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MARLBOROUGH HOUSE, 22nd June, 1863.

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THE CREATION, THE FALL, AND THE FLOOD.

OD made all things—day and night; sun, moon, and stars; land and sea; every beast of the earth, every bird that flies, every fish that swims, every insect and creeping thing; grass and trees, flowers and fruits, were all made by God.

God in the beginning said, “Let there be light.” And there was light. And God saw that it was good; and God called the light Day, and the darkness Night. This was the work of the first day.

God made the blue sky on the second day; and the dry land and the sea on the third day, and He made the earth beautiful with green grass and many-coloured flowers and rich fruits; and He made the sun, and moon, and stars on the fourth day; and all sorts of fish and all kinds of birds on the fifth day, and He made also every kind of beast; and on the sixth day He made Man—Adam and Eve—the father and mother of us all. And God looked on all that He had made, and saw that it was very good, and He blessed it, and told it to prosper.

Everything was good. Our Saxon forefathers used to call the Maker of all things the *Good*; and this is how we come by our word God. He

was, and is, and always will be, good. He is good to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works.

Adam and Eve were placed by God in a beautiful garden. It was all theirs; they might walk where they pleased, pick the choicest flowers, and pluck the sweetest fruit; they might do as they pleased with everything but one tree. God told them they must not touch that tree; that if they touched it, they should die.

There, in perfect joy and peace, they lived together, and knew no fear. They were not afraid of the tawny lion, nor the spotted leopard, nor the striped tiger; they were at peace with all things, all things were at peace with them; and when they heard the voice of God they were not terrified, for they were at peace with Him, and loved Him, as their kind, good Father; and “perfect love casteth out fear.”

And everything in the garden, and, indeed, in the whole world, belonged to Adam and Eve. All the animals, birds, beasts, and creeping things came to Adam, and he called them by their names. He was their ruler—king over all—to do what he pleased with all—except the one tree that God had forbidden him to touch. Only one tree, among so many things great, good, and beautiful!

You would think this no hard thing, would you?—touch all, taste all but one; and you think they would have acted very foolishly if they had disobeyed the word of their good Maker. But they did.

The evil spirit, the devil—dreadful name!—crept into the fair garden, and when he found poor Eve by herself, he said to her that it was a very hard matter that she, who was queen of the earth, should be prevented touching one kind of fruit. “See,” he said, “what a fine form it has; what a rich colour; what a bloom on it! Will God be angry if you touch this tree? No. Shall you die for this little disobedience? No. Try.”

Poor Eve listened, looked at the fruit, and wondered. It was a

THE GARDEN OF EDEN.



ADAM AND EVE IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN.

foolish thing to listen. The evil spirit told her that if she touched and tasted that fruit, she would be as wise as God himself. Try! And Eve

put forth her hand—perhaps drew it back two or three times, and looked round in terror; but the sky was clear over her head, and the sunshine smiling. So she took the fruit and did eat, and then she hastened to her husband, and gave him of the fruit, and he did eat also.

Then a dreadful terror fell upon them. They had disobeyed God, and they were afraid of Him. They had been glad to hear His voice; they had met Him cheerfully whenever He walked in the garden in the cool of the day; but now they trembled as they heard Him coming, and they hid themselves among the trees.

God called to Adam, and Adam was afraid: but at last he came forth; his eyes cast on the ground, his face red with shame; his wife shrinking from the bright gaze of God, and trying to conceal herself behind her husband. God asked them what they had done, and why they were afraid. Adam said, “The woman whom thou gavest me to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” And Eve said, “The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.” And there they stood—father and mother of the human race—trembling and afraid. You see how evil and bitter a thing it is to sin against God.

God punished them. He told them that henceforth they should have labour and sorrow—they should work and weep until they died, and returned to the dust out of which they had been made. But He gave them a grand promise. He told them that a Saviour should be born, and that He should destroy the evil spirit, and lift up those who had faith in Him to a better and a brighter home than that which now they must leave for ever.

Farewell, beautiful garden! Without are thorns and thistles, toil and trouble, and death. No doubt they turned and looked back many times at the garden they might enter no more, but they could not return. For God placed at the gate an angel, with a flaming sword, to keep the way of the tree of life.

Soon after this a son was born to Adam, and they called him Cain ; soon after another son was born, and him they called Abel. When Cain and Abel grew up to be men, Cain became a farmer, and Abel a shepherd. We do not know whether these two brothers were very much like each other in face and figure, but we do know they were very unlike in character and conduct. Abel loved God with all his heart ; Cain did not.

It was then the practice to worship God by sacrifice. They killed and burnt the flesh of innocent lambs upon an altar, to show that they were looking to the Saviour who had been promised, and who Himself, as an innocent lamb, should be put to death in the place of the guilty. Abel brought the best lamb of his flock, and offered it with a loving heart, as a sacrifice on an altar. Cain brought some fruits or a sheaf of corn and offered, but without love and peace in his heart. So God was pleased with the offering of Abel, but was displeased with that of Cain.

And when Cain saw that God accepted the offering of Abel, but refused his, he was angry. He did not think that he had done anything wrong : he did not even allow that God was just : he did not try to please God better : he was angry with his brother.

God saw that Cain was angry, for God sees into our hearts, and knows everything. He spoke to Cain, and told him that if he did what was right, he, too, should have favour, even as Abel had ; but Cain was jealous of Abel, and even angry with God.

When Cain and Abel were alone in the fields together, a dreadful thing happened. Cain struck down his brother and killed him. Abel was the first man who ever died in this world, and he died by the hand of his brother. No doubt Cain fled away from the scene of his crime, terrified, as his father had been when he had sinned in the beautiful garden. And God called to Cain, and asked him where was Abel. Cain—who was a liar as well as a murderer—said he did not know. But he *did* know very well where the body lay, all bruised and bleeding—the green earth



ABEL KILLED BY HIS BROTHER CAIN.

drawing in the red blood, as if it was ashamed and terrified, and would gladly put it out of sight. And God said to Cain, "The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground." And God punished Cain. He was from that time forth a wanderer in the world; whatever he sowed yielded no increase, whatever he planted died; and God set a mark on his forehead, so that everybody who saw him, years and years afterwards, knew he was Cain, who murdered Abel.

There was another son born to Adam, and his name was Seth: he was a good man, very different from Cain. And to Seth were born many sons and daughters, and to Cain also were born many children; and so the world came to be peopled. And Adam, our father, died, and Eve, our mother, died; but God was good to their children, and their children's children's children.

You may readily suppose that as the number of people became greater on the earth, many new things were thought of that had never occurred to those who had all the world to themselves. One man invented tents, and tents, you know, are the earliest kind of houses; another built a city; another found out the use of brass and iron; and another—here in the picture is the scene shown—invented music. What a wondering crowd gathered round Jubal—that was his name—when he first breathed his music through a simple reed pipe. It was a very plain, simple instrument, but the beginning of all musical instruments. There is a wondrous difference, you know, between beginnings and endings. The acorn becomes an oak; the boy a strong man; the bubbling spring a wide river. Things that are small in their beginnings may be very great in their end.

It is a sorrowful thing to say, but it is the truth, that as people increased in the earth they grew more and more wicked. They did not think of God; did not care for God; did not trust in God; neither loved nor feared Him. They cared to live only for themselves. They seemed to



forget that there was any God at all. They were utterly selfish, caring for nothing but what made them more comfortable. It was a dreadful world. The wicked spirit that had tempted Eve might have been—perhaps was—proud of his work.

But while nearly all the world were wicked, as if they were all Cain's children, and strikingly like their base and cruel father, there were a few who loved and served God. You may have heard that there are some streams of sweet water which flow through salt and bitter lakes without mixing with them. So there are in the world, and so there always have been, some good people who have not mixed with the wicked; they have kept their freshness and their purity, and have flowed on steadily, doing good to all whom they came near. Among these was one who was called Enoch. He loved and feared God, and always did those things that were pleasant in God's sight. And God blessed Enoch, and instead of letting him sicken and die, He took him away to heaven, without the pains of dying;—lifted him away from the earth, and carried him to the bright city in the skies.

There was a good man named Noah, and he had three sons—Shem, Ham, and Japheth. God loved Noah. When, therefore, God looked down on this wicked world, and saw how much wrong-doing, and cruelty, and violence there was in it, He determined to destroy the wicked, but to save Noah. The eye that mocked, the tongue that lied, the hand that stole and stabbed, the heart that was full of corruption, the feet that were swift to shed blood, should all perish. Young and old, rich and poor, rude and refined, they should all die together. God was grieved, and His hand would destroy. But God is merciful and gracious, and He would not suffer the good to die with the bad. God told Noah that a great flood was coming; that the highest mountains should be covered; that all living things should die. God told him that, to escape this fate, he was to build an Ark—a floating dwelling, in which he and all belonging to



BIRDS AND BEASTS GOING INTO NOAH'S ARK.

him should be saved when the flood came. You may imagine Noah would not know how to build it. God taught him. You may think he would not have time to build it. God gave him a hundred years. And for a hundred years was Noah making ready.

The ark which Noah built was made of a very strong and sound wood. It was six times as long as it was broad, and ten times as long as it was high. It was divided into three storeys, above what shipbuilders would call the hold of the vessel, and most likely all these storeys were again divided, as there were a great many animals, though but few men and women, to live in it for a long time. There was a door in the side of the ark, and a window to give light.

All the while the ark was building Noah preached to the wicked world; for had they turned to God, the Flood would not have come. But he preached in vain. The wicked would not listen. Some of them, no doubt, made sport of him, as if he were a fool; some of them, perhaps, accused him of pride and vanity; whatever way they heard his words, they heard to no profit.

Every stroke of Noah's hammer preached; every plank in the ark preached; every nail driven home preached, of the coming destruction. And do you not think that the beasts that found their way to this place of refuge, the insects that crawled to it, the birds that flew to it, must all have preached, as it were, to the wicked world that would not listen?

All kinds of creatures went up to the ark—sheep and oxen, lions and wolves, deer and leopards, horses and bears, camels, giraffes, elephants, and birds of all sorts; pigeons and hawks, and doves and ravens. Creatures that are dangerous to man, and dangerous to each other, came from the east and the west, the north and the south, and passed in at the open door of the ark; two and two of every kind, and a larger number of some kinds. It must have been a very wonderful sight, and it seems very strange that people, who must have known what was passing, should

have refused to listen to Noah. But so it was, until the Flood came and destroyed them all.

The last day came. Noah and all his family went into the ark, and God shut them in. The sun sank down; the weather-wise may, perhaps, have seen the signs of a storm, and that night the storm began. The fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

Rain, rain, rain; overflowing streams rushing to the sea, broad streams, that spread over the fields and broke down every landmark. Rain, rain, rain; old ocean leaping over the sands, and beating angrily upon the rocks; the water every day increasing, higher, and higher, and higher; the people driven from their houses to take refuge in the hills, and everybody seeing the waters following them, now slowly—so slow, they fancy that the storm is over—now so rapidly, that it seizes on them unawares, and whirls them round and round, and flings them dead away, as a tired, fractious child might cast away a toy. And Noah's ark floats, and the mountains are covered. It is all over:

“Not one tall tree is seen,
No flower, no leaf of green.
All, all are dead.”

But Noah and his children are safe within the ark. For one hundred and fifty days the waters are upon the earth; but at last the floating ark rested on the top of a mountain. Then Noah sent forth a dove to see if the waters were abated; but the tired bird came back with drooping wings; she could find no rest for the sole of her foot, and Noah took her into the ark. Seven days afterwards he sent her forth again, and in the evening she came back to him with an olive leaf in her mouth. Seven days afterwards he sent her forth again, and she came back no more.

Soon after this Noah, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives, came out of the ark, with everything living which had found a refuge with

NOAH PRAYS TO GOD.



NOAH'S SACRIFICE.

them. The first act of Noah was one of solemn worship. Noah built an altar ; he offered a sacrifice ; he kneeled and prayed to God. And God

blessed him, and made a covenant with him, and God said, "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for the token of a covenant between me and the earth: and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh." And so, when you see the Rainbow in the cloud, you should think upon the justice and the mercy of God.

It would be a happy thing to write that with the flood of waters all the wickedness of the earth was swept away. But, alas! this is not the truth. Those who came out of Noah's ark worshipped and served God, but their children's children forgot his mercy, and turned to wickedness and folly.

One of the wicked and foolish things done by the people, years after Noah and his sons were dead, was to attempt the building of a tower, the top of which should reach the sky; and the name of the tower they called Babel. They thought that if another flood came, they should be able to escape from it by climbing up this tower; that they need not then be afraid of God. It was a wicked, idle purpose, and God punished them. At that time there was only one language in the world; now there are more than three thousand. All the builders of this tower clearly understood one another, though, perhaps, many of them had come from distant parts. One day when their work was going on, as they thought, very successfully, the Lord God looked upon the tower which the children of men builded. And God confused their language. Every man began to speak a different tongue from his fellow. You may readily imagine the stormy scene that followed: the overseer could not understand the men; the men could not understand the overseer, nor each other; no orders given could be done, for no one understood what the order meant; they all spoke, but all spoke in new languages. Never was seen such a sight—never was heard such a *babble* before or since. Of course, the work could not go on; so they left off building the city and the tower, and God scattered them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

North, south, east, west, they started to people the earth: and so

THE CONFUSION OF TONGUES.

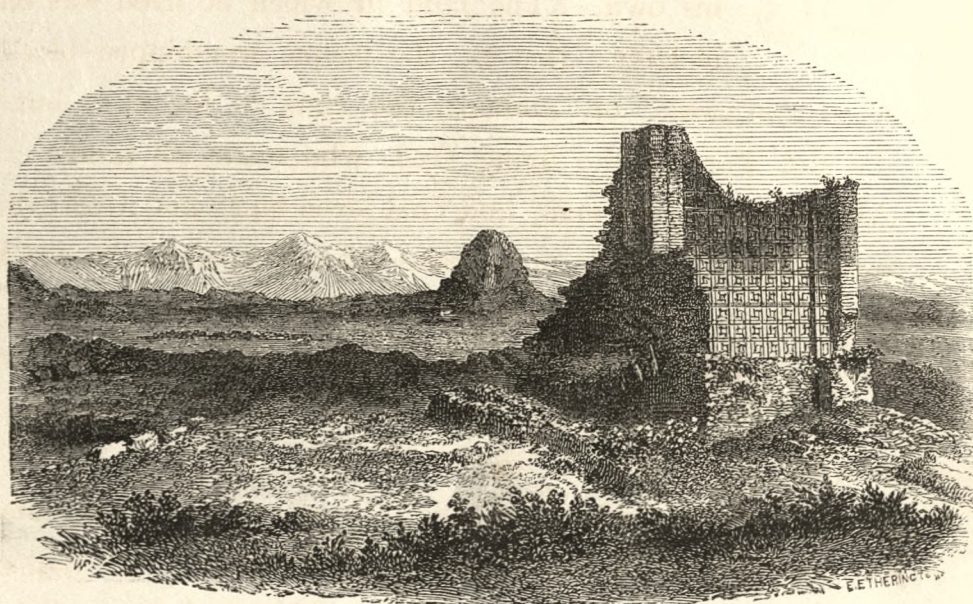


THE TOWER OF BABEL.

the world became filled with the different nations who now live in it;
and they all spoke different languages.

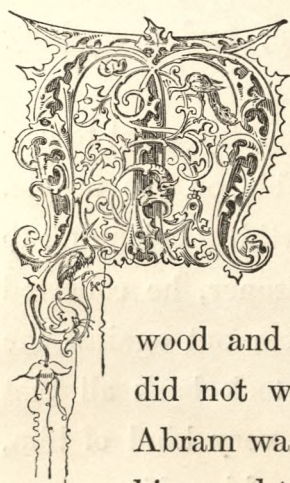
THE CREATION, THE FALL, AND THE FLOOD.

You will see from these stories of the old world, that God is good and gracious to those who love and obey Him, but that those who are foolish and wicked are sure to meet with punishment sooner or later ; so it was then, so it is now, so it will be at the end of the world. The dealings of God are always the same. Men change, but God does not. “With Him there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” As He was in Eden, so He is to-day. If you, my little children, disobey Him, as Adam disobeyed Him, He will cast you forth from His presence. If you are proud, as the men who built the Tower of Babel were, He will scatter and confuse your worldly plans. But if you do as Noah did, you will be saved out of the midst of the wicked, whom God will judge. Remember what our Lord and Saviour Christ said, “The wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, and the righteous into life eternal.”



THE TOMB OF NOAH.

ABRAHAM, ISAAC, AND JACOB.



ANY years after the great flood of waters, of which you read in the former story, there lived, in a land called Ur of the Chaldees, a man named Abram. He had a wife named Sarai, but he had no child of his own. The land in which he lived was one of idolatry; that is, the people worshipped blocks of wood and stone, or, perhaps, the stars in the sky; but they did not worship the living God, who made all things. Now Abram was a good man, and God loved him; and God called to him, and told him he must leave the land in which he was born, and must go into a strange country; but that, in time to come, this country should all belong to Abram's children. You see there was a double promise; God promised to give children to Abram, and to give them a beautiful land to live in.

Abram did not doubt what God said. He was seventy-five years old, and his wife was perhaps as old as himself, but he knew it was impossible for God to lie; so he took what belonged to him, and went away with Sarai his wife, and his nephew Lot, and came into the country God told him of. This country was called Canaan, and as it was at some time

all to belong to Abram's children, it has been often called the Land of Promise.

Abram had not been long in the land when there was a famine, and as there was corn in Egypt, he went down into that country. There he grew very rich, and when he returned into Canaan he had much cattle, and silver, and gold. His nephew Lot had also grown rich, and Lot's herdsmen and Abram's herdsmen quarrelled as to where their herds and flocks should feed. Abram hated strife, and so he put an end to the quarrel by saying that they would divide the land between them, and that Lot should have his choice. This was very fair and generous of Abram towards Lot. Lot made his choice, and went away; he took the best, as he thought, but God was with Abram, and everything prospered with him.

Soon after this the kings who reigned in that country went to war with one another, and brought great sorrow and trouble on the people. As for Lot, he was taken prisoner, and robbed of everything belonging to him. When Abram heard that his nephew was a prisoner, he collected all his servants, armed them for battle, and led them out against the kings. The fight ended in Abram's victory. He took back all that belonged to Lot, and rescued Lot himself, which was very kind of him, seeing that his nephew had brought all the trouble upon himself.

As Abram returned from the battle he was met by a great king—Melchizedek, King of Salem, which means “King of Peace”—who was a priest of God as well as a king; and he blessed Abram, and Abram gave to him a part of the spoil he had taken, and all the rest of it he gave to the King of Sodom.

Abram never forgot God's promise to him that he should have children, and that the land in which he was then a stranger should be their portion. And again and again God renewed the promise, but he told Abram that before the land was theirs they should be slaves to a

MELCHIZEDEK BLESSES ABRAM.



"BLESSED BE ABRAM OF THE MOST HIGH GOD."

powerful people for four hundred years, and that when these days of toil and trial were passed they should have the land. And God changed

Abram's name to that of Abraham, which signifies "father of a great multitude."

And Abram never doubted God for a moment.

One day, as Abraham sat at the door of his tent, he saw three men coming towards him. And he hastened to them, and asked them to rest and wash their feet, and take food and drink. And the men consented. Abraham called to his wife Sarah, and they busied themselves to make the strangers welcome. Milk, and roast meat, and hot cakes, were all made ready, and spread under a tree for the guests to eat. And while they were eating, and Abraham was serving them, they told him that a son should be born, who would be the father of the great people promised to Abraham. Sarah heard them and laughed—she thought it could not be true; but when the strangers asked her why she laughed, she was afraid, and denied that she had done so. It was a sad pity that she should first have been so foolish and next so wicked. After staying a little longer the three men went away—and *they were angels*. Do you remember the text in the New Testament—"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares?"

During this time, you must know, Lot was living with his wife and daughters in a city called Sodom. It was a very wicked place; and so was a neighbouring city, Gomorrah. And God determined to punish them both. God told Abraham what would be done, and Abraham prayed God not to destroy the righteous with the wicked. Two angels were sent to bring away Lot, and they stayed all night in his house. Early in the morning they told him that he and his wife and his daughters, and all who belonged to him, must go away from the city, for that they were sent to destroy that wicked city. Lot tried to persuade some of his friends and neighbours to escape, but they laughed at his words; so he went away at length with his wife and his two daughters, and the angels. And the angels told them not to look back;

but when the Lord God rained down brimstone and fire out of heaven upon all the cities of the plain, Lot's wife looked back, and was changed into a pillar of salt. Lot and his daughters escaped to a little city called Zoar. Sodom and Gomorrah were entirely destroyed; and a large lake,



"THREE MEN STOOD BY HIM, AND HE BOWED HIMSELF TO THE GROUND."

called the Dead Sea—because its poisonous waters allow no green thing to grow on its shores—still occupies the place where they once stood.

Not very long after this the promised son was born to Abraham. He was called Isaac, a name which means "laughter." How glad Abraham must have been when he saw a dear child of his growing up in the fear

of God ; how often must he have thought of God's gracious promises ; how often, very probably, he repeated them to Isaac. When he looked on the boy, he felt that the promise was already beginning to be fulfilled. But one day God spoke to him, and said, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah ; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will thee of." You may think how hard was the trial ; what pain there must have been in Abraham's heart as he heard this : yet he rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men, and Isaac his son, and clave the wood for the burnt offering, and went to the place that God had told him of. How hard it must have been to answer when the boy said—"Father, here is the wood, and here is the fire ; but where is the lamb for the burnt offering ?" "God," said he, "will provide himself a lamb." Then he took his son, and bound him on the altar, and lifted the sharp knife, and looked up to God—never doubting God for a moment—and he saw an angel, who spoke to him and said, "Lay not thine hand upon the lad ; neither do thou anything unto him : for now know I that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me."

And Abraham found a ram, caught by the horns in the thicket, and he sacrificed the ram instead of his son.

Many years after this, when Sarah was dead and buried, and Abraham very old, he called his servant to him—whose name was Eliezer—and he directed him to go into the country from which he had come out, and find a wife for his son Isaac. And the servant took a very solemn oath to do as his master told him.

He took with him ten camels, and travelled far away, until he came near a city called Nahor. There he sat down by a well of water, knowing that in the evening the women of the city would be coming to draw water, and he prayed to God that he might find among them a fit wife for

THE SACRIFICE OF ISAAC.



“MY SON, GOD WILL PROVIDE HIMSELF A LAMB FOR A BURNT OFFERING.”

Isaac. "Let it come to pass," he prayed, "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."

While Eliezer, the servant, was still praying, a beautiful girl came down to the well with her pitcher ; her name was Rebekah. She was the granddaughter of Nahor, Abraham's brother. When Eliezer saw her, he spoke to her as he had determined, and she lowered her pitcher and said, "Drink, my lord ; and I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking." As she busied herself in this kind office, Eliezer found out who she was, and he saw that God had led him to the person most of all to be approved by Abraham. So he gave the girl a rich present, a golden earring and two bracelets. She ran to tell her brother ; his name was Laban, and he came out to speak to the stranger, and invited him to tarry at their house, as there was ample room for the camels. Eliezer agreed to tarry ; but before supper he told Laban his errand ; and the matter was named to her father Bethuel, and she herself was asked, would she go with the messenger and become the wife of Isaac ; and so it was very soon arranged, and splendid presents were given ; and, at the proper time, Rebekah mounted on one of the camels, and went away to her new home.

Not many years after the marriage of Isaac with Rebekah, Abraham died, and was buried near the spot where he had buried his wife Sarah.

Isaac had two sons. They were twins. The name of the eldest was Esau, and of the youngest Jacob. It was said of them in their youth, "The elder shall serve the younger ;" and so it was. Esau was a rough, hardy man, a great hunter ; but Jacob was a quiet, peaceable man, content with the tranquil life of a shepherd. But no doubt he often thought that he was more fitted to be the head of the family than his boisterous brother. Isaac was very fond of Esau, but Jacob had always been his mother's boy.

ELIEZER FINDS A WIFE FOR ISAAC.



"LET ME, I PRAY THEE, DRINK A LITTLE WATER."

One day Esau came in from hunting, tired, worn out, and very faint. Jacob had prepared some tempting food, and hungry Esau wished to have it. But Jacob would only give it to him if he would consent to part with his birthright ; that is, to give up all his rights as eldest son. The tired, thoughtless man consented. You see he did not value his birthright as he should have done, or he would never have resigned it so easily. If he had been true to himself, and trustful of God's promises, instead of reading of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, we should read of Abraham, Isaac, and Esau.

When Isaac grew old he lost his sight, and was obliged to stay most of his time within his tent. One day he thought he should like to have some deer's flesh prepared, and he thought he should like it all the better if his son Esau hunted the deer and prepared the meal. So he called to him, and told him to make ready, and promised to bless him before he died. Esau went out to do his father's bidding, and Rebekah, who had heard all that had passed, called to her favourite son Jacob, and spoke to him after this manner :—

“Your father Isaac is not likely to live long ; he has promised his dying blessing to Esau on bringing him the food he loves ; your bargain with your brother as to the birthright will be of no avail if he obtains the blessing of the first-born. Go, get me two kids ; I will dress them in the manner your father loves ; take it to your father, and he will bless you instead of Esau. His eyes are dim, he cannot discern between you.”

Jacob was afraid. He said, “If I am found out in deceiving my father, I shall bring on myself his curse instead of his blessing. Perhaps he will put out his hand and feel my skin, and it is not rough and hairy like Esau's.” But Rebekah persuaded him, and he agreed. So the dish was made ready ; Jacob was clothed in Esau's dress ; the hairy skins of the kids were put over his hands and neck, and, thus disguised, he went in before his blind father.

ESAU BRINGS VENISON TO ISAAC.

Isaac rose up on his couch and said, "Who art thou, my son?" And Jacob said, "I am Esau, thy first-born; I have done according as thou badest me. Arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me." And Isaac said, "How is it that thou hast found it so quickly?" And Jacob answered, "Because the Lord thy God brought



"GO OUT TO THE FIELD, AND TAKE ME SOME VENISON."

it to me." Then Isaac told him to come near to him, in order that he might feel his skin, whether indeed it was really Esau. And he went near, and his father felt him. Do you not think he must have trembled as he felt the blind man's hand upon him, and heard him murmuring to himself—"The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau?"

After Isaac had eaten of the venison, he called Jacob to him again, and very solemnly gave him his blessing. “God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine; let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee; be lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother’s sons bow down to thee: cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he that blesseth thee.” It was the blessing of the first-born.

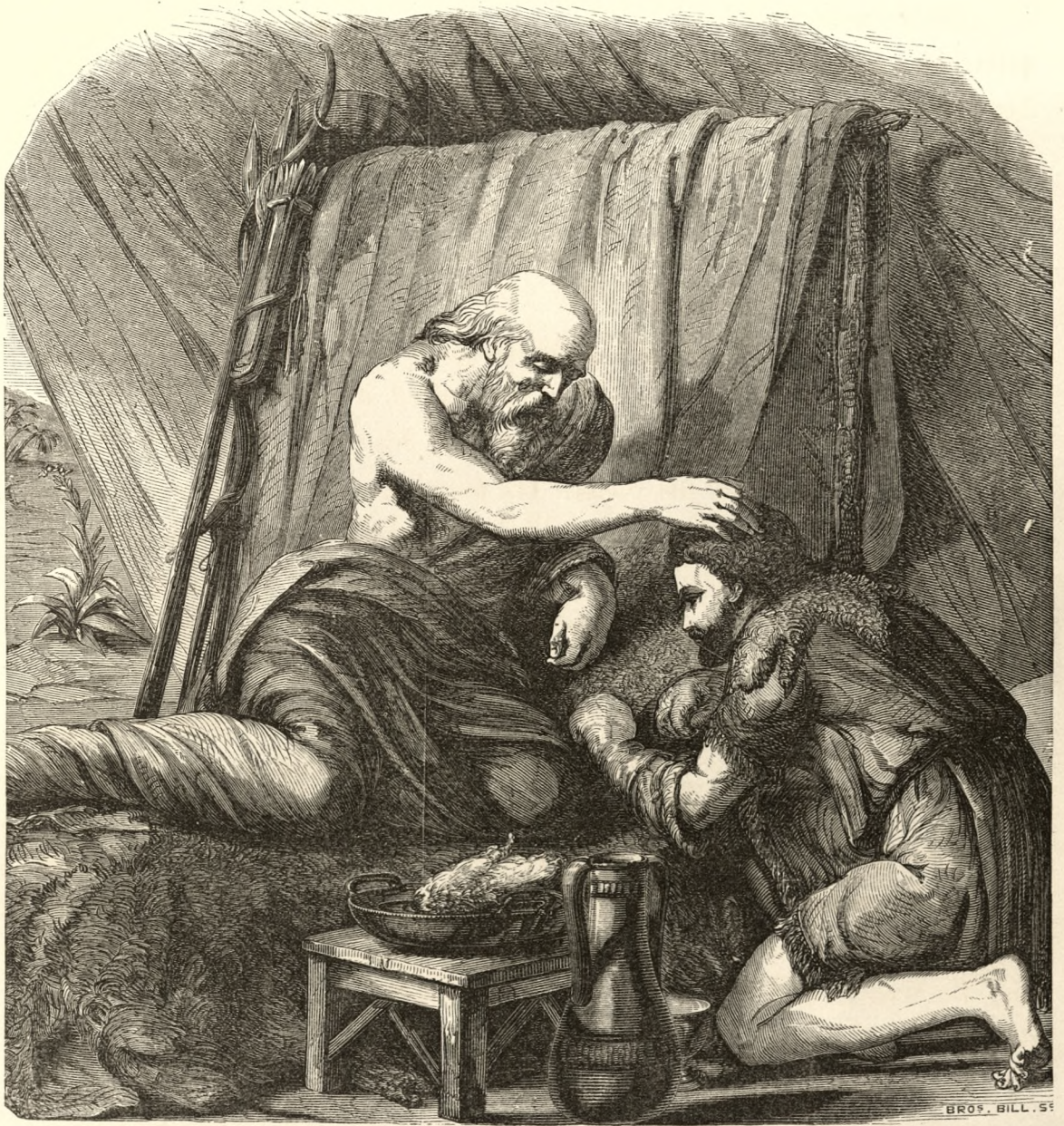
Very soon after Jacob had gone out from the presence of his father, came Esau with his venison. And he called cheerfully to his father, saying—“Let my father arise, and eat of his son’s venison.” Isaac trembled when he heard his voice. He found that he had been deceived; but the blessing he had given could not be withdrawn. With a sharp, bitter cry, Esau heard the news. But, you must know, he was greatly to blame. He had thought so lightly of his birthright at one time as to sell it for a meal—and he had sold it to him who had now obtained it. It was too late for him to undo what he himself had done, or to stay the results which followed. Isaac blessed his son Esau, but it was not with the blessing of the first-born.

Esau was very angry, and perhaps at that time, if he could have found Jacob alone, he would have slain him, as Cain slew Abel. Rebekah thought he would, and so she made Jacob go away to her brother Laban; and he was forced to leave a home he loved, and a mother he loved dearly—not to return for many years—for he was afraid of Esau.

Jacob, no doubt, was sorry for the deception he had practised. He took a tender farewell of his father before he went away, and heard his father’s blessing again. Then he went forth, a lonely traveller to a strange land.

When he lay down the first night of his journey, he took a stone for his pillow; and, as he lay asleep, he thought he saw heaven opened, and a bright, beautiful ladder, reaching from the earth to the sky; glorious

THE BLESSING OF JACOB.



ISAAC BLESSING JACOB.

angels were coming down and going up ; and in the heavens he thought he saw God himself, assuring him of protection and blessing. When he awoke he was terrified. His sins made him afraid ; but he was penitent, and God always forgives those who are sorry for doing wrong. So in the

morning he took the stone on which he had laid his head, set it up as a pillar, poured oil on it, and vowed himself to God.

In the land to which he had gone Jacob found his mother's brother, Laban, who took him into his service as a shepherd. Jacob looked after



"JACOB TOOK THE STONE, AND POURED OIL ON THE TOP OF IT."

Laban's flocks, and though Laban behaved very badly to him, he grew rich, and married, and had twelve sons.

After serving Laban for a great many years, Jacob made up his mind to return to his own country. He had left it a poor, weak man; he returned to it with flocks and herds, and servants, and a large family. But as he drew near to his own land he heard that his brother Esau,



"AND ESAU FELL ON HIS NECK AND KISSED HIM."

with a large number of armed men, was coming to meet him. Jacob felt certain that Esau would kill him, and take everything he had ; so he sent him a handsome present. He divided his own company into two, so that if Esau came against one, the other might escape. Last and best, he went alone, and prayed God to help him.

In the morning Jacob saw Esau and his army coming towards him ; but he did not feel the same terror as he had felt before ; he was sure that God was with him. Nearer and nearer came the two companies, and Jacob went forward alone, scanning the bright array which Esau's lines presented. Where was his brother ? Where ? See him hastening towards Jacob ! See, he runs—to smite him, revile him, remind him of his deception—to threaten, to punish, to kill ? No, but to fall on his neck and kiss him.

So the brothers, having been reconciled to one another, became very fast friends, and God blessed and prospered them.



CAMELS, AND THEIR FURNITURE.

THE STORY OF JOSEPH.



AFTER Jacob's meeting with Esau, he settled in the land of Canaan, he and his twelve sons. All of them were beloved by their father; but Joseph, a bright-eyed, beautiful lad, about seventeen years old, was he who had the largest share of his father's heart.

Jacob loved Joseph better than any of his other sons, because he was the son of his old age. Instead of his wearing the plain clothes worn by his brothers, a robe of brilliant colours was given to him by his father, and the sight of its gorgeous tints made his brothers jealous; they envied him, hated him, and very likely often wished that when he was out in the fields alone some wild beast would slay him.

One night Joseph was minding the sheep, and as they were all safe in the fold, he lay down under a tree to sleep; his crook was beside him, and his dog at his feet. Everything was very still, and Joseph soon fell asleep, and dreamed a curious dream. He thought it was harvest-time, and that he and his brothers were all in the field together, binding up the sheaves of corn; and he fancied that the sheaf which he had bound rose up of itself and stood in the midst, and that all the other sheaves which his brothers had bound bowed down before his sheaf, just as servants would bow before their master.

In the morning Joseph told his dream, and his brothers were very angry, and said to him, "Shalt thou indeed reign over us? or shalt thou indeed have dominion over us?" And they hated him yet the more for his dreams and for his words. Two or three nights afterwards Joseph laid down to sleep again, just as he had done before, and he dreamed



"AND JOSEPH DREAMED A DREAM."

that he saw the sun and the moon and eleven stars all bow down to him, as if they were his servants. And in the morning he told his dream to his father and his brethren, and his father Jacob chided Joseph, saying—"What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? shall I, and thy mother, and thy brothers, indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth?"

One glowing hot day Joseph's brethren were looking after their sheep; the mid-day heat, however, had driven the shepherds under the

trees, and the sheep had crept away into cool places, and lay crowded together in the shade. In the valley there was a well, but there was not a drop of water in it, nor a rain cloud in the sky to promise a shower.

As the brothers sat together talking about Joseph, they saw him coming towards them—his light, graceful figure clothed in the robe of many colours; his long, bright hair hanging loosely on his shoulders; and his clear voice ringing out some pleasant song of home or heaven.

You might readily have guessed by the frown on their faces, the low, hurried words they uttered, that those brothers meant harm; they crouched together and whispered—"Here cometh the dreamer. Come now, therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say, Some evil beast hath devoured him; and we shall see what will become of his dreams."

His brother Reuben was not so cruel. He saved his life, and said to them, "Let us not kill him. Shed no blood, but cast him into the pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him." This Reuben did that he might help Joseph to escape, and bring him back to his father. So they laid hold of him, and stripped off his coat of many colours, and cast him into a pit. Now this pit was a well, but, as it was not summer time, there was no water in it.

And so the day passed on, and evening shadows lengthened; the sheep wandered about and cropped the herbage; and the brothers sat at their evening meal; all except Reuben, who was away, planning some method of helping Joseph. As the brothers sat together in moody silence, they noticed a company of men coming towards them, mounted on camels, which were loaded with bales of spice. And they were going up to Egypt. The sight of these strangers decided the brothers what to do. They made up their minds to produce the lad, and to sell him for a slave.

A few moments sufficed to drag the poor boy from the pit. He, overjoyed at his escape, began to pour out his thanks, supposing his



“AND THEY TOOK HIM AND CAST HIM INTO A PIT.”

brothers had relented; they silenced him with words, perhaps blows; bade him dream his dreams in slavery, for into slavery should he be sold.

So they went to the well, and brought Joseph to the merchants, and

sold him for twenty pieces of silver. And they took him with them into Egypt.

When Reuben, the waverer, returned, the brothers related what they had done, and he wept bitterly ; but tears could not bring back Joseph ; so they killed a kid, dipped Joseph's coat in the blood, and then, with a lie on their tongues, returned home.

Jacob was watching for his sons' return. He came out to meet them, and they bowed before him ; he blessed them, but seemed anxious. Where was Joseph ? They led him to a seat, and then produced the blood-stained coat, asking, "Is this thy son's coat ?" With a bitter cry of anguish the old man recognised the beautiful garment. "It is my son's coat," he cried ; "an evil beast hath devoured him. Joseph is, without doubt, rent in pieces."

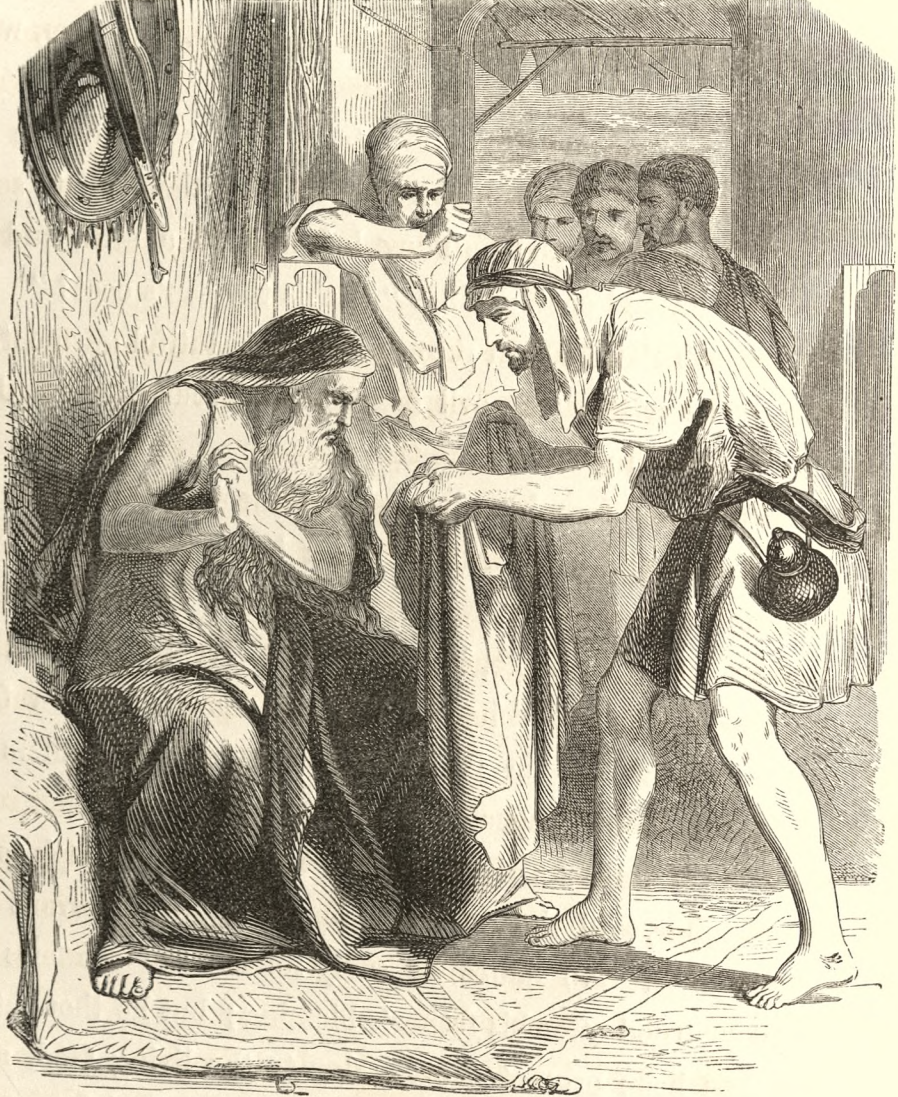
Jacob mourned for Joseph ; the light of the house was gone, the joy of his home departed. "I will go down into the grave," he said, "unto my son mourning."

The brothers saw his trouble, but dared not reveal the truth ; many were the falsehoods which they had to utter in answer to their father's repeated questions, for one lie is the occasion of many others ; and Jacob never, for a moment, suspected the truth.

When the slave dealers arrived in Egypt, they sold Joseph to a rich man, named Potiphar, and the poor lad thus became a servant in the house of the Egyptian. No doubt he sadly missed the comforts of his home, and often yearned after his father's blessing ; but he thought of the prayers which had been presented every day to the living God, and did not neglect his duty. He tried to please his master, Potiphar, and God prospered him. Joseph had not been very long in his service before he was made chief man of the household ; and if the brothers who had sold him into slavery, and often thought of him as groaning under the heavy whip of a taskmaster, had seen him handsomely clothed, with scores of servants

under him, they would have begun to doubt their own prudence in saving him from death.

But this prosperity was not to last. On the return of Potiphar,



JOSEPH'S COAT.

after a long absence from home, Joseph was accused of a grievous crime, and although he was perfectly innocent, his master was so greatly enraged that he sent him to prison, and there it seemed likely that he would linger out the rest of his days.

It was a miserable place ; high stone walls shut out the busy world ; heavily-barred gates shut in the poor prisoners. Some of them were confined in dark, damp cells ; others engaged in the hardest drudgery ; others were lounging about all through the day without any occupation ; but all were very unhappy, and whenever the sunshine entered the prison yard, it shone on care-worn faces, that seemed to have grown old before their time.

But the governor of the prison was pleased to notice the interesting young stranger, and, as he found him truthful and diligent, he promoted him to be the chief gaoler.

In the prison were two of the king's servants, the chief butler and the chief baker, and one morning Joseph noticed that these two men were very sorrowful. When he asked them the occasion of their sadness, they told him they had each dreamed a dream which troubled them, and they were anxious to know what their dreams meant. The butler had dreamed that he stood before a vine which had three branches, which budded and put forth grapes ; that having the royal cup in his hand, he plucked the clusters, pressed the juice into the cup, and gave it into the hand of the king.

Joseph told the butler what the dream meant, namely, that in three days he should be restored to royal favour, and should give the cup into the king's hand. Then Joseph besought the chief butler, when he was again at the court of the king, to think kindly of him, to mention his sad case, and obtain his release from prison.

Then the baker told his dream. He had dreamed, he said, that he had three baskets on his head, that in the uppermost basket there were of all manner of baked meats for the king's table, and that the birds came and ate them up.

And Joseph told the baker that the dream meant that within three days he should be hanged, and that the birds should eat his flesh.

Both events came to pass within the three days ; the butler returned to court ; and the baker was put to death. The ungrateful butler forgot all about Joseph, and never pleaded the cause of the poor Hebrew who had been so kind to him.

About two years after these events, Pharaoh the king had a dream which troubled him. He thought he stood by the river, and that there came up seven fat, well-favoured cows, and they pastured in a green meadow ; and after a while that seven lean and miserable cows came up and stood by the river, and devoured the seven fat cows. And then he dreamed again that he saw seven ears of corn upon one stalk, fine and good ; and seven other ears, blighted by the east wind, came up after them, and devoured the seven good ears.

In the morning Pharaoh was anxious to know what his dream meant. He called all his wise men, but they could give him no help. It was then that the chief butler remembered Joseph, and he told Pharaoh all that had happened. Pharaoh demanded that Joseph should be brought into his presence. Word was sent to the prison, and Joseph was conducted to the court.

The palace of Pharaoh was a grand and beautiful place, with curious sculptures, wonderful pictures, lofty pillars of glowing colours, and was filled with troops of servants in splendid dresses, and everything that could delight the eye and impress the mind with the grandeur of him who called it all his own. But Joseph was not dazzled by all he saw. He was a poor Hebrew, sold into slavery, but he felt that the King of kings cared for him, had helped him, and would help him still.

When Joseph stood before the monarch, Pharaoh said to him, " I have dreamed a dream, and there is none who can interpret it, and I have heard say of thee that when thou hearest a dream thou canst interpret it."

" It is not in me," replied the Hebrew youth ; " but God—my God—shall give the king an answer."

PHARAOH DREAMS A DREAM.



JOSEPH BEFORE PHARAOH.

So Pharaoh stated his dreams, and, when he had finished, Joseph said—"The dream is one; God hath showed Pharaoh what he is about to do. Seven years of plenty shall precede seven years of famine, and the years of plenty shall be forgotten by reason of the grievous want that shall come after them. Twice is the dream repeated; shortly shall it

come to pass. Now, therefore, let Pharaoh look out a discreet man to be set over the land of Egypt, and let him appoint overseers throughout the land to gather up a fifth part of the harvest during the seven years of plenty; let this corn be laid up in storehouses against the days of famine, and then when the trouble comes, and the fields are barren, the people shall not perish for lack of bread."

Pharaoh listened with attention, and scarcely had the young man ceased, before he said, "As God hath showed thee all this, surely there is no man so discreet and wise as thou art; *thou* shalt be over my house, according to *thy* word shall all my people be ruled, only in the throne will I be greater than *thou*!"

And so Joseph became the chief man in the land of Egypt. Robes of state were put upon him—but not so precious to him as the coat of many colours given by his father's hand. A ring from Pharaoh's finger was placed on his; a chain of purest gold was thrown round his neck; a chariot, drawn by splendid horses, was placed at his service; and Pharaoh led him out before all the people, and presented him to them as lord over the land of Egypt, while proclamation was made that every one should bow the knee before him.

Faithful to the trust committed to him, Joseph had large storehouses built, quantities of corn collected every harvest, and laid up in reserve.

When the last year of plenty had passed away, came days of trouble. The farmers looked in despair at their barren fields. Another year, and another, and still no crops. There was famine throughout the land; and then Joseph opened the storehouses and sold corn to the perishing. And the famine continued through all the countries round about Egypt; there was not a household but felt the pressure of those hard times. The famine fell upon the house of old Jacob, and on the families of his sons. There were many mouths to fill, for each of the eleven sons had children of their own, and the men looked at one another with sorrowful faces,

JOSEPH BECOMES GREAT IN EGYPT.



PHARAOH HONOURS JOSEPH.

as much as to say, "We are without bread, and without hope, and our wives and our little ones must perish of hunger."

In the midst of their trouble they heard that there was corn in Egypt. They resolved to go and buy, but Jacob would not hear of their taking with them Benjamin, his youngest son ; so they left him at home, and went down into Egypt. They were taken into the presence of Joseph, and in the noble-looking man, clothed in silken robes, with golden chain and royal ring, they failed to recognise the boy whom they had sold for a slave. Afraid to meet the glance of the great man, they bowed their heads before him, and as their foreheads almost touched the earth he thought of his dream, and how in that dream his sheaf stood erect, while all their sheaves bowed down.

Joseph, in order the better to disguise himself, spoke harshly, and accused them of being spies. They told him all their story—a story he knew too well—but they made no mention of their treachery. He demanded to see the young brother, Benjamin, of whom they had spoken, and refused to listen to any other terms than that one of their number should remain in Egypt while the rest returned for Benjamin. And so it was arranged that Simeon should stay, and he was bound with cords and thrust into prison. Corn, however, was given to those who returned, and, by Joseph's order, the purchase money was secretly put back into every man's sack.

On returning home the brothers told their story, and Jacob was deeply sorrowful when he heard that his youngest son must go down with them into Egypt. But when there was no food to be had, he was obliged to consent, and the brothers, taking Benjamin with them, went down again into Egypt. They had found the money which had been hidden in their sacks, and this made them the more afraid.

When their arrival was made known to Joseph, he had a feast made ready, and when they were assembled he came in to them, clothed in silk and jewels, and asked them many questions in so kind a manner, that they took courage. The steward, to whom they had offered back the

JOSEPH'S BRETHREN GO DOWN TO EGYPT.

money which had been put into their sacks, had refused it, saying that God had smiled upon them and given them treasure ; and now that they stood in the presence of the governor, he was gracious also. And then



SIMEON DETAINED BY JOSEPH.

they thought of Joseph, and their hearts smote them for the evil they had done to him : Joseph, they supposed, was either dead or still a slave, and they bowed before the governor, and presented Benjamin.

That night, while the brethren were feasting, Joseph ordered his steward to fill their sacks with corn, and to make ready for their journey in

the morning. He directed that the money should be put back into their sacks, and that in the sack of the youngest a cup should be placed. In the morning the brothers were early astir, and went away joyfully; but they had not proceeded far on their road when they saw a troop of soldiers coming after them, and they drew up in fear. Still more terrified were they when the captain of the troop accused them of stealing a silver cup belonging to the governor; they declared they knew nothing of it, but the Egyptians searched their property, and in the sack of Benjamin they found the cup.

We may readily imagine the grief and terror of the brothers as they were driven back to the city. When they came into the presence of the governor they fell on their faces before him, saying, "We are the slaves of my lord; both we and he also in whose sack the cup was found." "Not so," was Joseph's answer; "far be it from me that the innocent should suffer with the guilty. Get you back to your father, and leave this lad with me."

Leave Benjamin! no, they felt it to be impossible; the old man would die, and die reproaching them. Then Judah came forward, and pleaded earnestly that he might suffer in the place of Benjamin. He pleaded for the sake of the white locks of the old man at home; and the tears were in the eyes of Joseph, and his heart was troubled.

"Leave me with the strangers!"

There was the clash of arms as the soldiers retired, and the courtiers, in their splendid robes, bowed themselves out of the governor's presence. Then the massive curtains were drawn, and Joseph was alone with his brethren, alone with them as he had been when, in his childish, simple way, he told his dreams. And his brethren knew him not, but bowed before him. How strangely was his voice changed as he spoke to them now! Could it be the governor of Egypt? He was speaking to them as friend and equal, he had fallen on Benjamin's neck, and was weeping bitterly. Who could it be?

JOSEPH TELLS HIS BRETHREN WHO HE IS.

“ I am Joseph,” he said, “ whom ye sold into Egypt.”

It was indeed the despised and hated Joseph, and they shook with fear as they saw him. He saw their fear, and hastened to reassure them.



JACOB SETTING OUT FOR EGYPT.

“ Be neither grieved nor angry with yourselves,” he said, “ that ye sold me hither ; for God did send me before you to preserve life.”

And now it became known that Joseph’s brethren had arrived

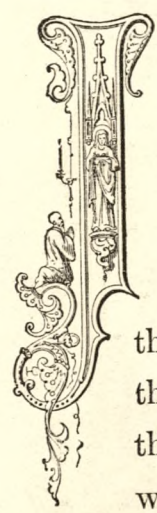
in Egypt; and soon the news was taken into Canaan, and old Jacob could scarcely believe the joyful message, that he and all belonging to him were to come down into Egypt, and to see Joseph, the mighty governor of the land of Egypt. And the father and the long-lost son met, and Joseph fell on his father's neck, and wept on his neck a good while; and Jacob said to Joseph, "Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, because thou art yet alive."

Soon afterwards Jacob was presented to King Pharaoh, and the brethren all settled in Egypt, with their wives and their little ones, and their flocks and their herds. And before Jacob died he blessed the sons of Joseph.



JACOB BLESSING EPHRAIM AND MANASSEH.

MOSES AND THE ISRAELITES.

OSEPH, of whom we read in a former story, had been dead for many years, and the children's children of himself and of his brothers were still in the land of Egypt. But their state was much changed from that of their fathers. *They* had lived like princes, but now their children were slaves. The Pharaoh who had been kind to Joseph had been dead for a long time, and those who had succeeded him on the throne had grown jealous of the Israelites, and step by step—inch by inch—they had driven them into slavery. They were forced to perform very hard work, chiefly in brickmaking and in building; and they were obliged to submit to very hard usage. The overseers, or slave drivers, beat them cruelly if they failed to finish their tasks by the set time. Pharaoh was afraid, perhaps, that the Israelites would some day resent the wrong that had been done them; and, therefore, he favoured everything that was likely to weaken and debase them.

Among other cruel and wicked acts, Pharaoh ordered that all the boys of the Israelites, as soon as they were born, should be drowned in the river Nile. You may easily fancy what grief and trouble this brought on the poor slaves. Most of them were afraid to disobey the order of Pharaoh, and they cast their infant sons into the water. But

MOSES AND THE ISRAELITES.



THE FINDING OF MOSES.

one family ventured to disobey. The mother hid her little boy for three whole months, and when she found she could no longer keep him in safety, she made a kind of basket of bulrushes, and covered it with pitch, and, putting her child inside, carried it to the river, and laid it among the rushes and flags on the banks of the stream. There she left it, most likely praying God to care for her outcast child, and, when she went away, the infant's sister came and watched to see what would happen. Do you remember the beautiful verse in the Psalms, "When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take me up?" So it was with Moses.

Presently there were merry voices heard, and a company of ladies, very richly dressed, were seen approaching the spot where the child was hidden. When they came to the bank of the river, they saw the basket among the flags. Then one of them — Pharaoh's own daughter — on whom the rest were waiting, ordered it to be brought to her and opened. And when she saw the beautiful baby, it wept, and, perhaps, stretched its hands towards her. The princess knew of her father's order, and she guessed the reason of the infant being there; no doubt, she thought, some poor mother has hoped to save her child's life in this frail basket: and she determined to take care of the babe. Seeing a Jewish girl near (the child's own sister), she called to her, and bade her procure a nurse for the infant. The girl mentioned the name of her mother, and the mother of the outcast child. So the Egyptian princess gave orders that the baby should be taken good care of, and that when it was old enough it should be brought to the palace, and reared like a prince. She gave the child a name which was very appropriate; it was Moses, which, in the language of the country, meant "saved from the water."

The mother of Moses was very glad to have back her little son, and to feel sure that his life was safe. No doubt she thanked God for His goodness towards her, and prayed Him to have her boy ever in His



EGYPTIAN TASKMASTERS AND THE ISRAELITES.

keeping. After a time Moses was sent for to the palace, and there he was treated as if he were a king's son. He was looked upon as one who would, in course of time, sit upon Pharaoh's throne ; and, perhaps, there were many jealous eyes watching the path of the favoured Israelite.

Moses was a prince, but he was unhappy. He knew that his father, mother, and all who belonged to him, were slaves. He was surrounded by grandeur, but they lived in miserable hovels. The servants of Pharaoh bowed before him, but they beat and ill-treated those who belonged to him. The older Moses grew the more he felt this, and particularly so when he thought of what his mother had taught him in his early childhood, before he was sent for to the palace, about Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and about the land which God had promised to give to their children.

He was thinking of these things one day, when he was a man, and his thoughts were disturbed by cries of pain ; they were uttered by a poor Israelite, smarting under the lash of an Egyptian. Moses was very angry, and he struck the beater and killed him. Next day he saw two Israelites quarrelling and fighting, and he tried to make peace between them ; but one of them turned on him, and asked—" Who made thee a ruler and a judge over us ? Wilt thou kill me, as thou didst the Egyptian yesterday ?"

Moses was grieved. By his own people and by the Egyptians he saw that he was suspected. So he fled from Egypt into the desert. He forsook everything but God, and God did not forsake him. He came to the land of Midian ; and there he helped the daughters of a good man, named Jethro, to water their flocks, and drove off some rough, ill-natured shepherds, who tried to prevent the women getting water for their sheep. For this kindness the women invited him to their father's house. There he was well used, and found a home more pleasant to him than that which he had ever found in the palaces of Egypt.

MOSES AND THE ISRAELITES.



MOSES AND AARON BEFORE PHARAOH.

After Moses had been in Midian a great many years, he was alone one day with his flock in a hilly part of the country. There he saw a strange sight. It was a bush that burned with fire, but the bush was not consumed. And he went near, and a voice called to him from the flame and it was the voice of God. God told Moses that He was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob ; that He had heard the cry of their children enslaved in Egypt, and had come down from heaven to deliver them ; that He had chosen Moses as His messenger to Pharaoh, and that he was at once to return to Egypt, and to demand of the king the freedom of the slaves.

But Moses was afraid, and said, "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh?" Then God showed him signs and wonders, and made him feel that in going back to Egypt he went as God's own messenger. He ordered him to throw down the staff which was in his hand ; he did so, and it became a living serpent, and Moses fled in terror before it. Then God told him to take hold of the serpent by the tail ; he did so, and again it was a simple staff in his hand.

So with this staff Moses went back into Egypt ; called together the chiefs of his people ; told them the message God had sent ; and then, with his brother Aaron, went to the palace, and stood before Pharaoh.

In the palace of Pharaoh, and before the throne of the great monarch, Moses and Aaron delivered their message : God had said the people of Israel were to leave Egypt ; would Pharaoh let them go ? No : the king of Egypt would not so much as listen to the message ; and the tasks of the slaves were doubled on account of this intermeddling. Then Moses and Aaron told Pharaoh that if he refused, dreadful plagues would come upon his people. He dared to refuse, and the plagues came : ten plagues in all. First, all the waters in Egypt were changed to blood : then the land was covered with frogs ; frogs in the houses, in the beds, in the ovens, in the kneading-troughs—everywhere : then noxious insects

and swarms of flies : then dreadful sickness : then a frightful hailstorm ; fire and hail mixed together, so that the cattle, the sheep, the shepherds, the herdsmen, the herb of the field, the trees of the forest, were alike destroyed : then came darkness, for three whole days black darkness,



THE PLAGUE OF FROGS.

without a ray of light : then came locusts, whole swarms, that covered the land.

While these terrible plagues were coming one after the other upon Egypt, Pharaoh and the Egyptians were greatly frightened, but still unwilling to give up their slaves. Whenever the plague became too heavy to bear, Pharaoh sent for Moses, and besought him to pray God to put an end to it, faithfully promising that the slaves should go forth.

THE FLIGHT OF THE ISRAELITES.

When the plague ceased, Pharaoh refused to keep his promise, and would not let the people go. The Egyptians might have been sure that God was with the Israelites, for none of the plagues came upon them as they did upon the Egyptians. When the fire and hail fell from heaven, it fell



PHARAOH PURSUING THE ISRAELITES.

not on that part of the country where the Israelites had their dwellings. When darkness was over all the land of Egypt, the place where the Israelites lived was light and cheerful. But though Pharaoh knew all this, he was resolved to fight against God, and to keep his slaves.

So the last plague came upon Egypt. Moses and Aaron were told by God that in one night all the eldest born in the land should die. The angel of destruction would pass through Egypt; the Israelites were to



PHARAOH AND HIS HOST DROWNED IN THE RED SEA.

make ready for a journey ; they were to put the blood of a lamb on their door-posts, as a sign to the angel who should pass over the houses so marked. When the night came, the threatened plague fell upon Egypt, and there was not a house where there was not one dead ; in the palace and in the prison the eldest born all died. But the punishment did not fall on the Israelites. They were ready for a journey, and it was well that they were ; for when Pharaoh found what had happened, when he saw his own son dead, when he heard the cry of the mourners in every part of the city, he sent for Moses and Aaron, and bade them instantly lead forth their people.

It was a busy night with the Israelites ; they had to take with them everything that belonged to them—sheep, oxen, all their property—and to set forth at once. The Egyptians hurried their departure, helped them as much as they could, gave them rich presents, and then almost drove them out of the land. The Israelites were not more glad to go than were the Egyptians to be rid of them ; and so they went forth, rejoicing as they went, and hearing, no doubt, many a mourner's sob—many a mother weeping over her dead son. Perhaps Moses thought of the mothers who had been made to weep for their poor little ones by Pharaoh's cruel order, and how near he had been himself to the fate of so many Hebrew children.

The Israelites went on their journey towards the Red Sea, but when they reached its shores they heard the shouts of the Egyptians, the noise of their chariots, and the clatter of their horses. Pharaoh had changed his mind again, and was intent on stopping and bringing back his slaves. The Israelites were terrified, but Moses was confident in God. There was the sea before them, the Egyptians behind. But God showed Moses the way of escape. When the Egyptians were close upon them, Moses did as God had told him. He stretched out his hand over the sea, and the waters divided ; the waves rose up like two walls, and between these

MOSES AND THE ISRAELITES.



MOSES ON THE MOUNT.

THE PASSAGE OF THE RED SEA.

walls the Israelites passed over. A cloudy pillar, which had led them on their way, now followed them, casting clear light on their path, but filling the Egyptians with dismay.

But Pharaoh still pressed on ; horses, soldiers, chariots, all followed the flying Israelites into the very midst of the sea. When the last of the



THE BRAZEN SERPENT.

Israelites had reached the other shore, Moses stretched his staff over the waters, and back to its bed returned the sea, covering Pharaoh and all his hosts, and allowing not one of them to escape. Moses and the people shouted God's praises as they saw the work which he had wrought ; and Miriam, the sister of Moses, took a timbrel in her hand, and danced for joy.

So the Israelites were freed from the Egyptians. But they were in the desert, and they soon began to be afraid that they would die of hunger. They ought to have trusted in the great God who had shown them so many wonders ; but they seemed to forget all about this, and to think only of their present want. God was very angry with them. He had led them into the wilderness, and He was leading them on towards the land which He had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And those who were thus led, and who saw that God was with them by the cloudy pillar in the day, and the fiery pillar at night, were wicked and foolish enough to wish themselves back in Egypt. Two men only out of all that great company did God allow to reach the promised land. The rest remained for forty years in the desert, and there they all died.

But God did not forget to provide for his people while they were in the desert. When they were hungry, He gave them bread from heaven. It was a light, pleasant food, called manna, very sweet to the taste. When they complained of this, and wanted meat, he sent them great quantities of birds. When they were without water, and likely to perish, he told Moses to strike a hard, dry rock, and when Moses did so, fresh water rushed out in a clear, bright stream. Sometimes the people were very wicked, and God punished them. At one time God sent fiery flying serpents, that bit them, and those who were bitten died in great pain. But when God saw that the people were sorry, he told Moses to make a serpent of brass, to set it up on a pole, so that all might see it ; and those who looked at it were cured. Those who were dying had but to turn their eyes to this brass serpent, and they were at once made well.

All these things ought to have made the people trust in God ; but they were very careless and very wicked. God called Moses up into a great mountain to talk with him, and while he was away the people made an idol, in the shape of a calf, and worshipped it ! When Moses came back, and saw what was done, he dashed it to pieces, beat

MOSES SEES THE LAND OF CANAAN.



MOSES VIEWING THE PROMISED LAND.

it to powder, mixed it with water, and made the wicked worshippers drink of it.


In the desert, on the top of Mount Sinai, to which Moses was called by God, God gave him the Ten Commandments. It was a dreadful sight when God came down upon that mountain to speak with Moses ; the people saw the black clouds, saw the blazing lightning, heard the roll of thunder, and the clear, shrill notes of a trumpet. They fell on their faces, and perhaps thought they would all be destroyed. But God was merciful : His name is Love.

Moses and Aaron were told what kind of religious service should be offered by the people ; and how they were to make a great tent, called a tabernacle, and what kind of dresses the priests should wear, and what sort of sacrifice should be presented ; everything, even to the width of a curtain, or the weight of a ring, was done exactly as God ordered.

All this time the Israelites were wandering in the wilderness, led by the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. When that pillar remained in one place, they encamped sometimes for a long while together ; when it moved, they followed it.

After about forty years, when nearly all who had come out of Egypt were dead, and the children born to them had grown up to be men and women, the Israelites came near to the land which God had promised them. Moses was not allowed to enter that land. He had said some foolish, wicked words, and God would not allow him to go into Canaan. But he was allowed to see the land. He went, as God told him, up into a high mountain that overlooked the country, and saw it and rejoiced. And then God took him to heaven—the better land—the land of promise, which we all hope to enter, never more to go out for ever.

THE PROMISED LAND.

FTER the death of Moses the Israelites began to enter on the possession of the land which God had promised to their forefathers. A good and a great man, named Joshua, became the leader of the Israelites, and he it was who took the place of Moses when that holy servant of the Lord was taken away.

The Israelites who had come out of Egypt were all dead, and it was their sons and daughters that followed Joshua into the Promised Land. Joshua and Caleb were the only men who survived the wanderings in the wilderness. And now the time had arrived when the people were to become possessed of the Promised Land, and there was but a river between them and the beautiful country which lay beyond. The river was called Jordan. But on the other side of the river there were powerful enemies; and when the Israelites came into the land, they would be exposed to great danger. Joshua knew this, and therefore he told the people they must be strong, and of good courage.

Before crossing over the river, Joshua sent two spies, to find out what kind of land it was. These spies came to a city called Jericho, and there they lodged with a woman named Rahab. But the king of Jericho heard



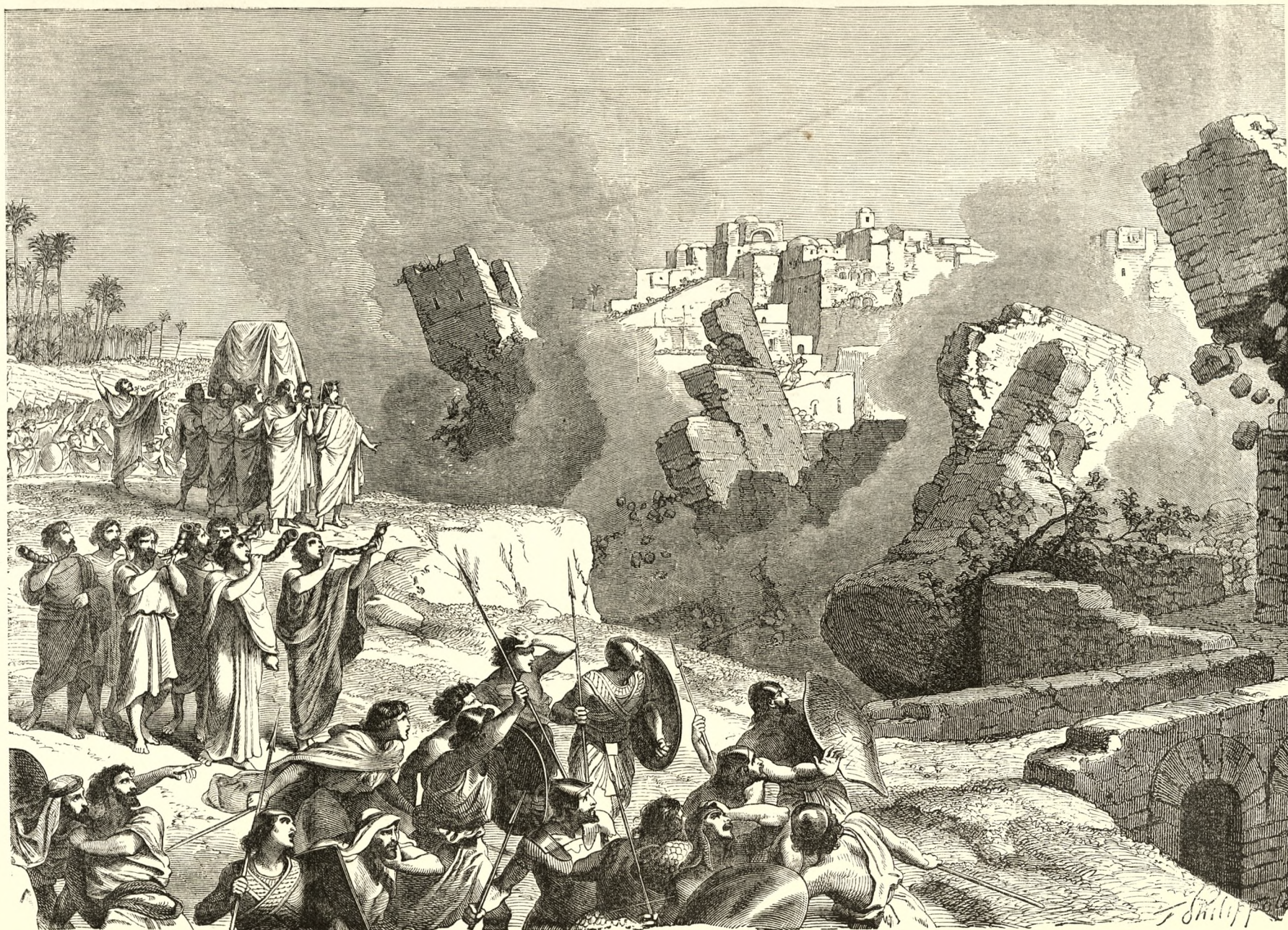
"AND JOSHUA SET UP TWELVE STONES."

of their coming, and he sent to Rahab, and commanded her to give the men up. She was afraid to do so, for she had heard of the strange things that had happened in Egypt, and she believed in God. So Rahab concealed the spies, and helped them to get away in safety ; only she made them promise that when the Israelites came to Jericho they should do no harm to her, or to those who belonged to her.

When the spies came back they told Joshua all that had happened, and three days afterwards preparations were made for crossing the river. They had no bridge; nor any boats, and the river was deep and wide, so that some, and perhaps many of the Israelites, may have wondered how they should reach the other side. If they doubted, they were foolish ; for the same God that had made a pathway through the Red Sea for their fathers could surely make for them a road through this river. On the appointed day the people were all gathered, and marched to the banks of the stream. The priests went first, carrying the ark, and the holy vessels of the tabernacle, and as soon as their feet touched the water, it divided and stood in great heaps, so that the priests and all the people passed over on dry ground. And twelve men took twelve stones out of the river, and set them up on the farther side, as a token of the wonderful work which God had wrought that day.

Thus was it that the Israelites came into the Promised Land.

When the people of the land knew that the Israelites had crossed over the river, they were greatly afraid ; and when the Israelites came up towards Jericho, the people in that city were afraid to stir out of its gates. All round the city were the Israelites. But they made no sign of warfare ; only for seven days, seven priests, bearing the ark, went round the city seven times, and seven priests, with seven trumpets, seven times sounded. On the seventh day, on the seventh round, at the seventh sound of the seven trumpets, all the Israelites shouted, and the walls of Jericho fell down flat. All that were in the city were killed by the Israelites, all



"THE WALL FELL DOWN FLAT."

except Rahab, and those who belonged to her. Joshua remembered the promise which his spies had given, and she suffered no hurt.

After the taking of Jericho, great fear fell on all the other cities against which Joshua came up. You must remember that the people of the land were a cruel, wicked race, and that God intended them to be killed, and their country taken from them. God led the Israelites against them, and gave courage and strength, so that no effort on the part of the people of the land could save them from the swords of the Israelites, so long as these soldiers of God trusted in God.

That God was with them was made very plain to the Israelites on many occasions. In one terrible battle God cast down great stones from heaven, and killed more with these mighty stones than were killed by the soldiers' swords. Strangest and most wonderful of all, Joshua called out, in the midst of the battle, to the bright sun shining in the sky, and commanded that it should remain as it was until the battle was over; and so it came to pass. All these wonderful things filled the people with fear, and they fled at the very sight of the Israelites, for they felt that God was with them.

In course of time the country was so far freed from its old owners as to permit of its division among the Israelites. The Promised Land was their possession, and Joshua divided it among the twelve tribes—that is, among the children of the twelve sons of Jacob. Two tribes and a half had their portion on the farther side of the river Jordan, and nine tribes and a half within the borders of the Promised Land. The division was made by lot; that is (it is supposed), there were two urns or vases, one containing the names of the tribes, the other the division of the land. These lots were drawn out by persons appointed, and the size of the piece of land, the position of which was thus ascertained, was afterwards settled according to the number of the tribe.

Thus the Promised Land was divided, and the Israelites settled in the



"AND THE SUN STOOD STILL."

THE LAND DIVIDED AMONG THE TRIBES.

land. But the old owners of the country, although they had been defeated over and over again, still tried to regain what they had lost, and many and sore were the troubles which had to be endured.



“BY LOT WAS THEIR INHERITANCE.”

Years passed away, and Joshua, the brave captain, grew old and died, and the people began to feel the want of some one to lead them against their enemies. They would never have felt this want if they had

put all their trust in God ; but they were foolish enough to fancy that it was another Joshua or another Moses they needed ; whereas the same God that had led them into the land cared for and watched over them still. When they forgot this, then trouble came upon them. Their enemies grew strong, and the Israelites were made to suffer. They did not turn to God : they were so wicked and foolish as to worship idols, and God was angry with them, and punished them ; but whenever they turned away from their idols, and came back to God, he forgave them, and blessed them, and made them strong against their enemies.

The Israelites were in those days ruled by judges. God gave them these leaders, and great and wonderful things were done by these God-taught men.

Gideon was the name of one of these leaders. In his time the Israelites were at the mercy of their foes, and “the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.” Whatever they sowed their enemies reaped—took all their sheep and cattle, drove their owners for refuge into the mountains, and made them long for death. One day Gideon was threshing some wheat. He was doing it secretly, lest the enemy should seize it ; and as he was thus engaged an angel came to him, and told him he was to save Israel from the hand of the foe. Gideon did not know it was an angel, and so he offered him refreshment—broth, and meat, and bread—and the angel told him to spread them on a rock, and when he had done so, touched them with the end of his staff. At that touch fire rose out of the rock—a bright flame of fire—and then the angel departed to heaven.

This sign made Gideon sure that it was an angel he had seen ; and that night he took a bullock, and built an altar, and offered sacrifice, and cut down a grove which had been dedicated to an idol, and threw down the altar of a false god. There was a great outcry in the morning as to who it was that had done this thing. It was found to be Gideon ; but he boldly stood forth, and gathered the Israelites round him, and told them

THE ALTARS ARE OVERTHROWN.

that God would deliver them by his hand. And God gave him a sign, to assure him that he would be with him.

Gideon was soon at the head of an army of two-and-thirty thousand



“THE ALTAR OF BAAL WAS CAST DOWN.”

men, but God told him the people were too many, and that if they won the battle they would declare they had done so in their own strength. So Gideon ordered all that were in the least degree afraid to go to their

homes, and twenty-two thousand went away. There still remained ten thousand, and this God told Gideon was too large a number ; three hundred only were chosen—for God can save by few as well as by many—and these, with Gideon, went up against the enemy. Every man carried in his hand a trumpet, an empty pitcher, with a lighted torch inside. They came secretly upon the camp of the enemy under cover of the night, and, as soon as they were very near, Gideon gave the signal, and all blew their trumpets, and shouted, “The sword of the Lord and of Gideon ;” at the same moment they dashed their pitchers in pieces, and the bright glare of their torches flashed in the eyes of their foes. The light, the trumpet blast, the shouts of battle, terrified the enemy, who imagined that a great army had come against them, and fled in confusion.

Thus it was that God, by the hand of Gideon, delivered the Israelites from their foes.

Other great and mighty men were raised up by God to lead the people—men of whose brave doings we have not space to tell. But one of the most remarkable was Samson.

Samson was a man who had been vowed to God from his infancy. His hair had never been cut—that was part of the vow—and he never drank any wine or strong drink. This man possessed immense strength and great courage. One day a lion attacked him, and he seized hold of it by the jaws and rent it in two. Some days afterwards, when he was passing by that way, he found that wild bees had swarmed in the body of the dead lion, and he took some of the honey and did eat. Not long afterwards, Samson was married, and the woman he married belonged to the enemies of the Israelites—they were called Philistines. At the wedding feast Samson proposed a puzzling question to the young men—a sort of enigma—and gave them seven days to find it out, promising to give them, should they be successful, some costly presents. The puzzle was, “Out of the

THE STORY OF SAMSON.



"AND HE RENT HIM AS HE WOULD HAVE RENT A KID."

eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness." They tried hard to find out what it meant, but could not, and they persuaded Samson's wife to make him tell her, so that she might tell them ; and he, foolish man, little thinking of the use she was about to make of it, told her about the lion and the honey. On the seventh day the young men gave the answer—"What is sweeter than honey, and what is stronger than a lion?" Samson no sooner heard the answer than he suspected how they had found it out. He gave them the promised reward, but was very angry, and from that time forth he was the bitter foe of the Philistines. They took away his wife, and he burnt up their corn. This made the Philistines more cruel to the Israelites, who became so terrified at what Samson had done, that they bound him with cords, and gave him up a prisoner into the hands of his foes. The Philistines shouted when they saw him ; but their joy was quickly turned to mourning : Samson burst the cords that bound him, and with no stronger weapon than the jawbone of an ass, killed a thousand men.

On another occasion Samson was in a city called Gaza, and when the Philistines heard of it they shut the gates and prepared to take him ; but he rose up at midnight, and putting the gates of the city on his shoulders, carried them away with him to the top of a hill. At another time the Philistines offered a large reward to a woman, named Delilah, a woman whom Samson loved, to find out the secret of his strength. He refused to tell her for a long while ; but at last he trusted her—his strength was in his hair. She watched till he was asleep, called in a man to shave off his locks, and then, rudely waking him, called out, "The Philistines be on thee, Samson." He rose up, not knowing what had happened ; but his strength was gone from him, and his enemies bound him with chains, put out his eyes, carried him prisoner to Gaza, where they made him grind a mill, and gave thanks to their false god Dagon for the victory they had obtained.

At one of their feasts the Philistines had Samson brought into the house where they were assembled, to mock at him, and make him show feats of strength. There were some thousands of persons in the building, and blind Samson stood before them. And he prayed, "O Lord God, remember me, I pray thee, and strengthen me, I pray thee, only this once, O God, that I may be at once avenged of the Philistines for my two eyes." Breathing this prayer, Samson took hold of the two middle pillars on which the building stood, of the one with his right hand, of the other with his left, and he said, "Let me die with the Philistines." He bowed himself with all his might; the pillars shook, the house trembled, and fell in one great heap of ruin, burying beneath it all that were there.

Thus died Samson, judge of Israel.

The last of the judges was the prophet Samuel. He had been vowed to God's service by his mother before he was born, and while he was yet a very young child he had been brought to the house of the Lord, and had dwelt with the priest Eli.

Now you must know that Eli the priest was a very old man, and foolishly fond of his sons. He had allowed them to do just as they pleased, until at last they cared neither for him nor for any one—nay, they cared nothing for God; and yet they as well as their father were priests of the Lord. They were very wicked, stubborn, selfish young men, and they behaved so badly that the people began to despise not only them, but the priesthood altogether, and not only the priesthood, but the very God they ought to have adored. When Eli heard of his sons' doings, he spoke to them very seriously, and tried to dissuade them from their evil ways. "Why," he said to them, "do ye such things? for I hear of your evil dealings by all this people. Nay, my sons; for it is no good report that I hear: ye make the Lord's people to sin; if one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against

the Lord, who shall entreat for him?" But the sons of Eli paid no attention to their father's words.

There came to Eli a man of God, who said to him, "Thus saith the Lord"—a message direct from heaven, a message very terrible to hear; Eli had been thoughtless or over-indulgent, and his sons had grown up wicked young men, therefore Eli and all that belonged to him should be



"AND BROUGHT THE CHILD TO ELI."

cast away, his two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, should both perish in one day; a faithful priest should be raised up, for "thus saith the Lord . . . "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." They were terrible words, and the heart of Eli must have sunk within him as he heard them, and how he must have blamed himself that he had not taught his sons better, that in their childhood

and their youth he had allowed them to follow their own way, until it was too late for him to caution or to instruct them, and nothing was left for them and for himself but disgrace and death. No doubt he often thought, as he looked on the good and gentle child who had been entrusted to his care, "Oh, that Hophni had been as Samuel!"

One night, when Samuel had laid down to sleep, a voice called him by his name—"Samuel, Samuel." He, supposing it was Eli called, arose and went to the priest. It was not the priest who called, it was God; and at last the child Samuel, hearing the voice, ventured to answer, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." And God told him many things that were to come to pass.

These are the words which God spoke to Samuel:—"Behold, I will do a thing in Israel, at which both the ears of every one that heareth it shall tingle. In that day I will perform against Eli all things which I have spoken concerning his house: when I begin I will also make an end. For I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever."

The child heard these terrible words, and lay all night fearing to tell poor old Eli what he had heard; but in the morning the old man charged him to tell him all that the Lord had said. Samuel told him everything, and the priest bent his head and said—"It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good."

Samuel loved God, and served him faithfully, and God revealed himself to Samuel, so that he became a prophet in the land.

But the wickedness of Eli's sons and the wickedness of the people made God angry with them, and their enemies the Philistines did battle

with them, and overcame them. In their distress the Israelites sent for the ark of the Lord, and the priests brought it down; but no miracle was wrought in their favour: God had forsaken them. The Philistines seized the ark, and defeated and slew those who would have preserved it. The priests Hophni and Phinehas were both killed. Eli was sitting by the wayside. He was very old and blind; but deeply anxious to know how went the battle: his ear was strained to catch every sound. A man, with his clothes torn and with earth on his head, came rushing on to tell the news, and Eli asked, "What is it, my son?" "The Philistines have made a great slaughter: thy two sons are both dead, and the ark of God is taken." The old man fell heavily back, and broke his neck with the fall.

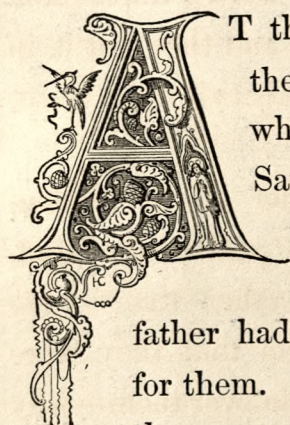
The Philistines had indeed taken the ark of God, and they put it in the temple of their false god Dagon; but it brought only evil upon them, and they were very glad to restore it to the Israelites.

When Samuel became a man, he was the chief of the nation, beloved, honoured, and obeyed. The Philistines were still in the land, and at times they overcame the Israelites, and at other times were themselves defeated. But the Israelites began to feel that they were not like other nations. Others had crowned kings to rule over them—why should it not be the same with them? They forgot that God was their King. The conduct of the people troubled Samuel very much. He told it all in prayer to God, and God heard, and answered: "Let them have their desires; let a king rule over them: they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me."

And so, from that time forth, a king ruled in the Promised Land.

THE THREE KINGS:

SAUL, DAVID, AND SOLOMON.



AT the time when the Israelites were seeking for a king, there dwelt in the land a wealthy and powerful man, whose name was Kish. He had a son, whose name was Saul—a fine, handsome fellow, a head and shoulders taller than any man in the tribes of Israel.

Now it happened that some asses belonging to his father had strayed, and Saul and his servant were sent to look for them. They journeyed a long distance, but failed in finding the asses of which they were in search, and, at last, Saul said he thought it would be better to return, lest his father should become alarmed at his continued absence. The servant thought it would be wiser to inquire of the prophet—that is, the prophet Samuel—and they agreed that they would do so before they returned.

When they came near the city, they asked whether Samuel was there, and some young women who were drawing water at the well told them that he was; but that, if they wished to speak with him, they must make haste, as there was to be a solemn sacrifice, and afterwards a feast, at which he would be engaged.

Saul and his servant hastened, and met with Samuel as he was

THE THREE KINGS, SAUL, DAVID AND SOLOMON.



"SAMUEL TOOK A PHIAL OF OIL, AND POURED IT UPON HIS HEAD."

going up to the place of sacrifice. They did not know him, and asked whether he could tell them where they should find the prophet. Samuel told them he was the prophet whom they sought; that they should remain in his house, giving themselves no concern about the asses, as they had been found, and that something more important was to be done.

God had spoken to Samuel, and had told him that this young man, Saul, should be king over the land; and therefore Samuel took him to his own house, and when the proper time was come, he told him all. This happened when they were alone together. Samuel took a phial of oil, and poured it upon Saul's head, and kissed him, and told him many things that should happen, all of which came to pass.

No doubt Saul wondered greatly at the words of the prophet. That he, a young man of no importance, should become the king of the land, seemed to him almost impossible; but he went away with his servants quietly, and said nothing of what had happened.

Soon afterwards Samuel the prophet called all the people together, and said—

“Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms and of them that oppressed you: and you have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations, and ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us. Now, therefore, present yourselves before the Lord, by your tribes and by your thousands.”

They first of all cast lots, we suppose, to ascertain in which of the tribes they should find their king; and the lot fell on the tribe of Benjamin. Then all the families of that tribe cast lots, and the lot fell on the family of Matri, and lastly on Saul, the son of Kish.

But Saul was not there. He had hidden himself, and for some time

THE THREE KINGS, SAUL, DAVID, AND SOLOMON.

he could not be found ; but after a search they discovered him and brought him into their midst, his tall frame towering over the crowds



"THOU HAST DONE FOOLISHLY."

that surrounded him, and his handsome features flushed with excitement. The people looked upon him, and rejoiced when they saw how

brave and noble was his bearing ; and they shouted till the hills echoed, “ God save the king ! ”

Saul was a brave man, but he was too confident in himself, and apt to forget those things which he ought to have remembered. The enemies of the Israelites, the Philistines, were a powerful people, and they ruled, whenever they could do so, with an iron hand. Saul led up his people against them, and more than once defeated them ; but he was hasty and self-confident, and brought trouble upon himself and those over whom he ruled. It was not lawful for any one but the appointed minister of God to offer sacrifice. On one occasion Saul, unwilling to attack the Philistines until sacrifice had been offered to God, waited for the coming of the prophet Samuel. At last, he grew impatient at the delay, and himself offered the sacrifice. In this he disobeyed God ; he showed plainly that he was more anxious to please himself than to do God’s will. No sooner had the sacrifice been offered than Samuel appeared. The aged man was angry, and he told Saul of the great wickedness he had done, and that on account of his having done so, another king would be raised up in his room.

From that time, no doubt, Saul began to look with suspicion on all who were about him. He would fancy that every man was ready to seize his crown. As for the people, the Philistines were mighty, and forbid them to wear a sword or to carry a spear, or even so much as to have a smith of their own, lest he should make weapons for them. It must have appeared to the Israelites, very plainly, that their king was of little use to them. The king’s son, Jonathan, was, however, a courageous, good man, and he led the people against the Philistines and fought them bravely ; but through a foolish order of his father, this hero was likely to have lost his life. Saul gave orders, when the Israelites were pursuing the Philistines, that no one should have anything to eat, on pain of death ; and Jonathan, who knew nothing of the order, took a

little honey. Saul would have killed him if the people had not resisted. After this the Israelites won more battles, and they took prisoner King Agag, and captured much spoil.

Now God had commanded that those who were taken should be killed ; but Saul saved the life of Agag. In this again he disobeyed God, and Samuel came to him and told him once more the kingdom should be taken from him.

Saul was in great distress, and looked, no doubt, with more suspicion than before on those who were about him. But he who was to be king of Israel was not then in the court of Saul.

Not very long after this, the Philistines began again to attack the Israelites ; the armies of both nations were drawn out in battle array—the Israelites on the one hill, the Philistines on the other hill, with the valley between them. The Philistines had in their army a giant. His name was Goliath. Every day this man marched into the valley and defied the Israelites, and defied God, to send him a man who was able to fight with him. There was not a soldier in Saul's army who would risk his life, for the giant was terrible to look upon, and his fierce words made the stoutest heart tremble.

One day a shepherd boy came up to the camp of the Israelites, to bring some provisions to his elder brothers, who were serving in the army. They were angry that he had come, as they supposed he had done so out of idle curiosity ; but in this they were mistaken. David was the name of the lad ; and when he heard the boastful words of Goliath, and saw that no man was ready to do battle with him, he ventured to offer himself as a champion, and, after some little delay, was taken into the presence of King Saul. When the king saw David, he said to him, "Thou art not able to go against this Philistine, for thou art but a youth, and he a man of war from his youth." But David answered that, as he kept his father's sheep, a lion and a bear came down and took

DAVID KILLS GOLIATH.



“AND DAVID RAN AND STOOD UPON THE PHILISTINE.”

a lamb out of the flock, and that he followed them, killed them both, and saved the lamb; and that the same God who enabled him to do so would give him power to kill the giant.

Saul at last consented to let David go, and he had a suit of armour

brought for the youth, also a sword; but when the lad had tried their weight, he said he could not wear them, and that he would go unarmed against the Philistine. With nothing more than his staff in his hand, and five smooth stones out of the brook, in a shepherd's bag, with a sling, David went forth, and there was very great excitement in the camps as those who were to fight together drew near each other.

There, striding forth, fully armed, with a step that seemed to make the earth tremble, was the giant; here, a slight-made, fresh-coloured lad, with no better weapon than a stick and a sling. When the giant saw with whom he had to fight, his passion was greatly excited, and he swore by his gods that he would give the boy's flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field. David answered—"Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the Lord deliver thee into mine hand."

Then David ran towards the Philistine, and as he ran he put his hand into his bag, and took a stone and slang it; the stone struck the giant in the forehead, and he fell flat on the earth. David sprang upon him; but he had no sword, so he drew forth the giant's own sword, and cut off his head.

When the Philistines saw what David had done, they fled, and the Israelites pursued them, and made great slaughter.

David was taken into the presence of King Saul, bearing with him the head of the giant; and the king was very gracious to him, and Jonathan, the king's son, gave him his own robe, sword, bow, and girdle, and he was promoted to be a great man, and the people rejoiced at what he had done.

But Saul grew jealous. He had looked for a long while with

SAUL ATTEMPTS THE LIFE OF DAVID.



"I WILL SMITE DAVID EVEN TO THE WALL."

suspicion on those who were about him, fearing that some one should take his crown, and now he saw this shepherd lad becoming the pride of the land. One day, as David was playing the harp before Saul, and perhaps singing one of his sweet psalms, Saul seized a spear and tried to kill him ; but David slipped away and escaped.

From that time Saul became the cruel enemy of David, and drove him from one part of the country to another, so that he could find no rest day or night. Once he had to escape out of a window ; at another time to pretend he was mad ; and, for months together, to live in caves and dens, in hourly risk of his life. He knew well that God would make him king over the land, for Samuel the prophet, he who anointed Saul, had anointed him, and assured him that he was to be king in place of Saul. But David did nothing against Saul, and when he might have taken his life he refused to do so.

While Saul was hunting David and seeking to kill him, the Philistines were growing bold and oppressing the Israelites, and nothing that Saul could do prevailed against them. The end was coming, and he was to lose his crown, as Samuel had foretold. He had disobeyed God, and the kingdom was to be taken from him. A great battle was fought, and God punished the disobedient. When Saul saw this, he told his armour-bearer to kill him ; but the man refused, so Saul took a sword and killed himself. When the Philistines came up the next day to strip the slain, they found the bodies of Saul and his three sons, and they cut off his head, and fastened his body, and those of his sons, to the wall. But some of Saul's soldiers came by night, and took down their bodies, and burnt them, and buried their bones under a tree.

Thus died Saul, the first king of Israel.

Soon after the death of Saul, David became king of the land, and there were great rejoicings. David was a good man, and loved God with all his heart. When he sinned, as indeed he did, he came to God

DAVID MADE KING.



"ALL WERE OF ONE HEART TO MAKE DAVID KING."

confessing his sin, and not, as Saul did, striving to cloak and to hide it. It was the desire of David's heart to do what was right in the sight of God, and to lead the people over whom he was called to reign in the ways of truth and righteousness.

All the story of David's life cannot be written here—how careful he

was in God's service, how he beat the Philistines, and subdued all his foes ; but we must not omit to notice David's two sons.

David had a son named Absalom—a very handsome youth, with hair that was wonderful both for beauty and quantity. David loved him with all his heart, and favoured him very highly ; but he was a wicked and disobedient son, and because he thought it likely that the people would join with him, he rebelled against his father, and drove him from his throne. You remember the fifth commandment? Absalom wilfully broke it, and God punished him. As he rode through a wood, his head was caught in the branches of a tree, and the beast on which he rode went from under him, so that he was left there hanging ; and one of David's servants saw him, and stabbed him through the heart. After this David was restored to his throne ; but he mourned bitterly for Absalom, and cried, “ O my son Absalom ! my son, my son Absalom ! would God I had died for thee ! O Absalom, my son, my son ! ”

David had another son, and his name was Solomon. He was a good and wise youth. In early life God spoke to him, and asked him what he most desired to have ; and he asked, not for riches, or power, or glory, or strength, but for wisdom, and God gave him his desire, and added all the rest. Solomon was taught by his father David that he should build a splendid temple at Jerusalem for the worship of God, and most of the materials for building it were collected during David's reign. When David died, full of honour, full of years, Solomon became king.

One of the first acts of King Solomon showed the wisdom which he possessed. Two women came into his presence, bringing with them a dead and a living child. Each woman declared the living child to be her own, and the dead child that of the other. Solomon heard all they had to say, and pronounced judgment—“ Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other.” At this a soldier bared his sword, and was about to seize hold of the poor living child, when

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON.



SAUL SEARCHING FOR DAVID.

a wild shriek from one of the women stayed his hand. No, she would resign her claim, give up the babe ; but spare its life ! The other woman was urgent that it should be killed ; and Solomon saw the truth—he saw who was the mother—and to the pale, trembling woman, whose cry for mercy had disturbed the court, he gave the child.

The praises of Solomon's wisdom rang through the land, and from far-off countries people came to see his glory. Amongst others, the queen of a country called Sheba came up to Jerusalem, to "prove him with hard questions." But though she told him all that was in her heart, yet he had an answer ready for everything. So, when the queen had seen Solomon's wisdom, and the glory of his house, she confessed to him that she had not believed how great his wisdom and glory were, until she had witnessed it all herself; and now she acknowledged that the half had not been told her. Before she returned to her own country, she bestowed valuable presents upon him—gold, and spices, and precious stones—in greater abundance than the king had ever before received.

In addition to all this wealth, Solomon got gold, and rare woods, and precious stones brought to him from distant lands in his ships, and thus he was prepared for the great work which he was going to undertake. This work was the building of a temple for the worship of God. David had been forbidden to build God a house; so Solomon erected a beautiful temple to God, and furnished it with golden vessels and all manner of precious things; and when it was all finished, he made a great feast, and offered solemn prayer to God, and sacrificed: and while the sacrifice was upon the altar, fire came down from heaven and consumed it. And as the priests were performing their solemn service, and the singers and players on instruments were praising God, God's glory was seen in the midst—a glory such as that which had been seen by their forefathers, in the fiery pillar that led them to the Promised Land.

Who so great as Solomon? All the princes of the earth sent presents to him; strangers from afar came to listen to his wisdom and to behold his glory, and owned that the reports which they had heard were far below the truth. The power and glory of the Israelites had been growing: it had put forth its leaves in the days of Saul; it had budded

THE GLORY OF SOLOMON.



ABSALOM ENTANGLED IN AN OAR.

in the reign of David; it burst forth into full blossom in the time of Solomon, and its beauty and its fragrance were the wonder of the earth.

But a greater than Solomon was yet to come. Before that Great One came, the Israelites fell into many sins and much trouble. The kings who succeeded were unlike David and Solomon. The kingdom itself was divided into two; and the one kingdom was called Judah,

THE THREE KINGS, SAUL, DAVID, AND SOLOMON.

and the other Israel. After many years had passed away, and the people both of Judah and of Israel had sinned grievously against the Lord, a powerful enemy came against them, and Jerusalem was taken, the beautiful temple destroyed, and the people carried away as slaves into Babylon. There they suffered much, and lingered long ; and in



"FIRE CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN."

the Book of Daniel you may read some very interesting stories about what happened to the people there. After a while God permitted them to return to their own land, to rebuild the temple, to re-establish his worship, again to be a great people, but never so great as they had been, when David's valour and Solomon's wisdom were owned and blessed of God.



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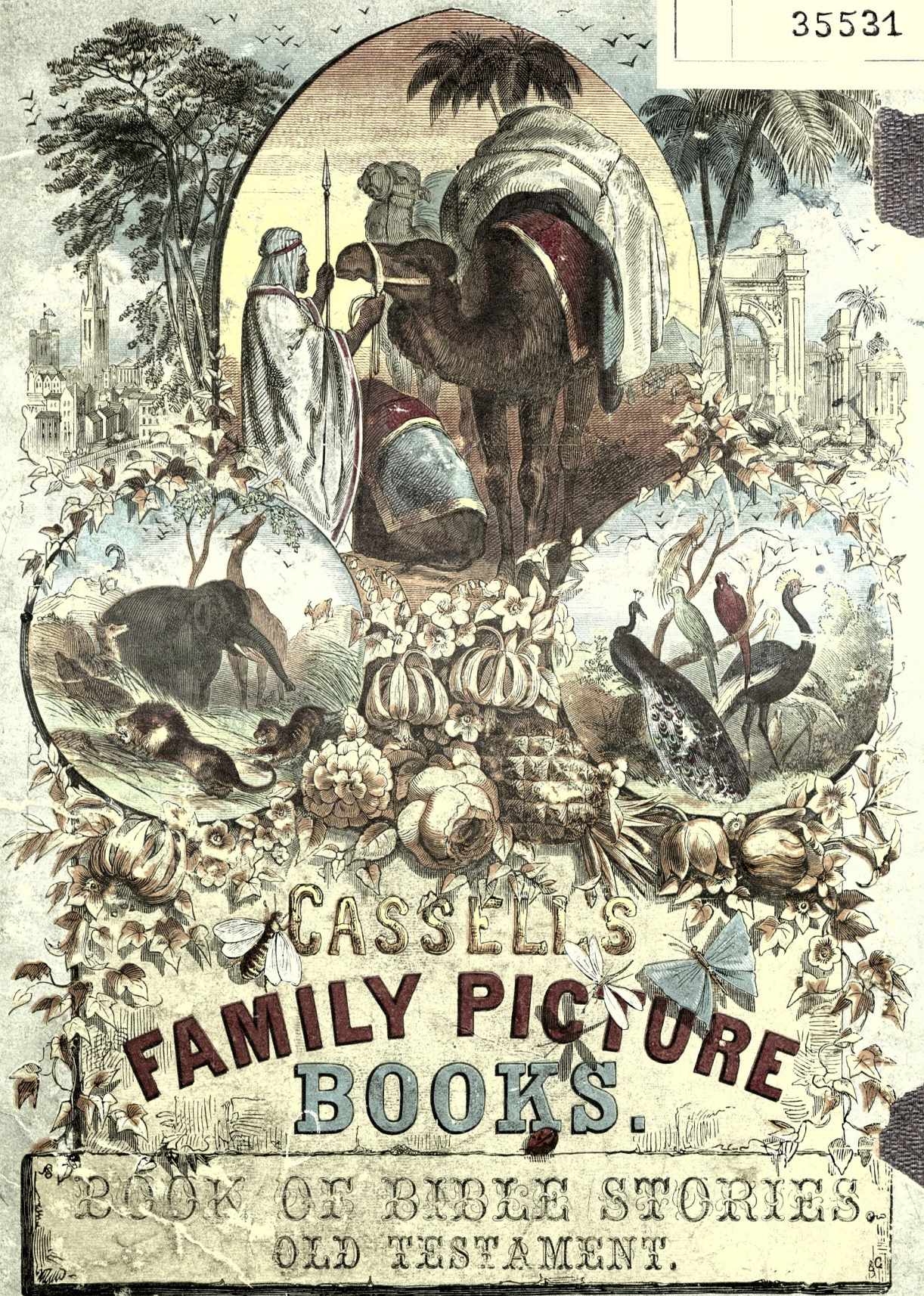
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