity

Forced to leave Keilah because he could no longer trust the people around him, David now fled into the wilderness, where Saul vainly sought him. Here David had a last interview with Jonathan, who assured him that he would in time be king over all Israel.

Then, still pursued by Saul, David fled on; and he would surely have been made prisoner, had not the king been turned aside by a sudden raid on the part of the Philistines. While Saul was waging war against these old foes, David made his way to Engedi.

But as soon as the war with the Philistines was ended, Saul resumed the pursuit of David, and, coming to Engedi, he stopped to rest in a cave. He slept there peacefully, little suspecting that the foe whom he had come to seek lay but a few feet from him.

While the king slept in the midst of his guard, David noiselessly stole out of the dark recesses of the cave where he had been hiding. He stole up to the sleeping king, and cut off a piece of the royal mantle, which he bore off as a trophy when he went away.

When Saul and his army were riding off on the morrow, David suddenly appeared at the mouth of the cave and showed him the piece of his garment. The young man urged that this was a good proof of his innocence, seeing that he had not tried to harm the king when it was in his power to do so.

Saul, touched by the generosity of David, who could so easily have killed him in his sleep, now gave up all thought of harming his son-in-law, and cried: "Thou art more righteous

than I; for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil."

As the pursuit was thus ended for the time being, David supported himself for a while by the gifts of neighboring farmers, whom, in exchange, he protected from the raids of their enemies. On one occasion David sent ten young men to the farm of Nabal, to ask for the usual provisions. But Nabal churlishly refused to give any, and would have been punished sorely by David and his angry troops, had not his wife, Abigail, hastened to appease their wrath.

She took an ample supply of food, and brought it to David in person; then, falling at his feet, she implored him to spare her husband and family. Pleased by her gifts, and touched by her beauty, David consented; and when Nabal died, he took Abigail for his wife, for Michal, the king's daughter, had during his absence been given in marriage to another man.

The memory of David's generosity did not linger long in Saul's mind, so we soon hear of his starting out again to seize and kill David. But the young hero, accompanied by only one servant, slipped one night into the king's camp and tent, and left it unseen, carrying off Saul's spear and cup.

When he reached a hill opposite the sleeping army, David raised his voice and awoke the sleepers. Then, holding up his trophies in full sight of them all, he again told Saul what he had done. As in the meeting at the cave of Engedi, Saul felt touched by David's kindness in sparing his life, and, instead of continuing the pursuit, went away, after he had sent one of his soldiers to get his spear and cup, as David bade him.

David and Saul never saw each other again, after this strange conversation from one hilltop to another; for, fearing that the king would again forget his solemn promise, David

went away with all his followers to take refuge among his old enemies, the Philistines. They were so glad to get the help of so good a warrior that they gave him a city to live in. David dwelt here for about one year, fighting with great success against the Amalekites and other tribes, and bringing back much spoil.

The King of the Philistines was so pleased with his share of the booty that he treated David as a friend, and told him all his secrets. One day he even made known to him a plan which he had made to attack the Israelites, and asked him to join the army. David did not dare to refuse, but when the other Philistines heard what the king had done, they would not let David fight with them, and had him sent back to his town.

David Made King

Saul, in the mean while, had heard that the Philistines were coming, and he was very anxious to know how the war would end. As the spirit of the Lord had left him, and he could not find out what would happen in any other way, he now made up his mind to do as many people did then, and consult a witch.

Saul had often rebuked the Israelites for doing this, and as they did not heed him he had killed nearly all the witches in his land some time before. Only one had escaped him, and she now dwelt at Endor, where Saul went in disguise to ask her advice.

The witch soon recognized the king, although he came without his usual train of followers; but, after making him promise that he would not harm her in any way, she consented to use her magic arts in his presence. By spells and incantations she then called up the spirit of the prophet Samuel, whom Saul said he wished to see.

Saul questioned the spirit when it rose up before him, and learned not only that his army would meet with a terrible defeat, but that he and his sons would perish on that same fatal day.

In a gloomy frame of mind he left the witch of Endor, and went forth to meet the Philistines. As Samuel's wraith had foretold, the Israelites were beaten, and Saul's sons were killed. Then the king and his armor-bearer, unwilling to survive and become the prisoners of their foes, fell upon their swords and died also.

David, coming back to his town among the Philistines after a short absence, now found that the Amalekites had taken and

burned it, and had carried off his two wives, Abigail and Ahinoam. After consulting the high priest Abiathar, and getting his leave to fight, David pursued and defeated the Amalekites, and gave their spoil to his own followers. As he came back to his own town, he was met by a messenger, an eyewitness of the terrible battle between the Philistines and the Israelites.

This man told David about the defeat of the Israelites and the death of the king and his sons. Then, hoping to win David's favor, he added that it was he that had killed Saul with his own hand. This untruth received a speedy punishment; for David, believing it, bade one of his soldiers cut off the man's head.

The death of all the royal family was a great blow to David, but he mourned especially for his friend Jonathan.

Several of his psalms, which bear the impress of his grief, are supposed to have been composed at this time, and to be a sort of funeral lament for the royal race.

The whole country was in a terrible condition at this time. Although Abner, general-in-chief of the Israelite army, had proclaimed Ishbosheth, the youngest son of Saul, as king, the Philistines had taken possession of the greater part of the country.

For two years Ishbosheth made a feeble attempt to reign; but Abner saw that David's party daily became more powerful, so he finally proposed to make peace with him and join him. David accepted these proposals, and promised to receive Abner kindly, provided that his wife Michal was given back to him.

All would have gone well, and the two parties would have been good friends, had not Joab, David's captain, slain Abner soon after he left his master's presence. This act of treachery so

angered David that he cursed Joab and all his family, and mourned publicly for the murdered Abner.

When the rest of the people saw how just David was, they all said that they were in favor of him. Two captains then slew Ishbosheth and carried his head to David, from whom they expected a reward. But David, who despised all treachery, put them both to death.

Although some members of Saul's family were left, David was now called sole king; and he reigned at Hebron seven and a half years before he moved to Jerusalem. In this new capital, "David went on, and grew great, for the Lord God of hosts was with him." It was here, too, that Hiram, King of Tyre, sent to ask his alliance, promising him in exchange cedar wood from Mount Lebanon for the building of a new palace at Jerusalem.

This palace was very grand and spacious; for David, not content with Michal, Abigail, and Ahinoam, had many other wives, and was the father of many children, who all dwelt under his own roof.

The Ark Brought To Jerusalem

David was soon obliged to leave his new capital, to go forth and fight his old foes, the Philistines. When he had conquered these enemies, he felt that it was time to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, and to build a temple where it might take up its abode for good. With an escort of thirty thousand men, he therefore set out. The Ark was placed on a new cart, driven by the sons of the high priest, and the procession slowly wended its way towards Jerusalem.

God had commanded that no one should venture to touch the Ark while on its way, but one of the high priest's sons stretched out his hand to steady it when the cart tipped. No sooner had he touched it than he fell down dead.

Awed by this accident, the king ordered the journey stopped, and the Ark was placed for safe keeping in a house near by, where it remained three months. Then, seeing that it brought great blessings to the place where it was kept, the people again became anxious to have it in Jerusalem; and as soon as the new tent, or tabernacle, was finished, they sent the Levites to bring it thither.

To show his respect for the God of Israel, David went ahead of the Ark on foot, in the simple garb of a minstrel; and, dancing and playing upon his harp, he led the way to Mount Zion, where the Ark was to remain.

In his joy at the recovery of this precious Ark, David also gave alms to all the poor, and he offered up costly sacrifices. His joy was marred, however, when Michal, his wife, taunted him for dancing and singing before his people. David finally grew so angry with her that he sent her away from him forever.

Although David had thus safely brought the sacred Ark to Jerusalem, and had placed it in the new tabernacle, he did not consider a tent a sufficiently handsome abode, and wished to build a fine temple for it.

But when he consulted the prophet Nathan, he learned that the honor of building this temple was reserved for one of his sons. He also received a renewal of the old promise of the birth of the Messiah. This promise gave him great pleasure, and was the probable source of the joyful psalms which are known as the Messianic psalms.

As David did not dare to undertake the building of the temple after Nathan's words, he made use of his time in completing the defeat of the Philistines. Then, too, he punished the Moabites for the treacherous murder of his parents, whom he had left in their care.

David also made war against the Edomites, one of whose young princes fled to Egypt. There he grew up and plotted revenge, coming back to Palestine with a mighty army in the days of the next king, Solomon.

By all these victories, which are celebrated in some of the psalms, David little by little enlarged his kingdom, till it reached as far as the banks of the Red Sea. All the Promised Land now belonged to the Chosen People; but their hold on it was rather uncertain, because they had not always been faithful to the Lord.

David was now so firmly placed upon the throne that he no longer feared the family of Saul. He even received Saul's last descendants in his palace, where he made them welcome and treated them like his own sons.

But the consequences of Saul's sins were not yet ended. Because he had murdered the Gibeonites, a great famine came

over the land a few years later, and lasted three years, causing much suffering. David, hoping to end this famine, finally offered to give the Gibeonites satisfaction, and in answer to their demands he gave up into their hands seven of the former king's family. The Gibeonites, like most people of the time, believed in revenge; so they hung these seven men on the hill of Gibeon, and decreed that their corpses should swing there for several months.

Rizpah, the distracted mother of two of the dead, wished to protect their bodies from the beaks and claws of the vultures and other birds of prey, so she took up her position at the foot of the gallows. There she wildly strove to drive away the birds by day and the wild beasts by night, until David, touched by her devotion, had the bodies taken down and buried.

The Repentance of David

Although the wars with the enemies of Israel were not yet entirely ended, David left the army to the care of Joab, and came back to his capital, Jerusalem. It was while looking out of his palace window one day, that he saw a beautiful woman at her toilet, and fell deeply in love with her.

He now asked who she was, and soon found out that her name was Bathsheba, and that she was the wife of Uriah one of his soldiers. As David wanted to have this beautiful woman for his own wife, he began to plot how he could get rid of her husband, Uriah; for he knew very well that he could marry her only after she was a widow.

After much thought, David decided on a plan. He sent word to the captain of his army to place Uriah in such an exposed spot, when the next battle took place, that he would surely be killed. The captain obeyed, Uriah fell, and David soon married Bathsheba, the widow, whom he had thus won by the greatest crime of his life.

Of course so wicked a deed as this greatly displeased the Lord, and he sent Nathan, one of his prophets, to reprove the king. Nathan came before David, and, to make sure that he would listen, began to tell this parable:

There was once upon a time a poor man, who had only one ewe lamb. He fed this little creature out of his hand, and cared for it very tenderly both night and day. Near this poor man there dwelt a rich farmer, who had great flocks, and more lambs than he could count.

One day a stranger came to visit the rich man, and the latter gave orders that a feast should be made ready for his guest. As

there was no meat in the house, he bade his servant go catch the poor man's pet lamb and kill it, so that they might have enough to eat.

David listened attentively to this story, and was very angry when he heard that the rich man, instead of killing one of his own lambs, had taken the poor man's pet. He said that such a thing was mean, unjust, and cruel, and vowed that the rich man should be severely punished.

But when he sternly asked Nathan: "Who is the man?" he was astonished and ashamed to hear the answer: "Thou art the man." The prophet then went on to explain that, while the king's heart had been filled with pity for the poor man who had lost a pet lamb, he had felt no such feelings for Uriah, whom he had killed, and whose wife he had married.

David now understood how deeply he had sinned, and he repented greatly. He prayed to God to forgive him, and, as he was a poet, he composed a number of psalms, or hymns, which he used to sing, accompanying himself on his harp. In these poems he expressed his sorrow and deep repentance; hence they are called the "penitential psalms."

But in spite of his repentance David could not escape all punishment, and the first child which Bathsheba bore him fell very sick. The king loved this child dearly; so he fasted and prayed, and was so anxious that when it breathed its last the courtiers did not at first dare tell him that it was dead.

But when David heard that the child had ceased to live and suffer, he became very calm, and left off weeping and fasting. His courtiers, who had expected a great outburst of grief, were amazed at his calmness. Finally they ventured to ask him how he could be so composed, now that the child was dead, when

the mere knowledge of its danger had made him spend all his time in fasting and prayer.

David then sadly told them that as long as the little one lived, he had hoped by prayers and tears to make God forgive his sin, and leave him the child. But when he heard that it was dead, he knew that tears were useless, and added softly: "I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me."

Absalom in Disgrace

Bathsheba and David were slightly comforted for the loss of their first child by the birth of another son, whom they called Solomon, which means "peace." They gave him this name because the wars were just ended, and a peace had begun which David hoped would last a very long while.

He was mistaken, however. The peace did not last; for God wished to punish David for his sins, and especially for having caused the death of Uriah; so he stirred up great troubles for the king. Even David's many children now quarreled together, and one of them, Amnon, insulted Tamar, his half-sister.

This young prince was not bad by nature, but, unfortunately, he liked to associate with bad companions. They soon taught him to be as wicked and mean as themselves, and after he had wronged his stepsister, they encouraged him to turn her out of the house and into the street.

Tamar was weeping bitterly when her brother Absalom found her, and when he heard how shamefully she had been treated, he took her into his own house, and vowed that he would avenge her.

Although Absalom was now always seeking for a chance to punish Amnon, he had to wait a very long while before he could do so. At the end of two years, however, he made a great feast, to which he invited all the king's sons.

Amnon came with the other guests, and sat with them at meat, little thinking that his end was so near. But in the middle of the feast, Absalom's servants suddenly fell upon him and killed him, before he could make an attempt to defend himself. The other princes, seeing Amnon fall, rushed out of the room,

and, mounting their mules, rode quickly away, lest the same fate should overtake them.

Absalom had at last avenged his sister Tamar, but, fearing David's displeasure, he did not dare return to court; so he went to live elsewhere during the next three years. The king, who had always treated Absalom as a favorite, secretly longed to see him, but did not like to recall him, because he had done wrong and because there was danger that the people might injure him. Joab, the general of the army, felt sure that David was very anxious to forgive his son, yet hardly knew how to do so, and at last he sent an old woman to see the king and tell him this story:

"I am a poor woman, a widow, and I had two sons. They were a great comfort to me; but, unfortunately, while working out in the fields one day, they began to quarrel and soon came to blows. As no one was there to stop them, they fought until one was killed by accident.

"All my relatives are so angry at the only son I now have left, that they wish to kill him to avenge his brother; and thus they would leave me all alone in the world."

The king, touched by the poor woman's sorrow, bade her weep no more. He promised that her son should be allowed to come home, and that no one would dare to do him any harm.

Then the woman confessed to the king that the story she had told him was not true, and also that she had spoken by Joab's order. But she had made the king understand that, provided he were willing to forgive his son Absalom, no one would dare to oppose him.

David now saw that the wisest plan would be to send for Absalom, who, therefore, came back to Jerusalem to live. But although Absalom had thus been recalled by his father, David

refused to see him, and the young man began to make many friends among the people who did not like the king.

One of these men, the king's own counselor, secretly advised Absalom to try to become king in his father's stead, and encouraged the prince to form a plot which resulted in forcing David to flee from Jerusalem in great haste.

David fled from his capital, followed by a small band of devoted men, and the Levites came after him with the Ark of God. But David soon bade the priests carry it back into the city, saying that, if the Lord wished, he would yet be brought back to Jerusalem, where he would again see the Ark.

As David passed along, weeping, he was soon overtaken by another faithful servant, Hushai. In obedience to the king's orders, this man went back to Jerusalem, and pretended to join Absalom, only in order to discover and defeat all the prince's plans.

A little further on, the king was met by Shimei, a member of Saul's house, who stoned and insulted him. David bore this harsh treatment with humility, and would not allow his servant to punish Shimei. He sadly said that it was the just punishment of his many sins.

While David was thus fleeing, Absalom triumphantly entered Jerusalem, where he graciously accepted the services of Hushai, and settled himself comfortably in his father's palace.

The Death of Absalom

As Absalom lingered in Jerusalem to enjoy the pleasures of royalty, David had time to assemble an army on the other side of the Jordan, and to place it under the command of Joab and two other generals.

The king then called all three of these men into his presence, and, after giving them his general orders, he added: "Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom." Thus, you see, he still loved his rebellious son dearly, and was very anxious that Absalom should meet with no harm.

The armies started out, and met Absalom in a great forest, where his host was defeated. The prince, seeing that the battle was lost, then fled in haste through the forest, until the mule which he rode carried him under the spreading branches of an oak tree.

Absalom's long, fluttering hair caught in the branches of this tree, and he hung there while his mule dashed on. The pursuers, headed by Joab, soon found Absalom, and, forgetful of the king's charge, they killed him.

The news of the victory soon came to David, but all his joy was changed to grief when he heard that Absalom, his favorite son, was dead. The aged king "went up to the chamber over the gate, and wept; and as he wept, thus he said: 'O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!'"

The poor father continued mourning thus, until his captain Joab bade him rouse himself, and make an effort to win back

his kingdom, unless he wished to lose the people's affection forever.

David, understanding the importance of this advice, then set aside his private sorrows, made a treaty with the rebels, and went back to Jerusalem in triumph. There Shimei was one of the first to come and ask his pardon for the stones and insults which he had hurled against him when he left Jerusalem in sorrow.

The joy of the king's return to his capital was soon marred by a quarrel between the tribes of Benjamin and Judah, and by the jealousy of Joab and Amasa. This Amasa had just been appointed captain of the army, so he started out to fight the Benjamites.

Joab, who was unwilling to give up the command of the troops, now secretly followed Amasa, and, after killing him, headed the army as usual, and pursued the Benjamites to a city far to the north. There, seeing that they would not otherwise be able to escape from Joab's wrath, the people killed the rebel leader, and flung his head over the wall and into the camp.

As we have seen, David had already been punished for his sins by a three years' famine, and an exile from Jerusalem which lasted three months. He had sorely repented, but he soon fell into another sin as bad as the rest; for in spite of God's command, he counted the Israelites so that he might glory in their numbers.

The punishment came almost as soon as the census was ended; for a prophet of the Lord came to David, bidding him choose among three evils the one he would rather endure, seven years of famine, three months of flight, or three days of pestilence. Having tested the first two punishments, and knowing full well what sufferings they had brought upon him

and his people, David chose the last, as the least evil of the three. So the angel of destruction passed over the city, and in three days no less than seventy thousand people died of the plague.

By the advice of a prophet, David then built an altar upon the spot where the angel had stood, and there he offered up sacrifices, day and night, until the plague had ceased. It was upon this spot that the temple was built during the next reign, and from this time on David amassed a large treasure for that purpose.

Everybody knew that David wished Solomon to succeed him, but not all the people were satisfied with this choice. A conspiracy was therefore formed to set another son on the throne in Solomon's stead as soon as David died.

The news of this plot came to the ears of the prophet Nathan, and of Bathsheba, who therefore coaxed David to have Solomon anointed as his successor during his lifetime. This ceremony took place in public, and in it the priest used the sacred oil which was kept in the tabernacle for this purpose only.

Having reigned forty years, secured a fine capital, amassed wealth enough for the future temple, anointed his successor, and given him good advice, David now died "full of days, riches, and honor; and Solomon, his son, reigned in his stead."

The Judgment of Solomon

Under the reign of Solomon, the Jewish kingdom reached its highest point of glory and power. The new king had inherited from his father not only an extensive country, but also very great wealth. He was, besides, very clever, and had been well educated by his mother, Bathsheba, and by the prophet Nathan.

When only ten years of age, Solomon had shared his father's flight, and at fifteen he was anointed as his successor. Solomon freely forgave the brother who tried to secure the throne, but when this same young man again tried to be king, he had him put to death.

In this conspiracy perished Shimei, Saul's last descendant, as well as Joab, David's principal captain; and the high priest Abiathar was banished forever. Solomon, having thus secured the throne, now made an alliance with the King of Egypt, and, to strengthen the bond of friendship between them, he married the Pharaoh's daughter.

Shortly after his wedding Solomon went up to the heights of Gibeon, to offer up a great sacrifice. On that selfsame night, he heard the voice of the Lord, bidding him choose any gift he wished, and promising that it should be granted to him.

Solomon was still very young, and he realized that he would need much knowledge to govern his people; so he now asked for wisdom in preference to happiness or wealth. This wish was granted, and because he had thought more of his people's good than of his own, God also promised him long life, riches, and power.

The Great King, for such is the name Solomon bears in Jewish history, soon had occasion to make use of the wisdom that he had obtained. Two women appeared in his judgment hall, clamoring for justice and bringing with them one living and one dead child.

Solomon, with his usual regard for justice, heard both sides of the story; but as both women denied the dead child, and claimed the living, the people present were greatly perplexed. The king, however, seemed to feel no doubts. As both women laid equal claim to the living child, he said that it should at once be cut in two and one half given to each mother.

The guards, in obedience to this order, seized the child, and were about to divide it, when the real mother fell at Solomon's feet, begging him not to injure her child, and offering to give up all right to it, provided it might live.

The other woman, however, stood by unmoved, saying that the judgment was just. By her indifference to the fate of the living child, she showed that the dead one was hers. Solomon, having thus found out the truth, then bade the guards pause. He gave back the child to the real mother, and received much applause for the way in which he had settled this difficult case.

To extend the kingdom which had been left him by his father, Solomon made alliances with the Kings of Syria and Phœnicia, and greatly increased his riches by trading. In his reign large caravans set out in all directions, and came back from distant climes laden with precious things.

A large fleet of trading vessels also sailed out of Joppa, to bring gold from Ophir, ebony, ivory, spices, precious stones, silken and fine woolen materials, and almost every other thing you can think of. Many of these wares were sold, but the choicest among them were kept for the building or adornment

of the great temple, which Solomon wished to erect on Mount Moriah, on the very spot where the angel of pestilence had stood when David was given the choice between a seven years' famine, a three months' flight, or a three days' plague.

The Building of the Temple

Solomon, as we have seen, was very anxious to secure the most precious materials for the building of the temple. He therefore made an agreement with Hiram, King of Tyre, who promised to furnish him huge timbers from the big cedar trees which grew on Mount Lebanon.

These logs were cut and made ready for their future purpose on the spot where they grew, and were then carried to Jerusalem. The stonecutters, in the mean while, had got huge blocks of stone ready for the walls and foundations; and workers in iron, brass, silver, and gold were busy day after day, preparing all that was necessary for the adornment of the costliest edifice that has ever been seen.

We are told that no less than one hundred and eighty thousand men were employed in this work, and the preparation of the material was so complete that no sound of ax or hammer was heard about the building, during the whole seven and a half years needed to finish it.

Solomon, with Hiram his architect, watched this great edifice slowly rise. It was completed one thousand and five years before Christ, and probably cost more than five billion dollars.

The temple which Solomon thus built had a porch supported by Hiram's masterpieces, two great brazen pillars. Then came the Holy Place, where stood the altars for incense, the table for the shewbread, and the seven branched golden candlestick; and in the courts were the altar of burnt offering, and a great brazen laver which was called the Sea of Brass. A

third inclosure, the Holy of Holies, glittered with gold and precious stones, and within it stood the Ark of the Covenant.

The grandest religious ceremony described in the Old Testament is the dedication of this new temple, which took place at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles, one of the greatest Jewish festivals. People came to Jerusalem from all directions to see it, and although the Promised Land was a small country, no less than five million persons were present at this great ceremony, where God sent down fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice.

Not content with the building of this temple, Solomon also constructed a palace large enough to shelter him, his court, and his seven hundred wives and attendants. The architect Hiram finished it in thirteen years, and hung it around with golden shields which were used for the king's bodyguard.

Within this palace was the great cedar-wood Judgment Hall, where Solomon sat on a marvelous throne of gold and ivory. It was here that he received the Queen of Sheba, who came from afar to visit him, and to find out whether all the tales she had heard of his wealth, power, and wisdom were quite true.

The Queen of Sheba brought Solomon princely gifts, and soon made sure that none of the stories about his wealth and power were exaggerations. Then she satisfied herself about his wisdom by asking him some problems and riddles, which he solved with the greatest ease.

To please his Egyptian wife, Solomon built a second palace, in the mountains, where he and his court spent the warm summer months. But even his royal income of thirty million dollars was not enough to keep up all this magnificence, and to obtain more money Solomon soon had recourse to

taxes, which caused the people much suffering, and which in time made them hate him.

As the Israelites could not raise money enough to supply their needs and pay these heavy taxes, they little by little neglected their farming and cattle raising, and began to engage in trade to get larger profits.

Thus they soon came into close contact with many men of different nations, and they learned from them to worship idols, such as were seen in the Syrian and Phœnician temples. Little by little, they thus forgot the Lord their God, who had released them from slavery in Egypt, had given them the Promised Land, and had blessed them with all the prosperity which they now enjoyed.

The Death of Solomon

When Solomon had finished all his great works, God renewed to him the promises which had been made to David. He also warned the king that while obedience would be rewarded with great blessings, disobedience would bring about the ruin of both king and people.

Hiram, who had finished the buildings which the king had planned with such magnificence, now went home, after receiving his promised reward of twenty cities, which were all situated in the land of Galilee.

After Hiram had gone, Solomon finished the walls of Jerusalem. Then, to please his foreign wives, he did what he knew was wrong, and set up heathen altars to Ashtoreth and Moloch on the Mount of Olives, directly opposite Mount Moriah, where stood the new temple. Here he not only allowed his wives to offer up sacrifices to the idols, but even helped them to do so.

God had warned him that such disobedience would surely be punished, and as Solomon had worshiped idols he was no longer allowed to enjoy the great prosperity of his early reign. A prophet was therefore sent to Jeroboam, one of Solomon's rivals, to tell him that part of the kingdom would soon be given into his hands.

The prophet met Jeroboam, snatched the new mantle off his shoulders, and tore it into twelve pieces. Then thrusting ten of these into the astonished Jeroboam's hand, he said that God would thus rend the kingdom to pieces, and would give ten tribes into his keeping. This soon came true; ten tribes joined Jeroboam, and the tribe of Judah was the only important one

which remained faithful to the royal family. It was left to the king only for the sake of David, and so that the Lord's worship might go on in his temple at Jerusalem.

When Solomon heard this prediction, he tried to bring it to naught by killing Jeroboam; but the intended victim, hearing that his life was in danger, fled into Egypt.

Solomon was haunted all the time by the feeling that his sins had robbed his children of their inheritance. He was also worried by wars with two rivals,—Hadad, Prince of Edom, and Rezon, founder of the kingdom of Damascus; and thus he was very unhappy toward the end of his life.

Solomon was not only one of the greatest kings of the world, but he is also known as a writer. He left three books, which form part of the Old Testament. It is supposed that the first, which is called the Song of Solomon, was written when he was very young; that the second, Proverbs, was the work of his manhood; and that the third and last, Ecclesiastes, was composed in his old age, when he had ceased to take pleasure in anything, and could only say: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

Having found that wealth and wisdom are of no avail to a man who has departed from the ways of the Lord, Solomon died, after a reign of forty years. He had spent all the treasure which his father had left him, and had laid such heavy taxes upon the people that they were poor and oppressed. When he died, he left his son Rehoboam to reap the harvest of dislike which he had sown.

Rehoboam, called to the throne by Solomon's death, went up to Shechem to be proclaimed king. There he was met by Jeroboam, who had now come back from Egypt, and who came

to ask him to redress the wrongs under which the oppressed people had suffered so long.

Instead of granting this petition, as all the older men in his council advised him, Rehoboam haughtily refused to reduce the taxes, and said to the people: "My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke; my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions."

The people, hearing these cruel words, understood that they could expect neither mercy nor justice from the new king, and in their anger they rose up against him. His tax collector was stoned to death, and Rehoboam himself escaped a like fate only by fleeing in his chariot to Jerusalem.

The rebels, left masters of Shechem, now went on to elect Jeroboam king of Israel, and ten of the tribes promised to obey him. Only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin were still faithful to the grandson of David.

To compel the other ten tribes to obey him once more, Rehoboam collected an army of one hundred and eighty thousand men. He was about to march against Jeroboam, when a man of God brought him a divine message, which forbade his going forth to war.

Rehoboam did not dare disobey this order openly, and for many years there was only a pretense of warfare. The two kings, however, were all the time busy in making their armies larger, winning allies, and building strong walls around their towns, so that when the right moment came they could wage war with better chances of success.

The Two Kingdoms

The Chosen People were divided forever. While ten tribes formed the kingdom of Israel, and called Jeroboam their king, the other two formed the kingdom of Judah, and were faithful to Rehoboam.

The adherents of Rehoboam of course went on worshiping in the beautiful new temple which Solomon had built; but those of Jeroboam were not allowed to do so. It seems that this king feared that his subjects, in going up there to sacrifice, might again promise to obey their royal race; so he forbade their worshiping in Jerusalem at all.

To make up to them for this, Jeroboam set up golden calves at Bethel and Dan, although God had forbidden it. He bade the people adore them, and he himself offered up sacrifices and burnt offerings to them. This disobedience was soon and severely punished, as you will see a little farther on.

Although Rehoboam had lost ten tribes at the very outset, the first years of his reign were quite happy, because he tried to be good. But later on he ceased to lead a good life, and allowed his people to fall back into idolatry; and then he was punished sorely. The King of Egypt, an ally of Israel, came into the kingdom of Rehoboam with a large army, took all the strongholds of Judah, and even entered Jerusalem.

The enemy robbed the temple and the palace, and carried off the golden shields which Hiram had made for Solomon's bodyguard, and which were hung all around the king's dwelling. Only a prompt and thorough repentance saved Rehoboam and the people from being carried off into captivity in Egypt at this time.

Besides that, the King of Judah was forced to pay a heavy tribute to the conquerors, but he soon began to repair his losses. The golden shields, among other things, were replaced by like pieces of armor in brass, which, although far less costly, shone quite as brightly as if they had been made of the more precious metal.

Unfortunately, however, neither Rehoboam nor his subjects were faithful for any length of time, and after a reign of seventeen years, this king died and was succeeded by his son Abijah. The new monarch went on waging a petty warfare against the King of Israel. He relied upon the Lord, put down idolatry, and tried to be good, and, therefore, he was rewarded by a victory, and was allowed to become master of three of Jeroboam's towns.

But the virtue of Abijah was not to last long either. He too soon fell into evil ways, and followed the bad example which his father Rehoboam had given him; so his reign was cut short, and Asa, his son, ruled in his stead. At this time the land was in a very promising state, and Asa soon became so strong that the King of Israel feared to attack him, and left him in peace for ten long years.

While Judah had been governed by three kings, Rehoboam, Abijah, and Asa, Israel had been under the sway of the same monarch, Jeroboam. This ruler had established his capital at Shechem, and had been promised that his kingdom would endure if he obeyed the law of God. But this he did not do, for he led his people into idolatry by setting up golden calves at Dan and Bethel.

A prophet came to reprove Jeroboam, and when the king bade his guards seize and put the insolent man to death, none of them dared obey him. As the guards would not lay hands

upon the prophet, Jeroboam himself tried to do so; but the arm which he stretched out fell helpless and withered to his side, and an earthquake overthrew the heathen altar which he had just built.

These wonders so frightened the king that he now begged the prophet to pray that his hand might be cured. Then, when this request had been granted, and the arm was well again, Jeroboam humbly asked the Lord's messenger to come into his house and take food.

The prophet had been forbidden to eat or drink there, so he refused the invitation, and started for home. On the way thither, however, he was met by a false prophet, who told him that an angel had come to bid him take food. The true prophet, who was very hungry, now went to the false prophet's house; but even while he was eating and drinking there he heard the Lord's voice rebuking him for his disobedience.

He was soon punished for listening to the false prophet's lies, for on his homeward journey he was attacked by a lion, which sprang out of a thicket and killed him.

Seven Kings of Israel

In spite of all the warnings which he had received, Jeroboam went on in his evil ways. Another punishment, therefore, soon befell him; for he lost his favorite son, the only good member of his family, and the one upon whom rested his greatest hopes.

Then, after a reign of twenty-two years, Jeroboam himself died, leaving the kingdom of Israel to be ruled by his son Nadab.

But as this new ruler led a bad life, he was killed two years later by one of his own captains during a war with the Philistines.

To get the crown, this captain, whose name was Baasha, killed all the other members of the royal family. Thus, by a wholesale murder, he became the third king of Israel, and during his reign of twenty-four years, he followed all the evil ways of the kings who went before him.

He was reproved for his sins and idolatries by a prophet of the Lord, and was punished by a war with Judah, and one with the King of Syria, who marched into his kingdom and took several of his cities.

Baasha's son Elah was murdered at the end of two years by Zimri, the commander of his chariots, who also killed all the other members of the royal family. But Zimri himself died, a victim of the hatred of his rival, Omri, just seven days after he had come to the throne.

Omri, the sixth king of Israel, is especially noted because, during his short reign of twelve years, he built the city of Samaria, which became the capital of his kingdom. When he

died, he left the throne to his son Ahab, the best known of all the kings of Israel.

In the mean while, Asa had reigned quietly over Judah, and, as his "heart was perfect with the Lord all his days," he was allowed to rule forty-one years. During this time Asa rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem, and gathered together a large and well-trained army. As soon as he was all ready, he proudly refused to pay tribute to the Egyptians, although they had forced the people of Judah to make a yearly payment ever since they had entered Jerusalem during the reign of Rehoboam.

The armies of Judah and of Egypt met on the southern border of Palestine, where Asa, in answer to his fervent prayer, was rewarded by a great victory over his foes. When he came back to his capital in triumph, with all the spoil he had won, the people's hearts were full of thanksgiving and joy; so God seized this favorable moment to make a solemn appeal to them through a prophet.

This holy man bade the king and people to be strong, heart and hand, in seeking God, and told them not to worship idols. They were so strongly moved by this speech that they sent away all the idols from their land, and purified their altars. Next they assembled in such large numbers for the worship of the Lord that Baasha, who was then King of Israel, was frightened, and decided to march against them before they could come and attack him.

When Asa heard that the King of Israel was coming to fight him, he quite forgot that he needed no other helper than God, and sought the alliance of the King of Syria. This he managed to get by giving him in exchange all the temple treasures. But a prophet soon came to reprove Asa for this lack of faith in God's help. The prophet told the king that as he had sought the help

of a stranger, instead of trusting the Lord, he would have war all the rest of his life.

Asa was so angry when he heard this prophecy that he had the prophet put into prison and persecuted. But he could not forget the words which this unfortunate man had spoken.

Then, too, the prophecy was soon fulfilled, and Asa's last years were made very unhappy by constant warfare and much sickness. He died in the forty-first year of his reign, after having lived long enough to see the first seven kings of Israel.

The Great Drought

Asa was succeeded by his son Jehoshaphat, a pious and energetic king, under whose rule the little kingdom of Judah reached its highest point of prosperity. The new king began his reign by pulling down many of the heathen groves and altars, and because he thus tried to stop the worship of idols he was rewarded with great power.

In the course of time, however, Jehoshaphat forgot that God had forbidden his Chosen People to make friends among those who worshiped idols. Not only did he enter into an alliance with Ahab, the idolatrous King of Israel, but he even encouraged his son to marry the daughter of this ruler.

Ahab, the King of Israel with whom the pious Jehoshaphat had thus made an alliance, is known as the greatest, but at the same time the most wicked, of all the rulers of the ten tribes. He began to reign in Samaria while Asa was yet King of Judah, and from the time of his marriage he was completely under the influence of his wife, Jezebel.

This woman is well known as one of the cleverest, but most wicked, women that ever lived. She brought the worship of the heathen god Baal into her husband's kingdom, set up altars and groves at Samaria, and had no less than eight hundred and fifty heathen priests who were fed at her own table.

Moreover, Jezebel persecuted the prophets of the true God with such fury that they were soon obliged to flee from her, and take refuge in neighboring caves, where they staid hidden. Here they were for a while secretly fed by Ahab's steward, who did not dare to support them openly, because he was afraid of the anger of his haughty mistress.

The Israelites, during the past sixty years, had little by little yielded to the worship of idols, and there were now only seven thousand men among them who had not bent the knee to Jezebel's favorite god, Baal. The Lord, touched by the suffering of these few servants who had thus been faithful to him, now interfered in their behalf.

To help them, he sent Elijah, the greatest prophet since the time of Samuel. Elijah was very tall, his features were rugged and stern, his long hair flowed over his broad shoulders, and he wore a rough robe or mantle of sheep's hair.

Directed by God, this prophet suddenly came to the king's court, where his rough clothes and manners must have made a startling contrast with Ahab's courtiers, who were dressed in costly silks. As soon as he arrived there, he abruptly gave his message: "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word."

When Ahab heard these words, he shuddered; for, although Jezebel and her priests thought that Elijah was nothing but a madman, Ahab knew very well that he was a prophet of the Lord. Before the astonished king could collect himself enough to bid his guards seize the prophet and put him to death, Elijah had disappeared, and no one could find any trace of him.

The prophet, in leaving the palace, had merely obeyed God's orders. After warning Ahab of the coming drought, he speedily went to a quiet valley far from the houses of men. In this little valley flowed a tiny stream, which emptied its waters into the river Jordan. Here Elijah staid, quenching his thirst in the little stream, and living on the food which the ravens brought to him.

He lived in the valley until the time of the rainy season came; but, although the ground was very dry, there were no signs of the usually abundant rainfalls. Little by little, even the stream at the bottom of the valley dried up, and then the prophet, in obedience to God's command, left this lonely place and went down into Phœnicia.

Elijah came at last to a village near the seashore, where the famine brought about by the drought was beginning to make itself bitterly felt. Here he saw a poor widow picking up a few sticks to cook her last food; for she had no money, and her whole stock of provisions was a handful of meal and a few drops of oil.

The prophet, whose garments were faded, dusty, and torn, drew near this woman and asked her for a drink. Then, when his thirst was slaked, he looked up at her with imploring eyes and said: "Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand."

Now, although this man was a complete stranger, and although he had come and asked her for what was most precious to her, the woman felt so sorry for him that she led him into her house, and generously shared with him the small amount of food which was all she had to keep herself and her son alive.

In reward for this good deed, the widow was favored by a miracle. During the next three years, which Elijah spent in her house, the meal and oil never failed her, and she and her son and her guest had plenty to eat.

Some time after, the poor woman's son died, and then the prophet further showed how thankful he was for her former kindness, by bringing the boy back to life. This is the very first time in the story of the Bible that we hear of such a miracle as

bringing the dead back from the tomb. But, as you will learn from reading the Bible, a like miracle is mentioned several times in the Old, as well as in the New, Testament.

The Priests of Baal

It was only at the end of the third year of drought, that God bade Elijah leave the widow's house and go to Ahab, King of Israel. The prophet did not find the king at his palace, as usual; for Ahab was traveling around the country in search of pasture for his horses, which were suffering sorely from the long drought.

The moment that Elijah appeared, the king remembered his former visit, and, thinking that the prophet was to blame for all the suffering of his people, he angrily cried: "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?"

But Elijah stood fearlessly before the king, and boldly answered:

"I have not troubled Israel, but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim."

Then, to show the king the power of God, and to convince him that the idols which he worshiped could really do nothing at all, Elijah invited him to bring all his priests to Mount Carmel. There, he said, the four hundred and fifty priests of Baal might build an altar to their god, while he himself, the only believer in the true God who still dared make his faith known, would erect an altar for Jehovah (the Hebrew name for the Lord).

All the people gathered together on the mountain, where they knew that a test of the powers of God and of Baal was to be made. Then Elijah boldly addressed the multitude, saying: "How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him."

Next, Elijah went on to say that they would now call upon the true God to make himself known by sending down fire from heaven to burn up the sacrifice laid upon his altar. Not daring to refuse this test, the priests of Baal built their altar, and made use of all their arts, prayers, incantations, and magic, to make Baal hear them.

But the hours passed on without any sign of their prayers being answered. The heathen priests became more and more excited, and danced, and screamed always louder. Elijah, who stood by, watching their antics, mockingly spoke to them from time to time, saying that perhaps their god was out hunting, or that he was talking, sleeping, or away on a journey. He also advised them to make more noise, so that their prayer might be sure to reach Baal's ear.

But when all the efforts of Baal's priest's were seen to be vain, and their strength was quite exhausted, Elijah stepped quietly forward and built an altar in his turn. He dug a deep trench all around it, and poured water on his fuel until it was soaked through, and until the ditch around it was full. Then he placed his sacrifice on top of the pile, as usual.

When all was ready, the prophet stood calmly near the altar; and, instead of the wild cries and dances which the priests of Baal had used, he said this simple prayer: "Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word."

The prayer was scarcely out of his mouth when the fire of heaven came down upon the altar from a cloudless sky, burned up both fuel and sacrifice, and even dried all the water in the trench. When the assembled people saw this miracle, they were

afraid, fell down upon their faces, and cried aloud: "The Lord, he is the God."

Elijah now took advantage of the people's admiration for the power of the true God to make them seize the priests of Baal, who were all slain on the very spot where the uselessness of their prayers had been made known. Naboth's Vineyard

By the sacrifice upon Mount Carmel Elijah had publicly made known the power and majesty of the God whom he served. When the massacre of the priests of Baal was ended, he turned to Ahab, who had watched all these deeds in awestruck silence, and told him that plenty of rain would soon fall.

This news pleased Ahab so much that he went into his tent to hold a great feast, while Elijah climbed up the mountain, and sat there, his head bowed down upon his knees, in silent prayer. His servant, in the mean time, had orders to watch the sky closely so as to tell him of the first signs of rain.

Six times the servant came back to the place where Elijah was sitting, and reported that the sky was as blue as ever; but the seventh time, he came back, saying: "Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand."

This small sign of coming rain was quite enough for Elijah. He now sent word to the king to prepare his chariot and hasten home. The skies quickly grew black with clouds, and the rain fell in torrents, all over the parched and thirsty land, as Ahab drove quickly back to his home at Jezreel, accompanied by Elijah, who ran ahead of him every step of the way.

Arrived at the palace, the story of the day's happenings was told to Jezebel, Ahab's wife, who flew into a terrible rage when she heard that Baal's priests had all been slain. She threatened Elijah, saying: "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I

make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time."

Thus warned that he was in great danger, Elijah managed to escape, followed only by his young servant. They fled without stopping until they had crossed the kingdom of Judah and reached the furthest southern boundary of Palestine.

Then, leaving his servant there, Elijah went on alone into the wilderness of Sinai, where he sank to the ground, fainting and ready to die. But an angel of the Lord came to him here and touched him on the shoulder. The prophet then looked up and saw a fire, with a cake of bread baked upon it, and near it stood a jar of water.

This food gave Elijah strength enough to spend forty days and forty nights in the wilderness of Sinai. Here he talked with God, whom he was very curious to see. After finding out that the Lord was neither in the wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, Elijah discovered that he was in the "still small voice," which spoke to him, giving him directions as to what he should do next.

Soon after this, Ahab, the King of Israel, wanted to make his palace gardens bigger; so he asked Naboth, a poor man, to give up his vineyard. Naboth was offered a good price for this little piece of land, but he did not wish to sell it. He had inherited it from his father, and, in the eyes of a true Israelite, such a sale was considered a sin.

When Jezebel heard that this poor man had dared to refuse to sell his vineyard to Ahab, she made up her mind to take the little piece of land by fraud, since it could not be obtained by fair means.

At first the queen did not know exactly how to do this, but some one told her that, according to Israelite law, a man who

spoke ill of God was punished by being stoned to death, and that his property was given to the king. Jezebel was delighted when she heard this, and she immediately hired false witnesses to say that Naboth had spoken against the Lord.

These men swore before the judges that Naboth was guilty; so Naboth was killed, and the vineyard which the king had longed for became part of the palace garden. But the story of Naboth's death soon became publicly known, and it finally came to the ears of Elijah.

Once more the tall and thin prophet appeared unexpectedly before the eyes of the king; and this time his stern voice was heard proclaiming: "Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, shall dogs also lick thy blood, even thine … And of Jezebel also spake the Lord, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel." These were awful prophecies, but you will soon see how exactly they were fulfilled.

Several Miracles

Ahab, terrified by the prophecy which Elijah had made about his death, now began to show signs of such deep sorrow that the Lord took pity upon him, and put off for some time the threatened punishment.

Shortly after Elijah's warning, however, Ahab received a visit from his neighbor, Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, and they two began to plan war against the King of Damascus, whom Ahab had already defeated in one war. But Jehoshaphat, who was a godly man, refused to set out until he was sure that the Lord approved of their plan. He therefore asked Ahab's prophets, who all declared that they would win the victory. Only one of these men had the courage to say, what proved to be the truth, that Ahab would lose his life in this war.

Although Ahab declared that he did not believe this prediction, he tried to prevent any possible harm by going into battle in disguise. In spite of this caution, he was mortally wounded; but he bravely staid in his chariot until his army gave way, and his panic-stricken soldiers fled, crying: "Every man to his city and every man to his own country."

Before Ahab could reach home, he breathed his last, and his body was buried in his capital, Samaria. But Elijah's prophecy was none the less fulfilled; for the king's blood-stained chariot was washed on the very spot where Naboth had been stoned to death, and the dogs came and licked up his blood.

Ahab was succeeded by his son Ahaziah, who was named king while Jehoshaphat, terrified at the defeat of the forces of Judah and Israel, was hastening back to Jerusalem. During

Jehoshaphat's absence from his capital, the tribes of the desert had formed an alliance with the Moabites and Ammonites, and they now soon began to make war against Judah, hoping to throw off the yoke which they had been forced to bear ever since the days of David.

To meet the coming danger in a godly way, Jehoshaphat bade his people fast; then he offered up a sacrifice, and prayed for the help of the Lord. This prayer received a speedy answer; for the spirit of the Lord fell upon one of the Levites, who bade the people go forth on the morrow, and win a victory without striking a blow, their part being merely to stand "and see the salvation of the Lord."

With loud songs of praise the people of Judah marched forth on the next day, and from afar they saw a strange sight. The various nations, confused by the traps and ambuscades which they had set for the men of Judah, had fallen upon each other with fury, and, when Jehoshaphat and his army came up, the ground was all strewn with their dead.

This great deliverance from danger filled the hearts of the Lord's people with joy, and so terrified their enemies that the peace was not again broken as long as Jehoshaphat reigned.

Meanwhile, Ahaziah, the successor of Ahab on the throne of Israel, ruled only two years; but during that short time he imitated all the evil ways of both his parents, and worshiped idols. When he became ill, therefore, his first thought was to send messengers to one of the shrines of Baal. But Elijah met the men on their way thither, and told them that Ahaziah would soon die in punishment for his sins.

When Ahaziah heard that Elijah had dared to speak so, he sent out fifty of his men with orders to seize and kill the prophet. This little troop surrounded Elijah, who was sitting on

a hill, and then the captain of the men went up to him, crying: "Thou man of God, the king hath said, 'Come down.'"

In spite of this summons Elijah sat still and answered: "If I be a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty." No sooner had he spoken these words than captain and soldiers perished; and the same fate overtook a second band of soldiers who were told to take him.

When a third troop was sent out by Ahaziah, the frightened captain fell down upon his face before Elijah, begging the prophet to spare him and his men. In obedience to God's command, Elijah then went with the soldiers into the king's presence, where he boldly repeated the words which he had already spoken. This prophecy came true; for Ahaziah, the king, soon died.

The Chariot of Fire

Although Joram, Ahaziah's successor, was not an idolater himself, he allowed Jezebel to go on worshiping Baal, and to lead his people into evil ways. All this king's attention was taken up with wars, in the hope of recovering the land which had fallen into the hands of the King of Damascus.

The hard yoke of Jezebel weighed more and more heavily upon the people of Israel, who, encouraged by their prophets, finally revolted. By God's order one of these holy men sought Jehu, captain of the armies of Israel, anointed him king in Joram's stead, and told him that God was about to cut off the house of Ahab, and put an end to the idolatry in the land.

Jehu made known this divine message to his fellow-officers, who not only joyfully hailed him king, but offered to help him overthrow Joram. They said that the moment seemed very favorable; for the king was ill from a wound which he had received in one of his battles a short time before.

Thus encouraged, Jehu made up his mind to lose no time, and, jumping into his chariot, he drove furiously toward the palace at Jezreel. The king heard that he was coming, and sent a messenger out to meet him and ask what he wanted.

Instead of answering this man, Jehu drove on, and soon saw Joram, the king, who had risen from his bed, and was riding out to meet him. The rebel captain drew his bow, pierced the king with an arrow, and left him dead in the bottom of his chariot.

Having thus killed Joram, Jehu quickly went on to the palace, where Jezebel, who was now sixty years old, but affected the airs and appearance of a young woman, leaned out of the

palace window, and taunted him, saying: "What became of Zimri, who murdered his master?"

Instead of answering her, Jehu gave some orders to the servants standing beside her, and they flung her out of the window, down into the court, where Jehu's chariot wheels passed over her body.

In the general confusion caused by this sudden change of rulers, Jezebel's remains were forgotten; so the dogs of the city came upon them and devoured all but her head, hands, and feet; and thus was fulfilled the prophecy which Elijah had made when she unjustly caused the death of poor Naboth.

Jehu now put to death Ahab's seventy sons, all the courtiers, and the priests of Baal. Then after pulling down the temples, altars, and groves which had been consecrated to idols, he restored the worship of the Lord, not only in Samaria, his capital, but throughout his whole kingdom.

In the mean while, the prophet Elijah had been commanded by God to choose Elisha as his successor. Not long after he had done so, he felt that the time was drawing near when his earthly career would be ended; so he journeyed toward Jericho, accompanied by Elisha.

When they came to the banks of the Jordan, Elijah rolled up his mantle, and struck the waters with it, which parted and allowed them both to pass over dry shod. Upon reaching the other side, Elisha asked, as a parting gift, that a double portion of his master's spirit might rest upon him.

Elijah listened to this request in silence, and then promised that it should be granted, provided his disciple were watchful and saw him taken away. The Bible now goes on to say: "And it came to pass, as they still went on and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted

them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried: "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof!"

In this fiery chariot, Elijah the prophet was whirled up out of sight, and as he vanished, his mantle fell down upon Elisha, as a sign that the new prophet's request had been granted. Elisha took up the mantle, and slowly retraced his steps. He tested his power by again dividing the waters of the Jordan with Elijah's cloak; and, going to the prophets at Jericho, he told them all that had occurred.

Naaman the Leper

Elisha had become the successor of Elijah, and it soon became plain that the spirit of the Lord was with him, because he too could work miracles. Among those which we find written in the Book of Kings, we see that he not only divided the waters of the Jordan with Elijah's mantle, but that he also sweetened the waters of a bitter spring at Jericho.

On his way to Bethel, some wicked children once scoffed at him, crying: "Go up, thou bald head!" In punishment for this rude conduct, they were all torn to pieces by the bears that sprang out of the forest upon them.

Elisha next went on to Mount Carmel and to Samaria, where he was openly recognized as a prophet of the Lord. Later on, in the course of his ministry, he multiplied a widow's cruse of oil, so that it filled many jars. These she sold, and the money which she thus got was enough to supply all her needs.

To please a woman who befriended him, Elisha prayed that she might have a son. Five years after this prayer had been granted, the child was taken out into the harvest field by his father. There he was probably overcome by the hot sun, for he sickened and died. When Elisha saw the mother's grief, he felt very sorry for her, and by a miracle brought her dead child back to life.

Elisha once prevented a mess of poisoned pottage from doing any harm to those who ate of it, and at another time he multiplied twenty barley loaves and a few ears of corn so that they were food enough for a famished city. We are also told that he once made an iron ax head to rise to the surface of a stream in which it had fallen, and swim there until it was taken out.

Elisha's most famous miracle was done for the sake of Naaman, a Syrian, who came to him to be cured of his leprosy, which is a terrible disease. The prophet, instead of laying his hands upon him, as Naaman expected, merely bade the man go and wash in the Jordan if he would be clean.

This advice seemed far too simple to please Naaman, and he went off in anger, saying that the rivers in his own country were just as good as all the waters of Israel. As he was thus riding home in high dudgeon, one of his servants spoke to him, and after much persuasion induced him to try the remedy which Elisha had advised, and which he had come so far to obtain.

Naaman then stepped down into the Jordan, and when he had washed, his loathsome disease was all gone, and he was indeed clean. In his delight at being cured, he went back to thank Elisha, and offered him rich gifts, which the prophet refused to accept.

Naaman departed; but Elisha's servant secretly followed and stopped him, saying that he had been sent by his master to ask for the gifts. He received them, but instead of being made richer, he was punished for his deceit by suffering all his life from the disease of which Naaman had been cured.

The Syrians, or people of Damascus, ever since they began to wage war against Israel, had been in the habit of making sudden raids into the country to carry off cattle and spoil. Elisha, warned by God of their coming, always sent word to the king, who was thus able to drive the enemy away before they had done any damage. The King of Syria soon heard that the prophet knew all that he said, even in his bedchamber, and that his words were always repeated to the Israelites. He therefore

became very anxious to capture Elisha, and sent out an armed force for that express purpose.

The Syrian army surrounded the mountain upon which Elisha had taken refuge, and seemed so large that his poor servant cried out in fear. To reassure him, Elisha fervently prayed that his eyes might be opened; and then the man, looking up, saw the heavenly host mounting guard all around them.

His fear was gone, and when the Syrian army drew near to take Elisha captive, he saw that all the men were struck with sudden blindness. Helpless, and not knowing where to turn, they allowed themselves to be led into the capital of their enemies, where Elisha not only restored their sight, but persuaded the King of Israel to let them go home unharmed.

The Siege of Samaria

The king, whom Elisha had helped so many times in the war against the Syrians, was Joram. As we have already seen, this ruler of Israel allowed idolatry; and now God withdrew his protection from him, and even permitted the Syrians to march into his kingdom and besiege his capital.

During this siege the people of Samaria suffered much from famine, and at last had nothing to eat but dogs, cats, and mice. We are told that their hunger was so great that some of the inhabitants even became cannibals, and that mothers ate their own children.

The king, who pretended that Elisha was to blame for all these troubles, finally sent for him, intending to cut off his head. But the prophet refused to go to court, and bade the messengers go back and tell the king that there would be plenty of food at Samaria on the morrow. All the Samaritans believed this prophecy except one man, and he was told that, in punishment for his unbelief, he alone would not eat of the promised plenty.

That selfsame day, four lepers went into the Syrian camp. While they were there, they heard "a noise of chariots and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host." These sounds caused a panic in the camp, and the Syrians fled in haste, leaving their tents and all their stock of provisions behind them.

After satisfying their own hunger, and securing much plunder, the lepers went and told this news to the king. Then all the people of Samaria swarmed out of the city, and rushed into the deserted camp, where they found plenty to eat. Elisha's

prediction was fulfilled in every particular; for the man who had doubted his word was trodden under foot and killed by the hungry multitude as they rushed toward the Syrian camp.

We are told in the Bible that Elisha worked one more miracle, many years after his death. It seems that the gravediggers once hastily flung a body into his grave. As soon as this corpse couched the dead prophet's bones, it came to life again, and the man walked home as if nothing had happened to him.

While Joram was reigning over Israel, another Joram became king of Judah. This man was the son of Jehoshaphat, and had married Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, who influenced him to set up idols.

So great was the wickedness of this king of Judah, we are told, that his reign would have been the last, had not the Lord remembered his covenant with David, and the promise which he had made, that the house of that great king should last.

So, instead of being entirely cut off, Joram, King of Judah, had many troubles. In the first place, several of his cities rose up against him. Then the Philistines and their allies came into his kingdom, plundered his palace, and carried off all his family into captivity, except one son. Last of all, Joram of Judah became very ill, as a prophet had foretold, and died after much suffering, leaving his throne to his son Ahaziah. This young king was so wicked that he was allowed to rule only one year before he too was forced to give up the crown.

You remember, do you not, how Joram, King of Israel, was killed by his captain, Jehu? Well, at that time, Ahaziah of Judah was on a visit to the King of Israel, and rode out of the city with him on the day of his death. When Joram was shot, Ahaziah

fled, but he too had been struck by one of Jehu's arrows, and soon died.

It was not enough to have killed two kings and one queen, so Jehu slew also many other members of the royal house of Israel. In fact, only one member of Ahab's family was now left. This was Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, King of Judah. As soon as Athaliah heard that her son was dead, she treacherously killed, as she thought, all her children and grandchildren, so that she might wield the royal scepter herself, and keep up the worship of Baal in Judah.

But her grandson Joash, the son of Ahaziah, was saved by his nurses, who carried him, bleeding and almost lifeless, to his aunt, the wife of the high priest. She gladly received this little charge, and brought him up in the temple in secret.

Joash himself did not know who he really was, and Athaliah was allowed to reign over Judah undisturbed for more than six years. But in the seventh year, a conspiracy was formed by the high priest, and Joash was proclaimed king in the temple.

The priests, armed with the sacred weapons, stood around the child king, ready to defend him, when Athaliah suddenly burst into the temple. She had heard rumors of an uprising, and came there to put it down with a high hand. When she saw her own grandson seated upon the throne, and heard the joyful shouts of the people, she would have liked to flee.

But it was too late. The measure of her crimes was full, and the priests killed her just as she was about to escape. Many of her followers were also slain, and the heathen idols which she had worshiped were banished from the kingdom.

Joash King of Judah

The new king, Joash, was only seven years old, so the high priest ruled in his stead, and under his wise management, "all the people of the land rejoiced." It now seemed that with two such kings as Joash and Jehu, the kingdoms of Judah and Israel must long prosper; but, as we shall see, their happiness soon came to an end.

Jehu was the first to relax his efforts to reform his people, and when he too finally sank into idolatry, he was made to suffer for his sins by the King of Syria, who invaded his realm. When Jehu died, he was succeeded by his son Jehoahaz. This king also sinned, and for this reason he was forced to fight against Syria throughout his reign of seventeen years.

During this time, the kingdom of Judah prospered under the rule of Joash. Advised by the high priest, this king not only destroyed all the idols, but he undertook to repair the temple, and to make new vessels for it to replace those which Athaliah had taken for the service of Baal. All the people were asked to give money for this purpose, and, so that none should know how much each man gave, the king made the first money chest, which was placed at the gate of the temple. There was a slit in the cover of this box, which was opened every day, when the money was counted and given over to the man who had charge of the repairs.

Joash reigned forty years, and as long as he kept the religion of his fathers, the kingdom prospered; but when he began to worship idols, trouble came. Zechariah, his foster brother, who was now high priest, once scolded Joash for worshiping idols.

This reproof made the king so angry that he had the priest stoned to death, although he had once loved him dearly.

In punishment for this crime, the Lord now allowed the King of Syria to come into Jerusalem, and carry away the treasures of the palace and temple. The enemy caused much suffering to the people of Judah, who were angry at Joash for bringing them such misfortune. Some of them even forgot that he was their king, and allowed his own servants to murder him after the Syrians were gone.

Joash was succeeded by his son Amaziah, who, on the whole, was a just king. He punished the men who had murdered his father, but spared their families. This was a very unusual act of mercy at that time; for generally when a man did wrong his family suffered too.

When about to make war against the Edomites, Amaziah hired some Israelite soldiers, so as to make his army larger. But a prophet warned him not to keep them; so he sent these men away, and, with only his own troops, defeated the enemy and took their capital.

But although Amaziah had obeyed the prophet once, he soon disobeyed him by offering up a sacrifice to the principal idol of the Edomites. Because he did this, he had much trouble, and finally fell into the hands of the King of Israel, who was named Joash, like Amaziah's father.

Joash of Israel not only took Amaziah prisoner, but marched into Jerusalem through a breach in the wall. Then, when he had taken all the treasures from the temple and palace, he allowed Amaziah to continue reigning, which he did for the next fifteen years. At the end of that time, his people had learned to hate him so greatly that they killed him after he had fled in terror from his capital.

Meanwhile, after the death of Jehu, the kingdom of Israel had been governed by Jehoahaz and the Joash who took Jerusalem, as we have just seen. Hearing that Elisha was very ill, this king once went to visit him. When he saw that the prophet was about to die, he began to weep bitterly; but Elisha paid no attention to his tears, and told him to take his bow and arrows.

Laying his dying hand upon Joash's hand, Elisha bade him shoot an arrow out of the window. Then, after the king had struck the ground three times with an arrow, the prophet told him that he would win as many victories over the Syrians. This prophecy came true, and it was only after he had won several cities that Joash died, and his son Jeroboam II began to reign over the ten tribes.

This Jeroboam was the thirteenth king of Israel, and during his long reign of forty-one years, his people were very happy. He won for them all the land east of the Jordan which was in the hands of the Syrians, and even went to attack the great city Damascus.

The Story of Jonah

It was probably under the reign of Jeroboam II, one of the greatest kings of Israel, that the word of the Lord came to Jonah, the prophet, saying: "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me."

When Jonah heard these words, he was terrified; for Nineveh was not only the great city of Assyria, but one of the finest towns of the ancient world. It lay far to the northeast of Palestine, and was under the rule of a powerful and very despotic race of kings, who took pleasure in building some of the most remarkable edifices in the world.

Although more than twenty-five hundred years have passed since the kingdom of Assyria was destroyed, explorers have lately found the ruins of this great city. After digging in huge mounds of rubbish, they found ruined palaces, adorned with wonderful paintings and sculptures, many of which have been carried to the European museums.

At the time when the voice of the Lord came to Jonah, Nineveh had reached the highest point of its glory and prosperity. The prophet knew the pride of the people, and the power of the king; and it is no wonder that he did not care to go there to deliver so disagreeable a message.

In his terror, Jonah fled to the seaport of Joppa, where he went on board a ship bound for Tarshish. His object was to get as far away from Nineveh as possible, so that he would not need to do as the Lord had bidden him. But no sooner were they far out at sea than a terrible storm arose, endangering the vessel and the lives of all on board.

The sailors, according to the custom of the time, declared that there must be some guilty person on the ship, whose presence brought this peril upon them all. To discover the culprit, they drew lots, and when Jonah was thus found to be the sinner, they cast him overboard, "and the sea ceased from her raging … Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights."

We are further told that Jonah, who was still alive, "prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly," and that God had pity upon him and bade the fish vomit Jonah out upon dry land.

The prophet had been saved from great peril by a miracle, and when the Lord again bade him go to Nineveh, he no longer dared disobey. He finally reached the city, which was so large that it took several days to walk around it. Jonah viewed its magnificent buildings and beautiful sculptures, and, standing perhaps near one of the colossal statues which have been found in the ruins, he preached repentance to the people, threatening them with the overthrow of their great city within forty days, if they refused to listen to his words.

It seems that the people of Nineveh believed God's words and led better lives. And, because they "turned from their evil way, … God repented of the evil that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not"

Of course the men of Nineveh were overjoyed to escape the threatened punishment, but Jonah, the prophet, was disappointed because the judgment of God was staid. He went outside the city, and sat there in sulky silence, under a little booth over which the Lord caused a gourd vine to grow in the course of a single night.

The cool shade of the spreading vine was very grateful to the angry prophet, during the sunny hours of an eastern day. But the next night a worm came and gnawed the roots, so that the vine died. Jonah, deprived of its shelter, now complained aloud.

In answer to his murmurs, God said: "Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night. And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left?"

You see, it was for the sake of the innocent little children, who could not tell their right hand from their left, that God had spared the great city; and he now wished to remind Jonah that one should be far more pitiful toward one's fellow-creatures than toward a mere plant.

The Captivity of Israel

Under the reign of Jeroboam II, or of the kings who came just before, two other prophets arose in Israel, Hosea and Amos. Both spoke prophecies which are written down in the Bible, in books bearing their names. Hosea foretold the captivity of his people, and their return to the Holy Land, and he compared the sins of the people to those of his own wife, who had forsaken him. The Lord's forgiveness of his people was further made clear by Hosea's own generosity in receiving again, and tenderly supporting, this runaway wife in her old age.

Amos, the other prophet, was called from his labors as a shepherd to speak against idolatry, and to foretell the doom of all the nations that dwelt in that part of Asia. He too foretold the return from captivity, and before he died he had visions concerning the coming of the Messiah.

After reigning forty-one years, Jeroboam II, King of Israel, was succeeded by his son, who indulged in sin, and fell under the blows of a conspirator. This man destroyed all that was left of the race of Jehu, and took possession of the throne. But he did not long enjoy the royal authority; for he was murdered one month later by Menahem, who became king and reigned ten years, treating the people with great cruelty.

It was under the reign of Menahem, and while he and his people were again worshiping idols, that the strong Assyrians first came to attack the kingdom. But the king managed to buy them off, by offering them one thousand talents of silver to leave Israel in peace.

The second king after Menahem, however, made an alliance with the Syrians, and, thus strengthened, dared to fight against the haughty Assyrians. He was defeated, and saw a large part of his people led off into captivity, as had been foretold by the prophets. Menahem himself was allowed to keep his poor kingdom, but was soon murdered by Hoshea, his successor, the nineteenth and last king of Israel.

While all these unfortunate events were taking place in the kingdom of Israel, Amaziah, King of Judah, had been succeeded by his son Uzziah, an able monarch. As Uzziah served the Lord, he was granted a long and prosperous reign. But, encouraged by prosperity, he finally became very proud, and forgot to whom his blessings were due. He tried to assume the duties of a priest, which the Levites alone were allowed to perform; and thus he called forth the wrath of God.

Uzziah came into the temple to burn incense, in spite of the high priest and of eighty of his assistants; but as soon as he began it, the Lord struck him with leprosy, and a white plague spot suddenly appeared on his forehead.

When the people saw what had happened, they all took up the cry of "unclean, unclean," and drove Uzziah out of the temple, which his presence polluted. He had to go away to a lonely place, where he spent the rest of his life in torture, while his son governed in his name.

When Uzziah finally died, his son Jotham became king, and for sixteen years he ruled over Judah in the fear of the Lord, and led a godly and faultless life. But in spite of all his virtues, the people gradually grew more corrupt; and when Ahaz, his son, succeeded him, and no longer tried to restrain them, they again openly worshiped idols.

To punish Ahaz for thus sinking with his people into such gross idolatry, the Lord allowed the Kings of Israel and Syria to defeat him in war, and to kill one hundred and twenty thousand of his men. Jerusalem would have fallen into the hands of the Israelites on this occasion, had not Isaiah, a prophet, encouraged the people to repent and defend themselves bravely against the attack.

Thus delivered from the danger of falling into the enemy's hands, Ahaz still had to war against the Syrians and Philistines, who had both attacked him. But instead of relying upon the help of the Lord, Ahaz called the Assyrians to his aid, offering all the temple treasure as a bribe, and promising to recognize the Assyrian king as his lord.

In answer to this appeal, the Assyrians marched against Damascus, killed the Syrian king, and carried his people off into captivity. It was then, as we have seen, that a part of the Israelites were also captured and led away. They were the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and Manasseh, the very ones who had claimed the land east of the Jordan.

Ahaz then went to Damascus and had a talk with the Assyrian king, to whom he gave the sacred golden vessels, the bases under the lavers, and many other of the priceless ornaments of the temple. The King of Judah had by this time grown so wicked that he set up a heathen altar in the temple; and he would probably have done much more harm, had not his reign been mercifully cut short.

The Story of Tobit

The wicked King of Judah, Ahaz, was succeeded by Hezekiah, his son, who "did that which was right in the sight of the Lord." He reopened and purified the temple, restored the worship of God, and called the people together to celebrate a grand Passover, the first which is mentioned since the time of Joshua.

On this solemn occasion, Hezekiah, the good king, publicly asked God's pardon for all who had sinned; and he pulled down all the heathen idols and altars. He even ordered that the Brazen Serpent, which had been made by Moses, should be broken to pieces, because the people had now begun to worship this too.

Then, relying upon the help of the Lord, Hezekiah drove back the Philistines, and boldly refused to pay any more tribute to the Assyrians. Of course they were very angry when they heard that this Jewish king had thus tried to free himself from their power, and they soon came marching toward Palestine.

Hoshea, King of Israel at that time, followed Hezekiah's example; so the Assyrians came into his land, and made his people suffer so much that they were glad to get rid of the enemy by promising to pay the tribute. Not long after this, however, the Israelites revolted again, and this time the Assyrians besieged Samaria. They became masters of this city after a three years' siege, and carried off twenty-seven thousand, two hundred and eighty families into captivity.

Thus the kingdom of Israel came to an end, and the ten tribes which formed it were led away to Assyria, whence they never came back as a separate people.

As you know, there are many different kinds of churches; well, there are different kinds of Bibles, too. In some of them nothing more is said about the ten tribes, but in the others we are told that some of the captives went on worshiping God in their new homes. In these Bibles also we find the story of Tobit, which is so interesting that many pictures have been made of the scenes which it describes.

The story tells that Tobit, a good Israelite, lent all his money to his poorer brethren, until he had none left, and had to depend on his daily labor for bread. One day, during the noon hour, he lay down in the shadow of a wall to sleep.

Some birds, building their nest above him, let fall little pieces of lime, which dropped into Tobit's eyes and made him lose his sight. Blind now, and unable to work, Tobit called his young son Tobias, bidding him seek a guide, and journey to a distant province. Here the young man was to find an old friend of his father's, and collect from him a sum of money, loaned many years before.

Young Tobias found a guide at the city gates, and set out with him, not knowing that he was the angel Raphael in disguise. In the course of their journey, Tobias, while bathing in a river, was attacked by a monster fish. Helped by the angel, he not only escaped from all peril but also caught the fish. After taking the gall and gills, which by the angel's advice he carried with him, Tobias went on.

He finally reached the debtor's house, and not only collected the sum of money, but also married the man's daughter. This damsel had already been married seven times, but each one of her husbands had been killed on his wedding night by a demon who loved her.

By the angel's advice, Tobias burned the fish gills in the wedding chamber, and the smoke killed the jealous demon. Then Tobias joyfully went home, with his bride and with the money which he had gone to seek.

The angel Raphael, who had ever been at his side, now bade Tobias rub his father's eyes with the fish gall. Thus the pious old man got back his sight just in time to see the heavenly messenger resume his angelic form, and wing his way back to heaven, amid the adoring silence of the happy family whom he had befriended.

The Assyrian Host

After the siege of Samaria, the Assyrian host began to besiege the city of Tyre, which held out bravely for five years. But before it could be taken, the Assyrians were called home by a war with the Medes and Babylonians, and the Tyrians fancied that they had won.

But Isaiah, the great prophet whose predictions are written in the Bible, in a book bearing his name, sadly warned the merchant city of Tyre that although she had escaped this time, she was doomed to utter destruction.

Soon after this, Hezekiah, King of Judah, was "sick unto death." He was very unwilling to die, and in his distress he sent for Isaiah, begging the prophet to make his life longer. Isaiah then promised the king that he should get well again, and in token of the truth of this promise, the prophet made the shadow creep back ten degrees on the sundial, and said that Hezekiah's life would be lengthened by fifteen years.

This respite, and the miracle of the sundial, came to the ears of the King of Babylon; so he sent an embassy to congratulate Hezekiah, and to offer to make an alliance with him against Assyria. Hezekiah was so proud to receive an embassy from the Babylonian king that he showed all his wealth to the messengers, and even let them see all the treasures of the temple.

Isaiah was indignant at this vain display, and sadly told Hezekiah that his treasures would be wrested away from him, not by the Assyrians, whom he feared, but by the Babylonians, whom he trusted. Now that they knew what wealth was there, he said, they would long to get it.

When Hezekiah heard this, he repented of his vanity, and humbled himself before the Lord. He prayed so fervently for forgiveness that he was told that the misfortunes which had been foretold would not be allowed to happen during his day.

The Assyrian king, having made peace at home, again came into Judah, on his way to conquer Egypt. And now, although Isaiah had foretold the downfall of the Egyptians, the Jews offered them their alliance.

The Egyptians, sure of their own strength, scornfully refused to receive any help, and all that the Jews gained by their rash behavior was to call down upon their own heads the wrath of the Assyrians. Isaiah bitterly reproached his countrymen for what they had done, but at the same time he told them they need not fear the Assyrians, because God would defeat the invaders by strange means, while the people need but stand by and see his power.

Reassured by these words, Hezekiah at first showed no fear when the Assyrians came, but later on, influenced by the terrified people, he tried to buy off the invaders, by giving them three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. This large sum was procured by the sacrifice of his own plate, and by stripping the precious metal off the temple pillars.

The Assyrian king nevertheless sent one of his generals to take possession of Jerusalem, and then Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled; for, in the dead of night, "the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred four score and five thousand." When the Jewish watchman looked out in the early morning, he saw all the plain strewn with corpses!

Hezekiah, thus saved by a miracle from the awful danger which threatened him, now spent the rest of his life in peace

and prosperity, and when he died he was honored by the chief place in the sepulcher of the Kings of Judah.

He was succeeded by Manasseh, his son, who was then only twelve years of age, and who ruled over the country fifty-five years. In the first part of this long reign, Manasseh fell into idolatry, profaned the temple, and made his own son undergo a heathen rite, and "pass through the fire," a sacrifice to Moloch.

Manasseh dealt with wizards and witches; he persecuted many of the prophets, and probably killed Isaiah. It was in punishment for all these sins that the Assyrians were again allowed to come into his kingdom, and even to carry him off into captivity.

Then Manasseh felt so sorry for all the wrong he had done that God took pity upon him, and sent him back to his kingdom at Jerusalem. Here this king spent the rest of his life quite comfortably; and when he died he left his throne to his son Amon.

The Prophecies of Jeremiah

As Amon, the new King of Judah, was wicked and idolatrous, his reign lasted only two years, and he died the victim of a conspiracy. His son Josiah succeeded him, and reigned at Jerusalem thirty-one years. This king was a very virtuous man, and although the people all around him were terribly wicked, he remained good and chose to serve the Lord.

At twenty years of age, Josiah made a journey all through his kingdom, asking his people to put away idolatry, destroying their idols, and collecting money to repair the temple. It was at this time that the high priest again found the long-lost and nearly forgotten book of the law, and read it aloud to the king.

Josiah was so impressed when he heard the terrible punishments threatened that he tore his clothing, and called for a prophet to come and explain to him the parts he could not understand. But all the prophets had been killed, and it was only after long search that a woman was found who could tell him the meaning of the sacred words.

She said that all that was written was true, but comforted the mourning king by telling him that he should not see the downfall of Jerusalem. To save his people if possible, Josiah ordered a public reading of the law, pulled down all the idols that were left, and defiled Tophet, the hot fire kindled for the worship of Moloch.

When Jerusalem had been thoroughly purified, he put all the wizards and witches to death, and then celebrated the Passover at Jerusalem, according to the teachings of the newly found book of the law.

While all these changes were taking place in Judah, the strong Assyrian kingdom had fallen into the hands of the Babylonians and Medes; and Nineveh, the proud city, was destroyed as had been foretold by Isaiah and two lesser prophets.

Hearing that the Egyptians were on their way to attack the Babylonians, his allies, Josiah made an attempt to stop them. In this battle, however, he received a mortal wound, and he died almost as soon as he reached Jerusalem. His death was mourned by the great prophet Jeremiah, and by all the people.

Josiah was the sixteenth and last real king of Judah; for although four others bore that name, they were only the servants of the Egyptian or Babylonian kings, who ruled the people and country as they pleased.

The Egyptians, angry because Josiah had tried to stop them, came to attack Jerusalem under his successor. After pulling him down from the throne, they named his brother Jehoiakim king in his stead. This new king did evil, so Jeremiah rebuked him in the name of the Lord, and again foretold that the Jews would be taken in captivity to Babylon, whence they would return only after many years.

The king vainly tried to silence the prophet, but Jeremiah went on to foretell the destruction of the temple. This prediction so enraged the priests that they would have put him to death, had not the judges declared that a prophet had the right to say anything he pleased.

By this time the Babylonians had fought and defeated the Egyptians, and marching into Palestine, they now laid siege to Jerusalem, and took the city after a short resistance. Jehoiakim was allowed to keep the throne, on condition that he would be the vassal of Babylon; and the conquerors departed, carrying

off all the vessels of the temple, and a number of noble Hebrew youths, who were to be detained at their court as hostages.

Jerusalem was left in a very sorry condition, and the humbled people kept a solemn fast, during which Jeremiah again begged them to turn from their evil ways and repent. With the help of an assistant, Jeremiah wrote down all the prophecies he had uttered, and he now ordered that they should be read aloud, so that the people might see that some of them had already been fulfilled.

Jehoiakim, the king, was not present at this solemn reading, but he sent a man to get the prophecies and read them to him. He was so displeased, however, with what he heard that he burned the roll as soon as it was read. This proved to be of no use, for, by the Lord's command, Jeremiah again made his assistant write down every word he had said, adding a prophecy about the desolation which was to happen to Judah, and about the king's disgraceful end.

The Captivity of Judah

Jehoiakim relied upon the help of the Egyptians, and soon revolted against Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon. This king was busy just then with another war, so he paid no heed at first to the uprising of the Jews.

When the war was ended he marched against Jerusalem, and put Jehoiakim to death in the way that Jeremiah had foretold. The son of Jehoiakim now became King of Judah, but, as he was only eight years of age, his courtiers reigned in his stead. They were neither good nor wise, and made so much trouble that Nebuchadnezzar, in anger, came again to Jerusalem, and carried off the king, his courtiers, and ten thousand prisoners.

It was probably some time during these campaigns that an event took place which you will not find in some Bibles, but which you will often see in pictures. It seems that one of the Assyrian generals caused so much trouble in the country, that a brave Jewish woman named Judith made up her mind to kill him. She dressed herself up in her finest clothes, and went down to the general's tent, pretending that she had come to visit him because she loved him. The general gave her a grand supper, and when he fell asleep after drinking much wine, she took a sword and cut off his head. Then she called her servant, put the dead general's head in a cloth, and carried it home, to show her people what she had done.

As Jerusalem could not be left without a ruler, the Babylonians now chose Zedekiah, Josiah's youngest son, to fill this office. He was a vassal of Nebuchadnezzar, and as he

closely followed Jeremiah's advice during the beginning of his reign, all went well at first.

Made bold by success, Zedekiah fancied that he might shake off the Babylonian yoke, so he sought the alliance of Egypt. In punishment, his capital was again besieged, and at the end of two and a half years it fell into the hands of the Babylonians. They took Zedekiah captive and sacked the city of Jerusalem.

Not only were the temple and the houses burned, but the city walls were all torn down. This calamity seemed so great to the Jews that the anniversary of this evil day was always observed as a time of mourning and fasting.

Although the Babylonians would have liked to carry all the population off into captivity, the people had suffered so much during the long siege that only eight hundred and thirty-two of them were strong enough to stand the long journey.

The others were left in Palestine, to farm the land and take care of the vineyards. The country was placed under the rule of a governor, advised by Jeremiah. The prophet told the people to be patient and to submit, and at first they were so weak and so tired of war that they were only too ready to obey; but as soon as they got back strength, they again revolted, choosing a prince of Jewish blood as their leader.

After murdering the governor whom Nebuchadnezzar had given them, the Jews suddenly began to fear the wrath of the Babylonians. Hoping to escape from it, they fled into Egypt, where they fancied that they would be safe, although Jeremiah warned them that Egypt also would soon fall into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar.

This prophecy was also spoken at the same time by Ezekiel, who was among the captive Jews at Babylon. It came true, too,

before long; for Nebuchadnezzar became master of Tyre, after a siege of more than thirteen years, and then went on to conquer Egypt.

The Jews who had taken refuge in Egypt were duly punished, and when the Babylonian army went home, they took with them long caravans of captives, and left Judah a desert. These captives found many of their friends at Babylon, for twice before some of the Jews had been led thither into bondage.

Nebuchadnezzar's Dreams

The young Jewish hostages whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried off in the beginning of his reign, had grown up in Babylon, where they had received their education. But although so far away from home, and completely cut off from their people, they had not forgotten that they belonged to God's Chosen Race.

A few among them, following the example of Daniel, their young chief, ate pulse rather than defile themselves with the meat upon the king's table, which had first been placed on the altars of the idols. One of the officers in charge, seeing the young men eat such poor food, tried to force them to partake of better fare, lest they should grow thin and weak, or starve to death.

But Daniel coaxed this man to let them go on eating pulse, and when the officer saw that the young captives were ruddier and stronger than their companions, he no longer troubled them. We are told in the Bible that God gave all these Hebrew youths much knowledge, but that to Daniel, his servant and prophet, he gave a keen insight into dreams and visions, a power which was to prove very useful.

In the second year of his reign, Nebuchadnezzar was greatly worried by a dream which came every night, but which he could never remember when he awoke. He asked the wise men to describe this dream to him and to explain its meaning; but all in vain. Now, Nebuchadnezzar was in the habit of always having his own way; and when these men did not answer him he was so angry that he wanted to put them all to death. But

Daniel came and begged the king not to do so, saying that he would tell and explain the vision in their stead.

After a short prayer, in which he asked the help of the Lord, Daniel came back and told the king that he had seen in his dreams a great statue, with a golden head, silver arms and breast, brazen belly and thighs, iron legs, and feet and toes that were part iron and part clay. This statue was knocked down by a stone,—cut without hands from the living rock,—which came rolling along with great force. Then, having broken the image into pieces, this stone grew larger and larger, until it became a great mountain which filled all the earth.

Next, Daniel told the meaning of this strange dream. He said that the different parts of the statue represented different kingdoms. The head of gold was the kingdom of Babylon. Then would come in turn other powers which would be like the silver, brass, iron, and clay. But all these kingdoms would come to an end, when "the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed."

Like a great many of the prophecies, this was not understood until many years after, but now we are told that the golden head stood for the kingdom of the Assyrians and Babylonians, and the silver arms and breast for the Medes and Persians, who next took possession of Babylon. The brazen belly and thighs were the kingdom founded by Alexander the Great; the iron legs stood for the Roman Empire, and the iron and clay feet and toes represented the many but short-lived kingdoms which were formed from it. Finally, the Christians say that the stone, cut without hands from the living rock, was to represent the religion taught by Jesus Christ, which would in time spread all over the face of the earth.

Nebuchadnezzar was so astonished that Daniel could describe and explain his dream, that he fell down upon his face at the young prophet's feet, and did homage to him. In reward for this service, he made Daniel ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and gave important offices to his three companions.

Although the king knew that God had helped Daniel, he would not yield to the Lord, but soon afterwards set up a golden image which he bade all his subjects worship; and when the three young Jews whom he had so highly honored, refused to bow down before it, he condemned them to be cast into a fiery furnace.

This mode of execution had already often been tried, even on the Jews, and all the victims had died. Imagine Nebuchadnezzar's surprise, therefore, when he saw the youths calmly walking about amid the flames, in company with a fourth figure, which looked like an angel.

The king at once ordered that the young men should be set free, and they came out of the fiery furnace unharmed, and even without any odor of fire about their hair or garments. But in spite of this miracle, the king did not yet believe fully in the power of the God of the Jews.

Shortly after, Nebuchadnezzar was greatly troubled by another vision, or dream, in which he saw a great tree which overshadowed all the earth. But even while he was admiring it, he heard a voice from heaven order that the tree should be cut down, and that his man's heart should be changed into that of a beast for seven years' space.

None of the wise men could explain this dream, so Daniel was again called upon. The young Hebrew prophet told Nebuchadnezzar that the mighty tree stood for him, that he

would be cut down in his pride, and that for the space of seven long years his reason would forsake him, and he would eat grass like the beasts of the field.

Although Daniel warned Nebuchadnezzar that this calamity could be warded off only by repentance, the King of Babylon went on living as before. One year later the prophecy came true; the mighty king became insane, and for seven years he was like the "beasts of the field."

Nebuchadnezzar, however, recovered his reason at the end of the appointed time, and, doing honor to God, went on reigning over Babylon for many years. His career was brilliant to its end, and when he died, his son succeeded him.

The Feast of Belshazzar

The new ruler of Babylon seems to have been a very kind monarch; for he took Jehoiachin, the King of Judah, out of his prison. Although this captive was not allowed to return to Jerusalem, he was treated like a guest in the Babylonian palace. We know but little of this King of Babylon, but we are told that he was soon followed by Belshazzar.

Many great changes had been brought about in the Eastern world in the mean while. The Median empire, which had taken the place of the mighty Assyrian realm, was now in its turn to be conquered by a king of Persia called Cyrus the Great. He is called in the Bible the "anointed of the Lord," because he was the man chosen to fulfill some of the old prophecies.

As soon as Cyrus became master of Persia, Media, and Assyria, he longed also to conquer the more southern province of Babylon, and secretly made plans to enter into the city when his coming was not expected, and take possession of it.

One night, Belshazzar and all his courtiers were feasting in one of the magnificent palace halls. The king, probably excited by the wine he had drunk, suddenly gave orders that the golden vessels taken from the temple at Jerusalem should be brought to grace his feast.

He was just drinking out of one of these sacred cups, when all at once a ghostly hand appeared before him, and traced on the palace wall three mysterious words which he could not understand. Belshazzar grew pale and trembled, and sent in haste for the wise men; but they could not explain what the words meant.

Then the queen remembered that Daniel had explained Nebuchadnezzar's visions, and by her advice he was brought into the banquet hall. Without a moment's hesitation, the prophet of the Lord boldly told Belshazzar that because he had not humbled his heart before God he was about to be punished.

The mysterious words, "Mene, mene, tekel, upharsin," he said, meant that God had weighed Belshazzar in the balance and found him wanting, and that his kingdom would now be taken from him and given to the Persians.

Belshazzar rewarded Daniel for his explanation, which he either did not believe or tried to forget by going on with the feast. But that very night, when the revelers were fast asleep, the Persians secretly entered Babylon by turning aside the river which passed through it, and noiselessly following its bed into the very heart of the city.

In the Bible, we are simply told that "in that night was Belshazzar, the King of the Chaldeans, slain." Cyrus was now King of Babylon, but he spared the Jews in the general massacre which took place. Then, while the Persian king went on with his wars, Darius, the Mede, governed the conquered city, with the help of Daniel, who had been a faithful servant of the former kings.

Now it seems that many of the court officers were greatly offended at being obliged to render account to a Jew, and sought an excuse to get rid of Daniel. It was hopeless, they knew, to wait for him to commit any fault, so they made a plot whereby his religion would bring him into trouble with Darius.

Prompted by these artful men, Darius made one of those very strict laws, which even a king could not change, and said

that no one should address any prayer to God or man for thirty days, under penalty of being cast into the lions' den.

Although Daniel knew this order, he did not let it hinder him. Opening his window, as usual, toward Jerusalem, he offered up his daily prayers. His enemies, lying in wait, found him out and told Darius; and then the king, although he would have liked to spare Daniel, was forced to keep his own law, and ordered that the prophet should be cast into the lions' den.

Darius, however, must have believed that God had the power to protect his servant; for he said to Daniel: "Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee." It seems that Darius did not fear the hungry lions so much as he did his wicked courtiers; for as soon as his orders had been obeyed, he had a stone placed over the opening of the den, and set his seal upon it, so that it could not be moved without his knowledge.

Early on the next day, Darius hastened to the lions' den, and had the stone pushed aside. Then, bending over the dark hole, he anxiously cried: "O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?"

From the depths of that awful den came the calm reply: "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me." Daniel was now set free, his accusers were hurled into the lions' den in his stead, and Darius said publicly that Daniel's God should be honored throughout all the land.

The Return from Captivity

There is a story told about Daniel which is not found in all Bibles, but which has so often been used as a subject for pictures that it should be well known. This story tells us that when Daniel was very young, he was once present where a trial was taking place.

Two old men had come before the judge, and had accused a beautiful young woman named Susannah of a terrible crime. The judges, after listening to all that the old men had to say, condemned Susannah to death. The executioners were about to lead her away, when Daniel suddenly arose, and said that the old men were the real culprits and that they had tried to make Susannah do wrong; that, as she was a very good woman, she refused to do so, and the old men, in anger, had decided to punish her for not doing as they wished, by telling a lie to the judges.

When Daniel had spoken thus, the judges gazed upon the old men, whose guilty faces proved that he had told the truth. So the old men were condemned, and Susannah was allowed to go free. She was honored everywhere after this as a truly good woman.

Daniel's career after he had been saved from the lions' den seems to have been very prosperous. He spoke many prophecies, which are written down in the book bearing his name, and he foretold that at the end of seventy weeks the captive Jews would be allowed to go back to Jerusalem. He added that their hopes would finally be crowned by the coming of the long-promised Messiah, the Prince of Peace.

Daniel also had many visions, among which was one of four beasts. The first was like a lion with eagle's wings, the second like a bear, the third like a leopard, with four wings and four heads, and lastly came another beast, different from all the rest, and with ten horns on its head. This strange vision, like the statue which Nebuchadnezzar had seen, was interpreted as a sign of the kingdoms which would rule the land in turn; and it has been called a prophecy of coming political events.

Cyrus the Great, having finished all his conquests, now came back to rule in person over Babylon; and there he soon made a law which allowed the Jewish captives to go back to Jerusalem, and he also gave them permission to rebuild their famous temple.

A great-grandson of King Jehoiakim was chosen by Cyrus to lead the Jews home, and a long caravan was soon formed, numbering forty-two thousand three hundred and sixty men. Among these was Jeshua, the high priest, to whom were intrusted all the golden vessels carried away from Jerusalem so many years before, and plenty of money to build a new temple.

As soon as the Jews came to Jerusalem, they offered up sacrifices, and began rebuilding both the city and the temple. They were greatly hindered in this work, however, by the constant raids of their neighbors, whose proffered services had been refused because they were idolaters.

As one half of the Jews were obliged to be always under arms and on the watch to drive back these enemies, the work went on very slowly. Then, long before the temple was finished, Cyrus died, and when a new king came to the throne, he sent them strict orders to stop their labors.

Two of the Hebrew prophets finally obtained the repeal of this order, and, setting vigorously to work, the Jews finished their new temple five hundred and fifteen years before Christ.

Stories from Jewish History

by

A.L.O.E.

Preface.

The works which I have chiefly consulted in compiling the following sketch, have been (in addition to the Holy Scriptures) the books of the Apocrypha, Josephus' Wars of the Jews, the elaborate writings of Prideaux, and a small volume on the history of the Hebrews, published some years ago in India.

There is no history more fraught with interest, or conveying more important lessons, than that of God's chosen nation. There are no annals which display instances of more heroic courage, faith, and self-devotion,—alas! of darker apostasy and crime,—than those of the descendants of Abraham.

May the reader rise from the perusal of this brief sketch with a deeper sense of the mercy and justice of God, as revealed in his dealings towards His people; and a fervent prayer for the hastening of that day when the Lord's gracious promise shall be fulfilled:—

"I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called, A city of truth; and the mountain of the Lord of hosts, The holy mountain."

A. L. O. E.

Introduction

For the sins of His people the Lord had stricken Jerusalem, and given up Judea into the hands of the heathen. The judgments of God had first fallen on the kingdom of the ten tribes; as they had been foremost in the sin of idolatry, so they had first met its awful punishment. Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, had attacked Samaria (724 B.C.), and after a siege of nearly three years had taken the city, and carried Israel into captivity, with Hoshea its king.

The punishment of the kingdom of Judah had been for some time deferred. While such monarchs as the pious Hezekiah and the faithful Josiah had sat on the throne of their ancestor David, God's mercy had guarded Jerusalem from her foes; but since the time of these virtuous rulers, tyrants had arisen, who set not God before their eyes; princes and people had combined to break the laws of the Almighty, and despise the counsel of the Most High. The vine which the Lord had brought from Egypt, and had planted and watered with such tender care, had brought forth the *wild grapes* of rebellion and idolatry. The mandate had not gone forth, *"Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?"* but the Lord had said in his anger, *"I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. And I will lay it waste"* (Isa. v. 5, 6). In 606 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar carried captive to Babylon some of the most illustrious of the children of Judah, and subjected Jehoiakim their king to his power. In 599 B.C., the Assyrian monarch besieged and took Jerusalem, then under the sway of Jehoiachin, and led into bondage that prince and the chief of his people, in 588 B.C., the work of

retribution was completed. Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, was taken, a miserable, blinded prisoner, to Assyria; the temple and palaces of Jerusalem were given to the flames, her walls were razed to the ground, and the mourning exiles from Judea, by the waters of Babylon, hung their harps on the willows, and wept.

But though the Lord chastened his people, they were not given over to destruction. At the period at which the following sketch of Jewish history commences, that prophecy which had, seventy years before, been uttered by the inspired Jeremiah was on the point of fulfilment: *"Thus saith the Lord, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you, and perform My good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end"* (Jer. xxix. 10, 11). As a mighty despot had been the instrument, in God's hand, to chastise a rebellious race, so another powerful monarch was now appointed by Providence to raise the fallen, to restore the exiles; as a "shepherd," to gather together the dispersed flock of the Lord.

The Return from Babylon

In the first year of the reign of Cyrus, the Lord stirred up the spirit of that king, probably through the influence of the aged Daniel, to issue throughout his vast dominions the following proclamation:—

"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 (He is the God), which is in Jerusalem. And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with beasts, beside the freewill offering for the house of God that is in Jerusalem."

Great was the joy of the faithful Jews, who throughout their long captivity had been waiting and watching for the fulfilment of the prophecies made to their fathers, when at length the prospect opened to them of return to their beloved country. Doubtless they recalled the prophecies of Jeremiah and Isaiah, and especially that one, uttered by the latter above one hundred and seventy years previously, in which the Lord called their deliverer by *his name*, saying of "Cyrus, he is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure: even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid."

The proclamation of the king sounded through the land like a trumpet-call, to gather together the exiles of Judea, and large numbers hastened to Babylon to make preparations for

their journey. It was a second Exodus, a second release from foreign bondage, to seek the land of promise. But it was not by the whole of the children of the captivity that the opportunity of returning to Judea was embraced with patriotic zeal. Ruined dwellings and wasted plains, a city without temple and without walls, offered few attractions to such as regarded the country of strangers as a home. Many shrank from the hardships of the journey, and the dangers which they must expect to encounter; many who had formed ties in Babylonia, felt bound by them to that land. The Jewish exiles were an emblem of those who, in all ages of the world, hear the call of conscience and religion. While some turn their faces towards a heavenly Zion, willing to leave all, and suffer all here, so that they may but find an inheritance above, the greatest number prefer present comforts to future blessings; their hearts cling to the pleasures of the world; they are too fearful, too busy, too rich, to cast in their lot with the people of God.

The first return caravan was organized and directed by Zerubbabel, the grandson of King Jehoiachin, and by Jeshua a grandson of the last high priest, Jozadak. The number of those who joined them was about 50,000, including above 7000 servants of both sexes. Before they departed, Cyrus caused to be restored to them the most valuable of the sacred utensils which had been carried away from Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar; thousands of vessels of silver and gold were now again to be devoted to the service of the sanctuary. Zerubbabel was also intrusted with large contributions towards the expense of rebuilding the temple, from the Jews who remained in Babylonia.

Many and sad must have been the partings when that vast caravan set out on its journey to the Holy Land! The voice of

blessing and of prayer was heard, as those who stayed behind exchanged their last words of friendship with those who were ready to depart. Anxious and loving eyes watched the long line of pilgrims, with their laden asses and camels, slowly disappearing in the distance; and the hopes and prayers of their brethren followed the brave band who first returned to the home of their fathers.

On reaching Palestine the caravan repaired at once to Jerusalem, which was found in a state of ruin and desolation. Before the travellers separated to seek habitations for themselves, they raised a large sum by voluntary contributions towards the rebuilding of the temple. They then employed themselves in securing dwellings for their families; and at the ensuing feast of tabernacles again repaired to Jerusalem, where sacrifices were offered on an altar erected on the ruins of the temple. After this the people applied themselves zealously to the necessary preparations for the restoration of that edifice. In a year from the departure from Babylon these preparations were sufficiently advanced to allow of the great work being commenced, and the foundations of the second temple were laid amidst the noise of trumpets, cymbals, and shouting! But many of the priests and aged men, whose hair had grown white during the captivity—those who had seen the temple of Solomon when it stood in its glory and beauty—wept with a loud voice at the mournful recollection of the past, 535 B.C.

While the work proceeded, the Samaritans manifested a desire to aid in it and to claim a community of worship in the new temple to be erected to the Lord. Their offers were declined by the Jews; and the people of the land, irritated by the refusal, did all in their power to weaken their hands, and hinder them from proceeding with the building. An

unscrupulous use of money and influence amongst the officers of government, enabled these adversaries of the Jews to raise such obstructions that the work was at length altogether suspended. For about fifteen long years the faith and the patience of the people of Judah were thus tried. They gradually lost heart for the work, and were disposed to believe that the set time for it had not yet arrived. The zeal of many waxed cold; and, absorbed in the care of providing for their own security and comfort, the Jews were in danger of forgetting the sacred duty which they had at first so earnestly sought to perform.

From this apathy they were roused in the second year of the reign of Darius Hystaspes, by the stirring words of the prophet Haggai. "Is it time," he exclaimed to the people, "for you to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste? Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the Lord."

The call was not uttered in vain. Filled with fresh zeal, Zerubbabel, Jeshua, and the people hastened to resume the work of building, 520 B.C. Amidst the difficulties and discouragements which beset them, they were still cheered by animating messages delivered to them by Haggai. The temple gradually rose, far inferior, indeed, in splendour to that erected in the days of Israel's great king, when gold was abundant, and silver so plentiful that it was counted as the stones of the earth; but a gracious promise was given that the glory of the latter house should excel that of the first, for the DESIRE OF ALL NATIONS should come to it, the presence of the Messiah should honour it, *"and in this place will I give peace,"* said the Lord of hosts to his people.

The renewal of the work roused afresh the opposition of the adversaries of the Jews. Tatnai, the Syrian governor, sternly demanded of the builders by whose command they were re-erecting the ruined walls of their temple. The Jews pleaded the authority of the decree of Cyrus, and Tatnai referred the question to King Darius for decision. The result was happy, for after some search the decree in favour of the Jews was discovered. It not only authorized the erection of the temple, but directed the local government to afford assistance and supplies. These supplies the Jews had not hitherto ventured to claim, but Darius commanded that they should be given. Under the impulse thus imparted, the work proceeded with spirit, and four years afterwards it was completed, 516 B.C. The dedication was celebrated with great solemnity and joy; and the people flocked to the courts of the Lord, to perform again with thanksgiving and rejoicing the rites of their holy faith.

The Jews were now restored to their own land, but they were under tribute to the Persians, and subject to the general control of the princes of that people. They were allowed the free exercise of their religion and laws, and were ruled by a governor of their own nation, or by the high priest when no such governor was appointed. With regard to religion, the fearful lesson taught by the desolation of the land, the destruction of the temple, and the captivity of the people, had greatly cured the Jews of that tendency to idolatry which had brought on them such misery and ruin. But the inherent corruption of the human heart, restrained in one point, broke out in others; there are few more humbling lessons of man's infirmity and the sinfulness of his nature, than may be gathered from the history of the Jews.

It does not appear that the people suffered further molestation during the long reign of Darius; and his son and successor, Xerxes, seems to have regarded them with favour. This monarch was succeeded, in 464 B.C., by Artaxerxes Longimanus, in whose reign the Jews proceeded to rebuild Jerusalem on a regular plan, and to surround it with a wall, as will appear in a following chapter.

Zerubbabel and Jeshua, the first leaders in the restoration, had by this time been gathered to their fathers, and confusion and disorder were spreading widely amongst the Jews at Jerusalem. Light was the danger which they had encountered from the enmity of the people of the land, compared with that which they now experienced from too close alliances with them. Many broke the laws of their God by marrying heathen wives; some even of the princes and of the priests were guilty of this act of disobedience. A reformer was urgently needed, who should have wisdom to judge and firmness to act; and such a reformer was found in Ezra the priest, who headed the second large body of exiles, who returned from Babylonia to Judea, 457 B.C.

Armed with the authority of the Persian king, and intrusted with large offerings to the temple, including valuable contributions from the monarch himself, Ezra prepared for his journey. The bank of the river Ahava was the gathering-place for the people. There Ezra pitched his tent, and there he proclaimed a solemn fast, that the travellers might unite in supplication to the Almighty for protection on their dangerous way. As the band of pilgrims bound for Jerusalem included tender women and helpless children, and was ill provided for defence against an enemy in the probable event of an attack, some thoughts were entertained of requesting a military escort

from the king. But Ezra had declared before Artaxerxes his firm faith in the power and goodness of God, and the noble-minded Jew shrank from making a petition which might seem to imply distrust of the Almighty's providential care. Ezra would not lean on an arm of flesh, but with prayer and fasting he committed himself and his people to the protection of the Most High.

In safety the second body of exiles returned to the holy city. Having deposited in the temple the treasures with which he had been intrusted, Ezra applied himself with earnest zeal to the arduous work of reformation. The discoveries made by him of the guilt and corruption prevailing amongst God's chosen people, filled Ezra with grief and shame. He felt that the greatest of evils is sin; the greatest of dangers, that of forfeiting the protection of the Almighty by trespassing against him. In deep sorrow of heart Ezra rent his garments, and, falling on his knees, with tears confessed before the Lord the sins of those whom divine mercy had restored to their land. "O my God, I am ashamed, I blush to lift up my eyes to thee!" exclaimed the leader of the backsliding Jews; "for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our transgression is grown up unto the heavens!"

The blessing of the Lord whom he supplicated rested upon the efforts of Ezra to bring back the erring to the paths of righteousness. With repentance and weeping the Jews returned to their God; order was again restored; and the heathen wives were put away.

Let us now retrace a little the course of history, to consider some events of great interest and importance which occurred at the court of Persia between the periods of the return of the first and second bands of exiles to the land of Judea.

PRINCIPAL CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENTS.
536—457 B.C.

	B.C.
Hippias banished from Athens	610
Tarquins banished from Rome	609
Xerxes invaded Greece	481

The History of Esther

Artaxerxes, or, as he is termed in the Scriptures, Ahasuerus, sat on the throne of Persia. Lord of the widest kingdom which then existed upon earth—a kingdom which extended from India to Ethiopia, and comprised a hundred and twenty-seven provinces—the will of the monarch was the law to which many nations were constrained to bow. Ahasuerus possessed neither the wisdom nor the self-command requisite in one to whom power so vast is intrusted. He chose for his chief favourite and minister Haman, an Amalekite, a man of unbounded cruelty and pride, and dismissed his own queen for venturing to disobey a capricious command given to her by her husband, when he was probably under the influence of wine.

In choosing another partner of his state to fill the place of the dethroned Queen Vashti, the despot sought for no higher qualification than that of personal attractions. But the Almighty Disposer of events guided the choice of the monarch.

In the palace of Shushan was a certain Jew, named Mordecai, of the tribe of Benjamin. With a father's care he had reared Esther, a young orphan maiden, a relative of his own. The Jewess was possessed of exquisite beauty; amongst the fair she was the fairest; Ahasuerus saw her, loved her, and raised the beauteous captive to the rank of the queen of Persia.

Her elevation appears to have had no effect in changing the character of this daughter of Abraham. In the palace of Ahasuerus surrounded by luxury and pomp, Esther preserved her faith to the God of her fathers, though by the charge of Mordecai she kept her nation and kindred secret from the king. While placed in a position far above that of her early

benefactor, the young queen still rendered to Mordecai the dutiful obedience of a daughter. Through her the Jew made known to Ahasuerus a secret plot to assassinate him, which had been made by two of his chamberlains. The conspirators suffered the punishment of death, but he to whose timely warning the king owed the preservation of his life, sat day after day in the gate of the royal palace, unrewarded and neglected.

Through this gate passed Haman, the proud favourite of the Persian monarch. As he moved on with a stately step amongst the courtiers and servants of the king, every head, save one, was bowed down before him—all did him obeisance save one! That one was Mordecai, the bold, uncompromising Jew, who scorned to pay any mark of respect to him who was the enemy of his faith—to him who belonged to the guilty tribe doomed by a just God to destruction.

Haman was not a man to forgive that which he looked upon as an insult. Boiling with rage, he determined that not only should Mordecai expiate his offence with his life, but that the whole of his race should be swept away by one act of indiscriminate vengeance. The arbitrary temper of Ahasuerus, and his blind confidence in his wicked minister, too well seconded the bloody designs of Haman. This unprincipled favourite succeeded in obtaining from the despot a decree for the extermination of the Jewish people throughout all of his extensive dominions. Neither age nor sex were to be spared; the babe was to be slaughtered in the arms of its mother, and the spoil of the murdered victims was to be the prey of the merciless Haman! A time was actually fixed upon by lot for the perpetration of the horrible massacre, but, by the providence of God, the lot fell upon a distant day. Their consciences untroubled by a sense of their enormous guilt, Ahasuerus and

Haman sat down to feast and to drink, while all Shushan was startled by the fearful decree that was to destroy a peaceful nation from the face of the earth!

When Mordecai heard of the king's commandment, he rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and bitter cry. And in every province into which the king's decree came, there was great mourning amongst the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes. Esther heard of the deep distress of Mordecai, though, secluded as she was in the royal apartments, she seems not to have been fully aware of its cause. She sent Hatach, the king's chamberlain, to Mordecai, and received through him a copy of the dreadful decree, and a charge to go herself to the despot, and make supplication for her persecuted people.

This message threw the young queen into great perplexity and distress. For thirty days the capricious monarch had expressed no wish to see her, and to enter unbidden into his presence exposed any intruder to the penalty of death, unless the monarch should extend his golden sceptre in token of pardon and grace. Through the medium of Hatach, Esther communicated her difficulties and fears to Mordecai. But to the resolute spirit of the Jew but one path appeared open to his adopted daughter, and that was the path of duty. Whatever might be the difficulty, she must brave it; whatever might be the danger, she must dare it! He reminded Esther that it was probably for this very purpose that she had been raised to share the throne of Ahasuerus.

The reply of the queen showed her piety and her obedience, and her resolution at all hazards to intercede for her nation. She besought Mordecai to gather together all the Jews

that were then in Shushan, that they might plead for her with that Almighty Ruler in whose hand are the hearts of kings. She promised that at the end of three days, which she would herself devote to solemn prayer, she would appear before Ahasuerus, concluding her message with the touching words, "And if I perish, I perish!"

The third day arrived, and the trembling Esther prepared to redeem her promise. She put on her royal apparel, the rich garments and glittering jewels whose splendour seemed a mockery of the fear and sorrow of her whom they adorned. And so Esther ventured into the presence of the despot, not armed with great natural courage, but leaning on that invisible Protector who can give strength to the weak and heroism to the fearful. Ahasuerus beheld his beauteous queen, and all his affection towards her revived: he held out his golden sceptre, and perceiving that no light motive could have induced her to brave the peril of death, "What wilt thou, Queen Esther?" he cried; "and what is thy request? It shall be given to thee to the half of the kingdom."

Notwithstanding the relief which the young Jewess experienced at the first peril being happily past she was not yet prepared to disclose the secret of her race, hitherto carefully concealed. She confined herself to a request that the king and Haman should that day attend a banquet which she had prepared.

The request was instantly granted; the monarch and his favourite appeared at the feast; and again Ahasuerus gave a gracious promise to his queen—"What is thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed." Again Esther sought a brief delay. She entreated her lord to come with

Haman to another banquet on the morrow, and promised that she then would declare the subject of her anxious desires.

Haman left the presence of the queen glad, and with a joyful heart. Honoured as no other subject had been honoured, the spirit of the Amalekite was lifted up with pride. He approached the gate at which Mordecai still sat. Surely now the firmness of the Jew will give way; he will yield reverence at last to one who has so fearfully shown his disposition to revenge, and his power to gratify it. No! Mordecai stoops not, and the tyrant passes on, full of rage against one whom he may kill, but whom he cannot conquer.

On what a slight thread hangs human happiness, when such a breath can destroy it! Haman had all that the world could give, but one evil passion, like a viper in the breast, poisoned in a moment every spring of enjoyment. He went to his home a miserable man—so miserable, that he was constrained to publish to others what was humiliating to himself. Haman called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife, and told them of the glory of his riches, the multitude of his children, the favour of his sovereign, and the repeated invitations with which Esther the queen had honoured him; closing all with this striking confession of the vanity of earthly greatness—"Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the gate of the king!"

Zeresh appeared a meet counsellor for so unprincipled a man as her husband. She and her friends assured Haman that the object of his hate could be easily destroyed, without waiting for the day appointed for the massacre. "Let a gallows be made fifty cubits high," said they, "and tomorrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon; then go thou merrily unto the banquet."

The wicked counsel pleased Haman, and he caused the gallows at once to be made.

Continuation of the History of Esther

That night King Ahasuerus could not sleep. Those peaceful slumbers which the meanest of his subjects could enjoy, fled from the eyelids of the monarch. It does not appear, however, that the rest of the despot was destroyed by any thought of the thousands of innocent families doomed by his caprice to destruction. Unable to obtain sleep, the king ordered that the book of records should be brought and read before him; and as he listened to the account of the events of his reign, the conspiracy of his servants, and the means by which the dangerous plot had been discovered, were brought to the remembrance of the monarch.

"What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai?" said the king.

"There is nothing done for him," was the reply.

"Who is in the court?" asked Ahasuerus.

"Behold, Haman standeth in the court," answered his servants.

"Let him come in," said the king.

Now Haman had come into the outer court to procure from his master an order to hang Mordecai on the lofty gallows which had been erected. Full of his evil design, he presented himself before the king.

"What shall be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour?" said Ahasuerus, addressing his favourite.

Now Haman thought in his heart, "To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?" and eager to obtain the most distinguished mark of royal favour, to which his ambitious, presumptuous heart could aspire, Haman

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

Then Ahasuerus said to Haman, "Make haste, take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew. Let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken."

What must have been the feelings of Haman on receiving this most unexpected command, which he dared not for an instant dispute! What must have been the torment of his soul when he led through the city his intended victim, crowned and royally apparelled, and proclaimed aloud to wondering crowds, that the despised and persecuted Jew was one whom the king delighted to honour! Doubtless Mordecai received this singular reward as a token of good from the King of kings, as a sign that his prayers had been heard by Him who can give *beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.*

His hateful commission executed, Haman hurried back to his home, mourning and with his face covered. He found little consolation there from those who on the preceding day had encouraged him in the path of crime. "If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall," said Zeresh and her friends unto Haman, "thou shalt not prevail against him, but shall surely fall before him."

And while they were yet talking to Haman, the king's chamberlains arrived, and hastened to bring him to the banquet, to which he had been invited by the queen.

Then at the feast Esther at length made known to Ahasuerus the grief that weighed upon her heart, and pleaded with earnest eloquence for her own life and the lives of her nation; "For we are sold," she exclaimed, "I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, to perish!"

"Who is he," cried the astonished king, "that durst presume in his heart to do so?"

Then Esther replied, "The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman."

The king's indignation knew no bounds. Thoughtlessly he had signed the decree, little dreaming that it could possibly compromise the safety even of his beloved Esther! Haman saw the rising anger of his master, and, in an agony of terror, made supplication for his life to the queen. But he who had shown no mercy found none in his hour of need. Those who had not dared to oppose him in his power, were now eager to hasten his downfall. One of the chamberlains who was present told the incensed monarch of the gallows fifty cubits high, erected by Haman for Mordecai.

"Hang him thereon!" cried the king. The just command was instantly obeyed, and the wretched Haman was cut off in his wicked career by the very death which he had designed for another!

It was less easy to revoke the murderous order which had already been proclaimed, by reason of that law of the Medes and Persians, which made royal decrees irrevocable. But Ahasuerus did all that he could do to counteract the evil effects of his own sinful compliance. A decree was published

throughout the land, permitting the Jews to defend themselves against any enemy that might dare to attack them. The result was the complete triumph of the persecuted race over all whom hatred induced to attempt to execute the king's first decree. Mordecai was raised to high power, and his fame spread throughout all the provinces; the Jews had rest, and peace, and favour; and an annual feast was appointed in commemoration of the great deliverance which the Lord had wrought for his people, through the instrumentality of a feeble woman!

The Jews Under Nehemiah

Many years had passed since the events recorded in the last chapter had taken place, Ahasuerus was dead, and Artaxerxes his son reigned on the throne of Persia. Ezra had for about ten years been pursuing his labours at Jerusalem, when the Lord raised up another leader for his people in the court of Shushan.

Nehemiah, one of the Jewish exiles, held the responsible office of cup-bearer to King Artaxerxes. He was a devout servant of God, and an earnest and devoted patriot. Amidst the splendours of a royal palace, his thoughts recurred often to his suffering brethren at Jerusalem, and ardently did he desire the prosperity of the city of David.

These feelings were kindled into a warmer glow by the report which Nehemiah received from some of his countrymen who had returned from Judea. From them he heard that the remnant of the people that were left in Zion were in great affliction and reproach; that the wall of Jerusalem lay in ruins; that its gates had been burned with fire; and that aid from their brethren beyond the Euphrates was urgently needed by the Jews in the city.

This aid Nehemiah was anxious to give, but felt apprehensive of difficulties in the way; not the difficulty of quitting the pleasures and luxuries of the magnificent palace in which he held so honourable a place, but that of obtaining the consent of his royal master to his departure for the land of Judea. It is said that the nearest way to reach any heart is through Heaven; such had been the experience of Esther, such now was the experience of Nehemiah. Fervently and humbly he entreated the Lord to give him favour in the sight of the king.

The anxiety which oppressed the noble Jew, expressed itself in his countenance, when, in accordance with his office, he placed the wine-cup in the hand of Artaxerxes. The king noticed his servant's look of depression, and inquired its cause.

"Let the king live for ever," replied Nehemiah; "why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my father's sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?"

Then said the king to him, "For what dost thou make request?"

Nehemiah silently lifted up his heart in prayer ere he made his reply to the monarch:—"If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my father's sepulchres, that I may build it."

Artaxerxes received the petition with favour. He not only permitted the departure of Nehemiah, but provided for him an escort, and gave him letters to the officers of government on the other side of the Euphrates, 457 B.C. It is from the year in which the Persian monarch issued his decree, permitting the rebuilding of Jerusalem, that is dated the commencement of the weeks of prophetic years, at the close of which the Lord Jesus was crucified (Dan. ix. 25).

Nehemiah soon found, on his arrival at Jerusalem, that his position there would be one of great difficulty, requiring both judgment and courage. The enemies of the Jews, especially Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the Ammonite, were possessed of power, cunning, and the most determined resolution to prevent the rebuilding of the ruined wall.

It was in the stillness of night that a single horseman, accompanied by a few attendants on foot, passed through the

gate of the valley. Thoughtfully he rode on where in ancient and happier times the bulwarks of Jerusalem had stood. He gazed sorrowfully on the blackened ruins over which the Assyrian conquerors had passed. But it was not to mourn in unavailing woe over the desolation of his country that Nehemiah made that midnight survey. That which was ruined he resolved to repair, and, with the blessing of God, to encircle the city once more with a protecting wall.

By his words, and yet more by his example, Nehemiah animated his countrymen to exertion. The circuit of Jerusalem was portioned out to the most zealous of the people, and each in his own division set heartily to work. In vain Sanballat and Tobiah tried to discourage the builders by representing their patriotic efforts as rebellion against Persia. In vain, time after time, they endeavored to entice Nehemiah into a village, that they might deprive the Jews of him who was the life and soul of their undertaking. "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down," was Nehemiah's answer to their insidious proposals. A yet deeper snare was laid. Nehemiah was warned of a plot to assassinate him, and was urged to fly to the temple. But again the brave leader's self-devotion defeated the schemes of his enemies. "Should such a man as I flee?" he exclaimed; "and who is he that being as I am, would go into the temple to save his life?"

The adversaries tried the effect of mockery and scorn. As they viewed the unceasing labours of the builders, "Will they," cried Sanballat, "revive the stones out of the rubbish that is burned?" "If a fox come up," rejoined the insolent Tobiah, "he shall even break down their stone wall." But notwithstanding this hatred and scorn, the wall rose higher and higher. Then the bitter adversaries of the Jews resolved to use weapons more

formidable than words, and conspired to attack the builders. The peril was great, but Nehemiah and his followers were equal to the occasion. A watch was kept both by night and by day; they that builded the wall, and they that bare burdens, each with one hand wrought in the work, and with the other grasped a weapon for defence. Nehemiah, ever on the watch against the foe, changed not his garments, but lay down night after night in his daily attire, prepared to start up at the first sound of danger. He kept a trumpeter at his side, and said to the nobles and the people, "The work is great and large, and we are separated one far from another; in what place therefore that ye hear the sound of the trumpet, resort ye thither unto us: our God shall fight for us!"

By the indefatigable exertions of these devoted men, in the short space of fifty-two days the wall was completed. The enemies were cast down and discouraged, for they perceived that this work was of God.

And so, in the midst of a world that despises and hates them, God's people, through all generations, pursue the work that is given them to do; with one hand, as it were, armed to fight against besetting sins and inward corruptions, the other busily engaged in works of piety and love. He that will not fight, is unworthy of labour; he that will not labour, is unprepared to fight. It is they who, through faith, conquer sin and self, that are found most zealous in every good work.

The liberality of Nehemiah was equal to his activity and courage. With free hospitality he daily entertained at his own table a hundred and fifty Jews. This, and other expenses, Nehemiah defrayed from his own purse, refusing to draw from the people even the allowances due to his office. This generous conduct strengthened his influence, and enabled him with

more boldness to denounce and crush a hateful system of usury which prevailed at this time amongst the richer Jews, who took advantage of the wants of their brethren, to take from them their lands, and even their freedom. Nehemiah induced his countrymen to enter into a solemn covenant with the Lord—a covenant to obey all the law, to refrain from marriages with the heathen, to bring due offerings to the temple, and to keep the Sabbath holy.

A reverence was shown for the Scriptures, which was one of the most encouraging signs of reviving religion. A pulpit of wood was erected in one of the streets of Jerusalem, and from this, from morning till noonday, Ezra the priest read aloud from the book of the law of Moses. The multitude of listeners was immense; all the people gathered themselves together as one man to hearken to the word of the Lord. When Ezra opened the book in the sight of the vast crowd, all reverently stood up to listen. When he blessed the Lord the great God, a loud, fervent Amen burst from the dense mass of the people, thousands of hands were lifted up towards heaven, and then the multitude of Judah bowed their heads and worshipped with their faces to the ground.

After some time spent in labours for his country, Nehemiah returned to the court of Persia, having received only leave of temporary absence. But the disorders which again crept in amongst the backsliding Jews necessitated a second journey to Jerusalem, 434 B.C. Notwithstanding the strict law which forbade the entrance of Ammonites and other heathens into the temple, the high priest Eliashib, being allied to Tobiah, had actually prepared for him a chamber in the courts of the house of the Lord! The Sabbath was by many disregarded; the wine-press was trodden, burdens carried, and merchandise

sold on the day that was holy to God. The Levites were neglected, their dues were unpaid, and again some of the Jews had fallen into the grievous sin of intermarrying with idolaters.

Nehemiah suppressed these disorders with a firm and judicious hand, strengthening himself by prayer, and supported in all his difficulties and labours by the consciousness of the presence of that Almighty Being whom he was humbly endeavouring to serve.

CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENTS.

	B.C.
Decemvirs banished from Rome	449
Battering-ram invented	441

Alexander the Great

We now lose the sure guidance of the sacred writings, and must pursue our way by the dimmer light of uninspired history. "The two books of the Maccabees," writes Dr. Gray, "were certainly composed after the succession of prophets had ceased among the Jews." Of the first book he observes, "It was probably written by a contemporary author, who had witnessed in part the scenes which he so minutely and graphically describes; "and of the second book, which contains the account of Heliodoros and the martyrdom of the seven brethren, this writer remarks, "The fathers in general cite the book as a useful history, but not as of authority in points of doctrine."

After the time of Nehemiah, Judea ceased to form a distinct government, and was joined to the satrapy of Syria. Its internal government was, however, in the hands of its own high priests, and the civil power thus annexed to this office made it an object of great ambition, and unhappily gave rise to disgraceful contests.

On the death of Eliashib, 413 B.C., his son Joiada or Judas succeeded to the dignity of high priest. After he also had been removed by death, a wicked dispute arose between two of his sons, Johanan and Joshua, as to which should fill the sacred office. Johanan, like another Cain, slew Joshua in the inner court of the temple, and the holy place was polluted with blood shed by a brother's hand.

Bagoses, the satrap of Syria, hearing of this horrible crime, came to Jerusalem to take account of it. On his going into the temple to examine the spot where Joshua had been killed, the

priests would have hindered his entrance, as no Gentile was permitted to cross the sacred threshold.

"What! am I not more pure than the dead carcass of him whom ye have slain in the temple?" exclaimed the indignant satrap; and after rebuking the Jews for suffering the house of their God to be thus defiled, he imposed upon them as a punishment, a heavy tax upon the lambs that were offered in sacrifice.

The nation at this time had fallen into a grievous state of coldness and formality in religion. The priesthood were worldly and corrupted, and looked upon the services of the temple as a weariness, unwilling to perform even the smallest without some earthly reward. But there were yet faithful ones left in the land—those who feared the Lord, and spake often to each other, and feared the name of the Holy One of Israel. "They shall be Mine," said the Lord by the prophet Micah, "in that day when I make up My jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

Of such appears to have been the next high priest, Jaddua, who succeeded his father, Johanan, 341 B.C. This faithful servant of God endeavoured to follow in the steps of Nehemiah, expelling his own brother Manasses for marrying the daughter of Sanballat, the Cuthite governor of Samaria. Manasses then repaired to his wife's father, and the Samaritans availed themselves of the presence of a member of the pontifical family to erect a temple of their own upon the Mount Gerizim, of which Manasses was made high priest. This measure greatly widened the breach between the Jews and the Samaritans; the rivalry of the two nations increased the bitter antipathy which had long existed between them.

The period at length arrived when the Jews were to exchange the yoke of Persia for that of another foreign nation. The winged leopard of Grecia, beheld in vision by Daniel, was now to follow the Assyrian lion and the bear of Persia; the kingdom of brass, as the prophet had foretold to Nebuchadnezzar, was to succeed to the kingdom of silver. Alexander the Great, king of Macedon, at the head of his Greeks, in a great victory at Issus crushed the power of the Persian Darius, which he afterwards completely destroyed.

The conqueror marched into Syria after his victory, summoned its various nations to yield submission, and laid siege to the city of Tyre, a place of great strength and importance, 332 B.C.

Tyre was a stronghold of superstition and idolatry. Celebrated for her commerce, her merchants were princes, her traffickers the honourable of the earth. But the destruction of this idolatrous city had been foretold centuries previously, both by the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel. "I will cast thee to the ground, I will bring thee to ashes upon the earth, in the sight of all them that behold thee," had been the message of the Lord while yet Tyre stood in her strength and beauty, with no one to make her afraid. And now the prophecy was literally though unconsciously fulfilled by Alexander. With extreme difficulty, but with a perseverance which overcame every obstacle, the great Macedonian seized upon the mighty city. He mercilessly burned it to the ground, and destroyed or enslaved its people. In vain had the Tyrians called upon their idols, prayed to the deaf ears that could not hear, sought help of the hands that could not save! Eight thousand of the unfortunate citizens fell in the sack of the town, and were buried beneath its ashes; and

two thousand were barbarously crucified by order of the stern Alexander.

And now the conqueror, flushed with success, turned his march towards Jerusalem. Terror and alarm spread through that city. The Jews, faithful in their allegiance to Persia, had refused to supply the enemy of King Darius with the provisions which he had demanded for the sustenance of his army. This had greatly irritated Alexander, whose spirit was little able to brook such opposition to his despotic will. As soon as the ruin of Tyre was complete, the fierce conqueror therefore advanced upon Jerusalem, with intention to punish its people for daring to disobey his commands.

In the extremity of their danger, Jaddua and his countrymen threw themselves on the protection of their God. They implored his succour in their distress, and their prayers were heard and answered.

In a vision of the night Jaddua was directed to go out and meet Alexander dressed in the gorgeous robes of his office, and attended by a company of the priests, and all the people in white garments. They were not to draw the sword or lift the spear, but go forth to the destroyer of Tyre with no protection but that of the invisible arm of Jehovah stretched out to defend them. Jaddua obeyed the command, and on the next day left Jerusalem in the manner directed.

The white-robed procession slowly mounted a hill which commanded a prospect of the country around them. Doubtless many a heart trembled, and many a cheek grew pale with fear, when a cloud of dust in the distance showed the approach of the terrible foe! Alexander's army drew nearer and nearer, the sunlight flashing from their weapons. Would not these

weapons soon be dimmed in the blood of their unarmed, unresisting victims?

Once more the Lord showed his irresistible power over the hearts of men. No sooner did Alexander see the high priest followed by the people, advancing towards him, than, as if struck by sudden awe, he hastened forward to meet the procession, and, to the astonishment of his own troops, did obeisance to the venerable Jaddua. While all stood amazed at this most unexpected conduct on the part of the offended conqueror, Parmenio, who was one of his friends, ventured to ask him the reason of it, and to inquire why he, whom every one adored, should pay such adoration to a Jew.

Alexander answered that it was not to him, but to the God whom Jaddua served, that he paid adoration; for that when he had been in Macedonia meditating the war against Persia, which had been since so successfully begun, he had beheld in a dream this very high priest arrayed in such a dress as that which he now wore, who bade him pass boldly into Persia, promising that God should be his guide, and bestow upon him victory and success. Then turning to the high priest Jaddua, Alexander cordially embraced him, and entered Jerusalem in his company, where the proud conqueror of Persia offered sacrifices to the God of Jacob.

Jaddua having shown to Alexander the prophecies in which his triumphs were predicted, the king of Macedon left Jerusalem assured of that success which followed his arms. He called the Jews together before his departure, and graciously bade them ask of him whatever they might desire. They petitioned that they might be permitted the free exercise of their religion and laws, and be exempted from taxes every seventh year, during which they neither sowed nor reaped, but

left the land to enjoy her Sabbaths, according to the commandment of God.

To all this Alexander graciously acceded; but when similar petitions were offered by the Samaritans, who had merited well of the Macedonian monarch, by sending the supplies which the Jews had refused, Alexander returned a courteous but evasive reply, deferring compliance till, at some future period, he should have leisure fully to inform himself on the subject of their demands.

Alexander then pursued his victorious career. Darius, after a defeat at Arbela, fled towards Bactria, but was traitorously murdered by Bessus, one of his own nobles. Alexander reached the summit of power and pride. But he who was the lord of many nations was the slave of his own sinful passions: Alexander conquered his outward foes, but not the more dangerous ones within. Intoxicated with vainglory, he fancied himself to be more than man. Addicted to intemperance, in a drunken revel he killed his own friend Clitus, and by his wild excesses shortened his own existence. This extraordinary man died in the prime of his days and the zenith of his power, 323 B.C., leaving the vast empire which his prowess had subdued to be split into various kingdoms, and to be made the object of fearful wars and bloodshed amongst his contending generals.

CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENTS.

441—323 B.C.

	B.C.
Peloponnesian War began	431
Retreat of the 10,000 Greeks	401
Death of Socrates	400
Battle of Leuctra	371

Judea Under the Yoke of Egypt

In the first division of Alexander's empire, Syria devolved to Laomedon, and Egypt to Ptolemy Soter. Between them a war arose, and its result was that all the provinces of Laomedon submitted to Ptolemy. The Jews alone, faithful to the oath which they had taken to the defeated ruler, refused to bend to the conqueror. Ptolemy marched against Jerusalem, which, being now strongly fortified, might have held out against him, but that the Jews, from a scrupulous regard to the sanctity of the Sabbath, would not at this period defend themselves on that holy day, 320 B.C. Ptolemy did not treat the Jews with great severity; for, though he sent a large number of them into Egypt, it was rather as colonists than bondsmen.

The son and successor of this king was a great patron of learning, and spared no expense in procuring curious books for his famous library in Alexandria. He caused the Hebrew Scriptures to be rendered into Greek; and this important translation still exists under the name of the Septuagint, from the tradition that seventy persons were employed in completing it.

Not only did Ptolemy avail himself of the services of the Jews as regarded literature—some of them were also enlisted in the army of the Egyptian ruler. An anecdote is related of one who had the courage openly to reprove the superstition of the idolatrous soldiery amongst whom he was serving.

This man, whose name was Mosullum, was noted for his valour, and famous for his singular skill in archery. As, on one occasion, he was travelling towards the Red Sea with his companions, a certain soothsayer, who accompanied the band,

commanded an instant halt. Mosullum demanded his reason for the delay.

"Look ye," answered the foreteller of events; "behold that bird before us. If that bird stands, ye are to stand; if he rises and flies on, go forward; if the bird takes his flight the contrary way, you must all return back again."

The Jew, without speaking another word, fitted an arrow to the string, and let fly at the bird, which, the next moment, fell fluttering in death to the ground. Furious indignation was instantly excited amongst the superstitious beholders against the author of so daring an act. But Mosullum opposed calm reason to the folly of those who put faith in omens. "How could that poor creature," said he, "pretend to foreshow us our fortune, that knew nothing of its own? If this bird could have foretold good or evil to come, it would have kept out of this place for fear of being slain by the arrow of Mosullum the Jew."

Onias, the first high priest at Jerusalem, having died, 300 B.C., was succeeded by Simon his son, who, from the holiness of his life and the righteousness of his actions, was surnamed Simon the Just. This good man completed the canon of the Scriptures; and the Old Testament, as it has been handed down to us, was in its perfect form received by the Jews. Simon died 291 B.C., and Onias succeeded to the high priesthood.

Egypt, to which, as has been seen, Judea was at this period subject, was ruled by a succession of sovereigns, who all bore the title of Ptolemy.

A remarkable instance of the reverence with which the monarchs to whom the Jews were tributary often regarded the religion which those Jews professed, was shown by Ptolemy Euergetes, in the year 245 B.C. On returning from a successful expedition, this king of a most idolatrous nation chose to take

his way through Jerusalem, and there render thanks to the God of Israel for the victories he had obtained over Syria. We thus see that the light of truth, confided to the Jews, shed a partial radiance over the nations by which they were surrounded.

A young Jew, named Joseph, nephew of the high priest Onias, rose high in the favour of Ptolemy Euergetes. He was admitted to the office of receiver-general in the provinces of Cœle-Syria, Phœnicia, Judea, and Samaria; and, like his great countryman of the same name, acquitted himself with such wisdom and prudence, that he won and kept for many years the confidence of the king of Egypt.

In 216 B.C., Simon, second high priest of that name, succeeded his father Onias, who had been a weak and covetous old man, intent upon nothing so much as amassing treasure for himself. It was well that one of a nobler character had now entered upon so important an office, for a time of great difficulty was near, when the Jews would especially require courage and strong faith in their leader.

Ptolemy Philopater mounted the throne of his father. This young man was stained with the darkest crimes: he was the murderer of his mother and his brother, and subsequently proved himself a barbarous persecutor. He, however, appeared disposed, in the earlier part of his reign, to render, as his father had done, honour to the great God of Israel. He visited Jerusalem, offered sacrifices to the Lord, and presented valuable gifts to the temple. Perhaps the conscience of this wicked prince was not altogether silent, and he thought by his oblations to appease that great Being who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.

But Ptolemy was not contented with viewing the outside of the beautiful temple raised to Jehovah; he was resolved to

visit the sanctuary, to tread that Holy of holies into which none but the high priest was permitted to enter, and that only on the day of atonement. This raised an outcry all through the city. Simon opposed the entrance of the profane king into the holy temple; he declared to him the law which forbade it; but Ptolemy was disposed to regard no law but that of his own capricious will. Disregarding the expostulations of the high priest, and the distress and horror expressed in the countenances of the Levites, he pressed into the inner court, and was about to enter the sanctuary, when the wicked king was suddenly struck with such a terror and confusion of mind, that he was utterly unable to proceed, and he was carried half dead out of the place which an invisible Power protected.

Rage and hatred swelled in the heart of the disappointed monarch. He had been conquered by fear, and he now sought to cover his mortification by revenge upon the worshippers of the omnipotent Jehovah. On his return to his capital—Alexandria—Ptolemy at once degraded all the Jews, who were living there in great numbers, and commanded that each should be branded with the mark of an ivy-leaf—the badge of Bacchus, the god of wine, whom this miserable idolater worshipped. All who refused to receive this disgraceful mark were ordered to be put to death; but such as sacrificed to the false gods were to enjoy equal privileges with the Macedonians, the original founders of the city. Of the many thousands of Jews who were in Alexandria, only three hundred persons were found base enough to forsake their God to win the favour of the king.

Enraged at the firmness of the majority, Ptolemy resolved to punish not only the Jews in Alexandria, but those who dwelt in any part of his dominions. He sent orders that all who were

in Egypt should be sent to the capital in chains. There, it is said, that a great multitude of victims being thus gathered together, the tyrant shut them up in the hippodrome, a large place without the city used for horse-races and games, and appointed a certain day in which they were all to be destroyed by elephants.

Crowds assembled on this day to witness the horrible spectacle; but the king had sat up so late on the previous night at a drunken revel, that he slept on that morning beyond the hour which had been fixed upon for the show. Nothing could be done in his absence: the massacre was deferred till the morrow; and again on the morrow a similar cause occasioned a similar delay. During all this time the Jews, shut up in the hippodrome, ceased not by earnest, humble prayer, to implore that mercy from God which they could not hope for from the tyrant.

On the third day the king took his seat to behold the fearful execution. Multitudes hastened with barbarous eagerness to the spot to see their unhappy fellow-creatures torn limb from limb, for no other crime than that of holding fast their holy faith. The huge elephants were brought forth, maddened with frankincense and wine, that they might with more rage execute the king's vengeance upon his innocent subjects.

But no sooner were the fierce animals let loose, than, neglecting their intended victims, they broke bounds, and furiously rushed upon the crowds assembled to view the execution! The air was filled with loud shrieks and cries, the multitudes fled in dismay; but many were trampled under foot, many were destroyed by the savage elephants. Ptolemy, a witness of the terrible scene, dared no longer oppose his puny strength to the irresistible power of Israel's God; he dared no

longer persecute the Jews, who were so manifestly protected by Heaven. He revoked all his decrees against them, and loaded them with favours and gifts, 216 B.C.

The tyrant Philopater died, 205 B.C., while yet in the prime of his manhood; and as his title devolved on a little child, Antiochus the Great, king of Syria, soon succeeded in wresting Judea and other provinces from the Egyptian crown. The Jews by no means regretted this change of masters. They willingly rendered up their strongholds to Antiochus; and on his advancing to Jerusalem, the priests and elders went forth in procession to meet him, and received him with gladness. They had little reason, indeed, to uphold the cause of their Egyptian tyrants.

CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENTS.

323—205 B.C.

	B.C.
Beginning of the first Punic War	264
Second Punic War	218
Battle of Canna	216

Judea Under the Yoke of Syria

Antiochus the Great died, 187 B.C., and Seleucus Philopater succeeded. It is during the reign of this monarch that some remarkable events are said to have occurred, as related in the book of the Maccabees.

Simon, a Benjamite, having been appointed governor of the temple, some disputes arose between him and Onias, who was high priest at the time. Finding that he was unable to prevail against him whom the Jews regarded as their lawful chief, Simon fled to Apollonius, the governor of Cœle-Syria and Palestine, under King Seleucus, and informed him that great treasures were laid up in the temple at Jerusalem. This account as was probably intended, excited the cupidity of the king, and Heliodoros his treasurer was despatched to seize upon the coveted wealth.

Heliodoros arrived at Jerusalem, and was courteously received by Onias. The treasurer declared to him the purpose of his journey, and asked him whether the report were true that much gold was to be found in the temple.

Onias replied that there was indeed money laid up there for the relief of widows and orphans, but earnestly expostulated against any attempt to carry away from the temple the treasure committed to his trust.

Heliodoros had, however, received the positive commands of the king, and was resolved to carry them into execution.

The high priest was in the deepest distress; and his horror and indignation at the intended robbery and sacrilege were shared by the priests and the people. Women, girded with sackcloth, mourned in the streets; the priests prostrated

themselves before the altar—all, lifting up their hands, implored the Lord to keep safe and sure that intrusted treasure which they were themselves unable to defend.

Then, as is related, there appeared before Heliodoros a horse, on which sat a terrible rider, arrayed in bright armour of glittering gold; and beside him glorious beings, who, with scourges, sorely chastised the mortal who had dared to profane the sanctity of the temple. Overpowered by the vision, Heliodoros fell to the ground, thick darkness seemed to surround him, and he was carried, fainting and almost dying, from the treasury which he had impiously entered.

Seleucus was succeeded, in 175 B.C., by his brother Antiochus Epiphanes, one of the most base and cruel tyrants that ever disgraced a throne. As soon as he was settled in the kingdom, Jason, the unworthy brother of Onias by underhand means contrived not only to induce the monarch to let him supplant his brother, but to banish Onias to Antioch, where this good man was subsequently murdered.

Jason was now high priest and the use which he made of his power was such as might have been expected from his treacherous mode of obtaining it. Honour, patriotism, religion were all sacrificed to his desire to retain the favour of the king. He erected a gymnasium for games, after the fashion of the Greeks, whom he sought in all things to imitate. Jason did all in his power to induce his countrymen to abandon the customs of their fathers, to break their covenant with God, and to conform to the manners of the heathen. The services of the temple were abandoned, and corruption spread amongst the people.

Retribution soon overtook the wicked Jason, and as he had meted to another it was measured to him again. His brother

Menelaus supplanted him in the same manner that he had supplanted Onias, and succeeded to his title and his power, more than emulating him in his impiety and guilt.

Jason was not disposed easily to yield up his ill-acquired dignity. Taking recourse to arms, in 171 B.C., he marched with a thousand men against his own city, took possession of Jerusalem, drove Menelaus to seek shelter in its castle, and committed great cruelties on such of the citizens as he deemed the partizans of his brother.

The just chastisements of the Almighty were now descending upon his backsliding people. Antiochus hearing of what had occurred, and deeming that the whole Jewish nation had revolted, hastened to Jerusalem with his forces, and slew in the devoted city no fewer than four thousand persons. As many were sold as slaves. Conducted by the impious Menelaus, Antiochus forced his way into the temple, plundered it of vast treasures, and polluted the altar of God by offering on it a sow, which was held in abomination by the Jews. Well might the miserable descendants of Abraham think that the Almighty whom they had forsaken, had utterly forsaken them now; that His mercy had left them for ever; and that, after so many deliverances, they were finally given up for their sins to destruction.

But there were yet amongst the Jews those who clung to the faith of their fathers, and rested with earnest hope on the promises given through the prophets. Jerusalem still was the guardian of the light of Truth in a world that lay in darkness, and neither the powers of earth nor hell could prevail to quench it.

Dark and fearful, indeed, was the cloud of tribulation which rested upon Jerusalem. Antiochus, not contented with

his late fearful cruelties, sent Apollonius, his general, to wreak yet further vengeance on the city of David. After having slain great multitudes of the people, and sent away ten thousand captives, Apollonius plundered the town, set it on fire, and demolished the wall. The daily sacrifices ceased in the temple; Jerusalem was deserted. Officers were appointed to compel the miserable Jews to sacrifice to idols. The Samaritans consented to receive an image of the false god Jupiter into their temple on Mount Gerizim; and another, to the horror of all true children of Abraham, was placed in the temple of Jerusalem!

In this period of awful trial, glorious saints and noble martyrs were found ready rather to suffer unto death than to deny the God whom they adored. Such a spirit of devotion as that which had supported Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, when the fiery furnace glowed before them, animated still the faithful servants of the Lord.

An example of noble constancy was given by Eleazar, an aged scribe, who was urged by his persecutors to break the law of Moses. The noble old man was scourged to death, bravely enduring to the end.

A mother and her seven sons were brought before Antiochus, and threatened with the most fearful tortures should they disobey his unlawful commands. One and all this devoted family preferred death to apostasy. The mother, with refined cruelty, was made to witness the dying agonies of her sons. Far from weakening their courage by tears and lamentations, the Jewish matron exhorted her children to keep faithful to their God, cheering them in that awful hour by hopes of a joyful resurrection. Faith and strength from above supported these glorious martyrs. One of the young men exclaimed, as he stretched forth his hands for the torture,

"These I had from Heaven, and for His laws I despise them, and from Him I hope to receive them again!" One after another, six of the sons closed their eyes in death, committing their souls to their Creator. One only, the youngest, remained, and even the tyrant appears to have been touched with some compassion for his tender years, for he promised the youth with oaths to make him a rich and happy man, if he would turn from the laws of his fathers. When the young Jew refused to hearken to his offers, the king bade the mother, already bereaved of so many children, use her endeavours to save the last by counselling submission and obedience.

But she, strong in faith, addressed her son in the Hebrew language, conjuring him, even by his love to her who had borne him, to endure any amount of suffering rather than sin. "Fear not this tormentor," she cried; "but being worthy of thy brethren, take thy death, that I may receive thee again in mercy with thy brethren."

While his mother was yet speaking these words, the noble youth turned to the executioners. "Whom wait ye for?" he exclaimed; "I will not obey the king's commandment, but I will obey the commandments of the law that was given unto our fathers by Moses. And thou," he continued, looking at the tyrant, "shalt not escape the hands of God. For we suffer because of our sins; and though the living God be angry with us a little while for our chastening and correction, yet shall He be at one with His servants. But thou, godless man! be not lifted up without a cause, or puffed up with uncertain hopes, lifting up thy hand against the servants of God, for thou hast not yet escaped the judgment of Almighty God, who seeth all things. For our brethren who now have suffered a short pain, are dead under God's covenant of everlasting life; but thou,

through the judgment of God, shall receive just punishment for thy pride. But I, as my brethren, offer up my body and life for the laws of my fathers, beseeching God that He would speedily be merciful unto my nation."

The tyrant, enraged at the fearless words of the youth, put him to death by tortures more dreadful even than those that his brothers had endured; and then the devoted mother, faithful unto death, and under a trial more terrible than death, followed her glorious sons by the same brief and bloody path, to the haven of eternal rest prepared for those who, like them, count God's service as dearer than life.

The dying prayer of the young martyr had been heard. The Lord was preparing a deliverance for his persecuted people.

The Jews, quiet and peaceful as they had shown themselves to be under the sway of their rulers—Assyrian, Persian, and Egyptian—had at length been goaded beyond their power of endurance; or rather, the Almighty having compassion on their sufferings, was pleased again, as in the days of old, to raise up for them mighty deliverers.

CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENTS.

205—170 B.C.

	B.C.
Battle of Zama	202
Sparta subdued by the Romans	194

Victories of Judas Maccabeus

The noble family of the Asmoneans, so called from Asmoneus, one of its ancestors, was amongst the most distinguished in Judea, and dwelt at this period in the town of Modin. At the head of this family was Mattathias, the father of five noble sons, Joanan, Simon, Eleazar, Jonathan, and the illustrious Judas, surnamed Maccabeus.

Deeply did Mattathias mourn over the oppression of his people, and the desecration of the altar of his God; and he heard with emotions of indignation that the king's officers had come to his own town, to compel all to sacrifice to the gods of the heathen.

Mattathias being a person of great influence, the emissaries of Antiochus spared no pains to induce him, by many promises, to give an example of submission. But the brave old Jew answered with a loud voice, "Though all the nations that are under the king's dominion obey him, and fall away every one from the religion of his fathers, yet will I and my sons walk in the covenant. God forbid that we should forsake the law and the ordinances! We will not hearken to the king's words, to go either to the right hand or the left."

When Mattathias had concluded his declaration, there came a renegade Jew, in the sight of all, to sacrifice at the altar at Modin. Filled with indignation and inflamed with zeal, Mattathias, like another Phinehas, rushed forward and slew him on the altar; then turning on the commissioner, him he also slew, and pulled down the altar to the ground!

This was indeed drawing the sword and throwing away the scabbard! Mattathias exclaimed, "Who is zealous for the law

and maintaineth the covenant, let him follow me!" and leaving all that he possessed, he fled into the mountains with his sons, where they were joined by numbers of the faithful and brave, who were ready, like themselves, to yield up their lives rather than their faith.

A touching example of obedience to the law of God was given by a large band of Jews who, with their wives and little ones, had fled into the wilderness to escape the persecutions of the king. The fugitives were pursued, and the forces of Antiochus came up to them at a place where they had taken refuge in a cave. Philip, the leader of the soldiers, endeavoured to induce the Jews to come forth and make submission, but this they firmly refused to do. He then attacked them, and the day being the Sabbath, the Jews, scrupulously observant of the law which commands that day to be kept holy, neither stopped up the mouth of their cave nor raised a weapon against their foes. "Let us die all in our innocence," they exclaimed; and thus all—men, women, and children—were slain unresisting by the Syrians.

Mattathias and his followers were greatly grieved on receiving tidings of this cruel massacre. In full debate, after due deliberation, they came to the decision that self-defence is lawful on the Sabbath; and that if attacked by the foe on that day, they would fight for their lives and their laws.

Mattathias, and the brave Jews whom he had gathered around him, now leaving their fastnesses in the mountains, went to various cities of Judea, throwing down the idol altars, and driving the enemy before them. But the aged hero was soon worn out by the fatigues of warfare. He felt that the time of his departure was drawing nigh, and gathering his five sons around him, Mattathias gave them his dying exhortation.

He reminded them of the saints of old, whose faith had been crowned with success; he bade them give their lives for the covenant of God, and remember that they who trusted in Him never should be overcome. He appointed Judas, his third son, to be the leader, and Simon the counsellor of the patriots; and so, bestowing on his children, his parting blessing, Mattathias yielded up his soul to his God. *Truly the hoary head is a crown of glory, when it is found in the way of righteousness.*

Then Judas, called Maccabeus from the motto on his standard, "Who is like unto Thee amongst the gods, O Jehovah!" (the initials of which in Hebrew form the word Maccabi), succeeded to the authority of his father. There appear to have been no petty jealousies between the noble sons of a glorious sire; they were united by a better tie than even that of blood—fellowship in a holy cause.

Judas proved himself a bold and able commander, a hero treading in the steps of Joshua, Gideon, and David. With a force not exceeding six thousand men, he took the field against the large, well-disciplined armies of Antiochus, commanded by warriors of renown.

His first great triumph was gained over Apollonius, whose sword the victor wore to the end of his life. Judas then made head against Seron, a prince of Syria, who came to attack him with a mighty host. Maccabeus was then commanding a mere handful of men, and some of his companions, disheartened at the fearful disparity of numbers, came to their chief and said, "How shall we be able, being so few, to fight against so great a multitude and so strong, seeing we are ready to faint with fasting?"

"With the God of heaven," replied the hero, "it is all one to deliver with a great multitude or a small company; for the

victory standeth not in the multitude of a host, but strength cometh from Heaven. We fight for our laws and our lives, wherefore, the Lord himself will overthrow these men before our face!"

The result of the battle was the complete triumph of the Jews, who overcame and pursued their enemies.

This victory made the name of Judas renowned through all the neighbouring states, and it was speedily followed by others. Army after army was sent against him, and fled in broken masses before the conquering sword of him who trusted in the strength of the Omnipotent.

One of these engagements was with Lycias, a nobleman who acted as regent of Syria during the absence of its king. Lycias, with a force of sixty-five thousand choice infantry and five thousand horsemen, was met by Judas Maccabeus at the head of ten thousand men. When the Jewish leader beheld the immense host before him, before he closed in battle, he had recourse to the powerful weapon of prayer.

"Blessed art Thou, O Saviour of Israel!" he cried, "who didst quell the violence of the mighty man by the hand of Thy servant David, and gavest the host of strangers into the hands of Jonathan, the son of Saul, and his armour-bearer! Shut up this army in the hand of Thy people Israel, and let them be confounded in their power. Cast them down with the sword of them that love Thee, and let all that know Thy name praise Thee with thanksgiving."

The supplications of Judas were heard. The Lord God of Israel fought for His people, and the vast Syrian host fled in confusion before them.

Then said Judas and his brethren, "Behold, our enemies are discomfited; let us go up to cleanse and dedicate the sanctuary."

With what joy and thanksgiving must the valiant deliverers have been welcomed in Jerusalem, which they had freed from the oppressor! Judas and his band of heroes proceeded at once to the temple; but when they saw the sanctuary desolate, the altar profaned, the gates burned down, and herbage growing in the courts once trod by the feet of so many worshippers, they rent their clothes, and cast ashes on their heads, and fell with their faces to the ground.

But Judas, like Nehemiah, did not content himself with lamentations over the desolation which he saw—he zealously set himself to repair and to reform. He chose priests of blameless lives to cleanse the polluted sanctuary, pull down the altar which the heathen had profaned, and build up another in its place. He also appointed warriors to fight against the Syrian garrison, which still held a fortress which had been erected by Apollonius to overlook the temple. New holy vessels were made for the sanctuary, the lamps again were lighted and sacrifices offered, and, with joy and exultation, songs of praise, and the music of harps and cymbals, the conquerors returned thanks for victory in the temple of the Lord of hosts.

By the command of Judas Maccabeus, high walls, strengthened with towers, were raised around the sacred building, to protect it from future attack, and a garrison was appointed to guard it, 164 B.C.

When Antiochus, who was on his way from Ecbatana to Babylonia heard how the Jews had defeated Lycias, recovered the temple of Jerusalem, pulled down his idols, thrown their altars to the ground, and restored the pure worship of Jehovah,

he was enraged to the utmost pitch of fury. He commanded his charioteer to double his speed, that he might the sooner arrive in Judea to execute a fearful revenge. He threatened to make Jerusalem one vast grave for the nation that had dared to defy his power.

But the tyrant's hour was come. He was now, according to the prophetic words of the young martyr whom he had slain, to receive the just punishment of his pride. Antiochus Epiphanes was smitten with a most horrible and loathsome disease. Yet, hatred struggling against physical pain, he endeavoured to pursue his course, till his chariot being overturned, the king was so sorely injured by the fall, that it was necessary to carry him in a litter to Tabœ, a town on the confines of Persia and Babylonia.

Here the miserable tyrant endured tortures more intolerable than any that he himself had inflicted, and was forced openly to acknowledge them to be God's retribution for his impiety and cruelty. His reason at length gave way beneath them, spectres appeared to haunt him, and this enemy of God and of his people expired at length in the greatest agonies both of body and mind.

Meanwhile Judas gained victory after victory. He defeated the people of Edom, Bean, and Ammon; took Gazer, with the towns belonging to it; won a great triumph over a vast host, under a leader named Timotheus; and subdued the cities of the country of Galaad. He smote Hebron, and passed through Samaria; turned to Azotus, in the land of the Philistines; and when he had levelled their altars, and burned their carved images with fire, he returned back in triumph to Judea.

Antiochus had been succeeded by his son of the same name, to which was added that of Eupator. The king being too

young to assume the reins of power, Lycias took the government into his own hands. The regent raised an enormous army to crush the forces of Judas. A hundred thousand foot soldiers, twenty thousand horse, thirty war elephants, and three hundred chariots were gathered together, and headed by the young monarch in person, who laid siege to the town of Bethsura.

Judas collected his forces, far inferior in number to those of the enemy, and falling upon the Syrians by night, put the camp into confusion, and retreated on break of day, without suffering loss by his bold exploit, while many of the enemy were slain.

When the rising sun shed its full light on the glittering ranks of the host of Antiochus, the opposing armies closed in fierce battle. In the fight, Eleazar, a brother of Judas, sacrificed his life in a desperate attempt to kill the young king of Syria. Seeing an immense elephant, adorned with gorgeous harness, and supposing that the monarch himself must be upon it, Eleazar furiously fought his way up to the spot, slaying all who opposed him, and thrusting his weapon into the elephant, was crushed to death by its fall.

The Jews, perhaps discouraged by the loss of Eleazar, fell back before the overwhelming hosts of Syria, and made good their retreat to Jerusalem. Bethsura then surrendered to Lycias, but upon honourable conditions.

From thence Antiochus Eupator marched to Jerusalem, where he laid siege to the sanctuary, which Judas, as before related, had fortified in case of attack. The Jews were now in extreme peril, those who defended the temple being in the utmost distress for want of provisions. Instruments for casting stones, darts, and slings, and other formidable weapons of war, were brought against the handful of men who made their

desperate stand within the wall which had been raised to guard the temple. Famine stared them in the face, and their only alternative seemed to be to perish by hunger or the sword.

But man's extremity is God's opportunity. Lycias received tidings that Philip, a favourite of the late king, and appointed by him guardian of his successor, had seized upon Antioch, and set up his own power in opposition to that of the regent. Lycias found it necessary at once to make peace with the Jews, that he might be at liberty to march himself against this dangerous rival. He therefore proposed honourable and advantageous terms, which were accepted by Judas. The hero was recognized both by the king and the regent as the ruler of Judea; and from this period is dated the commencement of the Asmonean dynasty, which for a hundred and twenty-six years held sway over the Jewish people, 163 B.C.

The treaty between Antiochus and Judas Maccabeus having been ratified by oath, the king and Lycias were admitted into the stronghold which had been so bravely defended. But seeing the strength of the fortification, they, contrary to stipulation, pulled down and destroyed the wall before departing for Syria.

Menelaus, the treacherous high priest, had accompanied Lycias in his expedition against Jerusalem, probably in hope of being restored to his office by the enemies of his people. But divine vengeance at length overtook this traitor to his country and his God. Menelaus lost favour with those whom he had served at the price of conscience, and they became the instruments of his just punishment. He was, by the royal command, cast headlong from a high tower into ashes, where the renegade miserably perished.

CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENTS.
170-163 B.C.

B.C.

Macedon made a province of Rome.....168
The first library erected at Rome 168

The Death of Judas Maccabeus

The reign of the noble Judas was neither peaceful nor long. The year after that in which Antiochus and Lycias had besieged the temple, they were both defeated and slain by Demetrius Soter, a prince who aspired to the Syrian crown, 162 B.C. The conqueror was no sooner established on the throne than a band of Jewish apostates came around him, with bitter complaints against Judas. At their head was Alcimus, an unworthy high priest of the Jews, who had been expelled by them with just indignation for his attachment to Grecian idolatries. Unappalled by the fate of the guilty Menelaus, this renegade sought the aid of a heathen monarch to reinstate him in the office of which he had been so justly deprived.

The new king, Demetrius, lending a willing ear to the complaints of the Jewish traitors, sent a large force under his general, Bacchides, to support the claims of Alcimus. This commander entered Judea without meeting with any apparent opposition, and placing Alcimus in power, with what he considered a sufficient force to protect him, Bacchides returned to the king.

But the traitor Alcimus was unable to maintain himself in his dangerous position; he was forced again to seek aid from Demetrius, who again acceded to his prayer. The king sent Nicanor, a prince of high dignity, a man who bore deadly hatred towards Israel, with a powerful force, and the royal command to execute stern vengeance on the Jews. But again the Almighty gave victory to his people. Twice was Nicanor defeated by Judas, and in the second battle the heathen general was slain.

Then, though but for a brief period, the harassed land of Judea had rest.

Judas Maccabeus now looked around for some powerful ally who might aid him in the arduous struggle which the Jews had so long maintained single-handed against all their foes. He turned his eyes towards Rome, that mighty republic which was then advancing, step by step, to almost universal dominion. Judas sent an embassy to ask for the friendship and protection of Rome. His messengers were courteously received; the Romans entered into a league of peace and amity with a people whose heroic patriotism equalled their own, and agreed to aid the Jews by sea or by land, should Demetrius again dare to attack them.

Little did Maccabeus foresee that the powerful heathen nation, whose alliance he sought, would at a future period prove a more dangerous foe to his country than Babylon, Egypt, or Syria! Little did he foresee that Jerusalem would be trodden down by the Romans, her warriors slain, her people scattered through the earth—that through Rome she should behold her brave sons in fetters, her beautiful temple in flames! As little could he imagine that the crime for which the city of David should be given up to this fearful fate would be that of rejecting and murdering the Messiah, whose coming he, with all the faithful of Israel, awaited with hope and desire!

Before his ambassadors returned from Rome, Judas Maccabeus, by a soldier's death, had closed his glorious career.

Demetrius the king, hearing of the defeat and death of Nicanor, sent Bacchides a second time, accompanied by the traitor Alcimus, to avenge his general, and destroy Judas and his band of heroes.

On the approach of the hostile force, a panic seemed to have seized upon the Jews, hitherto so full of faith and of courage. They remembered not the lesson which had been taught them by so many glorious triumphs, that victory is not always to the mighty, nor the battle to the strong. Silently they dispersed on every side, till their leader, deserted in his need, found that but eight hundred men remained beside him to encounter the Syrian hosts!

Sore troubled and distressed in mind at the defection of those in whose fidelity he had confided—those whom he had so often led to victory, the lion spirit of the Jewish hero still roused itself to meet the danger. "Let us arise and go up against our enemies," he cried, "if peradventure we may be able to fight with them!"

But of that success of which he doubted, his followers despaired, and urgently counselled flight. Judas, so long accustomed to conquer, indignantly refused to turn his back upon the foe.

"God forbid that I should flee from them!" he exclaimed; "if our time be come, let us die manfully for our brethren, and let us not stain our honour!"

From morning till night raged the battle. Judas charging the right wing of the enemy with irresistible impetuosity, carried all before him, and was hot in pursuit when the left wing came up to its aid. This changed the face of the conflict. Surrounded, hemmed in by masses of the foe, but bravely fighting on to the last, Judas Maccabeus, the heroic leader, fell, and the few faithful followers who survived the bloody struggle were compelled to retreat.

The body of the hero was carried by Jonathan and Simon, his brothers, to the family sepulchre at Modin. Great were the

lamentations and sorrow through Judea, as from town to town and village to village spread the tidings of the death of its prince. Many and bitter were the tears shed for the fall of Judas Maccabeus, and long was he mourned in the land for which his brave blood had been shed.

Reigns of Jonathan, Simon, and John Hyrcanus

A period of extreme distress succeeded the death of Judas. The sky had not appeared darker over Judea even during the bloody persecution of Antiochus Epiphanes. Whereupon all the wisest amongst the Jews flocked to the standard of Jonathan, the youngest of the five sons of Mattathias, and made him their captain and leader, in the place of his noble brother.

In the next year Alcimus, the traitorous high priest, who had been restored to power by Bacchides, was cut off in the midst of his crimes. In his anxiety to preserve the favour of his heathen protectors, he had given orders that, in the temple, the wall of partition should be broken down which divided the court of the Gentiles from that which Jews only might enter. But he was not suffered to complete his impious work: the Almighty suddenly smote him with palsy, and summoned him to his awful account.

The death of this wicked high priest removed one great difficulty from the path of Jonathan. In his time Syria was convulsed with civil wars, from the competitors who struggled together for its crown. In the wild storm which raged around him, Jonathan guided the affairs of Judea as a wise and experienced pilot steers his vessel through rocks and shoals. While contending monarchs rose and fell, even from their disputes the skilful ruler won advantages for his country. Jonathan, by the grant of a prince named Alexander, who was at that time opposing Demetrius, assumed the office of high priest with the full consent of the Jewish people, 152 B.C. From this period, till the time of Herod, the dignity became

hereditary in the Asmonean family. Jonathan was now enabled to proceed with his various improvements and repairs, restoring justice throughout the land, and reforming, to the best of his power, that which was amiss both in church and in state.

For many years Jonathan had ruled over Judea, when an act of shameful treachery removed him from his post of usefulness and honour. Tryphon, who had been governor of Antioch, aspired to the crown of Syria, and his unscrupulous ambition was eager to trample down every obstacle that stood in his way. Such an obstacle he foresaw in the firm integrity of the high priest of Judea, whom the ambitious noble found at the head of a formidable force.

Tryphon, seeing Jonathan so powerfully attended, durst not openly attempt anything against him, but deceived him by flattering words, and a false appearance of friendship. He assured the high priest that he only came to consult him on matters which regarded their common interest, and that he was about to place the town of Ptolemais in Jonathan's hands.

By these treacherous pretences Tryphon induced his unsuspecting victim to trust himself with a small force within the walls of Ptolemais. No sooner had they entered than the gates were closed by order of the traitor, and a massacre commenced. Of those who had accompanied Jonathan not a man was spared; and though he himself lingered for a space in captivity, and earnest were the efforts of his brother to save his life, the merciless Tryphon completed his crime and the noble prisoner was slain by his command, 144 B.C.

With indignation and horror the Jews heard of the treachery of Tryphon. Deprived by this sudden stroke of their leader, and seeing enemies gathering around them, their hearts

failed them for fear. At this hour of peril Simon, the elder brother of Jonathan and Judas, showed himself worthy of his race. He went up to Jerusalem, assembled the terrified people, and offered himself as their leader. With joy the Jews hailed as their captain the last surviving son of Mattathias.

One of the first acts of the new high priest was to strengthen the friendship with Rome which had been commenced by Judas Maccabeus. He also sent a crown of gold to Demetrius, the rival of the guilty Tryphon, and received from him a grant of the principality of Judea, free from all taxes, tolls, and tributes, on the condition of the Jews aiding him to crush Tryphon, the murderer of Jonathan. Thus Simon became not only high priest, but sovereign prince of Judea, which for a space was entirely freed from the yoke of any foreign nation.

Simon showed himself to be an able leader as well as a prudent statesman. He took Gazara, Joppa, and Jamnia, drove the heathen from the fortress which overlooked the temple at Jerusalem, and razed the fortress itself to the ground.

Nor, amidst his labours for the good of his people, did Simon omit to pay due reverence to the memory of the dead. The body of the murdered Jonathan was taken from the place where he died, and buried in the sepulchre at Modin, beside those of his brave father and brothers. Simon raised there a splendid monument of white marble, with seven stately pyramids—one for his father, one for his mother, four for his brethren, and the seventh for himself. This monument being on an eminence, was seen far off at sea; and often as the Jewish mariner turned his eyes towards it, would he think with grateful reverence of the heroes sleeping beneath it, the memory of whose noble deeds has proved more enduring than marble.

After ruling Judea for about nine years, Simon was cut off by treachery even yet more base than that to which Jonathan had fallen a victim.

Ptolemy, his own son-in-law, who held an office under the high priest, secretly aspired to fill his place. This most wicked and perfidious man invited Simon to an entertainment which he had prepared in a neighbouring castle. The venerable high priest suspected no evil from one to whom he was so nearly connected, accepted the invitation, and went to the fortress with two of his sons.

In the midst of the feast, when the wine-cup went round, and the unsuspecting guests never dreamed of danger, suddenly assassins burst in amongst them, and Simon and his two sons were ruthlessly murdered!—135 B.C. Not contented with committing this fearful crime, determined to leave no son to succeed to the slaughtered prince, or to avenge his death, Ptolemy sent a party to Gazara to assassinate John Hyrcanus, the son of Simon. But tidings of the foul murder of his father and brothers reached Hyrcanus in time to put him on his guard. Hastening to Jerusalem, he secured the city and the temple against those whom the traitor had sent to take possession of both. His activity, wisdom, and courage defeated the designs of Ptolemy, and wrested from him the fruit of his crime.

John Hyrcanus was declared prince and high priest of the Jews, whom he governed for many years with great wisdom and success. Emulating the military prowess of his predecessors, Hyrcanus made himself master of all Galilee and Samaria and other places in the country around him, till none of the neighbouring tribes dared attempt to cope with the Jews,

and he passed the remainder of his days in full repose from all foreign wars.

In the latter part of his life, however, Hyrcanus met with much trouble from the Pharisees, a large and mutinous sect of the Jews. These, with pretensions to singular sanctity of life, and the strictest obedience to the law of Moses, covered a spirit of insolent ambition and intolerable pride.

Hyrcanus, who knew the great influence acquired by the Pharisees over the people, attempted at first to attach them to himself by all manner of favours. He invited the heads of the sect to an entertainment, and having there liberally regaled them, he addressed his guests to the following effect:—He told them that the fixed purpose of his mind had always been to be just in his actions towards men, and to do all things towards God that should be well-pleasing to Him, according to the doctrines which the Pharisees taught. He desired those whom he now saw at his table, should they behold anything in him wherein he failed of his duty in either of these its two branches, to give him the benefit of their instructions, that he might thenceforth reform and amend.

In reply to this humble address, the Pharisees loaded their high priest with praises for his wisdom and goodness, with the exception of one Eleazar, a man of turbulent and mutinous spirit, who, when the rest were silent, stood up, and with astounding audacity exclaimed, "Since you are desirous to be told the truth, if you would approve yourself a just man, quit the high priesthood, and content yourself with being the governor of the people!"

Eleazar tried to support this very startling demand by the false assertion that the mother of Hyrcanus not having been a

Jewess, he was debarred by the law from exercising the holy office of high priest.

Hyrcanus was deeply wounded. Insulted in his own house, in the presence of his guests, and on a point where, both as a pontiff and a Jew, he was most keenly sensitive, he appealed to the Pharisees around to declare what punishment was merited by one who dared to defame the high priest and prince of his people. Their reply was so little satisfactory to Hyrcanus, that he suspected that the insult which he had received had been a thing previously concerted amongst them. He became from thenceforth the bitter enemy of the Pharisees, and transferred all the favour which he had previously shown them to the rival sect of the Sadducees.

It cannot be supposed, however, that so righteous a man as John Hyrcanus adopted all the errors of a sect that afterwards denied the existence of angel or devil, and rejected the blessed doctrine of a resurrection. It is probable that at this time the Sadducees themselves had not gone further than renouncing the unwritten traditions, to which the Pharisees gave great and dangerous weight, regarding them with the same reverence which they paid to the inspired Word of God.

Hyrcanus died 107 B.C., and was succeeded in both his offices by his eldest son Aristobulus.

CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENTS.
152—107 B.C.

	B.C.
Carthage destroyed	146
Numantia destroyed	133

Strife Between the Asmonean Princes

Hitherto the history of the house of the Asmoneans has been a record of the brave deeds of noble men; but from this point it becomes little but a dark catalogue of crimes. We feel, in entering upon it, like a traveller who, after threading a majestic mountain-pass, which looks only the more sublime from the contrast of strong lights and shadows thrown over it by passing clouds, comes on a waste and howling desert, and quickens his pace instinctively, that he may the sooner reach a fairer, brighter scene beyond.

The noble sons of Mattathias seem to have shown no rivalry or emulation; each was ready to do his duty where the Lord had assigned his post; and though three brothers ruled in succession, the first-born of them was content to be the last to rise to power. Far otherwise was it with Aristobulus, the son of John Hyrcanus. Ambition was the idol that he worshipped. Not content with the authority, he must also assume the title of King. He was the first of the race of Asmoneus who put a diadem upon his head. He caused the assassination of one of his brothers, whom he suspected of aspiring-to the throne, and cast three others into prison! Plunging into a yet more fearful depth of crime, on finding that his own mother, by virtue of the will of Hyrcanus, claimed a right to the sovereignty of Judea, Aristobulus overpowered her, threw her into confinement, and suffered her there to perish of hunger!

The reign of this monster was but brief. Grievous remorse imbittered and probably shortened his life. He died in a state of extreme anguish of mind, having reigned over Judea for but one year, 105 B.C.

As soon as Aristobulus was dead, his queen restored his three imprisoned brothers to freedom; the eldest of whom, Alexander Janneus, ascended the vacant throne. But the warning given by the miserable death of Aristobulus did not deter Alexander from following in his steps, and dyeing his hand in the blood of a brother. Nor did his barbarous cruelty end here.

King Alexander, entering into the temple, to officiate as high priest in the feast of tabernacles, was rudely insulted by the people, to whom he was personally odious. Disregarding the sanctity of the place, or the solemnity of the occasion, the mob pelted the royal pontiff with citrons; called him slave, and other opprobrious names; and wound up his fury to such a pitch, that he fell on the crowds with his soldiery, and six thousand lives were sacrificed to the revenge of the insulted king. This was the commencement of a civil war, in which fifty thousand persons are said to have perished.

The concluding and most horrible event of the war was Alexander's triumph over the town of Bethone. Eight hundred of its unfortunate defenders were carried by the king to Jerusalem and there crucified by his command. Their wives and children were killed before their eyes as they hung in their dying torments, while the tyrant and his wives sat feasting and enjoying the horrors of the scene.

This most unworthy king of Judea died in camp of a quartan ague, 79 B.C.

Alexandra the queen, a woman of prudence, assumed the reigns of government on the death of her husband, and Judea was for about nine years wisely ruled by a woman. Alexandra made her eldest son, Hyrcanus, high priest at Jerusalem, he being at that time thirty-three years of age. Hyrcanus was a man

of quiet temper and indolent habits, unfitted to make a struggle for his rights; and on the death of the queen, Aristobulus, his younger brother, wrested from him both the high priesthood and the kingdom, 70 B.C.

But Aristobulus wore not the crown in peace. Great disturbances arose in Judea, having their origin in the ambition of Antipater, an Idumean by birth, but professing the Jewish religion. Having been brought up in the court of Alexander Janneus, and that of Alexandra his successor, Antipater hoped through his favour with Hyrcanus, whom he naturally regarded as their heir, to rise into importance in the state. These hopes were disappointed by the dethronement of Hyrcanus. Henceforth the anxious efforts of the Idumean were directed to rousing the dethroned prince to make a vigorous struggle to regain his lost throne.

Hyrcanus was neither active nor ambitious—he valued his own ease above the title of King of Judea; but at length being persuaded by Antipater that his life was in danger from his brother—that he had no choice but to reign or to perish—Hyrcanus engaged in the contest for power. The generality of the people declared for Hyrcanus, while many of the priesthood clung to the usurper, and a battle took place in which the forces of Aristobulus were defeated.

An event occurred at this time which shows how far the Jewish people had fallen from the piety of their ancestors, how the crimes of their wicked rulers were emulated by those below them.

There was at Jerusalem a man named Onias, so noted for his sanctity of life, that it was believed by his countrymen that to his fervent prayers rain had been granted in a season of drought. Concluding that the saint's maledictions must equally

prevail with his prayers, the superstitious followers of Hyrcanus brought Onias forth, and urged him to curse Aristobulus and his friends, who were then besieged in the temple. Long the saint refused to listen to such evil entreaties; but at length, to quiet the importunity of the people, he stood up in the midst of them, and lifting up his hands towards heaven, the good man uttered this prayer:—"O Lord God, Ruler of the universe! since those that are with us are Thy people, and they that are besieged in the temple are Thy priests, I pray that Thou wouldst hear the prayers of neither of them against the other!"

Instead of being touched by the patriot's prayer, the furious people were so much enraged, that, snatching up stones, they hurled them against the saint. Onias was actually stoned to death because he would not defile with curses the lips so often employed in prayer, nor invoke the Almighty's vengeance upon the misguided people whom he yet regarded as his brethren.

The contest which raged in Judea produced that which is the frequent result of such intestine struggles—a third party being called in as umpire, and that umpire taking advantage of the dissensions of the rivals to establish his own power over both. Such an umpire was found by the Asmonean brothers in the ambitious republic of Rome. The dispute between Hyrcanus and Aristobulus was referred to the decision of Pompey, a celebrated Roman general. Both the princes stooped to appear in person to plead their respective causes before a stranger and a heathen.

Various intrigues and negotiations followed. Aristobulus, perceiving at last that the decision of Pompey was not likely to be in his favour, abruptly withdrew to make preparations for

war. His conduct towards the Roman general was marked by mingled deference and distrust. Fearful of offending one who would be so powerful either as an ally or a foe, he endeavoured by every means to induce Pompey to recognize his title to the crown.

The blessing of Heaven did not rest upon the efforts of this ambitious prince. Pompey thought himself mocked and deceived, and before the year was concluded he had put Aristobulus in fetters, and had laid siege to Jerusalem.

Ill fares the city that is divided in itself! Hyrcanus and many of the Jews, allowing the spirit of patriotism to be lost in the spirit of party, supplied the foreign foe with every necessary for carrying on the siege. For three months the city held out, when, a breach being made large enough for an assault, the fierce soldiery rushed within even the wall which protected the temple. A savage massacre of the defenders followed, and none acted more cruelly herein than the Jews of the opposite faction. In this terrible scene of destruction, the priests, who were in the temple at the time when it was carried by storm, went on with the daily service, without being deterred by the horror of seeing their friends fall around them, or the fear of sharing their fate. Many of these heroic priests were slain by the enemy's sword, and their blood mingled with that of the sacrifices which they were offering on the altar of God, 63 B.C.

Pompey entered the temple as a conqueror; and not contenting himself with viewing the splendour of the outer courts, he violated the feelings of all pious Jews by intruding into the Holy of holies. The sound of the heathen victor's tread echoed in that sacred place into which the high priest alone had been privileged to enter; but had it not been as much profaned when an Aristobulus or an Alexander presumed there to

worship a holy God, while they were stained with the guilt of a brother's murder?

Hyrcanus was restored to the office of high priest, he was also made prince of Judea; but the dignity of the title was lost with the independence of his unhappy country. Judea was no longer free—she was under tribute to the Roman conquerors—she now bowed to the yoke of that nation which was at length to crush her even to the dust.

Aristobulus was carried to Rome, where, with his two sons, he was compelled to grace the triumph of Pompey. Bitter must have been the humiliation of the ambitious Asmonean prince when following the triumphal chariot of his heathen conqueror through streets thronged with eager multitudes! In vain might he long that the earth would open before him to hide his disgrace from the curious gaze of unpitying eyes! *They who exalt themselves shall be abased.* Aristobulus long remained a prisoner in Rome; and when at length political changes in that city seemed to open to him a path to freedom and to power, his ambitious career was suddenly closed by poison, administered to him as he was returning to his country, 49 B.C.

Hyrcanus bore the name of ruler in Jerusalem, but the real power lay in the hands of the ambitious Antipater, the Idumean, who enjoyed great favour with the Romans. Phasael, his eldest son, was made governor of Jerusalem; Herod, his second son, governor of Galilee. The latter, who afterwards sat on the throne of Judea under the title of Herod the Great, was a man of singular energy and courage, as well as of political talent. He strengthened his influence with the Jews by marrying Mariamne, the beautiful granddaughter of Hyrcanus, and thus allying himself to the royal family of the Asmoneans.

In the year 40 B.C., Antigonus, son of Aristobulus, assisted by the Parthians, made a desperate effort to win the regal power, in aspiring to which his father had lost first his freedom and then his life. Antipater the Idumean was dead—he also had perished by poison; and his son Herod was absent from Judea when the Parthians marched upon Jerusalem, plundered the country round, seized upon the city, and made Antigonus king. Hyrcanus and Phasael were delivered up in chains to the mercy of the conqueror. Phasael, knowing his death to be determined upon, in desperation dashed out his own brains against the walls of his dungeon. Antigonus spared the life of Hyrcanus, his dethroned uncle; but cut off his ears, that he might be for ever disqualified from being high priest, as no one with a member imperfect was capable of holding the office.

Herod, hearing of the dethronement of Hyrcanus and the death of his own brother Phasael, hastened to Rome, to seek there for help from his powerful allies. Aided by them, he brought a large force into the field, and besieged the new king in Jerusalem, 38 B.C. It was not till the next year that the city was taken, as it was desperately defended by the Jews. At length the Romans entered on every side, and filled all the streets with blood and slaughter, till Herod himself interceded for the people, exclaiming that the Romans would make him king only of a desert.

Antigonus, seeing that all was lost, surrendered himself to the enemy. Herod did not consider himself secure in the kingdom which was bestowed upon him by his Roman allies, as long as one prince of the blood-royal remained alive on the earth. With great difficulty he obtained from the Roman general a decree condemning Antigonus to death. The sentence was executed on the unhappy prince; and beneath the

axe of the lictor perished the last king of the male line of the Asmonean race. We have now followed the thread of the history of that race from its first glorious commencement to the period when, stained as it was with blood, and darkened with crime, we trace by it only the miseries and wrongs of unfortunate princes in the realm once ruled by their fathers. We behold in that history the end of ambition. The descendants of the noble Mattathias were great until they aspired to be greater, and glorious until they ceased to seek God's glory rather than their own.

CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENTS.

107—38 B.C.

	B.C.
Cataline's conspiracy at Rome	66
Cæsar's invasion of Britain	55
Battle of Pharsalia	48
Death of Cæsar	44

Reign of Herod the Great

And now, for the first time, there reigned in Judea a king who was not of the race of Jacob—a king who had been placed on the throne by a foreign power, and who was chiefly maintained there by foreign influence.

As the cruel and unscrupulous character of their ruler developed itself, the Jews had reason to feel their degradation more deeply, and to long more earnestly for the time, now at hand, when the Deliverer should appear in Zion.

We have seen that Herod had united himself in marriage with Mariamne, the grand-daughter of Hyrcanus, a princess who, in the graces of her person, is said to have excelled all the women of her time, and whose spirit was equal to her beauty. She possessed great influence with Herod, who loved her as ardently as one of his hard and selfish nature could love. Mariamne, and her mother Alexandra the daughter of Hyrcanus, naturally desired to see Aristobulus, the brother of the one and son of the other, elevated to the high priesthood. The youth, who was only seventeen, was entitled by his birth to the office; and the princesses so earnestly advocated his claims, that Herod deposed the high priest whom he himself had set up, and made Aristobulus high priest in his place.

But no sooner had the tyrant raised the Asmonean prince, than he began to find in him an object of jealousy and fear. Nature had endowed the youthful pontiff, like his sister, with dignity and grace, and the power of winning to himself the warm affections of the people. Herod knew that, in the opinion of many of the Jews, he who bore the priestly office was also entitled to the kingly, and the tyrant resolved to destroy one

who might become a dangerous rival to himself. The art with which he accomplished this villanous design makes its atrocity yet darker.

Aristobulus, unsuspicious of treachery, accompanied his brother-in-law, Herod, to a banquet prepared at Jericho. After the feast was concluded, the young high priest was persuaded to join a party in bathing. He entered the pond, which the tyrant had resolved that he never should quit alive. Under pretence of sportive play, attendants, suborned by Herod, held the struggling, gasping youth beneath the water till life was extinct and then pretended that his death had been occasioned by an unfortunate accident.

Bitter were the lamentations over the fair young prince, and none appeared to mourn his untimely fate more deeply than Herod. Splendid was the funeral which he prepared for his victim; but his hypocrisy blinded no one, and Alexandra, the bereaved mother, silently, in the depths of her bleeding heart, nourished thoughts of revenge.

If Mariamne had ever regarded her husband with feelings of affection, the murder of her innocent brother must have changed them to feelings of horror. For such Herod gave his young wife yet greater cause. On his departure from Judea, 34 B.C., the king left the administration of government and the care of his family to his uncle Joseph. Selfish even in his love, unable to endure the idea that his beautiful queen should ever survive him to be loved by another, Herod charged Joseph, should he himself be cut off on his journey, to put Mariamne to death.

During Herod's absence Joseph frequently visited the queen, and at these visits would dilate upon the love borne to her by her royal husband. At one time, with marvellous indiscretion, he let out the fatal secret of the command which

he had received from the king, telling her that so dear was she to Herod, that as he could not live without her, so he was resolved that death should not part them. The queen could not readily forget or forgive such a proof of a husband's affection.

Herod having advanced so far on his path of guilt, waded yet deeper and deeper in crime. The aged Hyrcanus was now living quietly and honourably at Seleucia. The Jews beyond the Euphrates respected him as their king and high priest, notwithstanding the cruel measure which his nephew had taken to incapacitate him from holding the latter office. Hyrcanus had been the friend of Herod's father, Antipater; he had been the benefactor of Herod himself and had bestowed his own grand-daughter upon him. But Hyrcanus was a descendant of Asmoneus; he had once sat upon the throne of Judea; and, notwithstanding his age and unambitious temper, might possibly ascend it again. This was sufficient to seal his doom. Neither gratitude, the social tie, nor respect for his gray hairs, could win mercy for the venerable prince. Herod enticed Hyrcanus to Jerusalem; falsely accused him of conspiring against him; and under this pretence took the life of his benefactor, after he had passed the eightieth year of his age.

Mariamne now regarded with ill-concealed aversion him who had caused the death of her nearest relations, and who had meditated her own. The contempt in which the high-born Jewess held the family of the Idumean drew upon her the bitter hatred of his mother Cyprus, and his sister Salome; and they did all in their power to induce Herod to destroy his beautiful wife. The Asmonean princess hung but by a thread over the gulf into which so many of her race had been plunged; that thread was the passionate love of a capricious tyrant; and it was at length snapped asunder by her own unguarded expression of

the just indignation which boiled in her breast. Bitterly Mariamne reproached the murderer, who was unworthy the name of her husband, and taunted him with the command which he had secretly given for her death in the event of his own.

Herod was stung to rage and fury, his love was changed for the time into hate, and the wicked Salome took advantage of his anger to ruin the woman whom she detested. Mariamne was falsely accused of a design to poison her husband, the father of her children. The fair young queen was brought to trial for her life; and her judges, suborned by her foes, sentenced her to be put to death.

Fearful was the struggle in the mind of Herod between his passionate love for Mariamne, and the fierce anger which possessed his soul. But Cyprus and Salome, like tempting fiends, urged him forward on his path of blood. They suggested that, if the Asmonean princess were spared, the people might rise in her behalf; and the miserable Herod was at length induced to order the execution of the fatal sentence.

The spirit of the descendant of the heroic Mattathias sustained her to the last. The queen of Judea with calm courage saw the end approaching of a life which had been crowded with so many trials; though she must have sighed at the thought of her two young sons, left under the guidance of a father who was the destroyer of their mother. As, with a firm step and an unblanched cheek, the queen proceeded to the place of execution, her bitter cup was yet further imbittered by the unnatural conduct of Alexandra her own mother. This unprincipled woman, dreading that she herself might become the next victim of the murderer of her son and her daughter, thought to avert Herod's wrath by loading the queen with cruel

reproaches. Mariamne bore this last trial in dignified silence, and passed on to her death great, firm, and fearless to the end, 28 B.C.

Herod's rage being quenched in the blood of his innocent wife, all his affection towards her revived. Half maddened by remorse and despair, he had no rest by day or by night. The remembrance of Mariamne haunted him wherever he went, and in transports of grief he called aloud upon the name of her whom his blind fury had destroyed. A grievous pestilence raged at this time in the land, which carried off great numbers of the people, and which was regarded as the just retribution of Heaven for the guiltless blood of the queen.

The health of Herod gave way under the pressure of his misery. While he lay sick, prostrated both in body and mind, Alexandra seizing the favourable moment, made a plot which, if successful, would have placed in her hands both power and the means of vengeance. Her design was discovered and frustrated, and the execution of the mother soon followed that of her unfortunate daughter.

Herod had now become the object of the just detestation of the people. He endeavoured to soften their resentment for his crimes, and perhaps to quiet his own tortured conscience, by expending immense sums upon the temple at Jerusalem. For many years he employed eighteen thousand workmen upon the building. The outside was adorned profusely with gold, and the pinnacles, glittering in the sun, dazzled the eyes of admiring beholders.

But that the miserable Herod had *not* brought to God the offering of a broken and contrite heart, more precious than all the world's vain treasures—that his remorse was *not* repentance, was proved by his subsequent conduct.

The blood of Asmoneus still flowed in the veins of two young princes—Aristobulus and Alexander, the sons of Mariamne; and though these princes were his own children, Herod regarded them with jealous fears. They might one day assert the rights of their birth—one day avenge their murdered mother.

The young men were brought up at Rome, where they had too unguardedly expressed their natural feelings in regard to the fate of the queen. Again Salome acted her fiendish part of stirring up her brother to crime. Herod's mind was filled with jealousy and suspicion. To make discovery of intended treason, the confidants of the unhappy princes were stretched upon the rack, and the intolerable torment forcing from some of them false confessions, Alexander was loaded with chains, and thrown into prison by his father.

The position of the princes excited sympathy. The good offices of Archelaus, king of Cappadocia, produced a temporary reconciliation between Herod and his sons. But the breach was not in reality healed. In 6 B.C., the unnatural Herod wrote to Augustus, then emperor of Rome, to obtain the monarch's consent to his putting his own offspring to death. Augustus had already repeatedly interposed between the tyrant and his victims, but he now left the unfortunate sons of Mariamne to the mercy of their father. The young men were brought to trial, as their beautiful mother had been before them; and the result was in both cases the same. Sentence of death was pronounced against the princes, and they were both strangled by their father's command.

It is fearful to contemplate the state of Judea under the rule of this bloody tyrant. At the commencement of his reign Herod had given an earnest of his cruelty, by slaying all but two of the

members of the great Jewish council of the Sanhedrim. Whoever opposed, or seemed to oppose, his power, was ruthlessly put to death. While Herod sought to spread his fame by the magnificence of the buildings which he raised, the people groaned under oppressive taxes. Bands of robbers ravaged the land, and were with difficulty put down by the strong hand of power. While crime stalked wolf-like through the palace, in serpent form it coiled even within the sacred precincts of the temple. Religion itself was made a mask for covetousness and pride. Different sects disputed together. The Pharisees, while scrupulously observing every outward ceremonial of the law, corrupted the pure fount of Truth by mixing with it the vain traditions of men. The Sadducees, with bold infidelity, rejected Heaven-taught doctrines, and plunged into evil excesses, unrestrained by the dread of a judgment to come. It might seem that the chosen, much-favoured nation, so often rebelling—repenting—being chastened and forgiven—had at length filled up the cup of her transgressions, and that the Divine vengeance, like a looming cloud, was about to burst in full fury upon guilty Jerusalem.

CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENTS.

38—1 B.C.

	B.C.
Battle of Actium	31
Rome became an empire	27

The Birth of the Messiah

It was at this period, when the gloom was the heaviest, the night darkest, that the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing on His wings—that the long-expected, much-desired Messiah at length was born upon earth.

Not that this was the first time that the Lord had condescended to appear to His people. As God the Father, robed in inaccessible glory, has never at any time been seen by man,—as we, who are dust and ashes, could not look upon His face and live,—it is evident that, on the various occasions on which the Lord became manifest to mortals, it was the Eternal Son who deigned to shroud His glory by assuming a visible form. Thus it was the Divine Son who pronounced the sentence upon Adam in the garden of Eden, and who held out to the trembling Eve the merciful promise of a future offspring who should both suffer and triumph. It was the Divine Son who listened graciously to the pleadings of Abraham for the guilty cities of the plain, doomed to a terrible destruction. It was the Divine Son who, in the likeness of a man of war, appeared unto Gideon, and by a single look bestowed upon him irresistible might.

But this was to be no brief appearance—no passing glimpse of a present Deity. The Holy One was to become incarnate,—to wear the throbbing flesh, to assume the mortal nature of the creatures whom He himself had created. Well might the heavens wonder, and the earth rejoice, at so transcendent an act of condescension.

But may we not marvel that, when the Lord stooped to become man, He chose not a time when the faith of His people

was strong—when their obedience was earnest? How would the devoted Nehemiah have welcomed his Master's coming!—with what joy would Judas Maccabeus have laid his conquering sword at the feet of his King! And may we not marvel that when He whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, condescended to wear a mortal body, He did not choose to appear as a mighty monarch, cradled in a magnificent palace, and adored by all the nations of the earth!

We must remember that the Redeemer of the world had a threefold office to perform: He had to save man, satisfy God, and subdue the power of Satan.

All men were under sentence of death. Eternal Truth had declared, "THE SOUL THAT SINNETH, IT SHALL DIE;" and Eternal Justice was engaged to execute that awful sentence. *All* had sinned and come short of the glory of God. Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?—pure water from a fountain that is tainted?

Before guilty man could be saved, Eternal Justice must be satisfied. A victim must be found of worth so priceless as to outweigh in the sight of the Almighty all the countless transgressions of mankind. It was not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could wash away a single sin. They were offered by the saints of old to show their faith in, and to make them partakers of the benefits of the one great Sacrifice, which was to atone for the guilt of a world.

And the Son of God came not only to save and to suffer, but also to subdue. He would meet the enemy, Satan, on his own ground. Where man had fallen under the power of temptation, the God-man would rise triumphant over every temptation which the Evil One could offer. One born of woman would, by his spotless obedience, fulfil the whole law

which Adam and Adam's race had broken, and in His own strength conquering the conqueror, trample Satan under His feet.

We thus behold the Redeemer in His threefold office. To save man, He must assume man's nature; to satisfy God's justice, He must suffer and die. His whole life must be an example of obedience under each form of sorrow and trial. He must bear the weight of poverty, endure the sting of contempt. It was by enduring that He triumphed—it was by suffering that He saved! The lamb bleeding beneath the sacrificial knife; the rock smitten, that its gushing waters might give life to the perishing people; Isaac bound by his own father on the altar;—such were the types of Him who, sinless, bore the punishment of sin, and who passed to His everlasting kingdom from the torments of the cross and the darkness of the grave.

As this work is merely a sketch of the history of the Jews, I shall not attempt to introduce into its pages any account of the life of our Redeemer, or the miracles of mercy which He wrought. My office is to describe the political state of the land in which He deigned to appear; to record the crimes of its rulers; to place the dark background of history behind that glorious form which inspired pens have delineated in the Gospels.

The tyrant Herod had reigned about thirty-three years, when his court was startled by the tidings of the arrival of sages from the East, who had received from a heavenly sign notice of the birth of a mighty Ruler. "Where is He that is born King of the Jews?" was the anxious question of the pious travellers; "for we have seen His star in the east, and have come to worship Him."

The monarch of Judea well knew that the expectation of his people was eagerly fixed upon the coming of the Messiah; he must also have known that prophecy pointed towards this time for the Holy One's appearance. The conduct of the tyrant showed that in the mysterious babe, born at Bethlehem, he dreaded a rival. He sought information of the sages regarding the child, that he might quench in blood this dawning light of Israel. Being frustrated by the secret return of the sages to their own land, Herod determined to make sure of his horrible object by a more sweeping act of cruelty. He sent forth and slew all the children in Bethlehem and in the neighbouring coasts, from two years old and under, ruthlessly tearing the innocent little ones from the arms of their agonized mothers, and filling the land with the lamentations of parents weeping over their slaughtered offspring.

But it is in vain for man to fight against the decrees of God. An angel had appeared in a dream to Joseph, the babe's reputed father, and warned him to flee into Egypt with the Virgin Mary, and her infant son. Thus every babe in Bethlehem was slain by the cruelty of Herod, save the one whose life he aimed at—the only one whom he cared to destroy.

Death of Herod

The measure of the tyrant's iniquities was now nearly full; the earth was not much longer to endure the presence of this monster of cruelty. Herod, as Antiochus Epiphanes had been before him, was struck by the hand of an avenging God with a most strange and horrible disease. The proud king became a loathsome object to all who approached him; he was consumed with inward pain, worn by incurable melancholy, tortured by unappeasable hunger, and scarcely able to breathe.

While his sickness was slowly but surely bringing Herod the Great to the tomb, an event occurred which proved that the old heroic spirit of the Jews was not quenched, and that there were those amongst them who could not patiently endure the hated yoke of the Romans.

Two of the most learned and esteemed of the Jews, Matthias and Judas by name, burned with an ardent desire to emulate their pious ancestors, and purify the city and temple of their God from heathen profanation. Gradually they gathered around them many young and ardent spirits, whom they incited to vindicate, by some gallant deed, the honour of their religion.

Herod, with great disregard for the feelings of the nation whom he governed, had put up the figure of a golden eagle, the emblem of Roman power, over the great gate of the temple. Many a fierce and angry glance had been raised by the Jewish worshippers towards this abhorred image, and the boldest amongst them at length resolved to tear down the insulting emblem. Judas and Matthias stirred up their followers to the daring attempt, reminding them how glorious a thing it was to

face danger, and even to die for the laws of their beloved country.

A party of resolute young men, in the face of day, and in the presence of a number of the people, let themselves down by thick cords from the top of the temple, and with axes cut away the golden eagle. But the power of the dying Herod was not with impunity to be defied. A party of soldiers hastened to the temple, and about forty of the young Jews were seized, and brought into the presence of the king.

Herod demanded of them whether they had indeed been so daring as to cut down the eagle from the temple; and they frankly confessed that they had done so.

"At whose command?" asked the tyrant.

"At the command of the laws of our country," was the young Jews' intrepid reply.

They were in the hands of one to whom mercy was a stranger. Not only the immediate actors in the daring deed, but the teachers who had incited them to it, were burned alive by the order of Herod.

The king's sufferings now became so intolerable, that he made a desperate attempt to end them by his own hand. One day, in the extremity of his agony, he tried to stab himself with a knife, but was prevented by a relative, who saw his design, and rushed forward in time to defeat it.

Five days before Herod expired, his son Antipater, who had conspired against him, was slain by the command of his merciless father. As the gloomy tyrant's end drew near, his savage nature showed itself in yet more revolting colours. He seized upon the most illustrious men of the Jewish nation, and then confined them in a place called the Hippodrome. Herod then sent for his sister Salome and her husband, and crowned

all his other acts of wickedness, by giving them the following atrocious order:—

"I know well," said the dying tyrant, "that the Jews will keep a festival upon my death. However, it is in my power to be mourned for on other accounts. Do you have a care to send soldiers to encompass those men that are now in ward, and slay them immediately upon my death, and then all Judea and every family of them will weep at it, whether they will or no!"

This horrible command was not obeyed. Herod died, and Jerusalem rejoiced.

By his will, subject to the approval of the emperor of Rome, Herod divided his dominions amongst three surviving sons—Archelaus, Herod Antipas, and Philip. To Archelaus fell the government of Judea and Samaria, which he held for nine years, under the title of Ethnarch; while Herod Antipas reigned in Galilee; and Philip ruled over Auronitis and other provinces.

The tidings of the death of the tyrant Herod were brought by an angel to Joseph, who forthwith returned from Egypt with Mary his wife, and her child. Hearing, however, that Archelaus had succeeded to his father, Joseph turned aside to Nazareth in Galilee, the Virgin's former place of residence. There, for many years, the family remained in quiet seclusion, until the time arrived for the Messiah to show Himself openly to the people.

The reign of Archelaus was stormy. Desperate struggles were made by the Jews to regain their liberty, and shake off the yoke of their oppressors. They hoped that the time had at length come when their Messiah should appear amongst them, place Himself at their head, and, with more than the prowess and success of Judas Maccabeus, drive all their enemies before them. Various impostors started up, who were for a while eagerly received by the people, and who drew their misguided

followers with them into destruction. The Roman general, Varus, came with an army to crush the insurgents, and by his orders two thousand of them suffered the horrible death of crucifixion.

Archelaus, a cruel, unprincipled man, was detested by the Jews almost as much as his father had been. Unable by their own efforts to get rid of the tyrant, they appealed to the Roman Emperor Augustus, by whom Archelaus was brought to trial, deposed, and banished.

The land over which Archelaus had ruled was now reduced to a Roman province, and governed by Roman procurators who possessed the power of life and death. This office was held successively by Coponius, Marcus Ambivius, and Valerius Gratus, till, in the year 26 A.D., the corrupt and unprincipled Pontius Pilate became procurator of Judea.

The new governor was not long in discovering how difficult was the charge he had undertaken. It was by no means easy to reconcile his anxiety to please and obey his Roman master, with his wish to conciliate the excited and turbulent people over whom he ruled.

A very great tumult was excited amongst the Jews by Pilate's bringing secretly into the city images of Cæsar Augustus. This was contrary to the Jewish law, and roused the strongest indignation. Numbers of the Jews hastened to Pilate, who was then at Cesarea, and besought him earnestly to remove the hateful ensigns from Jerusalem. On the procurator's refusal to accede to their entreaties, the Jews flung themselves down in the dust, and for five days and nights remained upon the earth in a posture of despair.

Pilate was struck by the firm attachment of these Jews to their customs and laws, and resolved to put it to a yet greater

trial. He summoned the people to the market-place, and then suddenly caused them to be surrounded by a band of armed warriors. The Jews were in the utmost consternation at the unexpected sights and yet more so when Pilate bade the soldiers draw their swords, and sternly gave the people the alternative of receiving the images with submission, or of being instantly cut to pieces.

But the devotion of the Jews rose superior to their fear. They fell down in numbers together, and stretching out their necks for the fatal blow, declared that they were ready to die rather than that their law should be transgressed.

Pilate's opposition was overcome by the firm resolution of these brave men; and giving way to the popular feeling, he commanded that the obnoxious images should be removed from the city of Jerusalem.

CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENT.

Temple of Janus shut in Rome as a token of universal peace, in the year 5 B.C., when the Lord Jesus Christ was born.

The Death of the Messiah

While the Roman Procurator Pilate governed in Jerusalem, Herod Antipas, the son of Herod the Great, reigned in Galilee under the title of Tetrarch. It was this prince who, on being reproved by the prophet John the Baptist for an unlawful marriage with his brother's wife, first threw his faithful monitor into prison, and afterwards, through the arts of the wicked Herodias, was persuaded to put him to death.

About two years after the perpetration of this crime, occurred at Jerusalem that awful EVENT on which hung the eternal destinies of a world. Before the tribunal of Pontius Pilate appeared the future Judge of all mankind! Accused by His own people of perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, the incarnate Son of God stood a prisoner in the presence of the Roman procurator.

Upon the details of the awful scenes that followed, it is not the province of this history to dwell. There was a struggle in the mind of Pilate, who was convinced of the innocence of the Accused. Unwilling to condemn the guiltless Prisoner, he was yet reluctant to oppose himself to the fanatical fury of the Jews, who clamoured for the blood of their Victim. An argument was at length brought forward by the wily Jews, which added to Pilate's fear of offending the people the yet stronger dread of drawing down upon himself the wrath of the emperor of Rome. "If thou let this Man go," they cried, "thou art not Cæsar's friend. Whosoever maketh himself a king, speaketh against Cæsar."

Overcome by that fear of man which bringeth a snare, the procurator at length gave the fatal command which consigned the spotless Jesus to the terrible death of crucifixion.

And then was consummated that awful sacrifice which had been determined on in the counsels of the Almighty, before the foundation of the world. Rejected by His own people, betrayed by an apostle, delivered up by the cowardice of His judge to the malice of His merciless foes, the Lord Jesus, "for us men, and for our salvation," poured out His life's blood on the altar of the cross.

Herod Agrippa

It was not long after the death and resurrection of our Lord, while His infant Church was struggling against its first difficulties, that Philip, brother of Herod Antipas, died. As he left no son, his territory was annexed to the Roman province of Syria; but his nephew, Herod Agrippa, was high in favour with the Emperor Caligula, and from him received the tetrarchy of Philip, together with the title of King.

Herod Agrippa was the son of Aristobulus, one of the unfortunate sons of Mariamne, who, like their unhappy mother, had perished by the cruelty of Herod the Great. He had, therefore, Jewish blood in his veins; and when, by the favour of a succeeding emperor, Judea and Samaria were added to his dominions, he made efforts to win to himself the affections of the people whom he governed. He began to encompass Jerusalem with a magnificent wall, which he deemed would render it impregnable—thus emulating the noble work of Nehemiah, although influenced by a very different spirit.

The greatness and prosperity of this king inflamed the ambition of his uncle. "Why should Herod Agrippa enjoy the regal title, while Herod Antipas remains but a tetrarch?" such were the envious reflections of the tyrant. His partner, the detestable Herodias, more than shared his ambition. She urged Herod Antipas to go in person to the emperor at Rome, assuring him that it was only because he had not appeared before Cæsar (such was the title then common to the Roman despots) that he was destitute of royal dignity.

It was meet that Herodias, who had been Herod's tempter to crime, should be also his tempter to ruin, and then share the misery which she had wrought.

Herod Antipas sailed for Rome. Herod Agrippa followed his uncle, not to befriend, but to accuse. The emperor lent a willing ear to his favourite. The tetrarch of Galilee was not suffered to return to the land which he had stained with innocent blood. He was banished to Spain, and his dominions were bestowed on Herod Agrippa.

Herodias followed the tetrarch to the place of his banishment. There he who had slain the Baptist, and mocked the Baptist's Lord, died an exile from his country.

The fate of Pilate was yet more striking. After ruling over Judea for ten years, he was deprived of his office for his malpractices, involved in various calamities, and banished to Vienne in Gaul. There despair overwhelmed this miserable man, deprived of that favour to retain which he had sacrificed his conscience and his soul. Pilate put an end to his own life by that hand from which he had once vainly attempted to wash the stain of the blood of the Messiah.

In the year 44 A.D., Herod Agrippa the king, in order to win the favour of the Jews, openly joined the persecutors of the Church. James, one of the apostles, was put to death by the tyrant; and Peter would have shared the same fate, had he not been delivered from prison at night by the intervention of an angel.

The career of the monarch was to be but a brief one. Herod Agrippa appeared to have all that the world could give. Riches, honours, power had been freely lavished upon him. In the splendour of his public works he appears to have emulated his grandfather, Herod the Great. Never had the grandeur of his

position been more striking than when, on a public occasion, he made an oration to the people. Arrayed in a robe of silver tissue, which glittered in the rays of the rising sun, the display of his magnificence combined with his eloquence to dazzle the admiring throng. With a shout, the people exclaimed, "It is the voice of a god, and not of a man!"

Herod rebuked not such impious flattery—the pride of his heart was gratified; and immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory. He was suddenly seized with agonizing pain, so that he could not refrain from calling out, "I, that ye called a god, am now going to die!" Stricken with a mysterious disease, which seems to have resembled that which destroyed the two great persecutors, Antiochus Epiphanes and Herod the Great, Herod Agrippa was borne to his palace. There, eaten of worms, and enduring exquisite torture, this proud enemy of God and of His Church died in the fifty-fourth year of his age.

His son Agrippa, being but seventeen years old, was deemed too young to succeed to the power and dignity of his father. Three years afterwards, however, the Roman emperor made him king of Chalcis. Judea again sank to the condition of a province, ruled by governors appointed by Rome.

Under Cuspius Fadus, and Tiberius Alexander, Jerusalem appears to have had a short breathing-space of comparative rest. But they were very soon succeeded by Cumanus, and in his time war, tumult, and sedition spread misery over the land. The Jews were discontented with their Roman masters, and their efforts to break from their bondage only drew the cords still tighter.

In one alarming riot in the temple, at the feast of unleavened bread, ten thousand Jews were trodden down and

killed, and the feast became a cause of mourning throughout the nation. There were fierce and bloody dissensions between the Samaritans and Jews. Villages were set on fire, and their inhabitants massacred without distinction of age. Bold bands of robbers ravaged the land, and insurrection was rife in all quarters. In the year 52 A.D., Cumanus was removed by the emperor, and Felix was appointed procurator.

The miserable Jews soon discovered the evil qualities of their new master. Felix was mean, avaricious, and cruel. He established his residence in Cesarea; and there, under pretence of administering justice, he practised the grossest extortion. The number of robbers, or those whom he chose to punish under that name, who were crucified by this barbarous governor, was fearfully great.

About this time a horrible system of assassination prevailed in Jerusalem. A band of men who were called Sicarii, bearing daggers concealed about their persons, mingled with crowds in the city, especially at the Jewish festivals. Suddenly they stabbed those whom they regarded as their enemies, but so secretly and treacherously that the murderers usually escaped detection. The first man slain by them was Jonathan the high priest (the office had become annual); and after him so many were thus treacherously assassinated, that men looked upon their neighbours with suspicion, and even in the day-time felt their lives insecure.

An Egyptian false prophet arose, who deluded a great number of the people. He led, according to the historian Josephus, thirty thousand of them through the wilderness to the Mount of Olives, whence he proposed to attack Jerusalem itself, and drive the Romans from the city. At the approach of Felix with his troops, the deceiver's courage failed him, and he

fled, leaving his miserable followers to the vengeance of the stem procurator.

In the year 62 A.D., Felix was succeeded by Porcius Festus. It was during a visit paid to this procurator by Agrippa, king of Chalcis, the son of Herod Agrippa, that the Apostle Paul, long detained in prison by Felix, pleaded his own cause before an august assembly in Cesarea, and appealed to the judgment-seat of the emperor of Rome.

CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENTS.
33—62 A.D.

	A.D.
London founded by the Romans	50
Caractacus carried to Rome	51
Boadicea defeated	61

Commencement of War.

Festus did not long hold the reins of government. He yielded them up to Albinus, a man of character so extortionate, that he was said to be the real head of all the robbers in the country.

It was during the brief period of his rule, that a wailing cry was heard by those who assembled to keep the feast of tabernacles:—"A voice from the east, a voice from the west, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the holy house, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against this whole people!" The cry of woe was from a poor husbandman, upon whose soul the shadow of coming national affliction lay like a heavy burden. Irritated by his mournful forebodings, the populace laid hold on the man, and beat him severely; but they could not silence the voice which cried Woe to the doomed city.

The rulers brought the peasant before Albinus, at whose command he was barbarously scourged, even till his bones were laid bare. Yet he uttered no prayer for mercy, nor could pain wring from him a tear; but at every torturing stroke he repeated, "Woe, woe to Jerusalem!"

For seven years and five months the husbandman continued to cry aloud by day and by night in all the lanes of the city, while the cloud over the land grew darker and darker, and the hour of destruction drew nigh. At length, in the fatal siege which crushed the last hopes of the miserable Jews, as the peasant was crying on the wall, "Woe, woe to the city, and to the people, and to the holy house," he added, "Woe, woe to

myself also!" and while the words were in his mouth, a stone from the besiegers silenced the prophetic tongue in death.

Evil as was Albinus, the Jews had cause to regret his departure, when, in the year 64 A.D., he was succeeded by the tyrant Gassius Florus. This, the last, appears to have been also the worst of all the governors appointed by Rome. He spoiled whole cities, ruined entire communities, and by his tyranny and oppression large tracts of country were brought to desolation.

Multitudes of the people, groaning under his intolerable yoke, made their complaint against him to Cestius Gallus, the president of Syria. They besought him to pity the miseries of the nation, and to relieve them from their merciless tyrant. Florus, who was present, laughed at their accusations, but made fair promises for the future, which he never intended to keep. It seems to have been his project by his barbarous oppression to force the Jews into a rebellion, that in the confusion and misery attendant on war, his own hateful crimes might pass unnoticed.

On the occasion of a riot at Cesarea, Florus sent to rob the temple of Jerusalem of a large sum of the sacred treasure, under pretext that it was required for the service of Cæsar. At this the people were thrown into great excitement, and some of the boldest uttered loud reproaches on the avaricious tyrant. Florus marched hastily with troops against Jerusalem, and, notwithstanding the submission of the chief priests and rulers, issued an order to his soldiers to plunder the market-place, and slay all whom they met with.

Only too eager to avail themselves of such license, the troops, like bloodhounds let loose, rushed through the town, plundered the houses, murdered thousands of men, women,

and children. Nor did the horrors of the scene end here. Many of the citizens, and some of them men of rank, were led before the brutal Florus, who commanded that they first should be scourged, and then suffer the death of crucifixion. Fearful, though just retribution! The people who had chosen Barabbas, were given up to a ruler with the spirit of a Barabbas; and the very sufferings to which they had subjected their rejected Messiah, were mercilessly inflicted on themselves!

Bernice, the sister of Agrippa interceded in vain for the people. They were not only tormented before her very eyes, but she was constrained herself to flee for her life from the fury of the cruel soldiery.

A fierce fight ensued between the Romans and the Jews. The people from the roofs of their houses threw down stones and darts on the troops, who at length, weary of this inglorious street warfare, returned to their camp near the palace.

A regular war was now becoming inevitable. The contest between the mighty empire of Rome and a people like the Jews, weakened by internal divisions, was indeed a fearfully unequal one; but with wild infatuation the nation rushed into the almost hopeless struggle, goaded on by their own fierce passions, as well as by the cruel oppression of Florus.

It was to no purpose that Agrippa, king of Chalcis, endeavoured to dissuade the Jews from engaging in this fatal war—warning them even with tears, while Bernice wept beside him. Holier tears had flowed before for lost Jerusalem, but the things belonging to her peace were hidden from her eyes. Some of the fierce seditious people became irritated by the very efforts made to calm them. Agrippa was loaded with reproaches, excluded from the city—nay, some of the furious

Jews even threw stones at the king; and Agrippa, indignant at their treatment, retired for a while to his dominions.

The fortress of Masada, garrisoned by Romans, was taken by the Jews through treachery, and its defenders slain without mercy, 65 A.D. Great was the excitement in Jerusalem. The flame of insurrection spread fast. Fierce Zealots ranged the city; the palaces of Agrippa, Bernice, and Ananias the high priest were given to the flames; the castle of Antonia was besieged, taken, set on fire, and its Roman garrison put to the sword.

Imperial Rome was little likely to submit quietly either to revolt of subjects or insult from foes. Cestius Gallus, at the head of an army, advanced, and planted his eagles at the distance of but fifty furlongs from Jerusalem.

Agrippa accompanied the Roman forces, and resolved to make one more effort to persuade the maddened Jews to sue for forgiveness. He sent two of his followers, named Borseus and Phebus, those of his party who were best known to the people, and promised them that Cestius should offer them his right hand in token of the free forgiveness of Rome, if even at this, the last hour, they would throw down their arms and submit.

But messengers of peace from an earthly monarch were treated as the ambassadors of mercy from a heavenly King had been by the deluded and guilty people. Phebus was murdered before he could utter his message; and Borseus, wounded and bleeding, only escaped death by flight.

Cestius now attacked the Jews, put them to flight, and pursued them even to Jerusalem. The fiercest of its defenders retreated from the suburbs into the interior of the city. For five

days the Romans assaulted the wall, and attempted to break into the temple, which was obstinately defended by the Jews.

It was believed by the Jewish historian Josephus, that had Cestius at this time continued his attack, Jerusalem must have fallen, and the war at once have been ended. But suddenly, without apparent reason, the Roman general recalled his soldiers, and made his retreat from the city. To the Jews, this strange conduct of Cestius appears almost unaccountable; but the Christian sees in it a most remarkable instance of the merciful providence of God. The Church at Jerusalem recalled to mind the prophecy of the Redeemer:—"When ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Jerusalem flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things that are written may be fulfilled."

The warning had not been uttered in vain. As soon as the retreat of Cestius left the way open for flight, the Christians retired from Jerusalem, like Lot from the city of the plain. In the mountains of Perea they found their Zoar of refuge, while the fiery deluge of destruction descended on the doomed city which they had left.

CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENTS.

62—65 A.D.

	A.D.
Rome set on fire	64
Nero's persecution of the Christians	64

Siege of Jotapata.—Fall of Jerusalem

Into all the details of this most horrible war we will not enter, nor describe how, in Cesarea, Joppa, Damascus, Jews were slaughtered by thousands and tens of thousands. In 67 A.D., Vespasian, a distinguished Roman general, marched into Galilee, where he took the city of Gadara, and other strongholds of the land. He was accompanied by his son Titus, who, on his father's subsequent elevation to the imperial throne of Rome, headed the conquering army.

Never, even in the time of the Maccabees, had more desperate courage been shown than the Jewish nation now displayed. Of this the defence of the city of Jotapata, under the Jewish historian Josephus, was a most memorable instance.

Jotapata was built on a high precipice, and was accessible only on the north side, which Josephus had strongly fortified with a wall. Against this wall Vespasian raised a high bank, and brought one hundred and sixty engines of war to throw stones, darts, and arrows into the city. But even as the bank rose, so rose the wall; the defenders labouring day and night, and protecting themselves from the innumerable darts and heavy stones cast by the engines, by screens formed of the raw hides of oxen, which broke the force of the missiles.

After many fierce assaults and desperate sallies, Vespasian resolved to invest the city, and starve its defenders into a surrender. There was plenty of corn within Jotapata; but the want of water was great, and Josephus was obliged to distribute it to his followers by measure. Finding, however, that the Romans had obtained some intelligence of their distress, Josephus commanded that many clothes should be plunged

into water, and then hung out upon the battlements, that the abundance of water trickling from them down the wall might deceive the foe into the belief that this first necessary of life was plentiful in the city. This artifice was successful; Vespasian despaired of taking the place by famine, and again betook himself to the force of arms.

A daring stratagem was made use of to supply the wants of the garrison. Some of the boldest ventured by night out of the city to procure provisions, creeping on all fours past the outposts of the Romans, and covering themselves with skins, that if descried by the watchful foe, they might be taken for prowling dogs.

The formidable battering-ram was now brought against the walls of Jotapata. This was a huge beam of wood, whose fore-part was armed with a thick piece of iron, suspended from an engine by ropes. When the beam had been pulled backwards by a number of the soldiers, it swung forwards with an impetus so tremendous, that at its very first blow the wall was shaken, and a cry of terror arose from the besieged, as if the destruction of their battlements were certain. Josephus, however, ordered bags of chaff to be hung over the walls, to deaden the force of the blows; but the Romans, with sharp hooks at the end of long poles, cut the ropes by which the bags were suspended.

Eleazar, a Jew, performed a feat of heroism which is well worthy to be recorded. Standing upon the wall, he hurled a huge stone upon the ram with such precision and force, that he broke off its iron head. He then leaped down, seized on the piece, and, though a mark for the enemy, and pierced with five of their darts, he actually succeeded in carrying it off, and regaining the top of the wall, where he stood for a moment

exulting, and then fell down dead from the summit, with the ram's head still grasped in his hands.

Again and again the Jews sallied forth, attacked the besiegers, and burned their engines with fire. When the Romans pressed on to the assault, scalding oil was poured on them from the wall, and the assailants were driven back by the desperate valour of the defenders.

Jotapata fell at last, however, by an attack made by the Romans at night, when, worn out with watching and fighting, the exhausted guard lay asleep. The brave garrison found no mercy; many were driven over the precipice, many perished by their own swords rather than fall into the hands of the foe. About twelve hundred women and children were reserved for bondage by the conquerors.

Josephus and forty of his companions, when they found that resistance was hopeless, concealed themselves by descending into a pit, which communicated with a cave. Here, on the third day, the hiding-place of Josephus was discovered by the Romans; and Vespasian, willing to preserve the life of the general, offered him quarter if he would yield himself up.

Nothing shows in a more forcible light the obstinate spirit of the Jews, than the fury of the comrades of Josephus at the bare idea of his surrender. "O Josephus!" they exclaimed, "art thou still fond of life, and canst thou bear to see the light in a state of slavery! If thou hast forgotten thyself, we ought to take care that the glory of our forefathers be not tarnished. We will lend thee our right hand and a sword: if thou wilt die willingly, thou shalt die as a general of the Jews; but if unwillingly, thou shalt die as a traitor to them!"

In their savage rage these desperate men were about to plunge their weapons into their own commander, when,

grasping at the last chance of deliverance, Josephus made the following proposal: "Since it is resolved among you," said he, "that we will die, let us commit our mutual deaths to determination by lot. He to whom the first lot falls shall be killed by him who draws the second, and thus shall death make progress through us all, but none shall perish by his own hand!"

The proposition was accepted. Josephus himself drew among the rest; but as Providence ordered it, his lot was the last but one. When the general was surrounded by the bloody corpses of his fierce companions, he succeeded in persuading the only one of them who survived not to complete the horrible work of destruction. He and the man surrendered to the Romans, and received mercy from Vespasian.

But even the horrors of Jotapata were light compared to those of the siege of Jerusalem! At the feast of the Passover, at the season when the city was most crowded with worshippers—at the season when the Messiah had been slain—the Roman army, under the conduct of Titus, invested Jerusalem, 70 A.D. A wall was thrown up around it; there was no means of escape for the multitudes within, except that of accepting the proffered mercy of Titus: that mercy was fiercely rejected.

As though the miseries of such a war were not sufficient, the city was rent by internal dissensions. Eleazar, at the head of a body of fierce bigots, garrisoned the temple of Jerusalem; John of Gischala, an unprincipled ruffian, swept the streets with his bands of robbers; and Simon, a savage tyrant, filled the lower parts of the city with blood. These three parties attacked each other with the fury of ravening wolves, and only united in ferocious sallies against the common enemy. In the madness of their rage in this intestine strife, the Jews actually set fire to the

houses which contained their own stores of provisions and thus added to all other horrors that of the extremity of famine. Multitudes perished by hunger; and happiest were those who were first relieved by death from their horrible torments. Girdles and shoes were eagerly devoured; leather from the shields was torn off and gnawed; robbers burst into the houses where wretched families were dying of hunger, and tortured the poor wretches to force them to discover where a morsel of food might lie concealed. Many of the famished sufferers who endeavoured to escape from the city were seized by the Romans, and crucified in such numbers that wood could scarcely be found for the crosses; while if any in the beleaguered town were suspected of wishing to quit it, they were murdered by the furious Zealots. The sound of war in Jerusalem was heard by day and by night; the streets were slippery with gore; no one there attempted to bury the heaps of corpses. It is said that 1,100,000 of the people perished in this horrible siege.

One by one the three walls which encompassed the city were taken by assault; as the circle grew narrower and narrower, the misery within grew more dreadful. Unnatural horrors were perpetrated. Not only would parents tear the last morsel of food from their famishing babes, but, fearful to relate, a mother was known even to feed upon her own offspring! Let a veil be drawn over such awful scenes. Fearfully was the prediction of the Messiah at this time accomplished—*"There shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world, no, nor ever shall be!"*

The Lord had foretold that false prophets should arise and deceive many, and that fearful sights and great signs should be from heaven; and these words were literally fulfilled. The

miserable Jews desperately grasped at the hope of a coming Messiah, and eagerly listened to deceivers, who only lured them to ruin. A wonder in the sky, resembling a fiery sword, hung over the devoted city; appearances as of chariots and assembling armies in the clouds terrified the astonished beholders; and one night the priests in the temple were alarmed by a quaking of the earth, accompanied by a strange sound, and a voice which uttered the mysterious words, "Let us depart!"

At length the hour of complete vengeance arrived. Ministers of God's wrath, the Romans burst through the last defences of the Jews, and the torrent of blood swept the city. Titus had resolved to spare the magnificent temple; but he could not baffle the decree of the Almighty. The Lord had declared that not one stone should be left upon another; and heaven and earth must pass away before one of His words can fall to the ground. A Roman soldier, acting without orders, set fire to the glorious building, which was speedily enveloped in flames. Loud and fearful rose the cry of the despairing Jews when their last hope perished in the blazing pile. In vain Titus in person exerted himself to put a stop to the progress of the fire; the flames curled round the pillars, spread over the roof, and the crash of falling timbers, and the roar of the conflagration, mingled with the shrieks of a multitude of the Jews who were burned in the cloisters of the temple.

CONTEMPORANEOUS EVENT.

65—70 A.D.

A.D.

Martyrdom of St. Peter and St. Paul..... 66

Conclusion

Thus fell guilty Jerusalem—once the chosen city, the joy of the earth! Thus fearful retribution overtook those who had rejected and slain the Messiah!

And what is Judea now, after the lapse of eighteen centuries? Still an oppressed and desolate land—a land which has been ruled by Saracen, Christian, Turk; but never since that fatal day by a monarch of her own. A land in bondage to strangers, whose valleys, once flowing with milk and honey, now lie comparatively barren, showing that the curse of Heaven still rests like a blight upon them.

And where are the sons of Israel, the descendants of patriots and of heroes? Scattered over the face of the earth,—aliens in many lands, yet ever a distinct and peculiar people; jealously guarding the Scriptures of the Old Testament, though blind to their prophetic meaning; and yet looking for the appearance of their Messiah, and their own restoration to the land of their fathers.

Will the Jews ever be restored? Will they return as from Egypt and Babylon, and tread again the city of Zion? We turn to the words of prophecy, which shine like stars in the darkness, and select a few out of many:—*"Thus saith the Lord of hosts. Behold, I will save My people from the east country, and from the west country; and I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem; and they shall be My people, and I will be their God, in truth and in Righteousness" "Ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel." "And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let*

your hands be strong." "I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." "Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O Jerusalem, for the Lord hath comforted His people, He hath redeemed Jerusalem."

Christian reader! let us not forget that the Lord worketh by human means; that to us, Gentiles, who walk in the light that first shone over the plains of Judea is committed the sacred charge, by holy example, free liberality, and fervent prayers, to gather the outcasts of Israel "one by one" into the Saviour's fold. *"What,"* wrote the Apostle of the Gentiles, pleading for his own beloved people—*"what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?"* Well may we conclude in the words of the martyr prophet and psalmist king,—*"Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give Him no rest till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces."*