

THROUGH THE PRISON

TO

THE THRONE.

*ILLUSTRATIONS OF LIFE FROM THE
BIOGRAPHY OF JOSEPH.*

BY

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Author of "Popery the Foe of the Church and of the Republic."

— "Dabit Deus his quoque finem."

"Forsan et hæc olim meminisse juvabit."

VIRGIL.

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PREFACE.

AN eminent author, in a recent publication entitled "Endymion," expresses the opinion that any position, even the loftiest, is within reach of the humblest person provided he pursues a clearly defined purpose with a strength of will which scorns difficulties and a degree of judgment which turns seemingly adverse circumstances to the best advantage. Though some, especially those who are firm believers in an overruling providence, may be indisposed to accept this theory, it is still scarcely probable that any would presume to deny that the concentration of one's energies and an unconquerable resolution are agencies in achieving results that are little less than marvellous. Providence, though determining the events in our lives, is neither capricious nor arbitrary, and consequently bestows favors where they are most merited—upon those who courageously meet adversity, rendering present reverses the stepping-stones to future advancement.

It is interesting to observe that the qualities of human character which in this age command respect and secure honor are the same as

those which possessed potency on the banks of the Nile, long ere the principles and ideas which we commonly associate with Western civilization were born amid the convulsions of expiring empires. Times change, customs alter, systems of faith decay, human nature remains immutably the same. Consequently, the life of Joseph, which possesses unusual charms by virtue of its accurate delineation upon the page of sacred biography, contains also lessons which richly merit consideration in every age, and particularly in the present, when the assertion is so frequently made that individuality of character is in measure destroyed by the strong disposition to become an indistinguishable atom in the great mass of humanity, each as like to every other as one blade of grass in the meadow is to all the rest. The reader is invited to observe that Joseph's lofty ambition to possess qualities superior to those of his associates and to attain honors which they deemed beyond his reach were efficient agencies in conveying the narrative of his life to us in these far off ends of the earth, and in rendering it more worthy of study than many another which may have been graven on imperishable marble or entered upon the royal records of some fading empire.

Burdened with the conviction that the results

of his labors are not clothed in that elegance of diction which the Scriptural narrative richly merits, the author nevertheless presents this little volume to the public in the ardent hope that it may convey instruction, encouragement, and comfort to some who are manfully endeavoring to solve the intricate problems of human existence. That the facts and lessons of a life as replete with interest as it is with unexpected reverses and with merited promotions may charm the reader into the exhilarating anticipation that trials shall prove in his case, as they did in Joseph's, the surest and shortest avenue to usefulness, is the earnest desire of one who is strongly inclined to imagine that adversity's most bitter legacy is its tendency to destroy cheerfulness of disposition and to paralyze energies which might otherwise hasten the dawn of prosperity's sunny days. If it shall accomplish this in the case of even one, the author's work of love will have secured an adequate reward. To have cheered one sorrowing soul, to have "added sunlight to daylight by making the happy happier," or even to have been slightly instrumental in inducing one perplexed child of Adam to recognize a divine hand in the allotments of life, is a measure of usefulness which an angel might covet.

How few there are who are permitted to at-

tain prosperity without passing through adversity. Through the prison to the throne, through humiliation to exaltation—this, which was the *via dolorosa* of Him who from the sunny heights of paradise bids us follow, is the rough pathway over which with bleeding feet we journey to the eternal city. Hence, if the author is justified in entertaining the hope that the incidents of this fascinating narrative may possibly prove an encouragement to the young, in whose hearts the ambitions of life have not yet turned to ashes, he is evidently excusable for expecting that the middle-aged and the aged may be disposed to meditate upon its lessons, reviewing the unalterable past of their own lives under the light of its teachings and admiring its striking illustration of unwavering confidence in Jehovah, till,

“ Faith, in the dark,
“ Shall pursue its mark
“ Through many sharp trials of love,
“ In the sorrowful waste
“ That is to be past,
“ On the way to the Canaan above.”

If, in any of the judgments rendered in reference to the conduct of Joseph or the motives and actions of his brethren, the author has unconsciously infringed the divine law of charity, the reader's pardon is sincerely sought. He has endeavored to hold the balances of impar-

tial justice with steady hand. Quite probably, however, he has praised where he should have condemned, has indulged in censure where commendation was merited. Since men's opinions differ almost as widely on moral questions as on those purely doctrinal, the reader will accord the same liberty which he claims for himself.

Frankness imposes the pleasing task of rendering an acknowledgment of indebtedness to Hunter's "Sacred Biography" and to the sermons of Melville and Spurgeon; for the facts connected with Egyptology to Bunsen, Sharp, Wilkinson, and Lepsius. Nor can I permit myself to omit the mention of indebtedness to the members of my Bible class, whose suggestions, explanations, and inferences were frequently striking and extremely valuable. The pleasure of thanking these kind and tried friends, who have had no small share in determining the character of the book, is greatly enhanced by the conviction that the lessons they so ingeniously deduced may prove interesting and encouraging to some to whom the names of these benefactors will forever remain unknown. "Iliads without a Homer," lessons without an author—heaven's richest blessings rest upon those who enrich humanity with a pleasing thought without connecting their names therewith.

The author entertains the cheering hope that in presenting to the public these results of his study he may aid, in some slight measure, in convincing his readers that Franklin's dying advice is still worthy of attention, "Young man, cultivate an acquaintance with and a firm belief in the Holy Scriptures—this is your certain interest;" and that the judgment of Diderot was correct, "No better lessons than those of the Bible can I teach my child."

May the beneficent Father who feeds the ravens with food adapted to their wants employ this humble presentation of unchanging truth as an instrumentality in nourishing and strengthening those whose spiritual necessities it may be best fitted to meet; and when this troubled life is o'er with both reader and author, may each find a place, humble though it may be, in the assembly composed of those who have "come out of great tribulation," of those whose eternal joys will be augmented by the remembrance of trials in life which induced them to cast an anchor within the veil.

Go, little book, and if on your perilous mission amid the troubled waves of human life you may possibly prove helpful to any struggling voyager, to Joseph's God be all the glory.

THE AUTHOR.

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Through the Prison to the Throne.

CHAPTER I.

JOSEPH, THE FAVORITE SON.

“Clemency is sometimes cruelty, and cruelty clemency.”

“Virtue and happiness are mother and daughter.”

“Idleness is the sepulchre of a living man.”

“He that spares vice wrongs virtue.”

THE Bible, though by no means devoid of unity, is quite remarkable for its pleasing variety. Its single purpose, the revelation of divine mercy, is variously announced : at one time in the measured cadences of Hebrew poetry, at another in the sublime imagery of the prophets ; now in the touching parables of the world's model preacher, now in the compacted argument of the gifted Paul ; during its dawn, through the holy aspirations of erring patriarchs ; during its effulgence, through the apocalyptic visions of the saintly John. History, poetry, prophecy—how harmoniously they blend into one ! Unity, without destroying variety ; variety, without impairing unity.

It will scarcely be denied that this characteristic of Revelation adapts it, in a peculiar de-

gree, to all ages, all countries, and all minds. The most thoughtful may therein find truths that are fathomless; the most brilliant, doctrines that are incomprehensible; the most cultured, beauties that are unrivalled; the most ignorant, simplicity that is unsurpassed; the most sorrowful, sympathy that is exquisitely touching. It is a mine from which none need go empty away, and which none can exhaust.

Perhaps in no department is this feature of Scripture more generally acknowledged than in biography. We have the most pleasing and varied delineation of character, the most interesting and instructive sketches of the fortunes of particular persons. Moreover, while most uninspired biographers write under the influence of strong prejudice, applauding, defending, censuring, or denouncing in terms not justified by the facts, it is strongly characteristic of the Divine Word to present accurate portraits of persons and reliable accounts of events. The desire to produce variety is not permitted to invade the domain of truthfulness. The good deeds of even bad men are recorded; the misdoings of good men are not concealed. David was guilty of treachery. Judas distributed gifts to the poor.

It will scarcely be denied that for many, perhaps for most, there is no method of presenting moral and religious truth which is more pleasing and more effective than that which associ-

ates it with the conduct, the hopes, and the fears of human beings. Goodness manifested in holy living is more instructive and more attractive than when presented as a barren abstraction, however elaborate and brilliant the ideal portraiture may be. Sin, as presented in its miserable victims, excites more intense loathing than even the most graphic verbal presentation of its deep turpitude can excite. It is living example which produces the deepest impression, eliciting keenest sympathy, or arousing strongest disapprobation. As evidence of this, we have only to remind you of the superior attractiveness of novel-literature. It is undeniable that to the mass of men this is more captivating than naked didactic statement. One presents us a living fact, a fellow-mortal struggling with realities; the other, an emotionless abstraction, whose beauty at best is but that of an iceberg glittering in the sunlight. One may produce intellectual conviction; the other excites love of virtue, or arouses detestation of vice.

Since variety in the method of imparting truth is a marked characteristic of the Bible, we hazard nothing in affirming that it should find place in preaching. It is the divinely authorized means of avoiding wearisome monotony, and of adapting truth to convince and impress all classes of persons and all styles of mind. That presentation of divine truth can alone be permanently successful, which exhibits the unchangeable doc-

trines of an unchangeable God under new aspects and in the varied forms in which heavenly wisdom paints them, contenting itself neither with simple didactic statement which may congeal religious emotion, nor with fervid exhortation that may more effectually sear the already blunted conscience; not confining itself to experimental religion to the neglect of solid argument, nor employing exposition—whether of the prophecies, the epistles, the law, or the Gospel—to the exclusion of history and biography, but adopting every method that has the sanction of the Spirit, and assigning to each, as far as possible, the prominence it has in Scripture. Truth is many-sided. The avenues to man's heart are numerous.

In examining the life of Joseph it shall be our endeavor to trace the hand of an overruling Providence; to discern the guidance of our Heavenly Father in the career of this remarkable man, from his birth in Jacob's humble home to his death in an Egyptian palace. In the present discourse we shall seek to accompany him from infancy to his departure from the ancestral home.

JOSEPH, JACOB'S FAVORITE SON.

As illustrating an overruling Providence, the biography of Joseph has all the fascination of a sacred drama, consequences the most momentous ensuing to the Jewish nation, to the Egyptian

monarchy, and indeed to the entire human family, from occurrences seemingly the most trivial. Acts, apparently the most insignificant, many of them proceeding from improper motives, nay, not a few performed by persons decidedly wicked, swell into such magnitude as not merely to affect the history of the Jewish nation in that century, but of nearly all nations in all subsequent time. Without infringing individual liberty or diminishing the guilt of those who sought to thwart the purposes of Heaven, those results were brought about which had been foreordained by Him whose counsels run parallel with the ages. Free, yet instruments in the accomplishment of a divine plan! The incidents in Joseph's life furnish an argument in favor of an overruling Providence so overwhelmingly powerful that no sophistry can successfully blunt its force. By whatever name we may feel disposed to designate the doctrine, and however great the difficulty in reconciling it with our preconceived notions, there can be no question it finds a place in Scripture. Our Heavenly Father "preserves and governs all His creatures and all their actions."

Not simply as an epitome of doctrine, but as a specimen of touchingly beautiful biography, this narrative has few equals. Unique in design, it is also rich in incidents, which, though veiling their issues in obscurity, yet gradually unfold predetermined results, loading goodness with

honor and visiting transgression with merited humiliation. It is a story whose authorship would reflect honor on even the most eminent writer of modern times. Accordingly, we marvel not that in all ages it has possessed a charm for readers in every nation and of every style of mind.

Our hero is ushered upon the stage as the child of many prayers, the first-born son of beautiful Rachel—the darling of Jacob's old age. Viewed by his parents as the gift of God, and by his mother as the pledge of another son, he is named Joseph—"added." The land of his nativity was to his father, as it had been to his grandfather and his great-grandfather, a place of temporary sojourn, not a permanent abiding place. These "heirs of the promise" sojourned in the land of Canaan "as in a strange country," looking for "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Strangers here, with no landed estate except a burial place for their dead, they plainly announced that they sought a better country, even a heavenly. Alas! how prone we are to forget that we have only a life-right in the things of time. Sojourners here, may we find a home above; wanderers on earth, may we secure rest in Heaven! Though friendless, penniless and homeless now, may we become the occupants of celestial homes, the possessors of glittering diadems, the endeared children of an eternal

Father! In the exercise of faith similar to that of the patriarchs, we become heirs of the same promises; if, however, we are destitute of a trustful confidence in God, death shall separate us from all our possessions, however ample.

Joseph, though the object of his father's tenderest love, was not brought up in idleness. At the age of seventeen he "was with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, feeding the flock with his brethren." Had he been brought up in indolence it is not probable that he would have attained to greatness; indeed, he could scarcely have acquired moral goodness. Those whose early lives are not passed in useful employment are quite liable to enter into the service of evil. The activities of youth, unless directed by parental authority, are most frequently employed in such a way as eventually brings down a father's gray hairs with sorrow to the grave. Accordingly, in proportion as parents value their own happiness, in the measure in which they desire honor and usefulness for their children, will they endeavor to prevent those whom God has committed to their guardianship from squandering time in idleness, the mother of vice and the fruitful source of subsequent misery. And the young man who is desirous of rising in the world should not forget that the world's prizes are for those who win them on the field of toil.

It is impossible to determine whether it was

Jacob's partiality or Joseph's superior merit which secured for him the office of superintendent of his brethren. That he held this position seems clear, both from the language employed and from the fact that he brought to his father a report of his brothers' conduct. Whatever may have secured him the situation, he seems to have proved himself equal to it. Far from home, associated with his half-brothers, whose example was not adapted to promote either morality or piety, and whose hostility could scarcely fail to mar his happiness; surrounded by the profligate inhabitants of the land, he yet acquitted himself worthy the son of a pious father. Grief at the conduct he beheld, and perhaps a strong sense of obligation, induced him to report to Jacob what worldly prudence would have been disposed to suppress. No marvel that "his brethren hated him;" nor that his father loved him more than all his other sons. Fidelity to duty, while securing a few friends, makes many enemies

Like Joseph, the young man who has principle and courage will find positions of trust open to him. The world cannot afford to permit merit to languish in entire obscurity, though it cannot be denied that she is sometimes slow in crowning it. And yet, for every earnest worker there is a place which no other successfully fills. If fully qualified for the position, the position will be quite likely to search him out. Those,

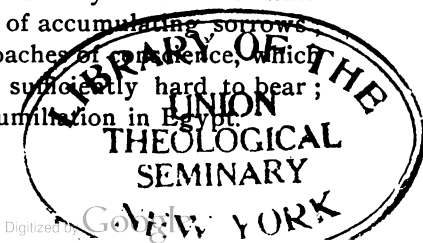
however, who spend the formative period of life in impatiently waiting for glittering opportunities instead of assiduously preparing themselves for entering the openings which Providence may make, are doomed in most instances to distressing disappointment. Theirs shall be the sorrowful experience of seeing, some whom they once affected to despise, greatly outstripping them in the race of life. Even the slightest observation is sufficient to convince us that the most successful, with rare exceptions, are those who by energy and character and toil have risen from obscurity, not infrequently from galling poverty. Our merchant princes, our landed proprietors, our most extensive manufacturers, our most successful mechanics, our most eminent statesmen, as also our prominent lawyers, skilful physicans, and useful divines, have sprung in most instances from the class of the persevering poor. Milton made his life heroic before he wrote his heroic poem. Richter penned his immortal "Hesperus" among pots and kettles and saucepans, while his aged mother, whose spirit extreme penury had nearly crushed, was dividing her time between cooking scanty meals and spinning for the small pittance with which to purchase the necessities of life. Poverty, pain, and evil they learned to sport with. Heyne struggled manfully with adversity during many weary years. Burns was the son of a poor peasant. Johnson endured

the flings of fortune ere he enjoyed her caresses. The world, while incessantly burying in oblivion the sons of the great and the wealthy, seems to find inexpressible joy in exalting the children of the lowly. She apparently delights in impoverishing the rich and enriching the deserving poor. Not mere capriciousness, however, is the law of change, but energy, character, worth. These qualities, wherever found, are reasonably certain to ensure success, not necessarily immediate, nor invariably dazzling, but sufficiently marked to make it evident that sooner or later merit wins the better prizes.

Jacob's ill-disguised partiality for the son of endeared Rachel prompted him to an act injurious at once to himself, to Joseph, and to his other children. He made him a coat of many colors. This may have been a badge of the birthright, which having been forfeited by Reuben was transferred to Joseph; but to dress the favorite son in gaily colored apparel was to inflame the envy of the brethren, to increase the censoriousness and self-conceit of Joseph—already too apparent, to add fuel to the flames that were to consume the happiness of his home. By this act of ill-timed fondness he distilled anguish into more than twenty years of his life. Parental indulgence—how many lives has it wrecked, how many hearts has it wounded! In all ages it has laid foundations of misery, disgrace for children, agony for parents. Not in-

frequently the dissipation of after years, as well as the waywardness of youth, has been the legitimate result of a father's excessive leniency. Failing to restrain his child from evil associations, gratifying him in every whim, extenuating or even defending conduct which should have been strongly condemned, he has himself sown the seed whose harvest disgraces the family and feeds the anguish that gnaws his heart. The poison which filtrates into the springs of our being, alas ! how often it is distilled by our own hands. The daggers which pierce our peace, how frequently they are whet by our own act ! The tears we shed, how often, like Jacob's, they are caused to flow by our own conduct !

This partiality of Jacob, while the fountain of anguish to himself, was also a fruitful source of suffering to his children. It so inflamed envy that finer feelings and nobler impulses were consumed. Hatred displaced love, the demon of revenge taking entire possession of their hearts. And the act to which this prompted cost them the keenest anguish, compelling the crushed spirit to bear for more than twenty years the heavy burden of a concealed crime ; causing, no doubt, poignant regret as they saw a father sinking under the weight of accumulating sorrows, intensifying the reproaches of conscience, which even when mild are sufficiently hard to bear ; issuing in the deep humiliation in Egypt.



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Even upon Joseph's character the consequences of this partiality are but too painfully apparent. It aided in rendering him censorious, even self-conceited. Priding himself upon his superiority his conduct tended to excite rather than allay the angry feelings of his brethren. There can be little question that it was this feeling of superiority begotten by parental indulgence, which gave form to Joseph's dreams, if indeed it did not prompt them. Quite manifestly his dreams were of a character similar to his thoughts in wakeful hours. Assuming that these images in the night were a heavenly prediction of Joseph's future greatness we are certainly under no necessity to conclude that the method of the revelation could not have been determined by the nature of Joseph's aspirations. Since all Heaven's communications to men must come in forms understood by them, the language and the images employed being adapted to the minds addressed, it is but natural to suppose that God's communications with Joseph should be determined, so far as the form is concerned, by the desires and thoughts of his own mind. Indeed, his entire conduct and bearing were such as to induce some commentators to exclude his dreams from the realm of the supernatural. And since it is scarcely worth while to make difficulties in Scripture for the mere delight afforded by sincere attempts to remove them, it may be that we should act wisely were

we candidly to concede that possibly these dreams may have been the product of Joseph's own mind. This at least is certain ; superstition, by creating difficulties where few or none exist, has impeded the progress of Christianity almost as much as open infidelity. Perhaps we are never justified in assuming the existence of a miracle where natural causes are adequate to produce the results observed. Those who have been taught from infancy to regard these dreams as miraculous revelations of Heaven's will, should be cautious about pronouncing condemnation on those who, reared under very different circumstances, prefer an explanation which demands less faith, while asserting their entire willingness to accept the record as it stands.

Whatever interpretation we may choose to put upon the passage, it is quite evident that Jacob's partiality produced an injurious effect upon the mind of Joseph, engendering a feeling of superiority. " His brothers' sheaves did obeisance to his sheaf." " The sun, the moon, and the eleven stars made obeisance to him."

With unsuspecting innocency, Joseph repeated these dreams to his father and his brethren. This, while it may evidence the integrity of his heart, certainly testifies to the presence of an emotion which religion may not sanction. It seems to evidence the presence of pride. Perhaps, however, charity requires us to view the act as simply a youthful indiscretion, one we

should not presume to censure in a lad of Joseph's tender age.

Jacob, in interpreting the second of Joseph's dreams, said : " Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth ?" But his mother, the beautiful, endeared Rachel, was dead. May he not, however, with entire propriety, have referred to the surviving maternal head of the family? Leah may have been still living. In no event, however, does the circumstance create any serious difficulty.

If it was the innocency of Joseph's heart which induced him to repeat dreams which the experience of age would have taught him to conceal, then have we pleasing evidence of the simplicity and goodness of his character, since, until observation has made us acquainted with the world, only the bad suspect others are bad. Joseph, if himself actuated by noble impulses, could not at his early age have imagined that his brethren would hate him yet the more for his dreams ; nor even that his father would rebuke him.

It is probably much safer, however, to conclude, that, though the ultimate success of Joseph's life casts a halo around his early conduct, he was, like most indulged sons, somewhat arrogant, and lacking in that delicate sense of regard for others' circumstances and others' feelings so necessary to completeness of Chris-

tian character. Had he failed in winning ample honors in Egypt we might have entertained entirely different views respecting his conduct in early life ; we might have been disposed to blacken the character which we are now tempted to paint in dazzling colors. Success has an almost magic power in cloaking faults which failure would have magnified beyond due proportions. To perceive errors in those who have won worldly honors is for most of us quite as difficult as to discover virtues in those who tread the humbler walks of life ; and that, too, even when their own integrity has stood in the way of advancement. Success is successful. We hazard little, therefore, in employing the incidents of Joseph's life to remind parents that they act wisely in religiously guarding against the manifestation of partiality within the sacred circle of home. It may not merely thrust daggers through our own happiness, but may ruin the object upon which it is bestowed. Nor should less care be taken against permitting our children to imagine that costly garments confer excellence ; against supposing that the beggar may be despised because clothed in rags. Though few may be disposed to respect unadorned merit, what is the value of that regard which is paid to cloth, not to character ? Virtue, honesty, and kindness, even though in plain garb, are worthy of the highest esteem. Want of moral principle, even when in the palace,

courted by the gay and rolling in luxury, is to the last degree despicable. A mind adorned with knowledge and actuated by love to God is incomparably more worthy of respect than personal beauty, though decked in finery and ornamented with jewels and gold. These are too often but the flimsy covering of an unfurnished head and an empty heart. While tutoring ourselves to honor worth, not wealth ; merit, not dress ; reality, not glittering show, let us not permit ourselves to be captivated by the tinsel of those who are devoid of sterling principle ; who, though beautiful as Absalom, rich as Cræsus, and brilliant as Byron, may be empty in heart and rotten in character.

Here, for the present, we leave Joseph, still under his father's roof, the darling of Jacob's heart, the object of envy and hatred.

How little can the youth know what awaits him in manhood ! Our hero, in his father's house, though he dreamed of coming greatness, had no vision of the eventful life before him, its suffering, its disappointments, its hours of deep loneliness, its trials from the hand of brethren, its moments when God alone would be the stay of the sinking soul. Though the youth, whose destiny is concealed in the clinched fist of the future, may anticipate unmixed happiness, this delusion will be unceremoniously dissipated by the stern realities of life.

While the circumstances and surroundings of

early life cannot determine those of maturer years, the character, which generally remains substantially unchanged, not infrequently does. In every period of after-life Joseph manifests the same unflinching principle, the same unmurmuring spirit, the same reliance upon God, patience in adversity, moral firmness under temptation, humility in seasons of prosperity ; as a despised brother in his father's house and as an unrestricted ruler in Egypt, he exhibits the same self-reliance, the same unsullied integrity. May every youth be induced to gain knowledge, to imbibe religious principle, to cultivate the affections of the heart, to acquire moral strength for future action. Without these, which are rarely secured except in the hallowed seclusion of a parent's house, success in life is seldom attainable ; true success, never. Had not Joseph acquired them, his name would not have drifted down to us over the troubled waves of more than thirty centuries.

Youth, my young friends, is rich in blessings, if you elect to make it so ; it is fruitful in materials of undying remorse if you determine that so it shall be. You may have what the world calls enjoyment, do not imagine, however, that it will be the sure avenue to a manhood of respectability, of usefulness, and of honor. Though it may intoxicate the senses in the present, it cannot conduct to competence, to solid comfort and to hope beyond this life, " Whatsoever a man

soweth that shall he also reap." Ask the gray-haired which of their early associates have attained truest success. With united voice they answer, "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come."

CHAPTER II.

JOSEPH LEAVING HIS FATHER'S HOUSE.

"Trust everybody, but thyself most."

"He that is at sea has not the wind in his hand."

"Man proposes, God disposes."

"He who is full of himself is quite empty."

"If you love yourself overmuch, nobody else will love you."

"Self-love is a mote in every man's eye."

HAVING briefly sketched the history of Rachel's first-born son, during his sojourn in Hebron, from infancy to the age of seventeen; having observed that he who was God's gift in answer to prayer was brought up to habits of industry, being entrusted with the superintendence of his brethren; having reminded you that he became the recipient of a costly garment, the pledge, most probably, of the birthright which was conferred upon him after its forfeiture by Reuben; having invited you to consider the evidence discoverable in the narrative that Jacob's partiality to his favorite son was destructive to his own happiness, disastrous

to the welfare of his other sons, and decidedly pernicious in its effects upon Joseph's character, causing him to act in such a manner as to transform fraternal love into intense hatred, though still possessing traits of character which, while fitted to command respect, gave cheering promise of future greatness ; and having interpreted his dreams of future superiority, dreams which, though the form may have been determined by human agencies, were most probably an effect of supernatural influence, we now come to contemplate the turning point in his destiny, his departure from home, never again to return thither. We follow him from his father's house in Hebron to the pit in the wilderness, near Dothan. We find him the indulged son of a wealthy patriarch, we shall leave him in the hands of traders in human flesh, nay, traffickers in human happiness, if not indeed in human souls. From affluence to poverty, from liberty to servitude, from love to enmity, how brief the steps !

Joseph is now seventeen years of age ; his father one hundred and eight ; his mother sleeps in her quiet grave near Bethlehem. Small now is the home circle ; the ten older sons are with their flocks, sixty miles distant. In their welfare the patriarch is deeply interested ; for their safety he is painfully anxious. They are in a strange country and among enemies. Perhaps the cruel Shechemites may seek to take revenge

for the murder of Hamor. This well-founded apprehension, taken in connection with the dangers naturally surrounding them and intensified by the fact that a long time has elapsed since tidings have been received from them, is amply sufficient to awaken intense solicitude in the mind of Jacob. His superior affection for Joseph had not eradicated love for his other sons. Whom, however, shall he send on a journey so hazardous as that of inquiring after their welfare and bringing him word? Who is better qualified for the arduous undertaking than the oldest son now under the parental roof, ill-starred Rachel's firstborn? To send him forth in the face of danger, to dispatch him on an embassy to his envious brothers, must have cost, we may rest assured, no ordinary struggle. Affection prompts the sacrifice, however, therefore it is uncomplainingly made. Forth from the vale of Hebron Joseph journeys, to return thither no more. Unhappy son—still more unhappy father! With this parting began trials for Joseph; twenty years of grief for Jacob. Who can tell what issues hang on seemingly trivial causes? Who can weigh the consequences of a single act? Blind to futurity, the very helplessness of our situation strongly recommends reliance upon God.

Israel is now alone; in the home of twelve children he is nearly childless; only Benjamin being left. Joseph, the darling of his heart, is

launched upon the troubled sea of life. The lives that have flowed in one channel shall henceforth flow in two. The father, in the feebleness and the solitude of old age, is left to find sympathy and comfort in communion with Him who orders all things after the counsel of His own will ; the son is battling with the realities of life, is bravely meeting its disappointments, patiently enduring its sufferings, manfully resisting its temptations, cautiously enjoying its honors.

It is scarcely possible to view this eventful separation without a sorrowful remembrance of the partings which have occurred in our own homes. A son, it may be, went forth with elastic step, anticipating only a brief absence. He returned no more. A daughter, linking her destiny with one she loved, gaily stepped over the threshold of home. To establish a home-centre for herself in a distant State she toiled unweariedly ; thence came tidings of hardships, intelligence of sickness, news of a funeral—and we can only anticipate union in the spirit-land. A father parted from his family at the open door ; ere he returned, death summoned him to an eternal abiding place, whence he shall go out no more. The spirit of the babe, at the silent hour of midnight, winged its flight from our home and we shall see its loved form no more. The wife and mother, committing her loved ones to the care of a covenant-keeping God,

went out from this earthly vale of sorrow, she awaits us in the palace of the great king.

In separations such as these, of which life presents numerous instances, how sorrowful would be the last glance, did we know it was the last ; how impressive the final farewell. The beginnings of grief, how often are they veiled from view ! Sorrow for parents, trial for children, the single act that inaugurated them, how frequently does it seem trivial, nay, the very one which prudence and affection dictate !

Sad as are these partings, how much more inexpressibly painful would they be if the veil were lifted from futurity, revealing a final separation where we anticipated one of brief duration ; or, worse still, a life of degradation, where hope painted one of honor. The future is hidden from view, how priceless the blessing ! What parent, as he bids his child farewell, would wish to gaze upon all the painful incidents in its checkered career ? Better, far better is it, that, as it enters the whirling, sinful world, he should have the liberty of hoping that it enters a pathway all of whose windings, however intricate they may be, are wisely determined or permitted by heavenly benevolence. When Jacob parted from Joseph, how melancholy would have been the day could he have foreseen the griefs awaiting him ! How torturing to Joseph, had he known that a pit, slavery, and a dungeon were before him ! Our Heaven-

ly Father, having mercifully hidden the future from view, has set within her dark brow the glittering star of hope, gilding all beyond with dazzling radiance. "Who can tell what a day may bring forth?" "The Lord doeth all things well."

The parting of Jacob and Joseph seems but an ordinary event. It was a link, however, in a chain of events which extended through centuries and affected the condition and happiness of millions. "The way of a man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." An eventful life is made to depend on an apparently trivial circumstance. His departure from Hebron determines Joseph's entire subsequent career. "Shall it be according to thy mind?" "The Lord reigneth."

Hapless Joseph, separated from his father's house, is now upon the sea of life, loosed, like the ship, from his anchorage, at the mercy of hostile winds and boisterous waves. A lad of seventeen, with a heart unused to sorrow, a firmness untried by temptation, a wisdom untested by adversity, he is thrown into the heartless world, where many a noble youth, because inexperienced, has gone down to irretrievable ruin. Exposed to the rage of wild beasts, and also of men, which in many instances is still more savage, he is found wandering in the fields. On reaching his intended destination he unexpectedly discovers that his brethren have removed

to Dothan. In this, as it would seem, we are permitted to perceive an overruling Providence. Had Joseph met his brothers in Shechem the divine purposes might have been thwarted. No wandering Ishmaelites passed through Shechem. It lay not in the route taken by caravans to Egypt.

With a heart burdened, as we may easily imagine, with the prospect of a lengthened journey and a prolonged absence from home, Joseph directs his steps still further from Hebron. Burning thoughts no doubt filled his mind, the anxiety of an aged father, the strangeness of his dreams, the extreme improbability that his wearied footsteps were now marking the way to future greatness. While imagination is painting tantalizing pictures on the curtain of futurity, some of them glittering in the sunlight of undimmed hope, others shading into the dark colors of settled melancholy, he unexpectedly discerns in the distance the tents and flocks of his ten brothers. Tears of joy, it may be, trickle down his youthful cheeks. Delight, filling his soul, adds new charms to his beautiful countenance. Dangers are passed. He is among friends, as he hopes. His brethren, though envious, will receive him kindly, coming as he does with messages of affection from an indulgent father. Perhaps, in the intensity of his own love he is incapable of supposing they could manifest hatred toward him. Alas ! in instances

not a few the unreasonableness of human malignity is simply measureless. In order to arouse bitterest hatred one needs not to injure another, only to strike against inveterate prejudices. This, it may be, shall furnish him ample opportunity for sorrowfully exclaiming with Paul, "The more I love the less am I beloved." If, with Joseph, he has sufficient manliness to report to a father the misdeeds of brethren, no matter how careful he may be to preserve truth, he shall soon convert affection, even the most intimate, into unrelenting hostility.

At the very time when, as seems almost certain, Joseph's heart was overflowing with kindly feelings toward his brethren they were forming the purpose of putting him to death. "When they saw him afar off . . . they conspired against him to slay him." They deliberately plan to imbue their hands in innocent blood. Envy has completed its work; now they coolly contemplate murder. Before hatred found a welcome home in the heart, such a purpose would no doubt have filled them with shuddering horror. So noiselessly, however, has Satan carried forward his work that now they calmly meditate fratricide—as coolly as they would deliberate respecting their daily employment. Anger once entertained, who can tell where it will end? Well does the evangelist exclaim, laying the guilt where it properly belongs, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a

murderer." It has not infrequently happened that a person who was apparently kind and even conscientious has been brought by harboring enmity to enter deliberately upon the commission of a most atrocious crime. To trace the work of evil in such hearts is indeed a melancholy, though not unprofitable, task. Satan, having first tutored his victims, goads them on step by step till in a moment of thoughtless desperation the deed is done ; henceforth, it may be, remorse takes the place of hatred. The charm is broken. Wretchedness remains as a living reality.

With the purpose of murder is connected that of concealment : " Let us slay him and cast him into some pit ; and we will say some evil beast hath devoured him." Falsehood is generally called into the service of villainy. We are reasonably safe in concluding that where one has been guilty of any great crime, he will not hesitate in employing deception, and even perjury, to escape detection. Accordingly, we may honestly question the propriety of permitting criminals to testify in their own behalf. They are extremely liable to add a second transgression to the first.

Manifestly, envy had completely deadened the conscience of Joseph's brethren. The first proposal was murder. And no sooner was it made by one than it was assented to by all except Reuben. Where shall we find a parallel to

this cruelty? Nine men are conspiring to kill a brother, an innocent youth, their father's favorite, to kill him while in the act of manifesting attachment in salutations of peace and in affectionate inquiries after their welfare. Cain's crime was less heinous. David's, base as it was, was less unnatural and consequently less revolting.

"And we shall see what will become of his dreams." Viewing these, not as the idle fancies of Joseph's fertile brain, but as prophetic intimations of Heaven's purpose, they cannot banish them from memory, and are madly driven to the arrogant presumption of attempting to contravene the plans of Omnipotence. Folly! such, however, as has characterized the conduct of many. Pharaoh exclaimed, "Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?" Saul endeavored to retain the throne after David by divine command had been anointed king. Herod attempted to slay the infant Saviour. The Jews conspired against Christ. Feeble man toiling to defeat Heaven's purposes, what madness! Alas, how frequent!

Their plan meets opposition from an unexpected source. Reuben said, "Shed no blood; but cast him into this pit . . . that he might rid him out of their hands and deliver him to his father again." Reuben is the last of the ten from whom we would have expected mercy. Joseph had secured the place in Jacob's

affections, and by consequence the birthright, which, according to the customs of that rude age, belonged by inheritance to Reuben. Unless we are disposed to consider this kindness as a selfish attempt to conciliate his father, whose regard he had forfeited, we shall be constrained to accept it as evidence of a forgiving spirit and a kindly disposition. Perhaps it was the recollection of his former behavior, and of the grief it caused, which in measure induced him to seek the deliverance of one with whose safety his father's happiness was so intimately interwoven. His sincerity seems to be fully attested by his subsequent anguish, by his vivid remembrance of the painful incidents of this tragic scene and by his offer to assume the responsibility of Benjamin's safe return from Egypt. Some explanation which reflects credit on the memory of this impetuous, unbalanced nature seems to be demanded by the simple fact that he whom we should have expected to find foremost in any act of wickedness, and especially in one designed to compass the death of Joseph, was nevertheless the only one of the ten who was moved with pity. It strikes us with surprise. It furnishes an apt illustration, however, of the fact that the bad are often not as bad as the world deems them; while, on the other hand, the good are seldom as perfect as our admiration paints them.

With considerable insight, and knowing that

it would be of little avail simply to protest against the murder and demand immediate release, Reuben employs stratagem: "Cast him into this pit." This concealment of his purposes was perhaps pardonable under the circumstances. Though it is a doctrine extremely liable to abuse, we ought, possibly, candidly to acknowledge that a wise dissimulation, especially where neither principle nor truth is seriously compromised, is sometimes demanded by the exigencies of the situation. The veiling of our designs, when it can be effected without falsehood, and when necessitated by the character of those with whom we have to deal, few would fail to practise under embarrassing circumstances; perhaps none should presume to censure. Since even friends can lay no absolute claim to a knowledge of our plans, certainly those who would seek to thwart them may not; and when our purpose is formed, as was Reuben's, with the laudable intention of preventing an atrocious crime; and when it is carried into execution without the employment of falsehood, certainly there can be no sin in concealing it. Concealment secured by untruthfulness is another matter. Whether this is ever justifiable, even when employed as the means of preserving life, is a question upon which we need not enter. It will arise more naturally when we come to consider the dissimulation practised by Joseph toward his brethren in Egypt. "He

made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly unto them." He said, "Ye are spies."

That Reuben's proposal should have been acceded to seems strange. It were surely more cruel to take his life by lingering starvation than by one murderous stroke. They may spare themselves the sight of blood, it is true; they will not diminish, however, but rather increase the turpitude of the crime. The infatuation which generally accompanies grosser forms of iniquity has evidently come upon them. The loss of strong common-sense is one of the first results of pursuing a course of wickedness. It is owing to this no doubt that the conduct of great criminals so frequently arouses public suspicion and unveils guilt that might otherwise escape detection.

With a species of satisfaction which only intense hatred could have produced, these unnatural brothers rend from Joseph the coat of many colors, the badge of a father's too indulgent affection. Our highest honors—at what dangerous risks we often wear them! Possibly, if Joseph had come in attire which did not so painfully remind his brethren of the superior position he held in a father's affections, the results might have been less tragic. To flaunt the hated robe before their eyes was more than envy could bear. The very thing which should have reminded them that the act contemplated would

thrust daggers through Jacob's heart—this only served to exasperate their fury.

Stripped of the odious coat, they cast him into a pit, probably one of the "two wells" which gave name to Dothan, and which in the dry season was without water. "The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." To be cast alive into one of these pits, there to spend the lonely hours of the day and the gloomy watches of the night in fruitless cries for deliverance, wondering whether hatred would relent, surely instant death would have produced less agony. Of this dreary cavern, and of his unavailing supplications for mercy, he may have been reminded when in later years he lay a condemned slave in an Egyptian dungeon. Perhaps the remembrance of this enabled him to endure that more heroically. God rescued him once. Might He not again?

With the design, as seems probable, of silencing the reproaches of conscience, the brethren now sit down to eat bread. Oh, the heartlessness of which human nature is capable! These monsters of cruelty are eating, apparently unconcerned, while a brother may be contemplating the slow approaches of lingering death by starvation. A faithful picture of life. Some, in gluttony and drunkenness, are endeavoring to still the voice of a reproofing conscience, are striving by brutalizing the nature to obliterate the memory of past crimes, or, worse still, are

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laboring to produce that fiendishness of spirit which actually delights in dwelling upon the revolting scenes of former iniquities. Having enlisted soul and body in the service of Satan, they attempt to silence the whisperings of God in the soul, that so they may henceforth sin unrebuked. Feasting beside the pit of suffering, alas, it is not infrequent! The rich and the gay, in lordly palaces or in gaily decorated saloons, are eating and drinking, are revelling and rioting, while the world's unfortunates are pining away in cellars and garrets, *unknown, unrelieved, unpitied*. The piteous wail of anguish, the deep-drawn sigh which only hopeless poverty can heave, the tear of grief which in midnight solitude scalds the pallid cheek, how often are they unheeded! In homes of heartless wealth and in halls of gaiety the feast and the dance go on, while near by in lonely agony heart-strings are breaking, penury's dark night is deepening, anguish is crushing its helpless victims. Man's forgetfulness of man seems incomprehensible. The proximity of joy and sorrow, of wealth and poverty, of hope and despair—how inexplicable! The mansion of the rich casts its shadow on the hovel of the poor, deepening the gloom it might have alleviated. The bridal party treads on the heels of the funeral train. The wail of unrelieved suffering and the songs of joyous festivity are wafted heavenward on the same breeze. The shouts of drunken revelry

and the prayer of penitence ascend side by side. Thus, everywhere, how like is society to the tragic scene in Dothan; joy and feasting above, wretchedness and starvation beneath; the one piteously petitioning for relief, the other stoically indifferent to human anguish!

For the deliverance of Joseph from this perilous situation Providence kindly interposed. In the expressive language of the old proverbs, "When the tale of bricks is doubled Moses comes," "Man's extremity is God's opportunity," "The darkest hour precedes the dawn." Behold, a caravan of Ishmaelites is passing by on the way to Egypt! Is it mere chance that brought them here at this critical time? Few would accept this as an entirely satisfactory explanation. This, like the proposal immediately made by Judah, "Come, let us sell him to the Ishmaelites," seems evidently to have been part of a predetermined scheme; successive steps in an all-embracing providential plan whose marvellous unfoldings strike us with astonishment. The proposal is instantly acceded to. For the paltry sum of twenty pieces of silver—about five dollars—Joseph was sold into slavery. At this low price they parted with their own happiness, a father's comfort and a brother's liberty. In subsequent years what would they not have given for that which they now unthinkingly throw away! How many thousands,

since that day, for a present trifling gain, have bartered away the peace of an entire after life!

Who shall unveil the hidden mysteries of Providence? These sudden turns in Joseph's fortune were paving his way to a throne. Apparently how improbable! The hope of a joyous return to his father's house is unexpectedly obscured by the imminent danger of a violent death; this hazard suddenly gives place to one scarcely less appalling—the prospect of starvation in a pit; this, to the terrifying apprehension of perpetual slavery. Before the end came, who is there who would have been likely to imagine that the unaccountable vacillations of deeply dyed villains were essential parts of a complicated arrangement ordered by Him who "*knows the end from the beginning?*" What, to man, seem trivial incidents are often freighted with momentous consequences.

Reuben's plan for rescuing Jacob's darling failed. Not by human power is Joseph to be delivered. Reuben, coming, as a Jewish tradition says, from a place of solitude where he had been weeping over Joseph's unhappy condition, finds the pit empty. Compassion for the lad and anxiety for his father produced deep and, no doubt, unfeigned sorrow. Why were his well-laid plans thwarted? For an explanation he had to wait more than twenty years, till Joseph, standing in an Egyptian palace and

bathed in tears, exclaims, "So now it was not you that sold me hither but God."

A moment's reflection will force from our lips the inquiry, if Reuben's grief was genuine why did he not report the facts, at least those we are sure he possessed, to his aged, mourning father? He knew the original purpose of his brethren. He knew Joseph was cast into a pit. He knew he disappeared therefrom. Even if the sale to the Midianites was unknown to him, which is very improbable, he must at least have had very strong suspicions of foul deeds on the part of his brethren. Still his lips are sealed. Jacob is allowed to believe his son was torn in pieces by wild beasts. Reuben, this has an ugly look! And yet it is by no means impossible to vindicate Reuben's reputation even against this charge. Assuming that he knew all the facts, including the sale, assuming that his life would not have been safe had he reported them, even assuming that envy in his own heart did not acquiesce in the result, accepting it as upon the whole satisfactory, might he not have argued, "As it is impossible to undo what has been done, impossible to restore Joseph, why should I augment my father's grief by revealing to him the wickedness of his nine sons. Better he should mourn him as dead than think of him as enduring the hardships of slavery. A living grief is more poignant than even the most intense sorrow for the dead." It thus becomes evident

that this concealment may have proceeded from the most laudable motives ; may be clear evidence of Reuben's nobility of character. Let us be prompt to exercise charity ; slow to condemn.

The crime committed, with what deep cunning they plan to conceal the dreadful secret. Staining the odious coat in the blood of a kid they send it to Jacob accompanied by the message—" Know whether it be thy son's coat." The acted falsehood produced the effect which was no doubt intended. Jacob exclaimed, " It is my son's coat. . . . Joseph is without doubt torn in pieces." In the present day scientific analysis, if called into requisition, would speedily distinguish between kid's blood and human blood. In those primitive times, with no method of determining the character of the blood, it was evidently quite natural for Jacob to reach the conclusion he did. Accordingly, grief that knew no consolation filled his heart. " I will go down," he said, " into the grave to my son mourning." His deep despondency, though quite natural, ill became one who had been so tenderly guarded for more than a century. If any, however, are disposed to pride themselves upon the possession of strength sufficient to endure sorrow uncomplainingly, it may be well for them to remember that under Jacob's trial they might have manifested Jacob's weakness.

Which shall we most despise, the savage

cruelty, or the brazen-faced hypocrisy of these brothers? They unite in an effort to comfort their father. How often one sin seems to necessitate another! He who embarks upon a sea of vice may find return impossible and progress inevitable ruin. For more than twenty years Jacob's sons endeavored with cruel deceit to heal the wound their own act had inflicted—with sleepless fidelity guarding the dreadful secret, the revelation of which would have shown the utter hollowness of their pretended sympathy.

As our children leave home, how little can we know what awaits them, success or failure, prosperity or adversity, the slavery of vice or the liberty of the sons of God. They enter life. Perhaps they may rise to honor, shedding lustre on the family name; possibly they may sink into degradation, blasting our hopes and crushing our hearts. Even in the most endeared human attachments there may be lurking the seeds of future anguish. Our present joys produce torturing apprehensions of coming griefs. The parent, however, whose piety has prompted him to mingle needed reproofs, or if necessary stern correction, with wise counsels and fervent prayers, may confidently commit his child to the unchangeable love of God, hoping that religious principles, carefully instilled in youth, will sway his entire after life. Even though he may not be permitted during his own earthly existence to witness the results for which he so ardently

longed, still, with the approval of a good conscience and the continued love of the Saviour, he shall possess materials of comfort ; yea, may have a ground of hope as enduring as the life of his child in this probationary state.

Let youth, as it enters the busy world, but be accompanied with a trembling sense of the Divine presence and a personal responsibility to unswerving justice, and real success is certain. Perishable riches perhaps may never be his ; enduring treasures will be his portion, a mansion above, the eternal friendship of the Saviour, a hope as cheering as the sunshine and as lasting as eternity.

From Joseph leaving his father's house, turn to behold God's only Son leaving heaven, to bear to His wandering brethren on earth the joyous salutations of our Father at home. Did man welcome Him ? " He came to His own, and His own received Him not," " He was despised and rejected," betrayed by a disciple, sold for thirty pieces of silver, stripped of His vesture, his raiment stained with blood, alone in His anguish, dying that we might live, a servant of servants—was not His life prefigured in that of Joseph ? Turning from the many broken cisterns that can hold no water, may we all drink from the fountain of living waters.

CHAPTER III.

JOSEPH A SLAVE.

“ When you are an anvil, bear ; when a hammer, strike.”
“ It takes many shovelfuls of earth to bury the truth.”
“ The burden is light on another’s shoulders.”

THE Lord with a lad of seventeen, and he a slave ! Often whom the world rejects God accepts, whom man oppresses God blesses ; on the other hand, whom man admires the Lord despises, whom the world exalts God humbles. Passing by the palace, our Heavenly Father not infrequently prefers to dwell in the humble cottage. Deserting the king, surrounded by admiring courtiers, He journeys with the weary wanderer. Unwelcome in the home of the master, He finds a dwelling-place in the heart of the servant. Though not with the Ishmaelites, traders in human souls, He is with their slave. “ The friendship of the world is enmity with God.”

While it thus becomes evident that not infrequently God’s friends are those whom the world despises, the world’s friends those whom the Lord contemns, it is undeniable that our Heavenly Father pities those whom man wrongs, oppresses, or enslaves. In strong contrast with this divine method, we have abundant and painful evidence of man’s inhumanity to man. It is but too clearly characteristic of

what the world denominates good society to court the rich and condemn the poor, to applaud the knave and to pour ridicule upon his victim, to honor the seducer and to turn in loathing from the seduced, to chant the praises of the strong and to look down in contempt upon the weak. Intense selfishness, one of the blackest sins of which man is guilty, induces many to solicit the favor of the successful, and to spurn the friendship of the less fortunate. The world has a strong disposition to honor and aid the rising, to scorn and kick the falling. Now, as in centuries gone by, it worships the rising sun. Success, even success without merit, receives applause ; failure, even though it may be the result of fidelity to right, is too often viewed with contempt. Heartless human society, while it has only tears and pennies for the worthy mendicant, has flattery and riches for the unscrupulous aspirant to popular favor. He gains more who appeals to man's pride than he who appeals to his compassion.

Perhaps we hazard nothing in affirming that this is an outgrowth of selfishness. Is not the hope of future favors a stronger incentive, at least to most persons, than the desire to sympathize with the lowly, or to relieve human anguish ? Is there not a strong disposition to aid those who, already successful, stand in little need of assistance ? a powerful temptation to leave the weak and the friendless unrelieved ?

Honor and aid the rising, despise and crush the falling, is not this the world's maxim? May not unsanctified human nature be likened to the ancient statue of Memnon, which is said to have given forth songs when the rays of the rising sun fell upon it? Anthems of praise are evoked from human hearts by the dazzling sunbeams that emanate from the ascending pathway of worldly success.

In strong contrast with this detestable method of the world, the true Christian, imitating his Redeemer, honors worth, not mere success; character, not position; principle, not policy—honors them wherever found, in king or beggar, in master or slave, in the palace or in the cabin.

May we not fondly hope that reflections such as these may aid us in the further examination of Joseph's eventful life? Having presented you two sketches, "Joseph, Jacob's Favorite Son," and "Joseph Leaving Home," we invite you to a third:

JOSEPH A SLAVE.

While Jacob in his distant home is bowed in grief, and Rachel, taken from the evil to come, is sweetly sleeping in the grave where her mouldering dust still awaits the resurrection, Joseph as a slave is journeying with wearied footsteps toward Egypt. What happened on the way we know not. Of the thoughts that flooded his injured soul we have no record. His touching

biography is not tarnished by a single murmuring word. Silence, majestic silence, encircled him. In adversity no complaining, in prosperity no boasting. How enviable that disposition which when reviled reviles not again; which when flattered vaunts not; which maintains dignified silence, as if influenced by the realities of eternity! From the imperturbable exterior of conscious strength, which can afford to preserve silence, difficulties roll down into oblivion, malice shrinks back abashed, and the bubble of mere worldly success dissolves into thin air. Vaporing emptiness no man need fear; silent power none should presume to contemn.

Like Joseph, he bears trials best who frets least. He learns the richest lessons under the ministry of trouble who draws nearest to God. He least feels the burden of his fetters who makes little effort to break them. It is by bowing before the tornado that we are the least likely to be injured. The bird by dashing itself against the sides of the cage only augments its suffering. He therefore is wise who recognizing the sovereignty of God is enabled to say, "Not my will, but Thine." Happy indeed is he who as deep answers to deep, as all God's billows roll over him, can uncomplainingly wait till the end comes, till the ways of Providence are unveiled.

It would be an aspersion upon Joseph's character did we imagine him entirely indifferent to

suffering, braving what he could not escape, and enduring what he could not cure in the spirit of that stoical philosophy which seeks to abolish anguish by annihilating feeling. This, though the highest consolation which heathenism affords, is evidently no part of genuine religion. Possibly it may produce heartlessness, it cannot however enable us to "count it all joy when we fall into divers temptations;" cannot prompt us to exclaim, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him;" "It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good." Stoicism is not a heavenly voice, whispering in the soul, "When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee; thou shalt walk through the fires and not be burned; neither shall the flames kindle upon thee; fear not, for I am with thee; for I am the Lord thy God, the Holy one of Israel, thy Saviour."

It is rather as the scourged slave than as the chastened child that stoicism tutors us to receive the rod. It does not lighten the heart with the hopes which tribulation worketh. It does not gild the future with the prospect of a heavenly crown for those who endure chastening as good soldiers. Are they entitled to credit who, after destroying feeling, have taught themselves to bear suffering without murmuring? The rock feels not the violence of the storm. The intoxicated wretch does not writhe under pain. The

hardened criminal is dead to the anguish of his heart-broken wife. Are we to conclude that flinty hardness, and drunken insensibility, and utter callousness are resignation? Nay, Christian submission proceeds from a clear recognition of the sovereignty of our Heavenly Father. It exclaims, "As my mercies exceed my deserts, as my afflictions are fewer than my iniquities deserve, I tutor the rebellious heart to say, 'God is my refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble.'"

Joseph, whose studied silence has unrivalled eloquence, is now in Egypt. New scenes are before him. In the far distance stretches the beautiful valley of the Nile, its fertility unsurpassed. Pyramids, hoary with years, strange mementoes of buried generations, tower towards the transparent firmament. A brief journey has brought him from a region scarcely more than semi-barbarous to one far advanced in civilization. The skilled agriculturist is in the field, the ingenious mechanic at his daily toil. The children have those rare evidences of a refined state of society, toys, with which to while away the joyous hours. The judge in his court is administering statutes which even modern society might advantageously re-enact. The priest in the temple is endeavoring to propitiate the gods, and secure blessings for their erring children on earth. A written language, the laborious work of many generations, and which had passed

from hieroglyphics to phonetics, meets his eye on cunningly prepared papyrus leaves. A settled religious faith, a complicated system of government, a language bearing evidence of growth through many centuries, a vast empire consolidated upon the wrecks of pre-existing nationalities, great material prosperity accompanied with the knowledge of the physical sciences, of history, of metaphysics, and even of theology; a degree of progress in the fine arts which, though different, still rivals that of the present day—these, as well as their institutions, their laws, and their brilliant achievements, unmistakably testify to the immense antiquity of the empire under whose overshadowing influence Joseph is to pass his days of servitude. Nor is he a solitary bondman among a nation of freemen, but one of a vast number of slaves—slaves from Nubia, from Ethiopia, from Asia, from many surrounding nations, all of which had witnessed, and many of which had submitted to the conquering valor of Egypt's powerful emperors.

The origin of the Egyptian Empire, like that of her most ancient pyramids, is an unsolved enigma. We are able, it is true, to trace back her history, with a rare measure of accuracy, from the conquest of Alexander B.C. 339, through three empires, the new, the middle, and the old—thirty dynasties, more than three hundred kings—to the consolidation of Upper and Lower

Egypt into one powerful empire under Menes, as early, if the testimony of Egyptologists is reliable, as 3894 B.C., if not earlier. Though the computations of those versed in the extremely intricate problem of Egyptian chronology, like the data from which they argue, are exceedingly divergent, most writers are disposed to lay emphasis upon Manetho's statement that it was 3555 years from Menes to Nectanebo, the last Egyptian monarch. Even admitting, which some however are very reluctant to do, that the clear light of history shines through this extended period, who shall lift the veil which enshrouds the preceding period, which must have been sufficiently lengthy for the growth of cities, the founding of nationalities and the origination of language, hieroglyphics, and laws? Indeed, Bunsen claims it as a undeniable fact that Egyptian tradition admitted one dynasty of kings in Lower Egypt, and one if not two in Upper Egypt, during a period of from two to four thousand years prior to Menes. With this conjecture as with the mythical period of 24,925 years, during which the gods, the demigods, the heroes and the provincial princes reigned in Egypt, we need not trouble ourselves. To account for the presence of powerful empires before the date of Menes, time is indeed demanded. It does not follow, however, that we must accept the statement that at least 10,000 years are needed. As the problem is undoubtedly in-

soluble, and as no antiquity which may be successfully established can possibly disturb our faith in Scripture, and as the Bible makes no pretence of presenting a scientific chronology prior to the building of Solomon's Temple, and as the usually accepted chronology, Archbishop Usher's, rests on the deductions of erring reason, we may safely dismiss the tantalizing question which has wearied the intellects of so many eminent scholars—dismiss it with the assured conviction that here, as in so many other instances, scientific facts when once fully established will be found to lay still firmer foundations for our faith in revelation. God's Word, which has successfully parried the envenomed shafts of infidelity for more than thirty centuries, is not likely to be buried either beneath the weapons of its enemies or beneath the demolished defences of its injudicious friends.

Other bewildering questions force themselves upon our consideration. What was the date of Joseph's arrival in Egypt? Which one of the Pharaohs occupied the throne? To which of the thirty dynasties did the reigning monarch belong? Was Joseph's arrival before the fall of the Middle Empire or in the beginning of the New? To these questions even the most accurate scholarship and the most unwearied research are incapable of giving answers which will secure the approval of all. In the margin of the Bible you will find the date 1729 B.C. set oppo-

site the verse recording his arrival. This date, however, is no more worthy of credence than perhaps a hundred others which have been laboriously defended. Archbishop Usher, whose chronological system furnishes the foundation for most of the dates accepted by Christian nations in reference to events prior to the birth of Christ, gives us 1706 B.C. This, though worthy of respect, is certainly no more reliable than that of Lepsius and Sharpe, 1400 B.C.; than that of Hales, 1863 B.C.; than that of Jackson, 1808 B.C.; than that of Petavius, 1746 B.C.; perhaps no more reliable than that of Smith's Bible Dictionary, 1876 B.C. As more than three hundred dates, it is said, have been defended by different writers we may safely pronounce the problem insoluble.

In like manner, it is impossible to determine which of the Pharaohs was on the throne; nay, impossible to ascertain which of several dynasties was then reigning. Bunsen says it was in the latter part of the twelfth dynasty; Lepsius, that it was during the reign of the fifth king of the eighteenth dynasty. The former writer places Joseph's arrival in the latter period of the Old Empire, and extends Israel's sojourn in Egypt to 1434 years; the latter fixes it in the New Empire. Both insist that it could not have occurred during the Middle Kingdom, that is, during the dominion of the Shepherd kings. Others, however, with even greater pertinacity, insist

that Joseph must have been brought to Egypt during the rule of the Hyksos kings, since so great was the detestation in which shepherds were held, owing to the fact that the nation had been conquered by shepherds from Western Asia and held in subjection for more than five hundred years, that no monarch of Egyptian birth would have made Joseph governor, or welcomed his father and brethren, assigning them a dwelling-place within the limits of the empire. Such favors a shepherd king might have granted, allotting Jacob and his family a portion in Goshen, where his own flocks and herds were kept ; not elsewhere, however, for prudential reasons, since the class to which they belonged was an abomination to the Egyptians, who constituted the vast majority of his subjects. Thus, evidently, we must leave these perplexing questions where they have long lain, under an impenetrable cloud of uncertainty.

Joseph, though brought into Egypt as a slave, became powerful. Stranger still, he retained the esteem of the Egyptians and of his countrymen even to the close of a long life. Indeed, so profound was the respect in which his memory was held, that his embalmed body became the object of an almost idolatrous veneration, and was carried up from Egypt a century and a half after his death and religiously deposited in the land promised to Abraham. Be-

hold the enduring nature of a reputation founded on goodness of character ! The stability of Christian affection—how honorable ! In comparison, how evanescent the honors which come to successful wickedness ; how transient the devotion of ungrateful worldliness ! Anne Boleyn, second wife of Henry VIII., enters London in great pomp, the excited populace wildly chanting her praises, the nobility vieing with the clergy in doing honors to the happy recipient of the king's affections, England's honored queen. Three years later she passes into obscurity, her name so infamous that the very dregs of society scorn to mention it except in terms of opprobrium. Popularity gained without merit—how fleeting ! Nay, even a reputation honorably won in the service of mere worldliness is not infrequently lost without crime. Walsingham, Elizabeth's able and cultured Prime Minister in Britain's palmiest days, loses the esteem of the fickle, treacherous queen, and dying broken-hearted is buried at night to save the expense of a public funeral. Woolsey mournfully exclaims :

“ Had I but served my God with half the zeal
“ I served my king, he would not in mine age
“ Have left me naked to mine enemies.”

Joseph's entire subsequent life presents unmistakable evidence that his severe trials in youth were decidedly advantageous. They produced heavenly-mindedness, uncomplaining sub-

mission to the Divine will, strength of faith in an overruling Providence, and nearness to God. They equipped him for the future struggles of life, imparting hope in hours of darkness, firmness in seasons of temptation humility in the period of prosperity. May we, like Joseph, be preserved from concluding that adversity comes because our Heavenly Father has forsaken us. Does not the gardener prune, with special severity, the trees which he prizes most highly? Does not the lapidary grind with unsparing hand even the most costly diamond? The purer the gold, the heavier the blows with which the goldsmith beats it. O you who pass dreary days, perhaps weary months, under the dark clouds of settled despondency, look up! Heaven is above you, the earth beneath you. Your Divine Father has placed the eyes in the forehead that you might look into the hopeful future, not backwards into the unalterable past. Past is past ; gone is gone forever.

Nor should we fail to observe, in reference to all the trials of life, that deliverance comes in most unexpected ways, in seasons when we are gloomily anticipating still heavier calamities. It was when the disciples' frail bark seemed ready to sink that Christ said to the angry waves, "Peace, be still." It was not till the Israelites were sorely pressed with hunger that God gave them "angels' food." It was in the wilderness, not in the fertile well-watered val-

ley, that water gushed from the smitten rock. It was not in the hallowed calmness of the evening landscape, but amid the thunderings which roared, and the lightnings which flashed from Sinai's rugged crags that Jehovah's voice was heard. It is in the hour of adversity that God most clearly reveals Himself to man.

Though in the possession of those who were entirely ignorant of God, Joseph has not forfeited Heaven's protection. "The Almighty is his refuge and underneath him are the everlasting arms." Who has God's favor has all—a cordial for the relief of the aching soul, a cheering sense of guardianship, a key for the solution of life's mysteries. Our hero, though sold as a beast of burden, falls by the intervention of Providence into the hands of Potiphar, captain of Pharaoh's guard.

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends
"Rough-hew them as we may."

Perhaps the most noticeable feature in Joseph's almost marvellous history is his apparent contentment in every situation. He seems to have possessed the secret of true happiness, the deep-seated conviction that joy resides not in external circumstances, as wealth, position, popularity, success, but makes her envied home in the sacred calm of a resigned heart and an unruffled conscience. Those who are discontented because poor are in all likelihood incapa-

ble of being rendered happy by a favorable turn in fortune's wheel. Though that which is external may indeed throw beams of sunshine upon the heart, still, it must forever remain true that our purest and more enduring joys well up from the hidden fountains of the soul. It is difficult to perceive how Joseph, had he been entirely destitute of piety, could have contentedly filled the humble position of slave—filled it with honor to himself and satisfaction to his master. That he submitted with cheerfulness, and performed duty with alacrity, is evidenced by the fact that he secured the esteem and confidence of Potiphar.

In this world of hazards few masters ever made a more fortunate purchase. "The Lord was with Joseph," blessing the master through the slave. Joseph made no concealment of his religion, neither countenancing the Egyptian idolatries, nor disguising his faith in Abraham's God. Without offensive ostentation, but with unflinching fidelity, he avowed himself a worshipper of Jehovah. The humble need not despair of benefiting the great. God invests the meanest of His people with moral power, a power which may indeed be more extensively exerted when its possessor has other advantages at command, but which may work almost marvellous results when alone. The power of consistent example is within the reach of all; consequently the religious servant in the irreligious

family may render an incalculable service to the cause of Christianity. Such need not long for the unnatural excitements which occasionally attend evangelistic services, anxiously waiting in the tearful hope that these may effect a change in the master's heart. They need not imagine themselves commissioned of Heaven to administer much-needed rebuke to blunted consciences. They need not travel beyond the immediate circle of common every-day duties. Do they ardently desire to deliver the Master's message in homes inaccessible to the ordained minister? to hearts that are never under the influence of sanctuary services? They have only to carry their Christianity into their daily occupations, being respectful, faithful, and diligent. It is matter for rejoicing that they who cannot preach the Gospel with the lips can preach it more effectively by silent example—can preach it where no other method would be allowed.

Indeed it is to this kind of preaching that the Gospel owes its greatest triumphs. Therefore to those who tread the lowly paths of life, but are God's ministers, commissioned to do a work which no others can do, I say, with Paul, "Adorn the doctrine of God the Saviour in all things." Let your religion be manifest, not in unbecoming admonitions, but in strict attention to your master's interests, in unflinching adherence to truth, in obliging deportment and in habits of industry—thus doing you may save

your own souls and win respect for your religion. Let it be your honor, as it was Joseph's, to recommend your religion by unostentatious fidelity to duty. Is your employer irreligious? Has he a form of religion that only encourages him in courses of evil? Let your quiet demeanor silently testify for genuine piety. His must indeed be a heart of stone if, after perceiving that no other serves him so faithfully, no other's word is so reliable, no other's industry is so conspicuous and no other's disposition more amiable, he does not come at length to do you justice, to respect your name and to honor your religion. It is such as these, who so greatly benefitting others render their services indispensable, linking their fortunes for years with the fortunes of their employers, to the great advantage of both—such, humanity cannot refuse to honor. In comparison with these, many who ride on the high places of the earth are contemptible indeed.

Though the form of slavery which existed in Egypt most probably permitted a change of masters at the will of the slave—as is now permitted in Siam—Joseph remained with Potiphar during all his years of servitude. In this I imagine I see great wisdom. Had he changed every few months, as those at service in modern times are too strongly inclined to do, he had never become Governor of Egypt. Those who, for trifling reasons, change situations every few

months, or at farthest every year or two, would do well to remind themselves that the time may come when they shall be mere driftwood on the currents of human society. Though change is unfortunately the order of the day, being manifested not alone in the kitchen and on the farm, but behind the counter and at the desk, in the factory and in the salesroom, by physicians, by lawyers, and even by ministers, it would nevertheless be extremely difficult to convince a reasonable person that change, in itself considered, is not decidedly injurious. Reputations cannot grow by feeding on change. Fortunes cannot grow by being rolled incessantly over the rugged rocks of new adventure. Friendships are not cemented by being continuously broken off. Influence does not grow by being spread every few years over new territory; nay, it becomes thereby so thin as to be impalpable. Do you desire fruit? let the tree grow, do not pluck it up each year to see whether it has taken root. Though you may transplant it each season in more fertile soil, you will die without eating its fruit.

It would be a great mistake to suppose that we have exhausted the lessons clearly deducible from the simple assertion, the Lord was with a slave in Potiphar's family. It is by such humble agencies that the Lord carries forward His work among persons disconnected with the house of God. A work of this nature was done

at Rome, even in the palace of Nero, the bitter enemy of Christianity. Perhaps at first there may have been but one brought to acknowledge Christ by the powerful arguments and un murmuring suffering of "Paul in bonds." The new-born child of the Heavenly King may have desired to abandon the service of the profligate emperor. Admonished, however, by the far-seeing apostle, to serve his new Master in the calling where God placed him, he may have overcome all opposition, till at length he found himself surrounded, even in the palace of the proud Cæsars, by a company of Christ's disciples, a church of the Redeemer in the very focus of pagan fanaticism. Certainly the mention made in Scripture of "the saints that are in Cæsar's household," and of Joseph's successful retention of genuine religion in the house of Potiphar, incontestibly prove that true piety may flourish under exceedingly unfavorable circumstances.

Before dismissing the subject it may be well to remind you that piety is more likely to be developed in the place where daily duty lies than in the solitude of the desert. It is not the absence of temptation or the want of trial which is most favorable to the development of vital Christianity. It is not when there is least to put a Christian upon his guard that he is most likely to advance in spirituality. Nay, it is when he is retreating from duty; when he is

disregarding the obvious claims of Christian citizenship, permitting rascality and ignorance to domineer over honesty and enlightened interest in the public welfare ; when he is allowing irreligion to scatter the deadly seeds of decay, imperilling the very existence of national freedom ; when he is selfishly ignoring the presence of powerful and determined influences which are slowly but surely destroying the very foundations upon which righteousness builds her gorgeous palace, that his own spiritual growth is most seriously imperilled. Potiphar's palace may be a better place for the growth of personal religion than some pious conservatory where heated feeling imagines itself soaring on angels' wings to celestial abodes. So long as it remains true that the Bible contains the declaration that those who enter Heaven come out of great tribulation, so long will it also remain certain that the rasping cares and duties of everyday life aid us in winning the dazzling crown that shall glitter on the brow of the redeemed in that state where old things shall have passed away and all things shall become new. Hot-house piety, emotional Christianity, that feels good and lets the world drift under the influence of Satan—every true Christian is sick of it. An honest impulse, a manly act bravely done, a blow struck for political honesty, for the deliverance of the writhing victims of sin, for the lasting good of humanity, even though it may

awaken a transient storm of indignation, best evidences the possession of living Christianity. Alas ! when will formal religion sink into the oblivion which it so richly merits ?

My Christian brethren, unless you possess that form of piety which could live in Potiphar's palace, which is manifested in the conscientious performance of daily duties, yea, which treads the stony pathway to Heaven with bleeding feet, which nerves you to deeds which, though unpopular, distil blessings upon mankind, you may justly fear, I apprehend, that you have the form of godliness without its power.

Joseph's God, who befriended him even while rendering menial service for a heathen, still lives ; and if you accept Him not merely in the hope of deliverance from the penalties of guilt, but as the Sovereign of your life, success awaits you here, and an imperishable crown in Heaven.

CHAPTER IV.

JOSEPH A SLAVE.

(Continued.)

“ Towers are measured by their shadows, great men by their calumniators.”

“ The eloquence of silence was never written.”

“ Trusting often makes fidelity.”

THE difference between intelligence and ignorance, how immense ! The one, accepting enlightened reason as a guide, tends

truthward ; the other, surrendering itself to blind prejudices, sinks day by day into deeper abysses of error. Potiphar, though as his name imports, a worshipper of a heathen divinity, saw nevertheless that the Lord was with Joseph. It speaks well both for his piety and for his intelligence, since the view we take of others' characters is determined in great measure by our own. To the jaundiced eye even the azure heavens wear a yellowish tinge. To the selfish—who endorse the maxim, "The world will praise thee when thou doest well for thyself, and will execrate thee when thou denyest thyself for others"—every person's conduct is viewed as the result of purely selfish considerations. Ignorance, what an impassible barrier it erects against the progress of Christianity ! Potiphar, the chief of Pharaoh's executioners, learns to respect a form of faith which large masses of men, even in the present day, owing to unconquerable ignorance, are disposed to treat with silent contempt, if not indeed with bitter hostility. What the Bible has to fear is not discussion, not free thought, but ignorance, against which the arrows of truth need to be hurled for centuries before the straggling rays of heaven's light can enter at the opening crevices. "My people," says Jehovah, "are destroyed for lack of knowledge." Intelligent heathenism may be induced to acknowledge the divine origin of Christianity, but we are forced

anxiously to ask, What agencies shall prove available in penetrating the dense ignorance which hangs like the pall of death over large masses even in lands nominally Christian ?

Again, in moral character, how vast the differences which exist ! Potiphar, with a degree of honor that commands the respect of the good, leaves Joseph to follow the dictates of his own moral sense, bestowing upon him the esteem which his conduct merited. Potiphar's wife, desirous of rendering her slave submissive to her own wishes, slanders him whom she cannot influence to evil. One perceives that the hand of the Lord is with Joseph and honors him ; the other merely perceives that the young Hebrew is " a goodly person, and well favored," and maligns whom she cannot ruin.

Of Joseph it is said, " The Lord made all that he did to prosper." Heaven's blessings, how priceless ! It would be a great mistake, however, to suppose that they are arbitrarily bestowed. It was what Joseph did that God blessed. If, as many others, he had made no exertions, or if he had done what clear judgment pronounced poorly adapted to secure desirable results, or if he had adopted courses which were manifestly at variance with divine laws, then evidently no matter how ardently he might have desired prosperity, nor how fervently he might have prayed for it, success would not have crowned his life. Our Heaven-

ly Father does not see fit to interfere with the operation of natural laws, in other words, to work a miracle, for the purpose of conferring benefits upon the indolent, the unthoughtful, or the immoral. As a rule, Heaven's blessings flow in channels which human exertion has prepared. With rare exceptions, abundant harvests are products of Heaven's benediction on human efforts, not the arbitrary gifts of divine sovereignty. They are not found waving on the ocean's heaving bosom, on the barren rock, or on the untilled field, but where man's judgment enriched the soil, man's strength turned the furrow, man's hand scattered the seed. Victory is on the side which has the heavier cannon, the better generalship, the braver soldiers.

Perhaps we ought to remind you that there is in human nature an almost uncontrollable disposition to charge Providence with being the cause of our many failures in life. Our brightest hopes of success in endeavors entirely laudable are unexpectedly blasted; instantly, instead of examining our own conduct for the cause, we exclaim, "Our Maker has seen fit to send upon us an almost crushing calamity." We insult Him by charging upon Him what may be, most probably is, only a natural result of our own folly; and to render the insult more glaring and more inexcusable, we flatter ourselves that we are presenting rare evidence of piety, a commendable example of submission to

divine sovereignty. We disregard the laws of our physical nature, and while reaping the legitimate consequences piously ejaculate, " God, in the mystery of His inscrutable dealings, has shattered our health, leaving us only a wrecked constitution freighted with disease and pain ; or at least has permitted causes, over which we had no control, to work the result which has cast us into settled despondency." We violate moral laws, and strange to say, while suffering their penalties here, and dreading lest there may be eternal anguish in future, if not for us at least for some, we are half disposed to charge God with delighting to inflict arbitrary punishment, seeming to forget that our own acts are the cause of the anguish we suffer both here and hereafter. Let us not forget that God made that to prosper which Joseph *did* ; and that as His blessing cannot rest on wrong-doing, Joseph's success must have been in large measure the natural fruit of his own conduct ; that on the other hand, the hardening of Pharaoh's heart and the disasters in which his impious career terminated were direct consequences of his own acts.

As we might naturally be led to expect, Joseph's fidelity as a servant was duly rewarded—" Potiphar made him overseer of all his house, and all that he had he put into his hands." While the character of the master, as portrayed in the sacred narrative, by no means precludes

the supposition that this favor may have proceeded from a sense of gratitude, we are certainly under no necessity of denying that selfishness may have played a prominent part. Indeed, it rarely happens that any act is the result of a single motive ; quite rarely, that selfish considerations have no weight in the decisions at which we arrive ; very seldom, that we are able to measure with entire accuracy the amount of force due to any one of several motives, which, in combined form, resulted in producing a settled purpose. Perhaps we need not marvel that there is mystery within us as well as above us, around us, and beneath us—insoluble enigmas in the very determinations we form.

The honor conferred upon the slave seems quite natural, since he who fills well the position he has, thereby recommends himself to a higher, while he who neglects the duties of a humble station incurs the risk of losing even that. While no position, however exalted, can in itself confer honor or pave the way to further advancement if the duties it entails are neglected or carelessly performed, so neither can any service, however menial, prevent one from rising if he only improves the opportunities he has for displaying qualifications adapted to a higher sphere. He who desires a more honorable situation can secure no more satisfactory testimonial than that which comes from filling well the place he now occupies. Incapacity will find it

extremely difficult to rise ; capability can scarcely be repressed. Providence helps those who help themselves ; it smiles on the energetic and frowns on the indolent. It conducts Joseph to a throne and hurls Jezebel to the street from her palace window, loading her name with undying infamy. Our Maker has said, "Them that honor me I will honor, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

For Joseph's sake God blesses the house of Potiphar. Upon all that he had in the house and in the field Heaven's favor rests—a recompense for kindness shown. Indeed, God's dealings with the children of men clearly evidence the operation of a law, having exceptions it is true, and varying with varying circumstances, but which nevertheless forces upon the thoughtful observer the settled conviction that those who show kindness to their fellow-men, and especially to dependants, are likely to receive Heaven's benediction, while those who wrong others, and particularly the poor and the weak, are quite certain to incur the Divine displeasure. The German proverb, "Curses, like chickens, come home to roost," might perhaps have been improved by adding, *kindness, like true love, comes homeward laden with benefits.* Both thoughts are well expressed in Scripture language : "As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him ; as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. As he clothed himself with cursing like as

with a garment, so let it come into his bowels like water and like oil into his bones ;” “ Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”

It is a pleasing proof both of Joseph's integrity and of Potiphar's faith in human nature that he entrusted everything to his steward, demanding apparently no account of either receipts or disbursements, “ knowing not aught he had, save the bread which he did eat.” Perhaps we are perfectly safe in saying that it is the want of honesty on the part of those who render service and the absence of integrity in those who borrow capital, which renders employers and capitalists so exceedingly suspicious. Necessity compels them. Charity should prompt us to believe that they have as much confidence in human nature as the condition of society will permit. Every unreliable servant is engaged in robbing faithful service of the confidence to which it is entitled. Every dishonest man is rendering it more difficult for honest men to secure credit. The knave is an enemy of society, the worst enemy honest poverty has, far worse than capital, however oppressive it may be. He destroys confidence, without which money will not flow from the coffers of the wealthy. He robs energy of the only means by which, in this age at least, it is likely to secure success. Consequently, if those who are engaged in wildly inveighing against accumulated wealth, its oppressions and its sordid meanness, would only

vent their indignation against rascality wherever discoverable, whether among the rich or the poor, in political life or in private, in those who defend certain forms of dishonesty because they have secured the sanction of many, or in those who employ religion as a cloak with which to conceal knavery, they would unquestionably be travelling a more practical road toward the results at which they aim, would speedily unlock the vaults which contain the only agencies which can put the complicated machinery of modern society into active operation. Where there are Josephs worthy of confidence there will undoubtedly be Potiphars who are ready to entrust to them their all.

How honorable, how responsible the office held by Jacob's favorite son! No longer the object of a father's partiality in the patriarchal home at Hebron, he has become the trusted steward in Potiphar's house in Egypt. It is impossible to deny that whatever else may have contributed to this preferment, personal merit must have been the main cause. Whensoever we are constrained by enviring circumstances to consider ourselves in adversity's school, let us not forget to make preparation for future prosperity. Perhaps it would not be wide of the mark to say that fortune knocks at least once during life at every man's door. Let us be ready to receive the welcome guest. He may never tap at our dwelling again. Joseph, un-

successful in the humble duties of every-day life, would have remained Joseph the slave ; if he had not fitted himself for the office of overseer he could scarcely have entered it even if chance had opened the way ; certainly could not have filled it with honor to himself and advantage to his master. Luck may be well, but it will never carry a man over a broad ditch unless he jumps with all his might. It will not put vegetables upon the table and shoes on the children unless he hoes his own garden and earns his own leather. Neither wind nor tide can ever convey prosperity to the man who sits moping on the barren rock of laziness. Waiting for opportunities is like waiting for dead men's shoes—poor business. Those who are always waiting for something to turn up would be engaged in better business in turning up something. Hoping is well, hard work is better. The only thing that can be obtained without labor is poverty. Even prayer and faith will not boil a dinner in an empty pot.

To return to our hero : The scenes in his life-drama are changing. In his case, as in that of many another, the season of advancement proved one of sore temptation. In the time of adversity hope for prosperity ; in prosperity's brief hour prepare for coming adversity. Joseph's personal beauty, made more attractive by the success which had crowned his career, subjected him to a trial which threatened to make an

utter shipwreck of honor, happiness, and eternal hopes ; threatened greater disaster than even the cruel hatred of his envious brethren. The one imperilled life and enslaved the body ; the other would have proved the surrender of manliness, the violation of a divine law, the degradation of the conscience, the debasement of his entire being. His master's wife, lost to all sense of honor, endeavored by oft-repeated solicitations to make him partner in a crime which, being dishonoring to God's unalterable law, and revolting to that conception of purity inherent even in fallen human nature, has been looked upon in all ages as a most heinous sin ; indeed, as that most richly meriting the intensest detestation of the good, and as almost certain to incur, even in this life, severe chastisement from Him who exacts "chastity in thought, speech, and behavior." Sustained, however, by "that grace which is able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless before the divine glory with exceeding joy," Joseph resisted, securing a victory which, alas, is too seldom witnessed on earth—a victory over self—a victory over an artful woman.

And the consideration which weighed with him, how clearly does it prove him a true child of Him who has given commandments for our guidance Heavenward ! "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God ?" A person less deeply religious might have given other cogent

reasons in abundance. With him, one is all-sufficient—it is a sin against God. David exclaimed, “Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight.” The religious man, though his sins may be against his fellow-men, may be against his own sense of rectitude, may be against the laws of his physical nature, is nevertheless quite certain to perceive that the depth of his guilt lies in the fact that he has sinned against his Maker.

Personal charms, though ardently coveted by many, are quite certain to subject the possessor to unusual temptation in one form or another ; to vanity, to frivolity, to coquetry, to excess in dress, or to transgressions whose guilt is drawn in still darker colors. The beauty which engrosses thought in adorning a body destined as the lowly tenant of the loathsome grave, which spends life either in front of the polished mirror or worshipping its own image, or amid the gayeties of an existence as miserable as it is unreal ; which, though as widely admired as that of Lady Hamilton, only leaves wrecks around it and despair within a tortured heart ; which dazzles but to increase temptations that are always numerous and quite too powerful ; which conquers but to fall and grows more brilliant only to fade the sooner—alas ! how many it has rendered indescribably wretched here and endlessly unhappy in the hereafter. Amid the countless forms of sin few perhaps are more unreasona-

ble or more dangerous than pride in the possession of personal charms. If, like Joseph, one can have these without becoming vain and without yielding to allurements, then are they, like every gift of our Father, the means by which we may raise our souls Godward, the agencies by which we may improve and cheer human society. Ugliness is not religion ; neither is loveliness piety. Each, however, may enjoy and may illustrate the beauty of holiness.

To Joseph the consequences of fidelity to God were such as the character of his assailant might lead us to anticipate. Inordinate desire is converted into revenge. Since no hatred burns more furiously than that which is enkindled amid the dying embers of disappointed lust, she deliberately resolves on slandering him whom she cannot ruin. She charges upon him the crime of which she herself was alone guilty--a method of procedure by no means rare, especially among confirmed slanderers. With such hypocrisy as only a malignant nature could have displayed she shows the evidence of his purity as the proof of his guilt. To appearances, which are quite frequently deceptive, the innocent one is the guilty ; the guilty one is the innocent. Accordingly Joseph is cast into prison.

Potiphar's palace has crumbled to decay, and Potiphar's wife has long since entered a world where falsehood will not shield the guilty ; but slander still lives, and has its temporary tri-

umphs. Indeed, it seems to have an almost marvellous adaptation to all countries, to all ages, and to all states of society. Born of malice, cradled in the arms of Madam Gossip, whose hearsays are three fourths falsehood, fed on ruined reputations, clad in the stolen robes of virtue and polished into the likeness of a holy detestation of wrong-doing—slander, notwithstanding her innate loathsomeness, has attained a prominence which true goodness deploras exceedingly. As in Joseph's case, the virtue which vice cannot conquer it is almost certain to malign. Consequently, slander is most likely to pursue one who possesses a good name. As the good do not employ themselves in tarnishing reputation, and as the bad need not take the trouble to blacken what is black already, the vile business must of necessity be carried on by those who, having no character of their own, eagerly endeavor to destroy the fair name of those who have a reputation worth preserving and a character meriting respect.

Accordingly, it must forever remain true that pre-eminent merit is the target at which slander hurls her deadliest arrows. It called Christ "wine-bibber," "Beelzebub," "friend of publicans and sinners." It pursued Paul during his entire ministerial life. It hounded the beloved disciple into exile. It followed Luther and Calvin, Knox and Latimer, Wesley and Whitefield, Washington and Lincoln, down to

the grave, and even poured its venom on the sweet memories that clustered around their sacred names. Goodness, unless it be the kind of goodness that is good-for-nothingness, is certain to draw the enemy's fire. As you may measure the height of the spire by the length of its shadow, so true greatness and genuine goodness may be determined by the dark shades of malignant misrepresentation which invariably accompany them. Is not this the teaching of our Saviour—"Woe unto you when all men speak well of you;" "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake"? Does not Paul affirm, "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"?

While the unprincipled are banded together in using falsehood to murder the reputation of the innocent, it is a pleasing reflection that the good are slow to believe reports that are generated in the hotbed of malice and wafted on the poisoned breath of angry contention. They know that talk, which is the cheapest thing in this world, is, as a rule, also the most unreliable. It would take a ten-acre field of talkers to make a falsehood stand long. Eternal verity is continuously crushing each successive crop of falsehoods into an impalpable dust. The good therefore can afford to wait till the grinding process is over, till polished truth presents itself for their acceptance. They are not so irra-

tional as to think less of a man because the dogs are barking after him, as to imagine that one has no character because those who can't control him vent their rage in slander, as to conclude that because he does not pause to kick every impudent cur therefore his indifference to barking implies guilt. They rather admire the silence of conscious integrity. Astronomers have been saying for many years, as we all know, that there are spots on the sun. What has the sun been doing about it? Simply shining right on. It has never paused even for a moment to affirm the truth or falsehood of the allegation. Noiseless as true charity it dispenses its blessings year by year, and permits the investigators to say what they choose.

X
In Joseph's absolute silence under the infamous charge we may perceive, as I apprehend, unmistakable evidence of true greatness. Why contend? Heaven will vindicate his name. Why contend with a bad woman? He only lowers himself and incurs the risk of having his name painted in yet darker colors. Fighting with the sooty chimney can only result in trying the patience and in smutting the person. Stirring up the frog-pond but increases the offensiveness of the odor. Trampling falsehood in the dirt only fills one's eyes with dust. Why should he deny the slander? he will only be charged with untruthfulness. Why endeavor to chase it down? While engaged in the tantaliz-

ing pursuit, a dozen other slimy creatures will be wriggling into existence.

Why not charge the guilt where it properly belonged?—he will thereby only create distrust in the heart of a husband without alleviating his own suffering. With a spirit as magnanimous as it was heroic, Joseph calmly, silently waits for time and his own conduct to wipe the foul aspersion from his name. Would that, under the incessant buzzing of those wasps that are all sting and no honey, we could imitate this excellent example! Slander would die for want of notice.

It is evident, therefore, that our hero, having compassion on those who had no pity on him, may have purposely concealed the crime, a knowledge of which, without alleviating his own anguish, might have seriously marred the happiness of one home, perhaps of several. Sooner than do this he will lie in a loathsome dungeon, unnoticed and contemned, suffering, the innocent for the guilty; in un murmuring submission waiting vindication from Him who, having rescued him from the wilderness pit, can release him from Potiphar's prison.

What an illustration this of life's strange drama—virtue languishing in a prison, vice revelling in a palace! Occurrences, of which this is a fitting type, are by no means rare. The spirit of discontent, fanned by political falsehoods into open rebellion, has taken up arms;

and lo ! while loyalty is quenching treason in the life-blood of thousands, while helpless widows are watering unmarked graves with burning tears, while fatherless children in homes of poverty are piteously asking for bread and no hand proffers it, the unprincipled demagogues who fomented the trouble are receiving the applause of the heartless unthinking crowd, or are revelling in excess. Intemperance, it may be, has entered the home ; and, as so often happens, a fortune laid by a self-denying wife at the feet of one who vowed undying fidelity and undiminished affection, is recklessly squandered. As the home passes under the sheriff's hammer and the desolate wife leads forth her children to face poverty and degradation, it is the abusive epithets of an inebriate husband which distil the bitterest drop into her cup of anguish. Guilt is revelling, innocence is suffering. O the mystery of tortured innocency, of triumphant wickedness ! The guilty seducer is enjoying the world's smiles while his victim in lonely anguish is tasting the bitterness of inextinguishable remorse. Alas, tragedies such as these are not infrequent. Life is in fact a kind of vicarious sacrifice—innocence bearing the penalties of guilt, a repetition of the scenes in Potiphar's palace and Joseph's prison. The wealthy knave fails with full purse, impoverishing the confiding poor. The father madly runs his course of folly, the children endure disgrace. He who is

a Christian merely in name forgets his sacred obligations, bringing dishonor upon the true believer and wounding the cause of the Meek and Lowly One. Guiltiness revelling, innocence suffering ; Potiphar's palace, Joseph's dungeon !

Though his body is in fetters, Joseph's pure spirit is still free. The one, man may load with irons ; the other, God alone can bind in the prison-house of torture. With integrity preserved, the prison may be a palace. With God's favor there may be happiness in a dungeon ; without it, wretchedness in a royal court. There may be spiritual liberty while shackles are chafing the weary limbs, there may be the bondage of sin while no visible chains are eating into the quivering flesh. In point of fact, Potiphar's wife was the slave—the slave of sin ; Joseph the freeman, the emancipated of the Lord. " He is a freeman whom the truth makes free, all besides are slaves." Many, alas ! though their limbs are unshackled, are yet bound captives, to human appearance hopelessly fettered by iniquity. Who is there so lost to honor that he would not prefer Joseph's situation to that of his assailant ? purity to impurity ? God's favor in a prison, to God's displeasure in the decorated halls of worldly grandeur ?

It would no doubt tend to promote piety were we frequently to dwell upon the many instances in which our sorest trials have issued in our richest joys. How often, as with Joseph, have

our choicest comforts grown out of our deepest distresses and our most exhilarating joys blossomed on the soil enriched by our keenest anguish. Let us then be prompt to remember that there is no vale of tears without its sunny heights of happiness and no mount of pleasure without its corresponding vale of sorrow. May we receive prosperity without being elated, adversity without becoming dejected, trials without murmuring—all things as becometh those whose richest treasures are in Heaven.

The prison and the palace have each alike yielded up its occupant. Eternity receives what time surrenders, receives it as time surrenders it and stamps perpetuity thereon. There is a time coming when eternal rectitude shall shout, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still."

CHAPTER V.

JOSEPH IN PRISON.

"The wine is drawn, it must be drunk."

"Who complains that Grantham's steeple stands awry, will not set a straighter by it."

"If I have lost the ring, the finger is still here."

IT often happens that the irreligious are inclined to sneer at the doctrine of an overruling Providence, especially when interpreted

as embracing incidents seemingly trivial or working out desirable results in behalf of those who profess allegiance to God. Such cavillers might ask : " If Joseph was guilty of the crime laid to his charge, why is it said, ' The Lord was with him ?' if innocent, why was he put in ward ? Is it consistent with Divine superintendence that vice should triumph over virtue ?"

Those who object to the theory of a particular Providence while acknowledging that of a general seem to ignore the fact that the latter implies the former ; that in the numberless complications of human society issues the most momentous not infrequently depend upon a combination of causes which singly appear quite insignificant ; nay, that results extending through centuries and influencing the happiness of millions often flow from a single agency which in its inception appears contemptible. Why, then, should we not tutor ourselves calmly to await the time when God, unveiling the mysteries of His Providence, shall vindicate His dealings with the children of men and especially with His chosen ones ; when the wickedness of the wicked shall come to an end and the just, receiving the end of their faith, shall be abundantly satisfied ? Meanwhile, though God's presence may not secure immediate deliverance from trouble, it may prove of inestimable worth, enabling us to bear uncomplainingly what omniscience sees fit to per-

mit. The abiding conviction of God's continuous guidance will induce us to exclaim :

“ 'Tis home, 'tis home that we wish to reach,
He who guides us may choose the way ;
Little we heed what path we take,
If nearer home each day.”

We may depend upon it that one main reason why we are so strongly prone to discredit Divine love, especially in seasons of distress, is because we fail to look beyond the present, fail in having regard to the recompense of the reward. Our anguish is the fruit of impatience. We desire to ascend the mount of joy without passing through the valley of sorrow ; to sit on the throne without lying in the dungeon ; to wear the crown without bearing the cross ; to be next to Pharaoh's throne without lying in Potiphar's prison. We forget that our Lord has said : “ If ye suffer with me ye shall also reign with me ;” “ Whosoever will come after me let him take up his cross and follow me”—follow me to Gethsemane and to Golgotha, to anguish of soul and to suffering of body. These lie on the highway to Olivet. Present adversity, though far from agreeable, may nevertheless prove an efficient agency in promoting future happiness. Uninterrupted prosperity is not always a blessing ; nay, it is sometimes a premonition of coming anguish. The Psalmist, though finding the mystery of triumphant wickedness a problem too

painful for him, yet discovered a solution when he entered the sanctuary of God and understood the end : " Surely Thou didst set them in slippery places ; Thou castedst them down into destruction." Spring-time with its balmy days and cloudless nights might perhaps be considered more agreeable than the gloom of an unbroken winter, and yet were it to continue so long as to produce neglect in storing provisions for the future, it would inevitably become the forerunner of a season of anguish, the intensity of which would be greatly aggravated by remembrances of the past.

In furtherance of the Divine purposes, and as a step in Joseph's progress toward greatness, the stratagem of an infamous woman is permitted to succeed. Jacob's favorite son is cast into prison. Friendless now, strange emotions fill his mind, forcing him to reflect upon the helplessness of his situation unless God should interpose on his behalf. Indeed, it must have required more than ordinary faith to retain piety, to endure this sudden reverse without questioning the guardianship of his Maker. Is wickedness to triumph while innocence is suffering? Is the Divine government a mere fiction? Does injustice occupy the throne? Why was he afforded those dreams of future greatness? Will they ever be realized? Were they gifts of heaven or creations of his own heated imagination? Certainly, to human dis-

cerning at least, his enforced absence from a father's house, the wilderness pit, the journey toward Egypt, the servitude in Potiphar's house, the false accusation and its aggravating result, his master's forgetfulness of service assiduously rendered—all these seem fitted to force upon him the conviction that he was fated to be the sport of misfortune, not the pet of prosperity. Is this the reward of obedience to Divine laws! Vice revelling, innocence suffering; guilt in a palace, virtue in a dungeon; "It is in vain to serve God, and what profit is it that I have kept His ordinance?"

Such reflections, though quite natural, seem to have found no place in Joseph's mind. He utters no complaint, gives way to no repining, manifests no spirit of rebellion against Providence. His silence has an eloquence such as seldom attaches to speech. Conscious of rectitude and therefore cheerful, possessing faith in God and accordingly brave to endure, he meekly bows to the stroke, persuaded that the nearer he draws to the hand that holds the rod the lighter the blow, that to stand defying the tornado is to invite destruction, that to stoop before the incoming waves is to secure an opportunity of seeing them break harmlessly upon the beach. Submission is often true heroism.

Till God's purposes with Joseph are accomplished he holds a charmed life. The combined

powers of wickedness cannot compass his death till his youthful dreams are fulfilled, till his life-work is completed. He has still much to do for Pharaoh, for Egypt, for the Israelites, for the world. Days of prosperity and years of honor are yet before him. "Man's days are determined, the number of his months are with God." The thread of life is in the hand of Divine sovereignty.

Joseph, diligent and trusty, finds friends even in the prison. Integrity invariably secures confidence. The conscientious, the honest, and the truthful commonly find those with whom they deal willing to exhibit the same qualities. On the other hand, the deceitful and the unprincipled are extremely liable to be paid in their own coin. Indeed, so strong is the disposition to judge others by ourselves that we are tolerably safe in concluding that those who charge the world with want of sympathy are not themselves extremely sympathetic; that those who pronounce mankind unprincipled will bear watching. Since the world is a kind of mirror, we are quite apt to see in others only a reflection of ourselves. Since its polished hardness approaches flintiness, our treatment of the world is liable to be turned back upon ourselves, the force of the rebound as well as its nature being determined by our own conduct. If we love our fellow-men, they will love us; if we hate them, they will hate us; if we aid them, they will aid

us ; abuse them, and abuse returns, sometimes steeped in the poison of malice. Hence it commonly happens that he who can control himself can usually determine the treatment he is to receive from others. Joseph's kindness secured a return of kindness even from the Egyptian jailer ; his integrity was repaid in confidence. He who has the love which our Saviour recommends possesses the means of securing kindness from most persons, and respect from all. Let us remember that hatred is not likely to break what love cannot melt ; that the warmth of a summer day can accomplish more in destroying the iceberg than centuries of howling wind.

Joseph, by a fortuitous concurrence of circumstances, has two of Pharaoh's officers as fellow-prisoners. These, having incurred the displeasure of their monarch, had been handed over to the captain of the guard, giving evidence of the insecurity of that honor which is suspended upon the good will of an erring mortal. Inasmuch as the one was led forth to execution and the other forgot the claims of gratitude, leaving Joseph's kindness unrequited, we are most probably justified in forming the opinion that their punishment in prison failed in producing any moral reformation. Nor should we err greatly were we to maintain that there is one fatal link in the reasoning of those who persist in affirming that future anguish will so completely renovate the character as to fit the inmates of

perdition for the abodes of the blessed. Suffering is not adapted in its nature to produce moral reformation. It generally produces a spirit of unrelenting rebellion.

Though Joseph may possibly have been unable during his prison experience to manifest unbroken cheerfulness, he was able to repress murmuring at least so far as to secure a narrative of his life which though apparently full and accurate, contains no record of complaints against heaven's orderings. This need not strike us with surprise, since it is the state of the heart which is the fountain of content or discontent with the allotments of life ; since the memories of fidelity to truth can render one as happy in a prison as the reproaches of conscience can render him wretched in a palace.

As formerly in Potiphar's house, so now in the prison, everything is entrusted to Joseph ; "and that which he did the Lord made it to prosper." Merit is serving demerit, innocence is soothing the anguish produced by guilt, piety is alleviating the sufferings resulting from an impious disregard of divine laws. Opportunities of doing good will never be wanting to those possessing the skill and the qualifications to embrace them. In Joseph's circumstances few would have thought of rendering useful service to fellow-prisoners ; most would have deemed it an unbecoming humiliation. Inasmuch as our Master labored with the de-

spised and the forsaken, let us not forget that readiness to serve God in humble station is the best evidence of fitness to serve Him in conspicuous positions.

In the same night each of Pharaoh's officers dreamed a dream. The character of each dream was determined in great measure by the duties and the occupations with which each prisoner was familiar; one dreamed of grapes and wine, the other of baked meats. The conceptions that come to us even from heaven have their character determined in no slight degree by the avenues through which they enter the soul. Religion, no matter how pure it may be, becomes vitiated as it enters human society. The purest code of morals becomes partially debased the moment it is accepted by erring mortals. Christianity, when accepted by ignorance, inevitably degenerates into superstition, the depth of which is determined by the depth of the ignorance that produced it. The conception a person entertains of duty is necessarily determined, to no inconsiderable extent, by the character of his own mind, the enlightenment of his own conscience and the purity of his own life. All the water that even the ocean can force into a thimble is a thimbleful.

Natural as the dreams were, the impressions produced were such as caused great uneasiness. Neither dreamer could rid himself of the convic-

tion that coming events were casting shadows before them. Like the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar and of Pilate's wife, these left upon the mind an irresistible conviction of their supernatural origin. As they seemed to offer no key by which they could be interpreted they became the cause of that form of sadness which springs from tantalizing uncertainty, successive hopes being incessantly blasted by forebodings of evil. This being detected by the keen eye of Joseph, immediately, forgetful of his own griefs, he kindly inquires, "Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day?" They who by having themselves felt sorrow have learned submission are best qualified to soothe the anguishful. Our Lord when in the furnace of trial, seeming to forget His own agony endeavors to comfort His sorrowing disciples. While none are so well fitted to cheer the sorrowing as those who are under sorrow, it is a pleasing fact that a sincere effort to comfort others is a most efficient agency in alleviating our own inward pain.

Hearer, does poverty oppress you? go feed the hungry and clothe the naked. Does bereavement sadden you? go sympathize with the bereaved, and while you are pouring consolation into others' souls God will pour comfort into yours. Has your heart felt the bitterness of unrequited kindness? visit those whose many acts of kindness to others, yea, whose self-sacrifices, have been converted by malignity into

poisonous drops within the fountain of life. Have you been made to feel that though innocent you have been forced to bear the penalties of others' guilt? mingle your tears with those humble disciples of the Lord who are ever imitating the Master in uncomplainingly bearing the guilt of others. Do this, and in sympathizing with others cheerfulness will take the place of despondency.

"There is no interpreter;" this Pharaoh's officers assigned as the cause of their melancholy. There can be no question that most persons prefer to know the nature of impending calamities, that so, though there may be no possibility of averting them, they may at least prepare for enduring the trial. To some a knowledge of the future, even though it may unveil approaching evils, is less harassing than those terrifying apprehensions which while unfitting the soul for the enjoyment of the present leave it helplessly exposed to the arrows of coming misfortune. Dimly foreshadowed disasters are quite as likely to sink the soul into despair as a clear vision of approaching trouble. The tantalizing shadows cast on the curtain of futurity by the weird spectres of our own heated imaginations cause more disquietude than either the griefs of the present or the mere veiling of the future. We can fortify ourselves to endure existing difficulties. We can tutor ourselves to believe the hiding of the future a priceless bless-

ing ; but the torturing apprehensions produced by the indistinct outlines of half concealed adversity, there are few indeed who can banish these at will.

Perhaps we shall be less surprised at Joseph's subsequent prosperity if we note his present fidelity to God. From heathen he requests an answer to this simple question, "Do not interpretations belong to God?" The words must have sounded strangely in an Egyptian prison. His comrades perhaps asked : "Who is Jehovah?" Egypt has lords many and gods many—temples, priests, altars—but this divinity whose only worshipper is a condemned slave has not even an humble shrine within the limits of an empire which boasts in being the centre of the world's piety, wisdom and civilization. Their amazement, it may be, was increased by the simplicity of the interpretation given and by Joseph's perfect faith in its accuracy as evinced in the request made of the butler, "Think on me when it shall be well with thee, and show kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me to Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house."

Since the butler, in the days of prosperity, quickly forgot the claims of gratitude, we have no difficulty in believing that he cordially promised to intercede on behalf of his benefactor. Promises, like debts of gratitude, are soon forgotten ; indeed, the more easily they are

secured the more speedily are they banished from memory. Assurances of assistance when given without due reflection are too frequently like fulsome praise—only the counterfeit coin with which baseness seeks to pay for substantial benefits. Restored to the favor of the monarch, the butler thinks no more of Joseph till he is led to hope that by so doing he may further his own advancement.

It would be a mistake to suppose that the class to which this nameless personification of selfishness belonged ever has been, or now is, either few in number or inefficient in causing anguish. How many children, for whom parents have toiled and suffered through weary years, have utterly ignored the debt of gratitude, yea, have trampled upon sacred promises; and madly quaffing the cup of transient pleasure have left parental hearts to suffer in lonely anguish with little or no consolation save that which religion affords! Joseph forgotten in the prison, the butler happy in a palace! Perhaps there are few of us who have not at some period in life rendered valuable assistance to an unfortunate friend, relieved a suffering brother or aided a struggling neighbor; then, most probably, there are very few of us who are not prepared to testify that service rendered to others is but poorly requited on earth. It is well; we are thereby induced to labor from pure motives and await the rewards of the hereafter.

Selfishness, ingratitude, forgetfulness of benefits ! he who has done most for God will know how frequent they are.

One of the duties devolving upon the butler as he attended upon Egypt's monarch should not be allowed to pass unnoticed—pressing the grapes into Pharaoh's cup. It is not even intimated that he presented this heathen king with strong drink. Though not a believer in the true God he seems to have belonged, as do most of the heathen in the present day, to the much-abused total abstinence society. Were he living in this age we should expect to find him uniting with Asiatic monarchs in denouncing that hypocrisy, which while boasting of advanced civilization is sending New England rum and elaborately printed Bibles, fourth-proof brandy and the living missionary, to the same ports and even in the same vessels ; which is so complete as to have rendered nations nominally Christian oblivious to the fact that whiskey makes ten converts where the missionary makes one. Had he lived a few years since we should have expected from him an eloquent protest against the desecration of the American flag, as in the canals of Bangkok and indeed throughout the kingdom of Siam it afforded the protection of this great nation to those who were selling intoxicants in direct violation of laws emanating from the Siamese Government, thereby forcing a king whom missionaries were endeavoring to convert to Chris-

tianity to see his own laws trampled upon and his subjects rapidly becoming drunkards, or forcing him into open conflict with this powerful nation which he was expected to regard as eminently Christian. If instead of these intoxicating beverages which Christian nations to their burning disgrace are pressing to the lips of the heathen, we could be induced to substitute the simple extracted juice of the grape, the advocates of temperance, however fanatical some people deem them, would find their occupation gone—fanaticism would search for a new field of labor; prosperity and happiness would reign in homes where now poverty and wretchedness hold undisturbed possession.

The chief baker, hoping his dream might also bear a favorable interpretation thereby rendering him as happy as his companion who was once as unhappy as he, is now engaged perhaps in promising himself prosperity when adversity is near, in building hopes on life though death has marked him as her victim. "Within three days shall Pharaoh . . . hang thee on a tree." What a pang this must have caused! Did a guilty conscience, seconding the heavy strokes of misfortune, leave him a prey to consuming despair? Possibly. It is at least certain that he furnishes a startling instance of man's natural indisposition to prepare for eternity. With only three days to live, this period, far too brief to complete the work he has to do, is recklessly squan-

dered. It may be that like the class he represents he was founding hopes upon the uncertain to-morrow. It may be he was defying the penalties of incensed justice. His folly, great as it was, is surpassed by that of those who with the Bible within reach and while death with muffled step is rapidly approaching, are nevertheless utterly indifferent to the momentous concerns of the near future.

It may possibly cause momentary surprise that Joseph, who interpreted others' dreams was left in ignorance of his own destiny. Is not this, however, the method ordinarily employed to strengthen faith and produce entire reliance upon God? Indeed, was it not communion with God produced by this sense of dependence which enabled him to interpret mysteries, which fitted him for comforting the sorrowing? It not infrequently happens that those whose lives are passed in unrelieved sadness—with whom the present is an enigma, the past a memory of grief, the future a cloud of torturing uncertainty—are nevertheless the instruments in God's hand of producing joy in others' hearts. As a block of ice, chiselled into the form of a lens, can be made to concentrate the sun's rays, kindling a flame, so the believer by gathering the scattered beams of Heaven's love may pour cheerfulness into others' hearts while his own may remain quite cheerless.

All unknown to the sufferer the hidden pur-

pose of heaven is hastening to a consummation. Circumstances are shaping themselves for the delivery of the innocent prisoner. "It came to pass at the end of two full years"—whether from the beginning of his imprisonment or from the execution of the chief baker is somewhat uncertain—"that Pharaoh dreamed." To Egypt's wise men the dreams are an enigma, no soothsayer presuming to hazard an interpretation. Are they struck dumb that so Joseph may emerge from obscurity? Verily, God "raiseth the poor out of the dust . . . that He may set him among princes."

Now, when selfishness quickens the memory, the chief butler bethinks himself of the kindness formerly received from the Hebrew prisoner. As a rule, unless it is the interest of others to benefit us they are not likely to do so. Selfishness is more universal and is more potent than gratitude. Joseph is ordered into the presence of the troubled monarch. "Seest thou a man diligent in business he shall stand before kings."

As evidence of Joseph's piety, witness the first words spoken by him in the Egyptian court: "It is not in me; God shall give Pharaoh an answer in peace." Of the God of his fathers he is not ashamed even in the presence of royalty, in the palace of one whose divinities an entire nation venerates. Assuming in the first sentence uttered that these were dumb

idols and their priests mere pretenders he manifests unshaken faith in Israel's God who had comforted him during thirteen years of slavery ; and dares publicly to announce what shall be the character of the harvests for fourteen years to come. For aught he knows, the discomfiture of the magicians may arouse a degree of malice that may seriously endanger his life Still, true to his own convictions he communicates Heaven's purposes to men. No marvel that the slave became the ruler.

Having interpreted Pharaoh's dreams, he proceeds to recommend a course of procedure suited to the exigency of the situation, advising the selection of a competent person under whose immediate supervision officers should collect and store away a fifth part of the products of the seven plenteous years. While the wisdom of the recommendation is beyond question, we cannot deny that its presentation apparently unsolicited and by a Hebrew slave just from prison wears the aspect of arrogant presumption. Why should he assume to know more than Egypt's honored statesmen ? Why presume to intrude his opinions ? Why offer advice which seems to come freighted with a recommendation of himself for the honorable and responsible office which needs " a man discreet and wise ?" Has his success in the interpretation of dreams so far elated him as to have destroyed his sense of propriety ? If not, how

does it happen that a foreigner, a condemned criminal, should be so lacking in modesty as to proffer counsel upon a subject so momentous, and to propose in a manner quite abrupt and somewhat dictatorial a series of measures which might easily involve expenditures so enormous as to result in national bankruptcy.

It is perhaps doubtful whether Joseph's conduct in this respect admits of entire justification, unless we endorse the infamous doctrine of the Romanists that "the end justifies the means." It is more than probable that if the issue had been disastrous, and especially if Joseph's career had been a conspicuous failure from beginning to end, that we would have discovered in this incident abundant ground for severe censure. The acts of the successful man are generally weighed in the balances of charity; those of the unsuccessful too frequently in the scales of malice. That there were weak points in the character of this Hebrew slave is certain, not merely because no human character even the most perfect is free from blemishes, but because he manifested great weakness along certain lines, especially in the direction of vanity. This, which was the tap-root of his troubles in the home in Hebron, was not so completely subdued by thirteen years of hardship but that he could boastingly exclaim, as his brethren after the second visit set out for the ancestral home: "Tell my father of all my

glory in Egypt." If the presumption manifested in a slave's giving advice to the intelligent monarch of a powerful empire admits of vindication, it may perhaps be found in supposing that his advice may have been solicited, the abbreviated narrative containing no record thereof ; or we may extenuate his conduct by conceiving that he could scarcely suppress the announcement of a policy which he deemed essential to the preservation of human life ; possibly we may assume that he viewed this as a part of Heaven's revelation committed to him for promulgation.

Pharaoh, influenced perhaps from on high, reposed entire confidence in the interpretation of his dreams. To this his empire owed its subsequent prosperity ; his subjects the bread that preserved life during the years of famine ; the Israelites their sojourn in Egypt. Behold on how slight a cause events the most momentous are sometimes made to depend. Had Pharaoh rejected the interpretation and contemned the advice of Potiphar's slave, it is scarcely too much to say that the lives of millions would have flowed in a different channel. How oppressive the sense of individual responsibility ! The centuries of the past look down upon the decisions we are forming, and the character of the future is in measure determined thereby.

How sudden the turn in fortune's wheel ! We found Joseph in a prison. We leave him

for the present arrayed in fine linen, with a gold chain about his neck and Pharaoh's ring upon his hand, riding forth in the second chariot of the realm while accompanying heralds are crying: "Bow the knee." Yesterday they were crushing him in a prison; to-day they are almost worshipping him as a god. In his former condition few were so humble; in his present position fewer still are so exalted. The slave has become "ruler over all the land of Egypt;" without him "shall no man lift up his hand or his foot" in all the broad empire.

How inadequate as a measure of merit is the situation one may chance to occupy! While declining to honor a man simply because the world honors him, let us never be guilty of gauging men by the circumstances which environ them. Meanness and intellectual imbecility may be occupying a throne, while greatness and skilled wisdom may be languishing in a dungeon. Since we are incapable of determining the destiny which God has in store, either in this world or in the next, for those now in humble station, let us cultivate the habit of honoring worth wherever it exists. Even from the deepest abysses of earthly anguish, yea, from the lowest depths of degradation, the redeemed sinner may be raised to a throne, to a glory as far surpassing that of Egypt's court as the realities of eternity surpass the vanities of the world.

CHAPTER VI.

JOSEPH THE RULER.

- “ A stone that is fit for the wall is not left in thy way.”
“ Fling him into the Nile and he will come up with a fish
in his mouth.”
“ Trust thyself only and another will not betray thee.”

THE vicissitudes of this eventful life, as exemplified in sacred biography, are not simply illustrations of providential interposition, but vindications of God's dealings with men. Suffering innocence is rewarded, being raised from obscurity to honor ; prosperous guilt is punished, being hurled down to degradation's deepest gulf. Jacob, to escape the anger of his enraged brother, sets out for Padan-aram, becoming a homeless, nearly friendless wanderer. He returns rich in flocks, happy in his family relations and full of hope in God. David, as a reward of his many manly virtues, gradually emerges from obscurity till in the dazzling splendor of Jerusalem's most prosperous era he occupies the throne from which Saul, having incurred the Divine displeasure, passes under a dark cloud of adversity, dishonored and contemned. Vashti is divorced, Esther becomes queen ; Mordecai is the second personage in the realm, Haman is hanging on a gallows fifty cubits high ; Daniel is prime minister in Babylon, his discomfited enemies are drinking the

bitter dregs of disappointed ambition. The balances of justice, suspended from the hand of unswerving rectitude, are perpetually tending to equipoise. To perceive that merit outweighs demerit requires a little time, it is true, but those having faith in God are never in doubt which way the scales will eventually turn—which way, ordinarily in this life, certainly sooner or later, though possibly it may not be till eternity has removed the false weights which at present cause so much deception. Justice is a law regnant throughout the universe. As the tree must of necessity cast a shadow when the sunlight falls upon it—this law prevailing on the most distant planet as well as on the earth—so wickedness when the light of eternity is shed upon it must inevitably cast a deep shadow of anguish. As has been well said, "Our earth, although an atom in immensity, is immensity itself in its revelations of truth." If justice is entitled to a throne on earth we may be certain it has a throne in the hereafter. "Gentlemen," said Edmund Burke to his constituents, "neither your vain wishes nor mine can change the nature of things." No human bolstering can give eternal prosperity to worthlessness; no eloquence, not even the most seraphic, can make shams a reality; no power in the universe shall prevent the upright from receiving their reward. There is an irreversible law that unless man brings himself into harmony with God real suc-

cess and abiding happiness are impossible ; in harmony with Him permanent suffering cannot be our portion.

The past record of Potiphar's wife, that is an imperishable fact ; the act done cannot be undone. Since law is inexorable, how can its guilt be wiped out ? that has been the problem of the ages. Expiation, or endless hopelessness ! Repentance and forgiveness, or ceaseless anguish ! Christ accepted and the past cancelled, or an everlasting endurance of the penalties of violated law !

“ The high may fall, the highest the lowest ;
The lowly may rise, the lowest the highest.”

Who dares say that the law which is operative here has no potency in the beyond, whose measureless duration shall afford ample opportunity for the vindication of suffering innocence and the punishment of successful guilt ?

The narrative under consideration furnishes numerous and striking illustrations of the law of retributive justice. Jacob practices deception ; it is practised upon him. His ten sons treat a brother with harshness ; bitterness is poured into their own cup. They are frenzied at the recital of his dreams of superiority ; they are forced to implore favors from him. They compel him to face starvation in a wilderness pit ; stern necessity impels them to ask bread at his hand. He who was once a petitioner for mercy, who was a slave in the custody of Ish-

maelites, who was the inmate of a prison, becomes a ruler in Egypt. In a world so full of shams, where vapping emptiness, and brazen impudence and cunning villainy so frequently occupy exalted positions, it is surely somewhat comforting to know that humility may win earth's coveted prizes. Let this, then, constitute the theme of our present meditations :

JOSEPH, THE RULER.

Rachel's son in Egypt and next the throne, while his aged father is mourning him as dead. How inexpressible the joy it would have caused had Jacob known that his son was still alive, though in obscurity! How fondly he would have hoped that by some fortunate turn in the disclosing events of the future they might yet be brought together! A knowledge of the mere possibility of such an issue would have been more highly prized than all his flocks and herds. To have known that he was ruler even of some wandering company of Midianites, or of some savage tribe in the distant sections of Africa, would have been as balm to his wounded heart; but to have been informed that he was governor of the powerful kingdom on the Nile would have been an ecstasy of delight such as seldom falls to mortals.

Having at his command the resources of a great nation, why did not Joseph communicate with the ancestral home? Was it because he

feared that sorrow had not yet sufficiently softened the hearts of his brethren? Did self-respect impel him to maintain dignified silence till multiplying calamities should so far mollify malice as to lay a foundation for reconciliation? Was it part of the Divine plan that Jacob should suffer till the envy of his ten sons should be so far eradicated that they might learn of Joseph's exaltation without augmenting their bitterness of feeling towards him?

Unknown to his father our hero is now ruling in the far-famed valley of the Nile, ruling a country which according to Herodotus could boast of 20,000 cities, from one of which, Thebes, 20,000 chariots and a million fighting men could be sent forth at one time—200 chariots and 10,000 infantry from each of her one hundred gates. The once-hated brother, whose dreams of superiority excited envy, is ruling the descendants of those who in the distant quarries of Syenne cut immense obelisks from the solid rock and transporting them upon rafts erected them in the public squares of their populous cities; is ruling the children of those who built the pyramids—those mysterious hieroglyphics on Africa's lonely sands—upon one of which a hundred thousand men, relieved every three months by a second hundred thousand, labored thirty years, ten in hewing the stones, twenty in placing them where they may remain till the rill of time is lost in the ocean of eternity; is ruling

the offspring of those who erected a palace which has been the wonder of succeeding ages, containing fifteen hundred rooms above ground and as many beneath—a labyrinth from which the uninstructed could find no egress—designed above ground for the residence of the monarch, beneath, part as the resting place of embalmed princes, the remainder—O the depth of human superstition!—as an enclosure for the sacred crocodiles which a nation worshipped; is ruling the nation which in preceding ages had manifested almost marvellous engineering skill in so regulating the inundations of the Nile by means of an artificial lake twenty-four miles in circumference and three hundred feet deep that, by the depth of the inundation and by the subsequent irrigation from a complicated network of canals, they could determine in great measure the yield of the succeeding harvest, frequently raising, as Rollin informs us, a hundred and fifty bushels of wheat to the acre. These wonders of mechanical ingenuity were completed, Egyptologists assure us, during the fourth and twelfth dynasties of the old empire, the two periods in which Egypt attained the greatest degree of material grandeur. Certainly, it was before Joseph became governor of Egypt.

Nor were these ancient dwellers on the Nile less proficient in government and in the sciences than in erecting structures of colossal proportions and in exhibiting evidences of rare in-

tellectuality. Laws, framed so cautiously as almost to necessitate impartiality in their administration, gave protection alike to great and small, restraining the rapacity of the rich, checking the ambition of the powerful and guarding with commendable assiduity the rights of those who were incapable of defending themselves. The king was subject to law. The peasant was defended in his legal privileges. The life of the mendicant was protected. None might approach the person of the monarch—much less enjoy his confidence—except such as had received an excellent education. The quality and even the quantity of the food he ate, as also of the liquids he drank, were prescribed by law. His hours for worship, for business, and for pleasure were irrevocably fixed.

Judges, no less than kings, were placed under rigid regulations. In order that the persuasive eloquence of lawyers might not unduly excite sympathy for the criminal, thereby blunting the edge of justice, legal pleadings were required to be in writing, being a simple enumeration of arguments. Justice was the end sought ; a knowledge of the truth the means to its attainment. Trial by jury, the invention of a more recent age, was unknown it is true ; so also were its glaring abuses. It does not follow, however, that laws were less righteously enforced. Now, as then, the best court is constituted by uniting the office of judge and juror in

one man—provided you select the best man. This they sought to do, and by raising him above the temptations of bribery and by holding him personally responsible for the decisions rendered, they secured in the administration of law a degree of justice which our present system too frequently fails in securing. Seriously exposing mere weaklings to temptations which they are unfitted to resist, and dividing the responsibility till no one keenly feels its pressure, our plan, which is but an innovation of recent centuries, may yet develop abuses which shall induce us to look with favor upon that which was able to bear the strain of thirty centuries. This age, boastful as it is, is not an embodiment of all the wisdom of humanity. The next century will be digging about the foundations of many existing institutions, possibly may upheave them from the lowest depths, laying down others that are more symmetrical in form and more enduring in character. Self-government is on trial. The jury system is on trial. Universal suffrage is on trial. Even accredited Christianity is on trial. Scriptural Christianity has fought the battle and won the victory. Faith in the church may be trembling—assuredly faith in God and in revealed religion is growing stronger.

With the Egyptians, the penalty of perjury, as of murder, was death. We imprison—occasionally. Perhaps we may yet learn that this

punishment is entirely inadequate to deter unprincipled men from furnishing false testimony at the dictation of political aspirants, who hope to secure a continuance of power by charging fraud in elections upon the opposite party, or by concealing their own monstrous rascalities ; conspicuously disproportioned to a crime whose deep turpitude, while it may not be measured by the size of the bribe, unquestionably may be by the extreme danger to which it exposes the very existence of popular government. Heavier penalties for perjury, and these relentlessly enforced, may become the indispensable condition of preserving this nation from the horrors of civil war.

Borrowing money, the fruitful source in civilized nations of harassing embarrassments, not infrequently of gross frauds, was discouraged among the Egyptians ; and failure in meeting pecuniary obligations at the precise time they were due was so hedged around with dishonor that the lender seldom became the loser ; indeed, he who died without returning borrowed money was denied the ordinary rites of burial. In the list of virtues that were considered pre-eminently honorable, honesty and gratitude held prominent places.

In astronomy and mathematics they were remarkably proficient, being able, as is evinced in the great pyramid, to solve with surprising accuracy the most difficult problems known to

the advanced scholars of modern times. In architecture, especially in grandeur of conception and symmetry of proportions ; in sculpture, particularly in vividness of representation ; in certain styles of painting, and conspicuously in imparting durability to the colors employed, and indeed in almost every species of fine art, it may be fairly questioned whether recent centuries have excelled, if indeed they have equalled, the almost marvellous productions of ancient Egypt. And in the adaptation of knowledge to the ordinary affairs of life they were scarcely less skilful, being able, owing to the intelligence displayed in agriculture, to sustain within their limits a population more dense most probably than is now maintained in any district of equal extent on the globe.

Over such a people and in such a country Joseph became governor, acquiring the honorable office through the instrumentality of Pharaoh, rather we may say, from Him in whose hand is the heart of the king as well as the destiny of the subject. His rule was to be co-extensive with the empire, and to extend over all classes, nobles no less than peasants being required to obey him whose finger was ornamented with the monarch's ring, whose person was decked in royal apparel, before whom proclamation was made, "Bow the knee." As we stand gazing upon the height of honor to which Joseph has attained, it is scarcely possible to

divert the eye from the tortuous avenue through which a seemingly mysterious providence has led him from Jacob's humble home to Egypt's lordly palace. Persons not a few—his envious brethren, the heartless Ishmaelites, Potiphar and Potiphar's wife, his fellow-prisoners and the king himself, *all*, without knowing it and without surrendering individual liberty, have been aiding in carrying out the purposes of a sovereign God. Why marvel? Does not the springing grass answer the end of its creation though waving freely under each passing breeze? "O Lord, I know that the way of a man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps."

With accession to honor came change of name. The humble cognomen of Joseph gives place to the loud sounding Zaphnath-paaneah. This name, which has greatly exercised the ingenuity of critics, will bear two interpretations, one Hebrew, one Egyptian—"Revealer of secrets," "Saviour of the world." The latter seems the more probable, since, being given by Pharaoh, it is most likely of Egyptian origin. If this be the correct interpretation it was no doubt given because Joseph, in the judgment of the reigning monarch, was destined to preserve not only Egypt but surrounding nations from the horrors of approaching famine.

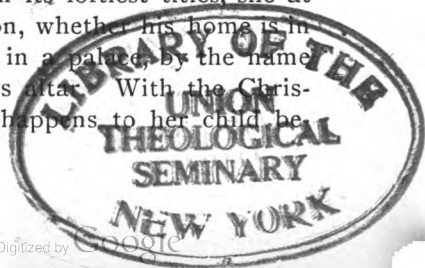
This reception of a new name in return for distinguished services, or as marking a crisis in

one's life, was quite common in early times. Daniel, on entering into the service of the Babylonish monarch, was named Belteshazzar. Saul, after his conversion, was known as Paul.

Nor is it perhaps unworthy of note that Joseph did not assume a new name. It was thrust upon him. With that received from beautiful Rachel he seems to have been content. It was that by which he was known in Hebron. It was that which grief had carved upon the wounded heart of an aged father. It was linked in his memory with terms of maternal tenderness, with pleasant recollections of one now safely housed from earth's sorrows. He may indeed have heard it amid the angry contentions of his enraged brethren at the wilderness pit, may have heard it spoken in scorn and loaded with abusive epithets as he journeyed with the Ishmaelites or performed the menial services imposed upon a slave, but as it had burned for itself a place in the sinful heart of a revengeful woman, as with the captain of the guard it was linked with pleasing recollections of unfaltering fidelity, and in the mind of the chief butler with an almost supernatural knowledge of futurity, as he had borne it in days of youthful innocency and in weary years of torturing anguish, he was no doubt content to wear it on the throne. As it had been his in adversity, it was sufficiently honorable for him in prosperity. Since honor consists neither in the position one may chance

to occupy nor in the name he may happen to bear, but in the character he possesses, assuredly in Joseph's judgment this high-sounding title had no power either to secure man's esteem or to produce enduring happiness. Principle is honor ; God's favor is happiness. Strip some persons whom the world pronounces great of the perishable garments in which they have managed to clothe themselves, procuring them not infrequently by base intrigue, and they will be naked indeed—bankrupt for eternity.

Pharaoh hoped, it may be, to bury the assumed disgrace of the slave in the grave of oblivion along with the name he had borne through the many years of suffering. As a slave he might endure anguish in unmerited confinement with any name or no name ; as governor he was to be known as Zaphnath-paaneah. The humble name by which he had been heretofore known must be left in the dungeon with the prison garments. It is too simple for Egypt's ostentatious court ; and yet how much of tenderness, of affection and of sympathy is connected with the name the mother bestows upon her infant babe. Discerning, as with an almost heavenly instinct, the emptiness of earth's honors and the vanity of even its loftiest titles, she at least designates her son, whether his home is in a cottage or his stay in a palace, by the name she gave him at God's altar. With the Christian mother all that happens to her child be-



tween baptism and eternity is almost or quite a blank, except so far as it tends to write his name in indelible characters on the book of life.

Joseph is now entering upon the full duties and the stern responsibilities of life. He is thirty years of age, thirteen years having been passed in servitude. Too affectionate in his nature to be indifferent to the charms of the purest friendship that has ever blessed humanity, and too sensible not to perceive the many advantages of wedlock, he married Asenath, the daughter of Poti-pherah, priest of On.

Marriage, when it is the union of two devoted hearts, is unquestionably the happiest state this side of paradise ; alas, as occasionally happens, it may be a condition of indescribable wretchedness, yea, one in which the very sanctity of the relation is employed as a shield to cover a species of cruelty which has few rivals on earth. Nevertheless, since it is an institution of Divine appointment, having its foundations in the indestructible affections of the human heart, it is fair to assume that He who has said, "marriage is honorable in all," has enacted that in the vast majority of instances it shall immeasurably increase human happiness, yea, that while it may multiply responsibilities and augment cares, it is essential to completeness of character. Since the Bible affirms that "they twain shall be one" it is proper to infer that they are only partially developed the tendrils of whose affections

have never become inwoven with those of another. It takes two halves to make one. Consequently, while there may be circumstances which will justify one in imitating the example of Paul, there can be no question that as a rule the recommendation of our Heavenly Father, if complied with, will intensify happiness, augment influence, lengthen life and render it more successful, sweeter, purer and more conscientious.

Indeed, we may perhaps safely affirm that of those who spend an entire life without entering into matrimonial relations only the religious are saved from becoming less affectionate and less self-forgotten than they might otherwise have been. Unless religion teaches them, as it did Paul, to love mankind—something outside of themselves—they will be quite evidently at disadvantage in the struggle with selfishness; genuine piety, however, will enable them to furnish notable examples, as many of each sex have, of an almost matchless devotion to the moral and religious well-being of society. While in either situation one needs to be wedded to God to secure happiness here and bliss hereafter, those who have no wedded companion on earth are under an additional necessity of cultivating genuine piety in order to counteract the injurious effects upon character which their condition will be otherwise quite certain to produce. The exemplary lives of many, who belonging to this class have been brought under

the influence of the Gospel, is clear evidence that they also recognize the truth of the Scripture declaration, "It is not good to be alone." They have taken God as their eternal portion.

Perhaps it is safe to affirm that every philanthropist, as well as every Christian, will find in the condition of human society and in the tendencies of human nature, numerous and unanswerable arguments why he should be a warm advocate of marriage. May the day be far distant when the Protestant church, imitating the Romish, shall recommend celibacy. That could not fail to result in a great diminution of human happiness and a vast increase of crime.

Those who are disposed to look with disfavor upon the character of Joseph are careful to remind us that he married an idolatress, the daughter of a heathen priest in the city of Heliopolis; that he wedded, not at the suggestion of affection, but at the dictation of ambition. He entered into matrimony with one who did not worship the God of his fathers, it is true; but he certainly did not wed himself to idolatry, nor even to infidelity. To marry Asenath were better than not to marry. Evidently, in the circumstances in which he was placed, he must of necessity wed one who accepted a false religion or remain unmarried. "Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers" is indeed a good Scriptural rule, the violation of which has frequently resulted, even in Christian lands, in the destruc-

tion of piety and the loss of heaven—still, where one is as plainly confronted as was Joseph with a choice between celibacy and union with an unbeliever, it is reasonably safe to expect such a measure of grace as will preserve fidelity to God provided the daily duties of religion are rigorously attended to. Such, however, will need to begin their married life, and to persist continuously, in lovingly maintaining their faith and self-denyingly employing the means of grace. They at least cannot afford to neglect the sanctuary. Alas, how many, seeming to forget that their journey to heaven is environed by many difficulties, so far fail in maintaining a good profession that they are unable on the bed of death to say to their children, as Joseph did to his: "Surely the God of my fathers will visit you and will bring you to the land of promise."

The heart of the true Christian is filled with an inexpressible sadness over the large number that are yearly lost to religion and lost to the Church under the deadening influence of irreligious companions. That this disastrous result is not exclusively due to union with unbelievers is evident from the case of Zaphnath-paaneah, who, with Asenath as wife, was still Joseph the humble worshipper of Jehovah. If a man can preserve his religion against the sneers that paint themselves upon the countenance of womanly beauty, and against the insinuations that drop from the lips of devoted affection, surely a

woman can preserve hers against the coarse attacks, the cold indifference and the unfeeling jeers of an irreligious husband. If each can maintain it in the heart, neither need lose it in the life.

If, as is charged, Joseph wedded at the simple dictation of worldly policy, then was he guilty of great sin. If he gave his hand to one to whom he had not first given his heart, and gave it with the unhallowed desire of rising to favor in an Egyptian court, he was guilty of a crime deeper than complicity in idolatry. If by the expression, "Pharaoh gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah," we are to understand that he received a bride at the hand of his monarch—as princes and the sons of noblemen frequently do—without having first received her love as a return for his own, then is he justly chargeable with a degree of baseness to which those in humble station seldom descend.

On the face of the narrative it does indeed appear as if he had deserted principle and were pursuing policy ; as if in becoming ambitious of honor he had become indifferent to divine law. But since the union received the benediction of heaven, and since from it sprang two of the twelve tribes, it is fair to assume that the same God who gave Rachel to Jacob although she was an idolatress, and Zipporah to Moses notwithstanding her father was priest of Midian, also in the exercise of His own unlimited sovereignty gave Asenath to Joseph—perhaps that

she might thereby be led to a knowledge of the true religion. Accordingly it is extremely difficult to believe that our hero became so intoxicated with the hopes of ambition that he deliberately committed the crime of marrying at the suggestion of mere worldly policy.

As minister of State and as son-in-law of the priest of On, Joseph attained unexpected, almost unrivalled honor, being the envied ruler of a powerful city adorned with temples, obelisks, statues and those mysterious symbols of deity, sphinxes, which, facing one to the setting sun and one to the rising, were designed as material representations of the omnipotence, omnipresence, intelligence and benignity of the divine nature. He, however, to whom deity was a living reality did not stand in need of mysterious symbols as aids to devotion. His was that form of spiritual worship, in the maintenance of which the true children of God have ever been called upon to resist the most powerful temptation to which human nature has been subjected, the tendency to formalism, the disposition to feed upon husks, which though they once enclosed precious kernels of truth are very dry and very worthless now. Of dead religion there has always been an abundance ; of living piety always too little. Even this age is not free from the charge of endeavoring to feed immortal souls on the chaff which once contained the bread of life ; of contenting itself with the forms from

which the life has oozed away ; of decking the corpse of religion in all the beauties of art. Phariseeism has always had its devotees. Some corpses are left above ground till they infect all the surrounding atmosphere.

The liberty and the property of millions are safely intrusted to Joseph, since he who fears a living God will be quite certain to respect the rights of men. Adherence on the part of a ruler to unswerving principle is a nation's best security, better than senate chambers and legal enactments and the boisterous demands of excited assemblies.

In conclusion :—the Christian's exaltation, like Joseph's, is reached through the avenue of adversity. There is first the trial, then the reward ; first the service, then the honor ; here the cross, there the crown. Merited exaltation, here and hereafter, has its foundations in the soil of humility. As is the case with the oak, he towers the highest who sends his roots down the deepest ; he becomes the greatest who battles most successfully with the storms. The king on the throne may render himself insignificant by performing no service for mankind ; the prisoner in the dungeon may attain to honor by becoming the medium of blessings to his age and to the world. The Christian who cheers the saddened heart of widowhood, or dries the orphan's tears, or trains infant lips to lip God's praise, has more honor in heaven's court than he who

rides to transient victory over the blood-stained battle-field. Heaven's estimate of greatness differs widely from man's.

CHAPTER VII.

JOSEPH THE RULER.

(Continued.)

“Charity and pride have different aims, but both feed the poor.”

“Saints can not, if God will not.”

“The river past and God forgotten.”

AS an efficient instrumentality in producing that contentment which with godliness is great gain, we do well to observe that in the allotments of life there is a law of compensation. This it is which apportions to each a measure of solid comfort which differs less from that of others than appearances would seem to indicate. It is because the anguish of each heart is known only to itself that we are so prone to exclaim: “Behold and see if there be sorrow like unto my sorrow.” Closer observation and more accurate knowledge will tend to convince us that it is folly to be perpetually desiring to “fly from the ills we have to others that we know not of.” It is mere fancy that paints distant objects in roseate hues. The remote mountain though gilded in the morning sunlight and as smooth apparently as the sleeping

lake, is quite cheerless and rugged to the traveller who is weariedly climbing its rocky sides. Every pilgrim, who with lacerated feet is hastening over the stony pathway to the grave, does well to remember that what the world pronounces success is at best but a fading flower plucked with bleeding hand from among encircling thorns; acts wisely in believing that lofty position not only exposes one to the fiercer winds of calumny but multiplies cares, increases responsibility, and augments labor—entailing trials as much severer than those in lowly station as the honors and joys are more exhilarating. The loftier the pine the more violent the storms with which it has to contend.

Observe, if you will, that Joseph's accession to office is an illustration of this law of compensation, according to which responsibilities and toils keep pace with increasing honors. Old trials indeed disappear, but new ones take their place; joys hitherto unknown thrill the soul, but those of former days have taken wing. The ennui of a prison life has given place to the weariness of a protracted journey throughout Egypt. The care of a few prisoners has been displaced by the cares of an empire. To the difficulty of satisfying the demands of a few has succeeded the tantalizing effort to comply with the unreasonable requests of the many. To command the respect of criminals in a dungeon was no doubt an arduous undertaking; to

secure the favor of millions is an impossibility. During the season of his imprisonment his duties were no doubt too few to divert his thoughts from the miseries of his melancholy situation; now his responsibilities are so numerous and his cares so absorbing as to leave the jaded mind the easy victim of imagined troubles. Then, perhaps, he had a keen appetite for food without the means of gratifying it; now, it may be, he has the means of purchasing food but no appetite to eat it. Once the lowliness of his situation rendered him an object of contempt; his present position exposes him to the envenomed arrows of envy. In the prison, friends were too few and too lukewarm; now he finds them perhaps, as most successful men do, more numerous than they are true, and more zealous than they are judicious, causing complications that seriously embarrass him and producing animosities which he labors in vain to allay.

Evidently to travel throughout all the land of Egypt, to provide granaries in every city, to purchase "corn as the sand of the sea, very much, till he left off numbering," to store it away and to have charge of the vast accumulation, must of necessity entail labors, responsibilities and anxieties such as were unknown to him till honor wove her fading wreath around his troubled brow.

His accession to office procured for him a wife. The duties of office, however, called

upon him to surrender one of the purest sources of earthly joy, the privilege of dwelling uninterruptedly within the sanctity of home. The honor he obtained before the public was purchased by the sacrifice of a certain measure of domestic happiness. Is it possible to deny that those who ardently covet the world's honors, thereby rendering themselves discontented with the station in which God has placed them, would do well frequently to contemplate the solid character of the home comforts they enjoy, and to remember that these are an almost priceless possession—one which those are not likely to secure who madly chase the glittering but empty bubbles that tantalizingly float before the vision of unsanctified ambition.

Joseph, exempt on the one hand from that arrogance which is so often an effect of sudden elevation, and on the other from that baseness which seeks to repay political friends at the expense of justice, is free to consult the good of the empire and to toil for the welfare of all classes. With him office meant service, not the reception of flattery from those whom his patronage had placed under obligations. With no vain ambitions to gratify, no supposed insults to avenge and no base transactions to conceal, he had only a God to fear, a king to honor, a wife to love, and a people to serve.

He desires to ascertain, by personal observation, the exact condition of the nation and the

yield of the harvest. With no flatterers to enrich, and perhaps with the conviction that self-exertion is better than hired service, he prefers to issue the orders for the collection of grain and to be himself a witness to their execution. In the seven years of plenty he gathered corn in such quantities that he knew not the extent of his acquisitions. Happily, unlike modern speculators, he hoarded for the benefit of the people, not for the purpose of enriching himself. During the period of plenty the earth "brought forth by handfuls." Owing to the inundations of the Nile and the sediment thereby deposited, the fertility of the soil and the copiousness of its yield were such as to modern agriculturists seem almost incredible, one grain producing ten, fourteen, eighteen stalks, each with branching heads loaded with grains—one kernel literary yielding "handfuls."

Such is the improvident character of the mass of mankind that we hazard little in affirming that, except for the forethought of Joseph, no preparation would have been made during the years of plenty against the possible necessities of the future; nay, it is entirely probable that even clear predictions of a coming famine would have been disregarded by many, if not indeed by a large majority. In times of prosperity men are prone to exclaim: "To-morrow shall be as to-day and much more abundant;" alas, in seasons of adversity they are strongly

tempted to yield to unreasonable despondency. Such, as is quite manifest, was the course pursued by the Egyptians. They made no provision for the future ; when its wants were pressing them sorely they despairingly said to Joseph, "Wherefore shall we die?—buy us and our land for bread." The folly of blindly trusting good fortune while recklessly squandering present bounty is only equalled by the madness which imagines that existing evils are destined to become perpetual, and gives way to despondency.

The firm conviction that "God hath prepared of His goodness for the poor" certainly justifies no one in assuming that prodigality may not be succeeded by extreme penury ; and assuredly he, who in things temporal so far disregards the day of his visitation as to squander that which may have been given him for future use, adds a second transgression to the first if he murmurs unduly while enduring the natural consequence of his own improvident conduct. Such, if they hope to become the possessors of "enduring riches and righteousness," should be careful not to charge upon their Maker the calamities which are legitimate results of past wastefulness. Alas, man, while "reaping as he sowed," while "eating the fruit of his own way and filled with his own devices," is strongly prone to imagine that God arbitrarily interferes to render some of

His creatures happy and others miserable. It almost seems as though men had entered into a covenant one with another to conceal the fact that most of the trials we endure here and the miseries of the world of woe are not arbitrary inflictions of Divine sovereignty, but the natural penalties of violated law.

It is scarcely worth our while to assume, however, that all classes of people can be induced to exercise such a degree of forethought as to provide in periods of prosperity for coming seasons of adversity. To imagine this possible is to dwell in Utopia. The few must of necessity accumulate for the many—Joseph for an entire nation. Indeed, to appearances, some are in the world mainly for the purpose of testing the skill of others in providing for them—they may furnish labor in the present, if the forethought of others has furnished the means of employing it. They may have bread to eat, if the thoughtful have taken steps to provide it, as did Joseph. He carefully gathers up what might otherwise have been wasted. Miserliness is folly as well as sin, but a judicious accumulation of the fruits of labor is both wisdom and virtue—one of the most efficient instrumentalities in conferring benefits upon posterity. The simple hoarding of wealth merits condemnation no less severe than that which is meted out to wastefulness. They spring from the same root—selfishness. They tend to produce the same result—widespread poverty.

They are the same in character—an abuse of God's gifts.

The years of Egypt's prosperity, like happy days in less favored climes, glided rapidly and smoothly by, furnishing few incidents for the pen of the sacred biographer. Though moments of anguish wear languidly away and being keenly felt are long remembered, a lifetime of joy may so quickly and silently fade away as to leave few events deeply embedded in the memory, and fewer still worthy of a place in history. Though uninterrupted prosperity is deemed a blessing by most persons, there can be no question that in many instances adversity is "the blessing indeed," its lessons being more numerous, more precious and better remembered because burned into the heart. Those truths which are distilled from the cup of anguish into the alembic of our inner lives are usually most valuable in this life, and to appearances are best fitted to enhance the stainless joys of the hereafter. "For my own part," says Bishop Hall, "I have learned more of God and myself in one week's extremity than the prosperity of a whole lifetime had taught me before."

Of this period only one fact was deemed worthy of mention—"unto Joseph were born two sons." In this age, when statistics seem to prove so unmistakably that the Anglo-Saxon race is gradually decaying under the withering curse of certain nameless vices, it would prove, we ap-

prehend, a priceless blessing could every believer in the God whom Joseph worshipped be induced to consider the birth of children an event more worthy of being chronicled than the acquisition of perishable riches or access to social circles in which religion is little more than a respectable nonentity.

“Joseph called the name of his first-born Manasseh; for God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil and all my father’s house.” Few would be disposed to understand these words literally. The sufferings of his thirteen years of servitude were no doubt too deeply graven on the memory to be entirely obliterated even by an event so joyous; and to forget the home in Hebron was manifestly impossible. The joys, however, of domestic life and especially of paternity dulled the keen edge of anguish and enabled him to bury the griefs of the past beneath the cheerfulness of the present and the hopes of the future.

“The name of the second called he Ephraim; for God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.” Gratitude worthy of commendation! Piety deserving mention! An unrestrained expression of a natural feeling which but too seldom finds utterance!

Though the years of prosperity furnished scanty materials meriting record, not so the years of famine. A few sentences only are required to relate all that is permanently interest-

ing in the former ; entire chapters, which announce truths lastingly precious or detail events unusually instructive, are scarcely sufficient to present a complete picture of the latter. Joseph's claim to prophetic foresight is vindicated, his predictions verified, his wisdom confirmed. Evils that were but dimly foreshadowed have become pressing calamities, especially upon such as neglected preparation though forewarned—self-reproach rendering want doubly more oppressive. Each Egyptian householder, as the months roll weariedly by, perceives the slow but inevitable approaches of the most hideous monster that ever stalks within the home—ghastly famine. Beneath the touch of his bony finger cheerfulness turns to gloom and hope to despair; competency melts into bare sufficiency; sufficiency shrinks into stringency; stringency tightens into pressing penury. The savings of former years, and the very furniture of the home, vanish like a vision of the night ; but the oppressive monster in all his hideousness still confronts them. The real estate passes into the hands of those who will furnish bread to satisfy the inexorable demands of this insatiate foe ; even yet his grasp is not loosened from the writhing victims.

The destitute in Egypt, and throughout Palestine as well, are dependent for bread upon the provisions accumulated by Joseph. He alone is so circumstanced as to be able to endure the trial and calmly await the issue—having made

preparation for seasons of adversity. Happy shall they be who in the great assizes of the coming eternity shall find themselves prepared to undergo the trying ordeal; indescribably wretched those who though forewarned persistently refused or foolishly neglected to lay up for themselves enduring riches—treasures of which death cannot rob them. May it not be that the inexpressible agony of remorse, which springs from the consciousness that eternal bankruptcy is the result of one's own indiscretion, is the gnawing worm and the unending sting of the second death?

To the starving Egyptians this was Pharaoh's command: "Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do." To have refused obedience would have been to insult the authority of the monarch, to despise Joseph and to invite death. Behold a greater than Joseph, Jesus, who "bearing a name that is above every name" is highly exalted "to give repentance to Israel and remission of sins," "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow." The King of heaven commands: "Hear Him:" "Kiss the son lest He be angry, and ye perish from the way when His wrath is kindled but a little." The Son exclaims; "I am the bread of life that came down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the

world. He that cometh to Me shall never hunger. Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden. He that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out."

Accordingly, to reject mercy from the divine hand is to disregard the commands of our heavenly Father, to despise the invitations of the Great Deliverer, to contemn the only appointed means of securing life, and to purchase death by an act the folly of which as far transcends that of refusing earthly bread as the value of the imperishable soul transcends that of the decaying body.

CHAPTER VIII.

JOSEPH AROUSING THE CONSCIENCES OF HIS BRETHREN.

"It is too late to spare when all is spent."
 "Punishment is lame, but it comes."

NOT only Egypt but surrounding nations as well were feeling the pinchings of want. Even in the distant Hebron, one of the oldest and wealthiest cities of the East, the staff of bread had been broken. Aged Jacob is now enduring a new trial—the grievous pressure of famine.

Sorrowful memories are now clustering around the scenes of Joseph's childhood. Rachel—the beautiful, the beloved, previously cured, let us

hope, from her fondness for idols—is in the presence chamber of the Great Jehovah—a silent pillar marking the spot on the way to Bethlehem where her mouldering remains await the resurrection. This tomb—which in subsequent years furnished to the prophet Jeremiah a poetic figure of rare beauty, in which he represents the tenant as weeping for the captivity of her descendants as the bands of exiles to Babylon passed by; which suggested to the evangelist Matthew the vivid picture in which he so tersely represents the sorrows of Bethlehem over the slaughter of the innocents, “Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted;” which is still an object of reverence even to the infidel invaders of the Holy Land who out of respect to buried love have erected over it a small rude shrine—is the spot on earth around which Jacob’s affections love to linger, where amid the sacred remembrances of blended joys and sorrows he seems to see her for whom he served fourteen years now mourning over the desolations of his saddened home.

In that home her memory is still cherished; cherished, however, amid many sorrowful recollections. The portraiture of her character, as enshrined in the heart of the aged patriarch, contained lines which painfully reminded him of her fretful disposition which on one occasion at least moved him to anger; retained traces of her duplicity, of the theft of her father’s images, of

the stern command he felt constrained to give, "Put away the strange gods," and of the burial of her idols under the oak near Shechem. Alas, how nearly impossible it is to bury the remembrance of a friend's frailties while cherishing the memory of his virtues!

But the loss of Rachel was not the only barbed arrow that had entered Jacob's bosom. Rebekah, in whose affections he held the foremost place, rests from all her anxieties in the family burial-place where Abraham and Sarah, wanderers during life, have permanent dwellings. Here also, eight years previously, Jacob had joined hands with the once hostile Esau in lowering to its last resting-place the body of an aged father. And Leah, the jealousies which embittered her life being forgotten, now "sleeps the sleep that knows no waking." Deborah, her toils being over, finds a peaceful resting-place under the oak-tree of Bethel.

Evidently, Jacob, like many another lingering on the verge of the grave, has more ties to another world than to this; sad memories of the brief yesterday, bright hope of the long tomorrow.

Heavier, perhaps, than the burden of his other griefs and more oppressive than the weight of sixscore years and ten, is the untimely loss of his most endeared son—the lapse of more than twenty years having but deepened the wound and intensified the grief of an aching heart.

In the midst of these trials a new calamity oppresses the patriarch—his family cry for bread and there is none. The land ordinarily having a sufficiency to support a dense population has not food enough for even the “heir of promise.” Fortunately, in the distressed household this announcement is made, “There is corn in Egypt.” Jacob, therefore, deeming it wiser to spend the time in active exertions than in painful anxieties, commands his sons, “Get you down thither and buy for us from thence; that we may live and not die.” A manly struggle with the difficulties surrounding us is the shortest road to sunnier days; shorter by far than that which leads through the slough of despond, or terminates in the marshes of inactivity.

Famine in Hebron, an abundance of food in Egypt’s graneries! An old man sinking under the weight of accumulated griefs; his son, in a distant land, wearing on his brow a crown of honor! Jacob facing starvation; Joseph dispensing food to slaves!

The existence of Joseph’s corn is announced in the home where the simple knowledge that Joseph still lived would have been a well-spring of happiness! That Joseph, possessing as he did the tenderness of a womanly affection and having the facilities of an empire at his command, should have made seemingly no effort to convey to Hebron the intelligence of his preservation

seems strange. To infer, however, that he had become indifferent to the happiness of his father, or that haughtiness had dethroned natural affection would be an unjust aspersion upon his character. The issue of the matter, so evidently of God, certainly justifies us in concluding that the steps leading thereto were also ordered by Him who is "wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." Perhaps, the knowledge of Joseph's career in Egypt—revealing as it of necessity would the foul crime of his brethren—might have caused more anguish than joy. Quite manifestly, his time had not yet come. When his erring brethren have felt contrition and found pardon, envy being displaced by love, then with less danger of augmenting a father's trials he may announce himself as still alive and the dispenser of food to famishing thousands. It is to results such as these, which shall in turn become the causes of yet more wonderful effects, that the providences of God are evidently tending.

What Jacob advised, his sons undertook to accomplish. And now behold them bowed in the presence of Joseph with their faces to the earth. These are they who once asked, with a keen sense of insulted honor, "shalt thou indeed reign over us?" In fact it was with the design of preventing this that they first proposed murder, and subsequently sold innocence into slavery. Man's effort to thwart the Divine pur-

poses how futile!—the very means employed to avert the detested result God employs to bring it about.

“Joseph knew his brethren.” Strange emotions thrill his soul. The promptings of fraternal affection are repressed by a sense of injured innocence. Half buried incidents, under the glowing heat of awakened memory, suggest many tantalizing questions. Are their feelings changed? Have they experienced a sense of remorse? Have they implored forgiveness from the God of their fathers? Is my father still alive? Is Benjamin the object of a malice as bitter as that which was visited upon me? Shall I announce the steps in my career from Dothan’s pit to Egypt’s palace? Innocence has long endured keen anguish, retribution requires that guilt should suffer for a brief period at least. To grant unsolicited pardon, which would probably be interpreted as weakness and would assuredly furnish no secure basis for future friendship, might only rekindle the fires of envy. Since infinite mercy demands repentance as the condition of forgiveness, is it wise in me to bestow friendship so lavishly as to tempt those who have wronged me once to wrong me again?

The tantalizing question which thus unexpectedly presented itself to Joseph is the same as that which confronts us all in our dealings with enemies, of whom only weaklings are destitute

—how shall I treat those who have greatly injured me and as yet have shown no evidence of changed feelings? Those, whose natural temperament prompts them to answer, “Forgive them freely and at once, restoring them to your entire confidence without the fear of inviting renewed impositions,” will be disinclined to commend the course adopted by Joseph, who sought to awaken the slumbering consciences of his brethren before he declared them forgiven, or received them again into full friendship. To effect this “he made himself strange unto them :” “he spake roughly unto them :” “ye are spies,” he said : “to see the nakedness of the land ye are come :” “ye shall not go forth hence, except your youngest brother come hither :” “this do and live, for I fear God ; if ye be true men, let one of your number be bound in the house of your prison ; go ye, carry corn for the famine of your houses ; but bring your youngest brother unto me :” “he took from them Simeon [perhaps the guiltiest] and bound him before their eyes :” “he restored every man’s money into his sack.”

It cannot be denied that in the method adopted in the treatment of his brethren our hero manifested a degree of dissimulation closely bordering on falsehood ; a species of duplicity, which, though the reverse of a still more offensive form, and one too frequent—the pretence of friendship while hatred rankles in the bosom

—was duplicity none the less ; an amount of angry vindictiveness which, to say the least, trenched narrowly upon the borders of transgression. We do not feel called upon to justify or even to extenuate his conduct. His character as a whole and the success which in the end crowned his life are a sufficient guarantee that most persons will judge him charitably. We may safely affirm that even if his own conscience was not as sensitive as we might deem desirable, he was not thereby necessarily disqualified for undertaking the task of arousing the consciences of others. If the possession of a moral sense keenly and equally alive to every possible form of sin be a condition of successfully convicting others of violations of divine law, then, most assuredly, no human being is fitted to address the souls of men in reference to their relations to eternal rectitude. None are free from iniquity. No one has a conscience enlightened in every respect. Each has a mission to all ; all, a mission to each.

While we do not regard ourselves as under any obligation to justify Joseph's method of procedure, neither do we consider ourselves called upon strongly to condemn it. Unquestionably, anger under certain circumstances is not only excusable but commendable. "Be ye angry and sin not." Though "the discretion of a man deferreth anger ;" though "anger resteth," that is, *abideth*, "in the bosom of a fool"

and nowhere else ; though " a bishop," according to Paul, " must be slow to anger," yet neither the man of discretion, the fool, nor the bishop is asked to believe that righteous indignation has no proper function in the economy of grace. As long as there are transgressions on earth meriting divine anger, there will be conduct meriting human detestation. The call to forgive those that trespass against us, loud as it is, is not a call to ignore impositions, to respect imbecilities, to be utterly indifferent to insult or to treat enemies as we treat friends. Until we are able to deny that Christ looked round in anger on the multitude, that He quite frequently spoke words of burning indignation, of scathing anger, of scorching irony and even of unmitigated contempt, we shall find it needless to affirm that anger is a violation of divine law, provided it is well directed, properly controlled, and dissevered from hatred. Of righteous indignation, and even of scorn, there is no noble soul that is entirely destitute.

If Joseph's language is entirely consistent with truth—which is quite doubtful, since his brethren were not spies, nor is it probable that he viewed them as such—we are perhaps at liberty to judge him innocent in employing dissimulation, since John the Baptist declared, " I am not Elias neither that prophet," and a greater than he when journeying to Emmaus " made as though He would have gone further," and on more oc-

casions than one baffled His enemies by resorting to a wise and justifiable dissimulation. Consequently, in pretending not to know his brethren—"Making himself strange unto them"—Joseph may have been guiltless, more guiltless than the woman of Bathurim who in the time of Absalom's rebellion concealed Jonathan and Ahimaz in a well, and spreading over the mouth a cloth covered with ground corn said to Absalom's servants who were pursuing the messengers, "They be gone over the water," intending to be understood, as she in fact was, as affirming that they had crossed the river, and satisfying her conscience with the subterfuge that they were over the water—in a well. But if in his subsequent intercourse he was guilty of affirming what he had good reason for believing was not true, as seems most probable, let us not presume to shield him from merited condemnation. Truthfulness is a virtue of such transcendent merit that untruthfulness deserves severest censure.

He who is incapable of manifesting sternness of character as occasion requires is destitute of one chief element of success in life, and is nearly certain to remain in inferior station and to be subjected to numerous impositions. As might be expected, Joseph addressed his brethren with affected sternness, inquiring in tones of harshness, "Whence come ye?" To assert that he acted unwisely is to assume that gentleness

would have been as effective in recalling the cruel incidents of former years, in arousing slumbering consciences, and in laying permanent foundations for restored confidence and enduring affection, as well-tempered severity. It is to ignore the fact that the prophets, and Paul, and Christ, the Great Teacher, were accustomed in their dealings with great transgressors to speak words of severity first, those of gentleness subsequently, when the barbed arrows of conviction had entered the soul. Mildness and mercy have their mission, it is true, and a noble mission it is ; but severity as unrelenting as the eternal laws of moral rectitude has its mission also, to prepare a pathway to the heart for the tender footsteps of heaven's gentle visitant. The thick clouds need to be riven by the forked lightning before the genial sunshine can kiss the sleeping landscape. The storm must purify the atmosphere and distil fertility to the roots of vegetation ere the gently quivering beams of light can impart beauty to the grass and vigor to the bud ; ere they can shape the lily, paint the rose, perfect the fruit or load the waving grain with nutriment for man. All sunshine and no storm would make earth a parched desert. All mercy, beautiful as is the heavenly maiden, would render existence on earth intolerable ; would encourage wickedness to trample justice beneath its feet.

Accordingly Joseph, in treating his brethren

sternly, exhibited, as we judge, a rare degree of self-control—restraining present emotion out of regard to future advantage and earning for himself a place among that noble few who regulate their conduct by reason not by feeling. When he saw it necessary he was able to adopt God's method—sternness first, gentleness afterward; first Sinai, then Calvary; first Elijah, then Elisha. Rare wisdom, this of Joseph! and he had his reward, the unbroken confidence and the undiminished affection of his brethren till with moistened eyes they laid his embalmed body in its Egyptian sepulchre.

“Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land ye are come,” were words well fitted to remind them of the tragedy in Dothan, and to send the burning arrow of conviction into hearts that had nearly frozen into insensibility. They were addressed to those who once charged him with being a spy, and with coming to ascertain their condition and conduct to report the same in a father's house. He came to them in a costly robe, professing friendship and casting himself upon their hospitality for bread; they came to him with silver and gold, craving bread and protesting, “thy servants are true men,” “twelve brethren, the sons of one man in Canaan.”

The fact that he did not employ the power he now possessed in severely punishing those who had so deeply wronged him is conclusive proof

that he was not actuated by revenge, but by a laudable desire to bring them to a sense of their guilt. He whom they sold into slavery might have doomed them to perpetual bondage. Pharaoh and all Egypt would no doubt have applauded the deed—would have commended the vigilance displayed in guarding the security of the realm. His purpose, however, was evidently to concentrate their thoughts upon the turpitude of their past crimes. "Ye are spies," the very words seem to intimate to them that retributive justice is upon their track.

Some perhaps, though willing to acquit Joseph of revenge, are strongly disposed to censure him for employing language closely bordering on profanity. The expression, "by the life of Pharaoh," was evidently a form of oath—and was needlessly introduced. While we should be extremely careful not to allow this or any other sin to conceal itself beneath the cloak of sanctity, it may be well for us to remember that time expended in correcting defects in our own character is more wisely employed than when consumed in severe condemnation of those who lived in ruder times and under entirely different circumstances. Goodness is a matter of degrees. Times alter, and men alter with them. There can be no question that in some ages and amid certain surroundings, persons have been intensely religious and sincerely devoted to the service of God, who were yet guilty of gross

sins. Charity requires that we judge men as God judges them, by the measure of light they enjoy. "The times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent."

In denouncing sin we are justified in employing severity; but as none are faultless we should judge men charitably. As there are spots on the sun, so are there stains on even the purest character. Let us therefore tutor ourselves to look upon the good qualities in our fellow-men, hoping that these may ultimately become so resplendent as to hide the stains of guilt, at least from the ordinary gaze of men. "Charity suffereth long and is kind . . . thinketh no evil."

To the charge of Joseph the ten made reply: "To buy food are thy servants come; . . . thy servants are no spies." "We are all one man's sons." Is it probable that a father, who owing to the infirmities of age can no longer chase the glittering bubble of ambition, would send his sons on an expedition so hazardous unless impelled by necessity? It is food we covet, not conquest; joyous intelligence for an aged father, not a knowledge of the military power or material resources of this empire. Not only are we the sons of one man—which would be extremely improbable were we the hired spies of some neighboring king; not only are we from the distant Canaan, an impoverished country from which this powerful kingdom has little to

fear ; not only are we plain shepherds who are content to tread the humbler walks of life and whose energies are necessarily expended, not in furthering the plots of heartless conquerors but in procuring bread for an aged father and starving children ; but "we are true men," not the deceitful emissaries of intriguing politicians. One of our number, "the youngest, is this day with our father, and one is not." Spies do not announce their nationality. They shroud their past history. They conceal their present purposes. They adopt, as far as possible, the manners and customs of the country into which they enter.

The situation of the ten—how similar to that of Joseph twenty years previous ! They have now a message from Jacob ; then Joseph had. They are now seeking bread for a famishing father, Joseph was then endeavoring to obtain intelligence which would comfort the aching heart of a devoted parent. This is the question now, "How shall the home in Hebron procure bread?" This was the problem then, "How shall it obtain intelligence in reference to the welfare of its absent members?"

By persisting in his accusation, Joseph obtained the knowledge he so ardently coveted. Jacob is still alive, and is kindly cared for by those whose conduct must have embittered his existence. Benjamin still lives, and occupying, most probably, the first place in his father's af-

fection is left at home to alleviate the sorrows of a saddened old age. He himself is viewed as dead, certainly his father has been led to believe him dead, and even his brethren know not but this may be true, perhaps sincerely hope it is.

Such is the picture which these once envious brothers have unwittingly sketched for Joseph. What emotions it must have stirred! What memories it must have awakened! Present joys are struggling for the mastery over past griefs. Evidently, the lapse of time, which has wrought so many changes in my own career, has also wrought changes in the home of my childhood. Kindness has taken the place of hatred. Jacob and Benjamin are loved where Jacob and Joseph were hated. "One," they say, "is not." Then I am remembered still, remembered apparently in kindness, my name a household treasure.

" So the bells of memory's wondrous city
Peal for me their old melodious chime ;
So my heart pours forth a changeful ditty,
Sad and pleasant, from the bygone time."

To find ourselves tenderly remembered where we feared we had been forgotten, is certainly one of earth's most exquisite delights. Indeed, the universal longing for remembrance even after death, and especially the ardent desire of the Christian to be remembered for the good he has done, furnishes to the reflective an almost

unanswerable argument for the soul's immortality ; an argument easily appreciated because keenly felt. Few indeed are they who do not covet an immortality of remembrance. May we not infer that the nearly universal desire to accumulate perishable riches is a relic of man's conviction that he is destined to a deathless immortality ? The inordinate propensity to provide for the wants of the near future is perhaps only the perversion of a natural impulse to make provision against the needs of an eternal existence. May we not also employ the intense longing for remembrance, so common in all ages, and the ineradicable desire to love and be loved but the better after death if God will permit, as unexpected witnesses to the soul's continued existence after it has laid aside the robes of mortality ? Thus Joseph's joy over the discovery that his name is still cherished in the humble home at Hebron, furnishes one thread in that mighty cable which binds the drifting soul to the stable shores of eternity.

“ Let earth dissolve, yon ponderous orbs descend,
And grind us into dust ; the soul is safe ;
The man emerges ; mounts above the wreck,
As towering flame from Nature's funeral pyre.”

“ It must be so. Plato thou reasonest well !
Else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,
This longing after immortality ?
Or whence this secret dread, and inward horror
Of falling into naught ? Why shrinks the soul

Back on herself and startles at destruction ?
'Tis the divinity that stirs within us,
'Tis heaven itself, that points out a hereafter,
And intimates eternity to man."

Consider, in conclusion, how frequently Christ, our brother exalted at the right of the King, recognizes us as His brethren, though unrecognized by us ; how often amid dealings seemingly harsh He conceals tenderest love, even infinite kindness ; how frequently He is endeavoring, by inexplicable providences, to arouse the slumbering conscience to a conception of the enormity of its guilt in the treatment extended to Him in the past. With a well-timed delay in granting blessings which we ardently covet and which we have perhaps earnestly implored, He is inducing us to examine the record of our lives, with the trembling hope that we may discover the barriers which prevent the inflow of His love. It may be that in seasons of spiritual declension, when love is languishing and faith is partially eclipsed, we come asking for spiritual food and receive this response, as we imagine, " Ye are spies ; to see the nakedness of God's treasury are ye come." This rebuke, we may rest assured, is not administered because of Christ's inability or unwillingness to grant the blessings, but with the intention of prompting us to probe the deceitful heart, confess past wanderings, and implore forgiveness. When

we are deeply penitent for past transgressions, earnestly anxious for present blessings, and determinedly resolved on future obedience, He will grant the request. To do so sooner would be to tempt us to under-estimate the gifts of His grace, to encourage us in believing that we may count on His love while disregarding His clearly expressed wishes.

Those, however, may confidently hope to obtain spiritual nourishment, who, to every seeming repulse are able to respond, "Thy servants are true men," sincerely devoted to God, and deeply solicitous of presenting the evidence of our appreciation of the benefits bestowed.

CHAPTER IX.

JOSEPH AROUSING THE CONSCIENCES OF HIS BRETHREN.

(Continued.)

"The noise is so great one can't hear God thunder."

"The way to heaven is by weeping-cross."

"Who will not be ruled by the rudder, must be ruled by the rock."

PERHAPS it was the instructive narrative of Joseph's life which furnished the Hebrew nation with the following beautiful apologue :

"The Eternal sent forth His creating voice, saying, 'Let two lights shine in the firmament,

as kings of the earth, and dividers of the revolving year.'

"He spake and it was done. The sun rose as the first light. As a hero rejoices on his triumphal march, so rose he, clothed in the splendor of God. A crown of all hues encircled his brow; the earth rejoiced, and the flowers put on their best array.

"The other light looked on with envy, as it saw that it could not outvie the glorious one in splendor. 'What need is there,' it asked, murmuring to itself, 'of two kings on one throne? Why was I the second instead of the first?'

"Forthwith its brightness faded, chased away by its inward chagrin.

"The moon stood pale as the dead, ashamed before all the heavenly ones, and wept—'Have pity on me, Father of all creatures, have pity.'

"Then the angel of God stood before the sad one and told her the decree of the Highest, 'Because thou hast envied the light of the sun, unhappy one, henceforth thou shalt only shine by his light

"'Yet, child of error, weep not. The Merciful One has forgiven thy sin, and turned it to good for thee. 'Go,' said He, 'speak comfortably to the sorrowful one; she will be at least a queen in her brightness. The tears of her sorrow will be a balm to quicken all living things and renew the strength which the beams of the sun have made faint.'

“The moon went away comforted, and, lo, there streamed round her that brightness in which she still shines; she set forth on that peaceful path in which she still moves as Queen of the night and Leader of the stars. Lamenting her sin and pitying the tears of men, she seeks whom she can revive, and looks for any one she can cheer.”

Whatever may have been the germ of this striking fable—which so artistically sets forth the nature and the consequences of envy, and as well the willingness on the part of the Merciful One to forgive the sin—there can be no question that the incidents connected with the career of Joseph and his brethren are an illustration of the principle therein announced. The ten envied the favored son; the splendor of their reputation was seriously tarnished thereby; happiness erected her glittering throne in other hearts, not in theirs. Unwilling to acquiesce in the decree of heaven that his success in life should eclipse theirs, the time came when they “only shone by his light.” He was Egypt’s lord; their greatness but a reflection of his. He had nearly inexhaustible stores from which to bestow bounties upon the needy; they were dependent upon him, as the moon is upon the sun, for the daily supplies which enabled them to maintain subdued cheerfulness, and to shed comfort within the precincts of a narrower domain than providence had assigned to him.

Yet—and to this we invite especial attention—the Merciful One was ready to forgive and to turn even envy “to good for them.” Their sorrow became balm. Their tears were transformed into needed provisions. Lamenting their sin and compassionating the anguish surrounding them, they sought whom they might cheer—an aged father and breadless children.

It was, as seems manifest, with a view of awakening his brethren to a sense of their guilt, thereby securing for them the benefits of Divine forgiveness, that Egypt’s ruler now thrust them into prison. To immure those in a dungeon who once hurled him into a pit ; to leave them in loneliness to recall from memory’s buried page the burning recollection of wrong done to one who was not merely entitled, as they now are, to a charitable interpretation of his conduct, but to brotherly treatment ; to disregard the entreaties of those who once contemned a brother’s earnest petitions for rescue ; to treat with harshness those who had once treated innocence with cruelty—these, assuredly, were agencies well adapted to awaken remorse, for the past, and a keen desire for forgiveness from that Infinite One, whose purpose is unmistakably graven upon the life record of free agents, “ They shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.” Nor were such agencies unnecessary. Ordinarily confession, re-

penitance, and forgiveness are conditioned upon their employment. Few, comparatively, ever become contrite in spirit till they are forced to feel that they are evidently bearing the consequences of their own folly, are enduring the penalties of their own transgressions. "Men are but grown-up children," consequently the rod of chastisement is sometimes necessary to enable us to perceive, and much more to induce us to confess, that we have violated the laws of our Father. The professing Christian, it may be, has been guilty of some gross sin. Does he present himself, bathed in tears and trembling with emotion, to acknowledge before the brotherhood the dishonor he has done to religion? Not in all likelihood—except in rare cases—unless the officers of God's church, imitating the example presented in the narrative before us, have previously employed the proper agency, the discipline of the sanctuary, sending the arrow of conviction into a heart that has been hardening under the influence of evil. Then, if ever he was a child of God, and unless those "set to watch for souls" have neglected duty till his sin is whiteness compared with theirs, the time will come when as an humble penitent he will offer the prayer, "Brethren in Christ, forgive me; Merciful Father, permit me to wash afresh in the fountain opened for uncleanness."

O that in this age of mock charity, when those who bear the name of Christ are sometimes fore-

most in shielding criminals from the penalties of law, even petitioning for the pardon of murderers and defending evil in the bosom of the sanctuary, especially if it is clothed in purple and pays heavy pew-rents ; O that in these days of Phariseeism, when certain classes are determinedly set on clinging to each other and to an outward, perishable organization rather than to the enduring principles of immutable justice ; O that in this century, when faith seems nearly eclipsed, being regarded too seldom as proceeding from the same spirit as obedience—a spirit which in the intellect we denominate faith, in the will, obedience—would that in these days, when mercy is becoming the bitterest cruelty, we could be induced to imitate the example of Egypt's shrewd ruler—yea, imbibe the manliness of Paul and the heroic self-abnegation of the fearless Master, employing approved agencies to arouse the slumbering consciences of those who are asleep in Zion, who, apparently without knowing it, are dreaming about decking the body from which the spiritual life may perhaps be slowly ebbing away. Infidelity, in the forms in which it is most dangerous, would soon writhe in the agonies of death. The chasm between Scriptural Christianity and embodied Christianity—over which thousands are plunging into endless hopelessness—would disappear as rapidly as the fogs of night vanish before the rising sun. Hope, issuing from a night seeming to

deepen in darkness—whose curtains threatening to enshroud heaven's light appall the souls of those whose feeble hands are striving to rend the hated texture—would beam on regenerated faith, "like another morning risen on midnoon." There might be less Pharisaical pride in the outward forms of religion, would there be less devotion to its imperishable principles?

Fertile in expedients, Joseph employed still another agency in awakening the needed sense of guilt. "Send," said he, "one of you, and let him fetch your brother, and ye shall be kept in prison." Though a mere fancy, it nevertheless seems quite probable that this proposition—looking, perhaps, to the release of the least guilty—may have been designed to secure a twofold result, to test the disposition of Reuben towards Benjamin, and to remind the nine that retributive justice with marvellous discrimination pursues the guilty, visiting upon them merited punishment. Since all Orientals are in the habit of employing proverbs freely, it requires no great stretch of the imagination to picture the guilty inmates of Egypt's prison as excitedly whispering one to another, "The road has ears, and so has the wall." "Every word you speak, good or bad, light or serious, is written in a book." "A man follows his own will, then comes retribution." "With the measure a man measures to others, it shall be measured to him again." "Whatsoever God does is right."

“ A good life is better than high birth.” “ The bread and the rod come from heaven together.” These are Jewish sayings, which, adapted to the situation, may well have fallen from the lips of Jacob’s imprisoned sons.

After languishing three days in the prison they are startled by the announcement, “ This do, and live ; for I fear God. If ye be true men, let one of your brethren be bound in the house of your prison ; go ye.”

Does Egypt’s lord fear Jehovah? Is his religion genuine and ours merely formal? Is the minister of an idolatrous monarch, and the son-in-law of a heathen priest, willing to show mercy because he fears Abraham’s God? We sold a brother into slavery ; are the tender mercies of the uncircumcised less cruel? No crime, the world over, surpasses ours in blackness ! It outtops the crimes committed by those who “ are suckled on a worn-out faith.” It has no equal save in the pious iniquity of those who recklessly pervert the natural instinct of man.

“ Who, in religion, however foul the infamy,
Will bless it, and approve it with a text,
Hiding the grossness with fair ornament.”

Conscience, man’s torment here and his hell hereafter, is now thoroughly aroused. Deep in the soul, with thundering voice, she repeats the past deeds of shame, wringing confession from those who under the benumbing influence of

envy were once deaf to mercy's call. Lips, which in reference to the fatal secret had been sealed for more than a score of years, are made vocal by the magic touch of contrition. Tongues, which by practising dissimulation had become nearly incapable of uttering the truth in reference to the hidden wickedness, are instantaneously loosened. "They said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother; . . . therefore is this distress come upon us." Justice waited long. She has tracked us down at last. The sin we successfully concealed. Its penalties we cannot escape. Retribution, which we imagined blind, has found its victims and with unsheathed sword is now piercing our anguished hearts.

As if inspired of heaven to send the sharpened arrows of remorse still deeper into tortured souls, Reuben exclaims, "Behold his blood is required." Like vinegar upon nitre, like burning coals upon raw flesh, must these words have fallen upon the palpitating hearts of the guilty nine; the more severe because they fell from the lips of one who once weepingly implored, "Do not sin against the child." If the degree of self-condemnation is determined by the point-edness of the rebuke; if remorse is measured by the fitness of the admonition to remind of past iniquity; if the reproaches of conscience are intensified by the conviction that sin was committed against light and in face of warning, then

the anguish of these unhappy brothers must have been poignant indeed. When self-purchased suffering has done its work, a few words fitly spoken are as goads, "as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies." "There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword." Conscience-stricken, they must have been driven almost to despair.

Joseph, perceiving the effect of his treatment, and hearing in the endeared language of childhood their many expressions of genuine penitence, could restrain his feelings no longer. Turning away he wept; the honored governor of Egypt's proud monarchy becoming once more an affectionate son and a forgiving brother in Hebron's humble home. An Egyptian dress, though it covers, cannot conceal an Israelitish heart. Finding himself remembered by those who treated him with cruelty, and learning that Benjamin was the object of paternal affection and fraternal care, he is overwhelmed with emotions which he dares not disclose and cannot repress. Tears of joy, mingled no doubt with those of sorrow, find their fittest opportunity to flow as his face is turned away; as in communion with God he contemplates the wonders of providence.

Having dried his tears and calmed the tumult of his soul he assumes once more the sternness of the judge. Not as yet has the time come to grant pardon. They feel penitent, it is true; but

do they fully recognize the existence of a law of retributive justice which is accurate, certain, constant in its operation ; a law the knowledge of which is by no means dependent upon revelation and from whose penalties escape is impossible ? They do not believe in fate, therefore it matters not that the poets have united in representing her as blind. They do not endorse the doctrine of indiscriminate benevolence, consequently it is of slight concern to them that this divinity is painted and sculptured with bandaged eyes. But do they accept that divinity which all lands and all ages view as the avenging angel of justice ; as possessing eyes rivalling in brightness those of the eagle, being capable of peering into the darkness of midnight, into the retreats of the guilty and into the gloom of the shrouded future ; as treading with noiseless steps, because his feet are shod with wool, but as nevertheless ceaselessly pursuing the criminal, till with unerring accuracy the consequences of his crime are visited upon him ? As Joseph, apparently the very embodiment of retribution, is seen binding Simeon, amazement must have alternated with horror. Though all are guilty, and all have suffered, the guiltiest is bound for further punishment. Even over the tumult of centuries we seem to hear awakened consciences saying, " The guilty secret which we thought buried forever is known—each man's guilt being accurately measured."

“ Nature has her laws
That will not brook infringement ; in all time,
All circumstances, all states, in every clime
She holds aloft the same avenging sword ;
And, sitting on her boundless throne sublime,
The vials of her wrath, with justice stored,
Shall in her own good hour, on all that's ill be poured.”

To increase their perplexity Joseph orders his steward to put each man's money in the mouth of his sack. By giving sums of silver and gold to those who once sold him for a mere pittance, and by providing liberally for them and for their families, he is endeavoring to give permanency to religious emotions which are extremely liable to be evanescent. Unmoved, they listened to the cries of a brother famishing in the wilderness pit. Coveting silver, they sold him into slavery. The bread they eat, and the bundles of money taken from their sacks, shall daily awaken regrets for the past till penitence has completed its work, resulting in changed feelings and altered purposes.

Are we not justified in strongly commending the course adopted ? Are not Christian laborers, in all ages, subjected to the temptation of “ healing slightly the hurt of God's people ? ” of saying, “ Peace, peace,” ere the foundations of permanent peace with God are laid in the soul ? Conviction is mistaken for repentance. Alas, when the keen sense of remorse has died away, the character remains substantially unchanged.

Hopes are engendered, it may be, but the last state is worse than the first. "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion ; that anoint themselves with the chief ointment ; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph." "Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar." "Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof."

Fearing that God was designing to punish them more in the excess of money than in the destitution of food, "their hearts failed them, and they were afraid, saying one to another, 'What is this that God hath done unto us?'" A quickened moral sense prompted them to imagine that retributive justice was preparing channels, through which further anguish would pour in upon their tortured souls. Perhaps the sons of men in all ages should feel that there is more to dread than to desire in the sudden acquisition of wealth—especially if no equivalent is rendered. Manifestly it is wise to be somewhat suspicious of those gains which, coming we know not whence, may entail misery. The proceeds of illegitimate speculation, and as well the accumulations of dishonesty in a business entirely legitimate and emphatically the riches gathered from pandering to the debased appetites of men, are

certain sooner or later either to make themselves wings, or to convert themselves into a stream of liquid fire burning into the tormented conscience, and hissing amid the overflowing waves of worldliness.

Joseph's conduct had the effect of increasing Jacob's misery. As he saw the bundles of money emptied from his sons' sacks, he was afraid. On receiving an account of their many trials, the imprisonment undergone, the detention of Simeon and the demand for Benjamin, Egypt's governor must have seemed a most insolent, cruel, unreasonable tyrant. The character we assign to an action is determined in great measure by our conception in reference to the motives in which it originated. Joseph's conduct, when viewed as proceeding from arrogant suspicion, produced bitter hostility; subsequently, when seen to have originated in genuine affection, it excited profound gratitude, and effected permanent reconciliation. When, as often happens, God's tender interest on our behalf comes in forms of adversity, we do well to repress all murmuring and calmly await the end, anticipating a complete vindication of His dealings with us.

Jacob's lamentation, being that of helpless, bereaved, inconsolable old age, is exceedingly touching: "Me have ye bereaved of my children. Joseph is not; Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away . . . If mischief

befall him . . . then shall ye bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave." How often by gloomy forebodings we augment the burden of present grief. Even the agencies which are fitted, and indeed designed of Heaven, to effect our deliverance from trouble are looked upon as sources of new anguish ; our increased trials being the result of a partial view of the heaven-ordained instrumentalities, which are working together for our good. We miss our Simeon ; we refuse to surrender our Benjamin, not perceiving that these are necessary steps to our embracing the long-lost Joseph. We cling to the less good, thereby rendering the possession of the greater impossible. We refuse to surrender the world, and consequently fail in securing Christ. We decline to part with transient pleasures, and as a result miss eternal joys. We obstinately refuse to permit sin to be separated from us, and by consequence holiness is not our enduring possession.

Ere closing, it may be profitable to employ the incidents of this narrative to strengthen our conviction that the sterner dispensations of Providence are often necessary, in order to startle us from carnal security ; that to prevent religion from becoming a mere formality, indeed, to prevent it from degenerating into a gross superstition, conscience needs to be dominant. If it is not, Christianity, so far as its effects upon human society is concerned, sinks speedily to the

level of heathen forms of faith, and with this disadvantage, that if it is to become a form of superstition millions prefer some other. Take from the church the class of persons of whom Joseph was a type, and she would soon become a barrier to the progress of genuine religion. Without her prophets, men who scorn shams and feel commissioned of Heaven to demolish formalism and arouse slumbering consciences, the church would soon become, what some of her ablest enemies affirm she has already become, a powerful instrumentality in making men worse. The time has been when embodied Christianity lay like a mighty incubus upon the spiritual life of the world ; and the period may again arrive when the most serious obstacle to the cause of heaven-revealed religion may be the church itself as embodied in those whose moral natures have become blunted, as were those of Jacob's sons. Formal religion may flourish ; spiritual piety may languish. Wealth may flow into the treasury of the church ; regard to the honor of religion may have perished. Men may be claiming faith, while not possessing sufficient to make one manly stand in defence of truth, while living upon the faith of buried generations.

Indeed, in this day—when some of the most heinous transgressors of Divine laws are within the church, and when the church in its organized capacity shields them from merited censure, causing alarm to the friends of Scriptural Chris-

tianity and emboldening the enemy to charge her with being in league with evil, with having mortgaged herself to the world, parting with her heavenly birthright for stones and mortar and permitting men to enter the ministry for a crust of bread—are we not called upon to imitate the example of Joseph? to endeavor, though it costs us many tears in secret, to arouse consciences that have slumbered for many long years? to startle those who seem likely to remain at ease in Zion till the thunders of the judgment day awaken them?

Again: In the trials of life, and even in the cruelties of friends, how frequently might true piety discern God's hand, allowing unkindness that so conscience might more certainly remind us of past transgressions. Trials, severe and long-continued, are often necessary to teach us lessons which we might otherwise never learn. It is in the furnace that our Father presents the sweetest evidence of His love.

Nor should we close, without observing that our Heavenly Father sometimes employs unmerited prosperity, as an agency in awakening a sense of sin. Unlooked-for wealth flows into our coffers. Unexpected success crowns our efforts. Unearned kindness greets us. There is joy where we expected sorrow, ease where we had anticipated toil, profit where we had counted on loss, gold and silver where we had looked for fruitless effort and hopeless penury. These,

viewed by us as harbingers of coming trouble, may be Heaven's agency for producing sorrow for the past and through this hope for the future.

CHAPTER X.

JOSEPH TESTING THE DISPOSITION OF HIS BRETHREN.

"He who does no more than another is no better than another."

"A full vessel must be carried carefully."

"Who serves God serves a good Master."

HAS envy perished? Sore indeed must have been the pressure which forced Jacob to command, "Go again, buy us a little food." He had parted with Joseph; he now mourned him as dead. He had sent the ten for corn; one returned not. Certainly in the feebleness of an old age saddened by sorrow, he will be extremely reluctant to part with his children again. But unrelenting necessity compels him. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life."

Deep must have been the conviction of Jacob's sons that the mission to Egypt would prove fruitless unless Benjamin accompanied them. The assertion of the father, "My son shall not go down with you," is met with the resolute affirmation, "If thou wilt not send him, we will not go down." Grant our petition, and we will

yield you obedience. Refuse our request, and we will not obey. Preserve yourself and yours, or let pinching famine do its work. Make your choice.

Ardent must have been Jacob's attachment to Benjamin. It prompted him petulantly to ask : "Wherefore dealt ye so ill with me as to tell the man whether ye had yet a brother?" Evidently the heart of the father is "knit to the heart of the son." He loves him as he loves his own life.

With an ardor of devotion, and an irritability of temper somewhat characteristic of advanced years, the father severely tries the disposition of the nine. These, however, though once ready to stain their hands in a brother's blood, now bear with the infirmities of age, even permitting an attachment to Benjamin which frenzied them with envy when exhibited toward Joseph. With no recrimination they calmly assure their father that they were forced to answer the question of Egypt's imperious governor, "Have ye another brother?" Some response we must give. Of falsehood we dared not be guilty. Our lives were in his hand. Human sagacity could not foresee that he would command, "Bring your brother down."

Firm must have been the conviction of Reuben and Judah that Benjamin might be safely entrusted to his brethren. One exclaims : "Slay my two sons if I bring him not to thee ;"

the other, "I will be surety for him . . . if I bring him not unto thee and set him before thee, let me bear the blame forever." Two are convinced that envy no longer rankles in the bosoms of those who in Egypt's prison exclaimed, "We are verily guilty concerning our brother." Rachel's younger son may be safely entrusted to those in whose hearts penitence has done its work. The experiences of twenty years have graven lessons on the soul. Jacob's partiality no longer kindles envy.

Jacob bows submissively to what is unavoidable: "If it must be so now, do this." Procrastination, though a species of relief under some circumstances, only augments our misery in the present exigency. The surrender must be made. To detain my son is to expose him and the entire family to starvation. Would the sight of him mitigate the pains of hunger? Go. "If I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved." I commit the issue to the God of my fathers. My will I resign to that of Him who has thus far guided and sheltered me and mine. "Go, my sons, buy us a little food."

Relying upon God, the patriarch yet employs means to facilitate the success of his sons' mission. As a token of homage he orders them to take "the best fruits . . . a little balm, and a little honey, spices and myrrh, and nuts and almonds." Remembering that Esau's anger was appeased by a present, he evidently hopes

that kindness may soften the heart of Egypt's arrogant ruler.

He would have them deal justly however, as well as kindly, equitably as well as liberally. "Take double money in your hands, and the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks, carry it again in your hand ; peradventure it was an oversight." Generosity is but the flower ; honesty, the root. To retain money paid by mistake is scarcely less dishonest than intentional theft. And an attempt to purchase, by means of rich presents, the esteem of one whose money we unlawfully retain would be to add meanness to dishonesty ; would be baseness beneath contempt, the more despicable because known only to ourselves.

Jacob further adds : "Take also your brother." Tyrant though Egypt's minister is — unfeeling, unreflecting, presumptuous—our necessities force compliance with his unreasonable demands.

Nor was Jacob's acquiescence a mere sullen resignation to the inevitable. He manifested no rebellion of heart. He yielded gracefully to what seemed Heaven's will. Having employed agencies fitted to conciliate the ruler whom he feared, he commits the issue to his Heavenly Father, breathing the ardent prayer, "And God Almighty give you mercy before the man."

With the heart of their father in custody and with money and presents in their hands, the nine set out a second time for the Valley of the

Nile. On their arrival they immediately present themselves before Pharaoh's prime minister. Their dress as well as their features must have reminded him of childhood's sunny days. They came no doubt in the long, flowing dress of the East, a tunic of linen or cotton bound around the waist by a girdle; their heads covered with turbans, or a plain kerchief of cotton folded so that three of the corners hung over the back and shoulders, leaving the face uncovered; their feet shod with sandals.

On seeing Benjamin, Joseph immediately orders preparation for a royal feast, not daring, apparently, to trust his emotions in a private interview. It is evidently his purpose to test the disposition of the ten toward his youngest brother and toward his father. At former interviews he had sought to awaken conscience; now, by the mixture of kindness and severity, he seeks to ascertain the hidden feelings of their hearts. Is their affection for Benjamin above the reach of envy? their love for a father such that partiality shown to Rachel's son will no longer excite malice? Will they cling to a brother in adversity? Will they make sacrifices to secure his return to a doting father? Two tests shall decide.

The first test employed was kindness. He affectionately inquires: "Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive?" To hear them say in the warmth of

filial affection, "Thy servant, our father, is in good health;" and to see them, in recognition of the kindness, bow down their heads and make obeisance, must have thrilled a soul struggling with overwhelming emotions. Then seeing the son of unhappy Rachel, he kindly asks: "Is this your younger brother?" "God be gracious unto thee, my son." No resentment now colors the countenances, though their own health is not inquired after. No envy nestles in the bosom, though a benediction has been pronounced upon the youngest. With emotions which he can no longer suppress, Joseph enters his chamber. To certain natures and on some occasions weeping is a species of luxury, a method nature has of restoring equilibrium, even as the waves of the sea lash themselves into quietness.

Removing the traces of tears and assuming his wonted composure, he entered the banqueting room and ordered, "Set on bread." At his command the eleven are arranged at the table in the order of their ages. This strikes them with amazement. But to see their youngest brother's "mess five times so much as their own," to observe this mark of superior esteem, and manifest no discontent, evidently evinces self-control and more than ordinary humility. To see equals receive tokens of superior regard is one of the sorest trials to which envious natures can be subjected. Perhaps no better test

could have been instituted, none more likely to determine whether the brethren had subdued the spirit which once ruled them. That this mark of partiality aroused no malicious feelings may be inferred, not merely from the silence of the record and from the issues of the entire matter, but from the declaration : "They drank and were merry with him."

It might not be difficult, with the assistance of Sir G. Wilkinson's celebrated work on Egypt and with the extensive charts of Lepsius and the drawings of Rosellini, to present a tolerably accurate picture of the scene—the house, the furniture, the household ornaments, the table and its contents, the features and dress of the attendants. The representations of domestic life, as it existed at that period, are so complete and accurate as to render it possible, by a judicious arrangement of details, to present a graphic view of the feast and its surroundings.

The host appears to become satisfied of one thing, that his guests are no longer envious one of another. They do not murmur, though the representative of Egypt's proud monarchy confers especial favors upon the youngest. They would therefore be scarcely likely to complain if a father should load him with tokens of superior affection. Ambition no longer sways their hearts as once it did. Malice has given place to kindly feelings ; hatred, to love.

Of Joseph's feelings we may perhaps form a tolerably clear conception; certainly we cannot describe them.

Shall he now confess, "I am Joseph?" Will it be wise to do so before he has tested their disposition to endure accusation, crimination and recrimination? Will they cling together under harsh treatment? Possibly the less guilty may severely denounce the more criminal. Dissensions may arise. Alienations may be the result. By healing the wound too soon he might be the innocent cause of yet deeper anguish; he might augment the sorrows of aged Jacob, who has become reconciled, in some measure, to his great loss. Not as yet has the time fully come for the disclosure. Possibly, if the cup of joy were now presented to the lips of his mourning father, it might be found to contain dregs of keenest suffering. He will therefore employ a second test—harshness.

Will they cling to Benjamin in adversity? Having restored Simeon and honored Benjamin, having feasted those who once threatened him with starvation, and having loaded them with corn for their famishing families, Joseph commands the steward to "put every man's money in the mouth of his sack," and his own silver cup in the sack of the youngest.

Early in the morning they set out, merry in heart, with glad intelligence for their father. Alas, like joy in general, how brief was theirs!

Pursued and overtaken when scarcely out of the city, they are sternly charged with having repaid kindness by dishonesty ; confidence, by theft. With a boldness, the legitimate fruit of innocence, they ask, "Would we, who carefully brought again what we might have kept, take what was not our own ? If careful search discloses the cup in the sack of either, let him die and we also will be bondsmen."

"Nay," exclaims the steward, "let the guilty one suffer ; let him be a servant ; let the rest be held blameless." As the cup is taken from Benjamin's sack, shame overwhelms them ; despair seizes them.

Will they still adhere to him ? Will they who sold innocent Joseph into slavery make any attempt to shield guilty Benjamin ? True, his father loves him, but affection may not palsy the hand of justice. Even a doting father will scarcely expect law to relent simply because the crime lies with his darling son ; nor will reason justify him in claiming a fulfilment of the promises given. He would not expect Benjamin to be returned in safety if Benjamin incurred the penalties of Egypt's laws. And assuredly they, who devised a falsehood to conceal their sale of Joseph into perpetual slavery, would not stand on ceremony in announcing the nature of the crime which placed fetters on Benjamin. "Surely," you exclaim, "they will surrender Benjamin." No, they will not ; a change has passed

over them. Their feelings are not the same as they were twenty years before. Rending their clothes, they return to the capital, each ready to die for the one a father committed to their keeping. Return to Hebron without him? Impossible.

Again the ten prostrate themselves before Joseph. Judah, who was under the most solemn obligations to return his brother in safety, addresses Egypt's lord. To deny the crime is useless. Though conscious of innocence, to prove themselves innocent is impossible. How shall they excuse, how account for the presence of the cup? Surely to be found in possession of another's property is strong evidence of theft. Judah therefore exclaims, apparently almost in despair, "What shall we say? . . . How shall we clear ourselves? God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants." In the bitterness of remorse for the past, he employs language which seems like a confession of present guilt. It however very clearly evinces a vivid recognition of Divine justice. God, he thinks, is visiting upon them the penalties of former crimes. Accordingly he exclaims, "We are thy servants." If bondage will answer the demands of insulted right, innocent though we are of this charge, we willingly become thy slaves. Helpless, resistance is futile.

It has been well said, "The truly illustrious are they who do not court the world's praise,

but perform the actions which deserve it." And assuredly the self-sacrifice of Judah merits what it has so richly received—the warm admiration of all succeeding ages. Indeed no conspicuous act of self-denial can perish. It has immortality stamped upon it. Thrilling on in undiminished power through the oncoming generations, it is destined to awaken emotions in the noblest hearts, if not in all. Humanity cannot afford to permit its memory to decay. Consequently, calumny and abuse, even when exerting themselves to the utmost, invariably fail in obliterating the remembrance of self-sacrificing devotion to God, to truth, or to accused innocence. The declaration of Martin Luther, "Here I stand, God help me," still lives, though the angry epithets of his enemies have perished long since. The battle cry of Cromwell's army, "For Christ's honor and Christ's crown," will sound down through all time, though those who raised it, and died to bequeath to man the blessing of an untrammelled Gospel, are sleeping where harvests now wave and the wild rose is their only monument.

Judah's declaration must have revealed to his agitated listener the fact that the ten still remembered the sin in Dothan. Evidently a record of past crime confronts them—escape from which they deem impossible, and submission to whose penalties they now view as the shortest road to a sense of acceptance with God. In the court of

heaven, where the here is never divorced from the hereafter, it is irreversibly decreed that the transgressions of a past life shall rise sooner or later, in all their ghastliness, to embitter existence, to force from trembling lips the exclamation, "Out, accursed spot." As a wrong done is an eternal fact, one which no penitence can obliterate, there can be no doubt of guilt, and no doubt of man's inability to wash away the foul stain. What remains? Nothing save resignation under the Divine penalties and prayer for Divine pardon.

How earnestly they may have implored heaven's forgiveness, we know not. This at least is evident, mentioning the guilty secret as a nameless iniquity they seem ready to resign themselves to its endurance in silence—unpitied and unrelieved.

The test has in measure answered the purpose for which it was designed. It has conclusively proved that the ten will make no effort to free themselves. They will not criminate Benjamin. Will they accept freedom, leaving the guilty to his fate? If I consign him to slavery will they petition for his release? Is their love for him and for my father such that they will cling to him in adversity, even with evidences of his guilt before their eyes? "Let the guilty be my servant. Get you up in peace to your father."

This proposal calls forth from Judah a touchingly pathetic appeal. Without attempting to

refute the charge or to extenuate the crime, he earnestly pleads for compassion.

“ O my Lord, thou art even as Pharaoh. Be not angry with me. You asked, ‘Have you a father? have you a brother?’ In the simplicity of unveiled truthfulness we answered: Yes, a father, an old man bending under a weight of misfortune; a brother, the comfort of his declining years, loved the more ardently because ‘another is not.’ That brother you ordered us to bring. We then assured you that compliance with this command would endanger the life of our father. Still, with an authority we dared not contemn, you affirmed, ‘Without him ye shall see my face no more.’ We reported all. Thereupon thy servant, our father, tearfully exclaimed, ‘Ye have bereaved me of my children. Simeon is not, Joseph is not, ye demand Benjamin. My cup of anguish is full.’

“ Hunger long struggled with affection. At length, driven by unrelenting necessity, he ordered, ‘Go again, buy us a little food.’ We assured him, ‘We cannot go except Benjamin accompany us.’ In an agony of uncontrollable grief he exclaimed, ‘Rachel, my unhappy partner in life’s vicissitudes, bare two sons. One left my house in the bloom of youth; he returned no more. In the desolate chambers of my soul these words have been echoing ever since, “surely he is torn in pieces.” Will you take the survivor? Perhaps I may see him no

more. Losing all that now sweetens existence, I shall be forced, during my few remaining days, to drink the embittered dregs of a grief that admits of no relief.'

"Consequently, to appear before our father without the young man, is to become the speechless witnesses of his prolonged death ; nay, is to become his murderers. Our faithlessness may open an untimely grave for one tenderly loved, and yet more tenderly loving. But one duty will be left us, that of burying gray hairs and a broken heart. Only one legacy will be ours, undying grief. Remorse less tolerable than bondage will be mine, for I became surety for the lad. Pledging liberty, honor, life itself, I solemnly promised to bring him back in safety. I covenanted to bear the blame forever if any thing befel him. Now therefore let me be slave instead of the lad. Let my father's favorite son return home with his brethren. I will uncomplainingly bear the penalties of his crime. The burden of slavery, even if it should crush the frail body and break the sorrowing heart, would be scarcely more grievous to bear than the sight of the evils that would come upon my father. For him and for Benjamin I am willing to suffer. The conviction that they are happy will alleviate my own wretchedness."

This eloquent appeal, the natural expression of an overburdened heart, is more than Joseph's full soul can bear. The earnest plea of help-

lessness for mercy is conclusive evidence that his brethren are now ardently attached to Benjamin and Jacob. The revelation of a self-denying love evinces the presence of a gentler spirit, the spirit of unfeigned kindness. This evidently rules in the family. Accordingly, emotions the tenderest and the deepest stir Joseph's inmost being. Joy struggles with sorrow, mercy wrestles with justice. The bosom heaves. The eyes fill with tears. He commands all save his brethren to withdraw. Here, for the present we leave him, alone with those whom he is preparing to declare forgiven. In the hallowed stillness of that hushed hour, and amid the sanctities of family friendships, his aching heart and quivering lips are seeking to explain the mysteries of the past; "So now it was not you that sent me hither, but God." He enjoys a possession, rare in this world, the ability so to control the feelings as to render them submissive to his will.

"Men's proper business in this world," says Ruskin, "falls mainly into three divisions:—

"To know themselves and the existing state of things.

To be happy in themselves and in the existing state of things.

To mend themselves and the existing state of things."

Assuredly Egypt's governor knew man's proper business in this life. He attended to it with discretion. He clearly perceived that two worlds are ours, an inner realm of thought, and an outer world of action; that all radical changes

of character begin in the former as the eternal Spirit is producing bitter regrets for the past and inspiring the determination that the future shall witness an altered life ; that emotions of penitence are evanescent unless they solidify into an unalterable purpose of amendment—then they become an eternal possession, the pledge of undecaying happiness. Not what we *feel*, but what we *do*, will produce permanent effects upon character. Tears, unless turned upon the wheel of purpose, have little or no effect in obliterating the stains of guilt.

If their contrition is genuine, let us not permit ourselves to despise the contrite, however far they may have journeyed in the ways of sin. Let us condemn Phariseeism, hypocrisy, cant, formalism—all dead forms of faith. But let us never be chargeable with under-estimating the worth of penitence, nor of condemning those entangled in the meshes of intellectual error.

From Egypt's lord turn to the world's Redeemer. See Him measuring the devotion of His people, ascertaining the disposition of the erring whom He is anxious to forgive. Frequently, by conferring favors upon others, possibly upon our inferiors, He is testing our fidelity ; is seeking answers to the questions, " Are they envious of others' good fortune ? are they willing to accept me not only as a deliverer from guilt, but as a king who shall rule hourly in their lives ?" At other times He employs adversity, endeavoring

to determine whether we will cling to Him though others desert us, though the world persecutes, though our adhesion brings with it accusation, disgrace, and keenest anguish. Severity is an agency He often employs in testing our devotion. Indeed, He is predicted as "He who shall sit as a refiner." Having been Himself perfected by suffering, He employs the same agency in preparing His disciples for the mission to which He has called them. Many of the graces which most adorn the Christian character are matured in the school of affliction. "Tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope." Indeed, suffering is the family badge. "If children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him."

Unlooked-for misfortune sweeps away our accumulated gains, friends betray us, our name becomes the mark for the arrows of envy, our companions in life drop from our side—the grave closing over them, unexpected trials overtake us, sorrow from the past, grief in the present, darkness for the future—these are the voices in which the Saviour is calling, "Will you cling to me still? Will you cling to the Mighty One? Cling in your grief?" Happy they who can respond, "We are Thy servants."

In Judah behold a type of Him who yielded Himself a sacrifice for sin. "He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows." "He was

wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities ; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him." " The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all."

Are we ready, like Judah, to plead for the privilege of bearing each other's burdens and so fulfilling the whole law of Christ. Are we clinging to God's suffering ones? Do we sympathize with the sorrowing? Are we ready to relieve the needy? Do we endeavor to cheer the despondent? Do we deny ourselves that we may aid in raising the fallen and in rescuing the tempted? Are we willing to bear reproach, to surrender liberty and almost life itself that we may shield the falsely accused? By guarding the innocent, being slow to believe evil reports, we may befriend those whose characters malice is endeavoring to blacken, and whose peace slander is engaged in destroying. May we never be permitted to sink to that depth of dishonor which will permit another's reputation to be traduced, his fair name to be loaded with undeserved infamy. Surely we—our own reputations being liable to be lost at any moment without crime—surely we should sacredly guard the reputations of others committed in measure to our keeping. Honor requires that we should guard a brother's name from becoming the plaything of envy. " With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

The narrative also admonishes us to have faith

in the erring. The ten brethren, guilty once—cruel to a father, revengeful to a brother and forgetful of God—are deeply penitent now, their conduct being worthy of the highest encomiums. Few are so bad as many of their acts would seem to indicate ; none so good as not to need the mantle of charity thrown over their frailties. The best may fall into transgressions. The worst may turn from iniquity. The holiest may be tempted ; the most sinful may be reclaimed.

It is vain, however, to imagine that the erring may be reclaimed by upbraidings, or by despairingly giving them over to the degrading influences that environ them. Not by losing faith in them, but by tutoring ourselves to have confidence in their nobler purposes do we become efficient agents in effecting their return to our father's house. Though we may have seen their best resolves snapped asunder like the green withes with which the Philistines bound Samson, yet must we earnestly pray that God's omnipotent grace will lead them to a renewed life. By falling into the error of judging men irreclaimably wicked, we do much towards rendering them so. Let us rather imitate the Master, who dealt with them lovingly, hopefully. The heart of omnipotent love beats against the heart of frail humanity, and loves the erring into heaven. Progress towards heaven is by oblivion of the past.

Christ, the friend of sinners, earned His title,

not by upbraiding them, but by endeavoring through kindness to win them to a life of piety. Are we self-denyingly laboring with every wanderer in the far-off land of sin, that so he may return, rescued by the sacrifice of our Elder Brother, to our Father's home in the distant Canaan?

CHAPTER XI.

JOSEPH FORGIVING HIS BRETHREN.

"The noblest vengeance is to forgive."

"Revenge is a morsel for God."

"Wait time and place to act thy revenge, for it is never well done in a hurry."

IT is a striking evidence of the genuineness of Joseph's piety that it did not perish in the season of prosperity. Not even the idolatrous customs, and the abounding immoralities which surrounded him, were permitted to obscure its lustre. This is the more remarkable, since character is to a great extent the result of one's environment. To such an extent is it determined by the influences which are dominant in a community, and by the prevalent opinions, beliefs, estimates of virtue and principles of morality, that there are comparatively few who are not in measure at least the creatures of circumstances. This is abundantly illustrated in the history of the East India Company. During its earlier

existence, men of sterling principles and of settled religious opinions—seemingly settled—were completely revolutionized in character, in belief, and in principles of ethics. This is only one illustration of many. Indeed, everywhere, in every age—and no less among ourselves—personal character is in great degree an effect of surrounding influences. Plenty and want, education and ignorance, kindness and neglect, cleanliness and filth, virtuous companions and vicious associations—these are agencies which exert an almost irresistible power in the formation of character.

This, while inducing us to entertain charity towards all, even towards the most degraded victims of vice, should greatly increase our admiration of the noble few who manifest rare independence, and illustrate the potency of living faith. They are worthy of our highest praise. With faith in God and an unperturbed confidence in eternal rectitude, they are able to live above the maddening influence of the unreflecting multitude. Against a heart anchored within the veil the surging opinions of a driveling generation beat in vain. Their religion is of that stable kind of which reformers are made. They are pillars in the temple of God.

Evidently Joseph had a species of faith which contrasts strongly with much that bears the name. It was an unchanging principle, not a shifting policy. It was not a compound of hol-

lowness, formalism, sham, cant and respectability, but continuous adherence to a system of truth imbibed in early life. It enabled him to stand face to face with eternal verities.

It may be impossible to determine with entire accuracy the origin of the envy of which Joseph was the object. It may have been an illustration of the principles announced by Lord Bacon: "A man that hath no virtue in himself, ever envyeth virtue in others;" "Those are most subject to envy, who carry the greatness of their fortunes in an insolent and proud manner." But whatever may have been the source of the envy, we have little difficulty in determining the agency by which it was subdued. It was Joseph's piety, manifested in forgiveness, which converted deep-seated malice into enduring friendship. As no anguish most probably is more intense than that which has its source in cherished enmity, and as no element in the misery of the lost is perhaps more torturing than that which flows from the perpetuity of hatred, so no pleasure is more exquisite than that which results from reconciliation effected through the ministrations of judicious piety. Consequently, happiness now erects its envied throne, not alone in Joseph's heart, but in the hearts of his brethren as well. Affection is rekindled; pride's barriers are broken down. Hearts long alienated flow together as converging streams. On the united current hope is

spreading sails for the haven of joy, while charity's mantle shields the bosom from the storms that may originate in the wilderness past, and faith's star flings her light across the waters of life's boisterous sea. Love, springing from free forgiveness, is heaven begun below.

Strange that the luxury of reconciliation, which may be so cheaply purchased, is so seldom enjoyed! Stranger still, how frequently is it marred by unfeeling references to the past! How unreasonable the malice which, after long detaining us from an obvious duty, is not content to surrender its empire over the soul until it has seriously diminished the happiness which it can no longer displace! "I have erred; forgive me" are words which pride is slow to utter, and which piety herself is tempted to link with supposed injuries of the past, or with extorted promises for the future. Paul's words are worthy of a place in every memory, "Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Joseph bestowed forgiveness in a truly Christian spirit. He forgave fully, unconditionally. He first sought to arouse the conscience, it is true. He first endeavored to ascertain the disposition of those whom he purposed to pardon. In this he acted wisely. Accordingly, when the hour for forgiveness came his magnanimity assumed a dignity and a grandeur commanding profound respect.

HE SEEKS PRIVACY.

It is natural for deep feeling to avoid publicity. Her home is in solitude. Tears, which are too sacred for the gaze of the stranger, are here permitted to flow unchecked, eloquently telling their unsyllabled tale. Here we sanction demonstrations of affection which an unsympathizing public might be tempted to treat with scorn. Here they—whose alienated feelings have long held back the sweet waters of affection, rendering the heart a stagnant pool—are ready to vie with each other in removing the hated barriers, “and kiss again with tears.” The father, whose life has been embittered by the waywardness of an erring child, prefers to endure his sorrow in secret—no stranger intermeddling; and when the hour of reconciliation has come, he, like Egypt’s governor, commands, “Cause every man to go out from me.” As he shall weep aloud, and whisper the word, “forgiven,” he desires “no man with him.” Not in the public assembly does the injured wife repeat her story of cruelties received, of blasted affections, of withered hopes, of pinching penury; and when he who caused her so much anguish presents himself, regenerated in heart and reformed in life, tearfully to ask the privilege of reuniting his destiny with hers, she seeks solitude, where in communion with God they may enter into vows which shall distil happiness into a reconstructed home. Deep emotion uniformly

covets privacy. So universal is this disposition that we are all disposed to view demonstrations of grief ostentatiously made as but the mockery of sorrow, loud but empty, noisy but shallow. The genuine seeks the darkened room at home ; there to wet with burning tears the marble brow ; there to kiss the pallid lips ; there to bid farewell to the coffined friend. And when it would visit the sacred spot in " the sequestered vale, where heaves the turf in many a moldering heap," it regards the presence of the stranger as a check upon emotions which find fittest expression when God and nature alone are witnesses.

Joseph alone with his brethren : what emotions must have flooded the soul ! What thoughts must have thrilled through the memory ! The incidents of twenty years, are they phantoms ? The trials he has endured, are they dreams ? The prosperity to which he has attained, is it an illusion ?

His feelings found expression in tears. These, being like smiles, the natural language of the heart, are more eloquent than words would have been. The latter, precise but emotionless, would not have touched human sympathy so deeply. How false to nature is that stoicism which regards weeping as a sign of weakness. Some of earth's noblest, though stern as a hero in public, have been as gentle, as loving, and as tearful as a child in private. Before Ahab, Elijah was as stern as Carmel's rugged sides, denouncing sin

with fiery indignation. In communion with God, when imploring mercy for afflicted Israel, he melted into womanly tenderness—bathed in tears. David on the field of battle is to appearances entirely devoid of sympathy. When armed treason is suppressed, we hear him asking with touching tenderness, “Is there any that is left of the house of Saul that I may show him kindness?” When directed to Saul’s sole survivor, the crippled, dejected Mephibosheth, he is heard exclaiming, “I will show thee kindness for Jonathan’s sake. Eat bread at my table continually.” Behold one greater than either Judah’s king or Israel’s prophet, Christ, in His public ministrations denounces the sins of His age with unparalleled severity, unveiling the gilded hypocrisy of Pharisees, and withering the hopes of world-conforming Sadducees. With moral heroism such as the world has never witnessed in another, he hurled the shafts of righteous anger against a system of formalism which was rapidly ripening into superstition; against the bigots

“Who cried church, church at every word,
With no more piety than other people,
Who quacking gave the temple an ill-savor,
And brought religion itself in’o disfavor.”

With a sternness whose marble features seem incapable of relaxing into mildness, he deals heavy blows at what Lord Bacon enumerates as the causes of superstition—“pleasing and sen-

sua. rites and ceremonies, excess of outward and pharisaical holiness, over-great reverence of traditions, the stratagems of prelates for their own ambition, the favoring too much of good intentions, the taking an aim at divine things by human." But this marvellous severity in denouncing wrong melts into tender, Divine love as He stands with Mary and Martha beside the grave of one He loved. "Jesus wept." Was His love less tender because His hatred of formalism was so intense? Was His devotion to genuine religion less ardent because His loathing of the false was measureless? Was His tenderness in private less winsome because His severity in public was unparalleled?

His sternness gone—its mission having been accomplished—Joseph "wept with his brethren," "He kissed them." He who knew how to be tender as well as severe, deserves to rank among the great men of earth.

The narrative contains no evidence that there was any harrowing recital of past wrongs. They had been many, and had left arrows of anguish within the soul. But they are left unrecanted. Their rehearsal could effect no good. The past is irreparable. Let the waters of oblivion bury the crimes and their consequences; conscience has done its work, and now human intermeddling may do more injury than good. "We are verily guilty," that ought to purchase silence in reference to the past.

Nor is the sweetness of this reconciliation marred, as that of many another has been, by the harsh assertion of mistaken piety, "Heaven has taken vengeance, I therefore may forgive."

A feeling closely akin to this might perhaps have colored the language, if many who deem themselves disciples of the forgiving Saviour had occupied the place of the chief speaker. But certainly, because vengeance belongeth to God, is no reason why we should exult over its infliction. Such conduct is closely akin to the purpose of those who, having waited in vain for God to take vengeance, would, insultingly

"Snatch from His hand the balance and the rod,
Rejudge His justice, be the God of God."

Forgiveness is the Christian's revenge. Pardon is the believer's retaliation.

With no wounded pride to gratify, and seeking no object save God's honor, the welfare of his brethren and perpetuity of friendship, Joseph demands no apology. His forgiveness is not even conditioned upon the request for pardon. Frankly, freely, fully and unsolicited, he forgives his enemies, as did the Master. Forgive those who do not ask forgiveness? Yes, since their continued hostility does not excuse us from duty.

It may perhaps strike us with surprise that no promises are extorted for the future. Whatever trials it may disclose, the present reconciliation, it is hoped, will produce such a spirit of forbear-

ance that subsequent alienation will be nearly or quite impossible. If there are no angry feelings now—twenty years and their wrongs being a forgiven past—surely it is a less conspicuous triumph of faith to trust for the years to come, neither demanding pledges nor extorting promises; these, if rooted in changed feelings are unnecessary; if not, are futile.

There can be no question that we are all too much prone to take little or no notice of sin, except when it invades some assumed personal right of ours; then we are strongly tempted to denounce the transgressor in severe terms, to cherish vindictive feelings, to demand apologies and to extort promises as the condition of a renewal of friendship. Pride is at work. Selfishness is disguising herself under the name of piety. A moment's reflection will convince us, that it is more in accordance with the spirit of the religion we profess to take little heed of the injuries done to ourselves, and to endeavor in the spirit of self-forgetfulness to vindicate the insulted honor of the Master, and to secure obedience to those Divine laws from whose penalties the guilty will find it impossible to escape. Why should we—who can gaze unmoved upon the daily violations of heaven's laws, who can stand in stolid unconcern while the waves of impurity are dashing against the altars of God, while dishonesty is wrenching bread from the mouths of the deserving poor, while profan-

ity is insulting the Divine majesty and irreverence is dragging sacred things into contempt, yea, moral cowardice is permitting worldliness and the semblance of religion to destroy spirituality—while thus indifferent to the insults offered to God and to religion, why should we be so exceedingly tenacious of our own honor? why so extremely sensitive to insults which we surely might forgive did we but remember that God has forgiven us? And if He is willing to forgive the sins committed in the injury done us, assuredly we ought to be willing to forgive the injurer!

When the heart is right, how easy it is to secure reconciliation with enemies! Joseph's words are few. "I am Joseph. Doth my father still live?" Progress in the present is by oblivion of the past. Paul's aim was perfection. The means by which he sought to attain the coveted prize was forgetfulness of what had occurred already. "I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

It is a pleasing evidence of Joseph's piety that even in these tragic circumstances he expresses gratitude for providential guidance, and endeavors to soothe the feelings of his brethren by reminding them that God had sent him before to

preserve life. He invites them to view good issuing out of evil, to gaze upon light streaming from darkness, to contemplate mercy wafted upon rough winds. Let none call their lot hard till the end comes. The storm may uproot the oak, it is true ; but it perfects the harvest. The lightning may shatter the home, but it purifies the atmosphere. The burden, while crushing the spirit, may nevertheless bring us nearer to God. Beside the withered gourd and the grave of buried hope, beside the empty cistern and the heated furnace our Father may be sitting, the benignity of His countenance giving sweetness and power to His words, "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." There is love in the rod as well as in the smile.

Success seldom comes in velvet slippers. As a rule, prosperity is the reward of toil ; honor of hardship ; victory of endurance. Joseph passed through a dungeon in order to reach his present position. Daniel heard the growlings of envy as well as the roaring of lions ere his success was assured. Columbus endured many hardships, and heard the mutterings of mutiny before he was permitted to attain the object of his ambition. Oliver Cromwell, the son of a London brewer, underwent hardships which would have crushed most men, ere he became England's Protector. Whitefield was execrated by half the Christian world before he was acknowledged as

the greatest preacher of his century. Luther was not recognized as the Great Reformer till after his enemies had exhausted their efforts to crush him. The avenue to greatness passes through the valley of humiliation. A sincere effort to elicit interest in the duties of the present is the agency employed to rekindle fraternal affection. Jacob still lives. All traces of dissension may be obliterated if he can induce the ten to vie with each other in showing him kindness. This therefore is his command, "Haste ye, go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt; come down unto me, tarry not. . . . And thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen."

The effort to bury the past in the kindness of the present, how honorable! In how many families, where hearts have become alienated, would a course similar to this awaken emotions that possibly may have slumbered for long years. And to see children united in an effort to soothe the sorrows of a father's declining years, to smooth the asperities of a shortened journey to the grave, what sight is more touchingly interesting?

"Tell my father of all my glory in Egypt." Though pride in his success was natural—in measure, perhaps, allowable—and though very few most probably would have been able to resist the temptation to indulge in boasting, it nevertheless remains true that Joseph herein

presents evidence that his greatness was not dis-severed from vanity. Evidently this is one trait in his character which the sufferings of twenty years have not obliterated. It was prominent ere he left his father's house. It is prominent still. "All my glory!" Littleness and greatness, how often they unite in the same character! One lesson perishable humanity is slow to learn—

"The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Await alike the inevitable hour—
The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

The hour of separation draws nigh. Weeping upon Benjamin's neck, kissing all his brethren, talking with them, preparing rich presents for an absent father—Joseph is painting an almost matchless picture of forgiving love. Ere the curtain drops, temporarily concealing the actors, he gives this kind and much-needed admonition, "See that ye fall not out by the way." Let no bickerings, in reference to the measure of guilt that properly attaches to the conduct of each, be permitted to destroy friendship which we have this day hallowed in tears and cemented in new-made vows.

In conclusion : please remember that Jesus, with love in His eye, forgiveness in His look, and the cup of salvation in His hand, stands ready to exclaim, "Neither do I condemn thee : go, and sin no more."

CHAPTER XII.

JOSEPH CARING FOR JACOB.

“Who sows kindness, reaps the same.”

“Purchase the next world with this, so shalt thou win both.”

SUCH is the selfishness of human nature that sudden elevation is extremely liable to be accompanied with forgetfulness of those who were friends in days of obscurity. Even relatives may be slighted—indeed disowned. The past may be studiously concealed, through the torturing apprehension that it may possibly reflect upon the greatness of the present, or may aid in defeating schemes by which it is hoped to attain still greater eminence. By veiling its history, and especially its humble associations, the attempt is frequently made to create the impression that lofty station is a natural inheritance; that while some win greatness by energy, and others have greatness thrust upon them, there are those, fortune's favored few, who are born great, and therefore have an inalienable title to honors which others should not presume to usurp.

Joseph, however, having that genuine nobility which even kingly favor could not corrupt, tenderly remembers and honorably acknowledges his humble father in distant Hebron.

Accordingly, with lavish liberality and with assurances of undiminished affection, he dismisses his brethren, commanding them, "Get you unto the land of Canaan; and take your father and your households, and come unto me." How honorable is even fallen human nature! Like the crumbling palace it has beauty still. Its outlines have loveliness. Its tottering columns have grandeur.

Joseph in Egypt, planning offices of kindness; Jacob in Hebron, longing for death's discharge from earth's sorrows! Having lived a long life, especially long if measured by its woes, and having tasted grief in most of its varied forms, he cheerfully looks forward to the grave, "where the weary are at rest." Life has few remaining charms, scarcely any save the hope of immortality, a hope which continued existence may endanger, and death converts into fruition.

"A hundred and thirty years," a period allotted to but few. And yet a much briefer life, consumed amid the activities of this nineteenth century, may be much longer, because the heart throbs with deeper emotions, the brain works with greater intensity, the pulse throbs with fuller torrents, the hand distributes broader charities, and the will accomplishes more momentous results. That life is long which is full, strong, rich. "In hoary youth Methusalehs may die."

“ We live in deeds, not years ; in thoughts, not breaths ;
In feelings, not in figures on a dial :
We count time by heart throbs. He most lives
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best.”

If anything save piety can cheer the saddened heart of age, making the continuance of life desirable, it is that purest of human joys, the knowledge that children are prosperous, honorable, virtuous. On the other hand, if there can be distilled into the cup of age one drop of grief more bitter than another, it is that which is extracted from the conviction that the vicious life of a son or daughter is nearly certain to result in increased wretchedness here, and indescribable hopelessness hereafter. Need we marvel then if the aged patriarch anxiously awaited the return of his sons from Egypt? He longs for a knowledge of the incidents of their journey, of the success of their mission, of the character they may have exhibited. He would embrace them once more, bless them, kiss Benjamin, and die—the wearied heart ceasing to throb with earth's sorrows, and thrilling to heaven's joys.

After anxious and prolonged watching, Jacob's dimmed eyes are blessed with the sight of his sons. Home again. Benjamin returned. Simeon restored. The number complete. For, though one is not, his place has been so long vacant that no note is made of it, even as in observing the well-formed tree we pause not to note the place from which a youthful branch

was removed, though the scar remains there still. And, indeed, as that scar may be a memento of a benefit received as well as of a wound endured, so the partially healed wounds in our affections may be silent witnesses of past blessings.

“ It is better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.”

“ You may break, you may ruin the vase if you will,
But the scent of the roses will hang round it still.”

What means this splendid retinue? What this long train of loaded wagons? Amazement is increased by the announcement, “ Joseph is yet alive ; he is governor over all Egypt. He commands, ‘ Come down unto me.’ ” The news, like the message of salvation to the penitent sinner, appears too good to be true. His heart faints. Perhaps he imagines this a concealed anguish, another gilded misery. But seeing the magnificent gifts, his spirit revives ; “ Joseph, my son, is yet alive ; I will go and see him before I die.” Hope of future happiness is one of the last things to perish in the wearied soul of man.

And can it be that sunshine will once again enter the clouded soul of the aged pilgrim ? Are his last days to be his happiest days ? May he die in peace, surrounded by his children, his eyelids closed by Joseph’s gentle hand ? Yes. Then may we well ask, Who knows what is best for him till the end comes, and the mysteries of Providence work out their own solution ? By

remembering this, even the unhappy might tutor themselves to bear affliction with fortitude, and the joyous might learn to temper hilarity with humility.

The future, which kindly veils our sorrows, also conceals our joys. It is well. Assurance of coming happiness would mar the pleasures of hope. It would remove the chief incentive to exertion. As it might paralyze effort were we permitted to look beyond the veil, and discern ourselves buffeting with temptations, bowing under griefs, writhing in suffering, or bemoaning our hopeless condition in the face of death ; so it might cut the nerve of energy, elating us beyond measure, were we allowed to view the happiness which the future has in store for us. Better by far is that hope which, beaming from the eye, enables the faltering tongue to exclaim :

“ I know not the way I am going,
But well do I know my guide ;
With a childlike trust I give my hand
To the mighty Friend by my side.
The only thing I say to Him
As He takes it, is, ‘ Hold it fast,
Suffer me not to lose my way,
And bring me home at last. ’ ”

“ ’Tis home, ’tis home that we wish to reach ;
He who guides may choose the way ;
Little we heed what path we take
If nearer home each day. ”

Hoping still, hoping ever, the patriarch prepares for his journey to Egypt. How strange

life's drama! No period in life seems too late, and no toil too great, to purchase a fancied good, however transitory. For the privilege of meeting Joseph and dying in his arms, Israel, though tottering under the weight of years, leaves the home of his childhood and even the hallowed grave of Rachel; journeys to a distant land to pass his few remaining days among strangers. How many, from motives less honorable, have left home when the shadows of death were already upon them! The palsied hand may be seen convulsively grasping after earth's glittering dust, when the diminished strength ought to be expended in lifting it to Heaven in prayer. The question, How shall we reach the Eternal City? is jostled from the mind by the anxious inquiry, How may we attain the prizes the world has to offer?

It would no doubt be unnatural to suppose that a desire to provide for the necessities of an increasing posterity had no influence with Jacob. It was entirely proper that this motive should have due weight. A wise forethought in providing against the wants of the future is commendable, and when, as in this case, the Divine blessing is sought on the method proposed we may have little hesitancy in expecting that the decision reached will be productive of good.

Before leaving Canaan he visits Beersheba, and there, where his fathers worshipped, enters

anew into covenant with Jehovah. The impulse to engage in some religious act before entering upon a hazardous undertaking is quite universal, especially in lands where superstition reigns ; and the most spiritually minded Christian, on leaving his native land forever, is able to derive an indescribable pleasure from kneeling in the sanctuary where his fathers knelt, and shedding his farewell tears near graves which will be green in his memory wheresoever his wearied feet may journey. It is nature's instinctive testimony to the sacredness of those places, which have been consecrated by the devotions and are endeared by the dust of our loved ones.

Jacob's sacrifice by day was succeeded by a vision at night. Being assured of Divine guidance, of a numerous posterity, of a safe return to Canaan, and of the last offices of affection from the hand of his best-beloved son, his heart is at rest. God smiles upon his proposed visit. He may therefore proceed with cheerfulness and courage.

Informed of his father's arrival, Joseph hastens to Goshen. Of this interesting interview Scripture, with characteristic brevity, merely presents two facts ; " Joseph wept on his father's neck ; Jacob exclaimed, " Now let me die." Joseph weeping for joy ! Jacob, his long-deferred hope fulfilled, ready to be gathered to his fathers ! How great the change in the fortunes of each since they last stood side by side !

Joseph, with loyalty to Pharaoh as well as to his father, immediately announces to the court the arrival of his kinsmen. Though governor of Egypt, he will do nothing without his monarch's approval. He has most power who assumes least; he most respect who consults others' wishes. Though it is impossible to determine what motive influenced the king, whether gratitude, generosity, or personal attachment, it is certain that the royal permission, "In the best of the land make thy father and thy brethren to dwell," testifies to confidence in Egypt's deliverer.

The narrative presents us a touchingly interesting view of Jacob's earnest piety. Ushered into the presence of "his royal majesty," his first act is to implore God's blessing upon the sovereign. He fears not to announce himself as the worshipper of Jehovah. Then, with a sadness characteristic of age, he exclaims: "Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been." The griefs of the past have left their mark on the subdued spirit. As were his fathers, so is he, but a pilgrim; his permanent home is in the beyond. Again blessing Pharaoh, he retires from the royal presence.

When shall they meet again? Possibly on earth; certainly at the bar where character, not station, shall alone have majesty. Earth's wearied pilgrim, Egypt's proud monarch, what shall be the eternal destiny of each? Though "the

righteous hath hope in his death," and though "many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast into outer darkness," yet is it nearly or quite impossible to determine, in particular cases, who are heirs of glory and who heirs of misery. Pharaoh had his virtues; Jacob, his sins.

An arduous task devolves upon Joseph, to render an old man happy amid new scenes. Strange as it may seem, yet is it true, that the person, who has toiled through the greater part of life in the hope of ease and competency in old age, is quite likely to find that the prize, when secured, is accompanied with wretchedness to which he was hitherto a stranger. The labors which oppressed him once would be a comfort now, were he able to endure them. The cares which perplexed him once would be a relief to present anguish, did he possess the energy to battle with them. The scenes which formerly possessed little beauty for him, and the home which was previously too humble, now seem to be invested with charms in comparison with which the delights of the present appear scarcely worthy the name.

"Man never is, but always to be blessed." Past the meridian of life is ordinarily too late for change. To transplant the aged oak is to number its days. Accordingly, it is an evidence

of good judgment that the patriarch received a home, not amid the idleness and pomp of a luxurious court, but in quiet Goshen. A shepherd he had lived ; as a shepherd he may end his days. It were better he should be happy in Goshen than wretched in Memphis ; cheerful in a booth, than discontented in a palace ; devout in the rural simplicity of pastoral life, than fretful in the dazzling splendor of a corrupt court. Happiness resides not in glittering externals, but in the heart. "Contentment with godliness is great gain."

Seventeen years later the scene has changed. Joseph is beside his father's death-bed. Having laid aside the cares of state, he has come to alleviate the sufferings of an honored parent, to hear the counsel of one whose retrospect of life is from the borders of eternity, and to receive one of earth's most precious legacies, a blessing from a father's dying lips. His brethren and his two sons are with him. What pen can do justice to the scene ? It has the eloquence of silent pathos.

The dying man, supporting himself in the bed by the energy which an uncontrollable desire imparts, and extending his trembling hand toward his endeared son, exclaims : "Swear that you will deal kindly by me. Bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt. But I will lie with my fathers. Bury me in their burying-place." A natural request, since we instinctively prefer

that the cast-off garments of mortality should be laid beside those of our loved ones, dust mingling with dust under the same turf, and where the bursting rose sheds its new fragrance on the same air. To secure this, some with iron will have dragged the diseased body through many a weary league, over continents and across oceans, inspired with the hope that the struggling heart may cease to beat amid the scenes of childhood, and the lifeless clay may repose near that of cherished friends. Need we wonder that the coveted promise was given, "I will do as thou hast said." Jacob exclaimed: "God Almighty appeared to me in the land of Canaan, and promised, I will make of thee a great multitude, and will give this land to thy seed. There Rachel died by me. There I buried her. I had not thought to see thee, and lo God hath showed me also thy sons. I die; but God will be with thee." Then extending his hands, and laying them on the heads of Ephraim and Manasseh, his right on the younger, his left on the first-born, he said: "God, before whom my father Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads, and let my name be named upon them, and the name of my father, Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth."

Jacob's thoughts are of his earliest, truest at-

tachment—of endeared Rachel. It is upon her sons that he pronounces his choicest blessings. Her name is uppermost in his heart. Is not this an evidence, afforded even in those rude days, that conjugal affection, when the perfected fruit of unselfish attachment, is sometimes as enduring as life itself, nay, is earth's purest type of Heaven's ceaseless love? Indeed, is it too much to hope that they, whose wedded lives have been one continuous joy on earth, their attachment intensifying every pleasure and mel-
lowing every grief, may be the happier in Heaven perhaps in each other's society because of their loving union on earth? Is it because we desire to pledge undying attachment—love till death, and if God permits, sweeter, purer after death—that the good desire the sanction of religion to the marriage contract? True devotion, and especially that toward the Saviour, covets the stamp of perpetuity.

“ The heart that has truly loved never forgets,
But as truly loves on to the close.”

“ Love has neither past nor future,
It is one eternal now.”

The end approaches. Is he ready for the last pang? Is he at peace with God? Does hope gild the tomb? To the covenant-keeping God has he committed his soul? As death's cold waters rise higher and higher, their murmuring waves stilling the throbbing heart, is his head re-

posing on the bosom of infinite Love? Is he able to exclaim :

“ I am waiting by the river,
And my heart has waited long ;
Now I think I hear the chorus
Of the angels' welcome song.
Oh, I see the dawn is breaking
On the hill-tops of the blest,
Where the wicked cease from troubling
And the weary are at rest.”

The struggle is over. Life's record is completed. The sorrows of a hundred and forty-seven years, like the sufferings of the dying babe, come to an end. And now that the balance is struck, how stands the account? Debit : Infirmities many ; sins not a few ; wrongs done to Esau ; polygamy with its legacy of bickerings ; partiality in the family ; murmurings under the succession of distresses which his own conduct brought upon him. Credit : The early choice of Jehovah ; habitual reliance upon Divine guidance ; deep and abiding impressions of piety ; an unquenchable faith in God ; the approval of a conscience, which though not greatly enlightened was evidently sincere ; a life marred by transgressions of deep moral turpitude, but remarkably exemplary for the rude age in which he lived. While we should be exceedingly cautious lest we may inadvertently represent the conditions of redemptive love so rigid as to discourage the sincere believer, we certainly ought

to be equally careful lest we may lay such stress upon simple faith, independent of obedience to moral laws, as to induce large numbers to ask : " If such are God's children, then why not all? Professors sin along one line, non-professors along another, each class condemning the other—but who are the guiltier? Weighing them in the balances of immutable justice and considering the influences surrounding each, reason, which seems to teach that the guilt of the two classes does not differ very greatly, earnestly asks, Are all condemned, or are all pardoned? Since the Scriptures enjoin the exercise of charity, by what right do those who are morally defiled, as guilty perhaps as others, claim a monopoly of Divine mercy and remorselessly consign others, their equals in moral goodness, to eternal wretchedness?"

Whether we are willing to admit it or not, there can be little question that the most powerful practical argument in favor of Universalism is the unreasonable assumptions of many who profess adherence to a narrower creed, which however, as practically exemplified, is deemed broad enough to furnish a good hope to all, provided they are found exclaiming : " I trust Christ's merit." They practically—not theoretically—suspend eternal salvation upon a mere sentimentality. They may be found extending the hopes of unending happiness to the dying man, who through all life has

been treading upon the crumbling verge of moral death, while with a degree of heartlessness that is appalling they are dealing out damnation to some who walk humbly, love mercy, and deal justly. The only explanation their teaching affords of a procedure so unwarrantable is the simple fact that one has said: "I believe; Jesus, forgive," while the other has not. When this spirit rules in the hearts of some—and who will deny that it does—is it any marvel if the sturdy common-sense of those not instructed in the Word sweeps away the thin film and asserts, "All are saved." Is there no valid ground for the apprehension that the prevalence in these days of the seductive doctrine of indiscriminate mercy may be a legitimate result of the moral condition of the Church herself, and of the undue prominence given to the doctrine of justification by faith, which may result in engendering error in the public mind if too much dissevered from James' doctrine of justification by works?

Accordingly you will not expect an expression of opinion in reference to the genuineness of Jacob's piety, the character of his faith, or the destiny upon which he entered on quitting the crumbling tabernacle. "Judge not that ye be not judged," is a command having force here as well as elsewhere. To analyze character and to praise virtues while spreading charity's mantle over human frailties are within man's province ;

but let us not forget that the key of Heaven is at Christ's girdle. "He shutteth, and no man openeth; He openeth, and no man shutteth."

As we pass through life most of us are called upon, perhaps frequently, to perform last offices of kindness to the marble forms of those whose lives were inwoven with our own. It may be,

"Our little earth angel
Has talked with death.—
We smooth out the ringlets
We close the blue eyes,
We bear her out softly,
This idol of ours."

It may be, a wedded companion, leaving us and our stricken children, has lovingly whispered :

"I leave the world without a tear,
Save for the friends I hold so dear.
To heal their sorrows, Lord descend,
And to the friendless prove a friend."

"We deck the brow with garlands,
We kiss the icy lips,
We gently cross the lily hands,
We softly whisper, Peace."

While not presuming to intrude upon the sacred loneliness of Joseph's grief, it may be proper for us to observe that he wept bitterly, falling upon the neck and kissing the death-cold form of one whose sorrows were largely due to abiding affection for him. At his order the physicians embalmed Israel. After lamentations continued for threescore days and ten,

he went up to Canaan, accompanied by the servants of Pharaoh and the elders of the land, to bury the embalmed body in the hallowed resting-place where in trembling hope repose the remains of his humble ancestry, awaiting "the gladdening daybreak of a blessed immortality."

Having fulfilled his vow he turns his footsteps homeward, where duty to the living demands attention. Of the anguish that thrilled his soul they are best fitted to conceive who have turned away from a father's grave with the oppressive sense that life's burdens will henceforth weigh the heavier, and that the feeble barrier between them and the tomb has been removed, leaving them face to face with death.

Let the record of Joseph's care of his aged father prompt those of us whose parents are on this side the river to undertake the laudable task of smoothing their brief pathway to the still waters, yea, through them, to the land of promised rest. There are others of us, however, to whom this privilege no longer remains. Our sun has passed midday. Its slanting rays are already causing long shadows. When it shall set behind the hills, may we have memories of good done, and enter the city whose light is the glory of God.

CHAPTER XIII.

JOSEPH'S OLD AGE.

“Consider well and oft why thou camest into the world,
and how soon thou must go out.”

“Hold all skirts of thy mantle extended when heaven is
raining blessings.”

THOUGH old age has its sorrows, it has its pleasures as well; though it has its trials, it has also its comforts. One of its choicest blessings is the ample opportunity afforded for reflection. The years that are embosomed in eternity may be lived over again; may be passed under the searching scrutiny of a mind no longer tortured by crowding perplexities, no longer harassed by the necessity of forming decisions ere the facts in the case can be fully investigated. Successes and reverses, duties performed and responsibilities assumed, triumphs nobly won and failures ignominiously incurred, friendships formed which distil sweetness into the hallowed solitude of declining years, and animosities aroused which even time's decaying finger has not lulled to rest—the consideration of these and of the numberless pleasing and painful incidents of the past, this it is which constitutes the chief occupation of those whose retrospect of life is dimmed by the shadows of approaching death.

Amid the mellowing influences of old age,

what was once deemed success appears as a glittering but empty bubble ; exalted station, as only a conspicuous mark for the arrows of envy ; reputation, as the plaything of malice ; riches, as fleeting shadows ; fame, as sounding brass ; fashion and beauty, as withered flowers. In the sear and yellow leaf that alone seems valuable which bears the impress of perpetuity ; virtue alone has majesty.

Having traced the personal history of one who in youth and middle life had tasted enough of life's joys, full enough of its griefs, who had risen from poverty to wealth, from obscurity to eminence ; who had passed through Egypt, on his way from Jacob's home to Jacob's grave, let us spend a half hour with him as the shadows of night are deepening about him.

At the time of his return from Machpelah he was in the full prime of manhood, being fifty-six years of age. But since he has already attained to the highest station within the gift of the Egyptian monarch, a degree of eminence which few reach ; and since the remainder of his life down to the great age of a hundred and ten was passed in the quiet enjoyment of the rewards of previous activity, we shall not err greatly if for convenience's sake we denominate this protracted period his old age. Age begins where life's ambitions cease. When the activities pause, we are gradually passing into the quietude of that hallowed period which may fit-

ly be denominated a rest preparatory to eternity.

Was he who had been great in winning honors great also in wearing them? Did he possess that species of greatness, so rare in every age, and yet so sincerely admired in every clime—humility in the season of prosperity? Was his magnanimity such that he could continue to treat his brethren with kindness, overlooking their past treatment of him, though regard to the happiness of an aged parent no longer stood between him and the visitation of merited chastisement?

The ten, judging a brother by themselves, are full of apprehensions. Tremblingly approaching one whose cruelty, they imagine, may have been restrained by the barrier of a common affection, they earnestly implore, “Forgive, we pray thee, the trespass of thy brethren and their sin, for we did unto thee evil; forgive the servants of the God of thy father.”

Knowing he possesses the power, they fear he may also have the determination to visit penalties upon their misdeeds. Jacob is no more. Nothing now stands between them and Joseph's anger. Accordingly, suspicions the most dreadful take possession of their tortured minds; fears the most tormenting agitate their stricken hearts. Guilt makes cowards of us all. By perverting the judgment and leaving stings in the conscience, by enfeebling the will and par-

alyzing the energies, by dwarfing manliness and pouring remorse into the soul, guilt makes us an easy prey to fears which conscious innocence can bravely face, and facing, conquer.

But they have mistaken the disposition of their injured brother. They have inflicted a new wound. As the request drops from their quivering lips, tears fill his eyes. We can readily picture him as asking himself the question, "Why am I so greatly misunderstood? Do they imagine me actuated by no higher motive than fear of a father's frown? As I have freely forgiven them, renouncing the office of avenger, why do they regard me as still in the place of God? Is the sense of justice so ineradicable, and withal are the agencies by which retribution is meted out so circumscribed, as to produce the conviction that the injured will assuredly take vengeance upon the injurer? God still reigns, can they not believe that vengeance belongeth to Him? Having already directed their attention to good issuing from evil, to the preservation of life resulting from my consignment to slavery, to a complicated scheme of providence whose marvellous unfoldings shall affect the destiny of generations yet unborn, determining the history of nations whose birth is shrouded in the undisclosed future, why do they still suspect me of cherishing the purpose of meting out vengeance? Ought not the pardon I granted, which was full, frank and unconditional, to

have saved me from the pang which this mistrust has given me?"

Alas, to be misunderstood, and even to be grossly misrepresented, is the portion of those who regulate their lives, not by the changing policy of a fickle world, but by the enduring principles of immutable truth. He who has a standard of piety above the age in which he lives must expect to become the object of many malignant misrepresentations, must content himself with being a conspicuous mark for the poisoned arrows of calumny. Unselfishness is what a selfish world cannot understand. Magnanimity is a trait which meanness always misrepresents, and not infrequently abuses. Generosity is attributed to some sinister motives; and indeed so universal is the disposition to judge the exalted few by the low standard of the degraded many, that even heaven-born piety is looked upon by some as raving fanaticism; by others as a species of refined selfishness. The liberality which the world cannot convert into illiberality, it is certain to malign, perhaps to persecute. The forgiveness which it fails in transforming into unrelenting hostility it is quite certain to misrepresent, suspecting its genuineness and anticipating a speedy disclosure of its hollowness.

Misunderstanding, how many hearts it has alienated! Misrepresentation, how many fair reputations it has tarnished! Calumny, how

much happiness it has murdered ! Selfishness, how many victims have perished on her altar ! It was the selfishness of his age which murdered Christ. It was the selfishness of the sixteenth century which sent so many martyrs to the stake. The same spirit is now tirelessly engaged in endeavoring to embitter the lives of those who are laboriously engaged in the noble effort to develop celestial piety on an uncongenial soil.

The spirit manifested by Joseph under these circumstances, when new troubles were threatening him—breakers ahead and breakers on either side—is a pleasing evidence of the genuineness of his religion. He evidently had more than simply a plausible profession ; more than that externality which at best could do no more than remind one of the wrappings of a mummy, the offensive appendages of that which had life once, but has only repulsiveness now. How often the world, and even a whole brood of hideous passions, lie concealed under a fair profession ! But the inward principle of spiritual life which shall enable one to head against the currents of human nature, how rare it is ! Still, as it is only dead fish which float with the current, so it is only those who are spiritually dead who walk according to the course of this world. To stem its influences, to encounter its misrepresentations, to condemn its spirit, to soar above its selfish policy—to do this, demands settled religious principle. Alas, how frequent-

ly it happens that those who, by profession, "are transformed by the renewing of the mind," are nevertheless found following the multitude, too timid or too much subject to the world to obey inward convictions of duty! To find men yielding to the dictates of the carnal nature, entertaining anger rather than forgiveness, glorying in the humiliation of an enemy rather than in his exaltation, and seeking advantages for self instead of the spiritual welfare of the injurer—how common.

A mind less intensely religious or even less noble, would have been strongly tempted to exult in the triumph gained. Not a few might have felt, indeed, might have exclaimed, "They who took offence at my dreams of superiority now come crouching at my feet to implore protection, piteously begging for pardon with a degree of meanness only measurable by their former haughtiness. Why should I not force them to drink the cup of humiliation to its last dregs? O sons of Jacob, you who were heartless once and are cringing now, who were implacably cruel when the power was yours and are contemptibly mean now the power is mine, become my servants."

No; with emotions worthy of greatness, he says: "Fear not; ye thought evil, God meant it for good. Fear not; I will nourish you and your little ones." Words of kindness, uttered amid sobs and accompanied with promises of

substantial advantages, testify to the completeness of his forgiveness.

His old age was characterized by cheerfulness. He had passed through many bitter experiences, it is true, and the recollection of the wrongs endured no doubt caused temporary pangs and perhaps occasional periods of depression, but nevertheless his declining years seem to have been spent in great tranquillity, no repinings escaping his lips. Neither cruelty, hollow friendship, base ingratitude, nor rancorous envy was permitted to sour a temper which piety had sweetened. His life was not embittered by disappointments, nor had his soul withered under the touch of worldliness, leaving his conscience the easy victim of torturing recollections. Without making the acquisition of riches the sole, or even the chief, aim of existence, he had acquired more than competency. No such poverty and friendlessness were his portion as fell to the lot of Walsingham, who sank from royal favor to obscurity, and from obscurity into a dishonored grave. Unlike Lady Hamilton, who, though the widow of an ambassador, the favorite of a queen and the adored companion of Lord Nelson, spent the last years of her life in misery and obscurity ; who, though retaining the charms of that extraordinary personal beauty which raised her from insignificant station, died unknown, impoverished and friendless, entering eternity while a torturing con-

science was deepening the shadows of guilt by strengthening the conviction that her fascinations had left a moral taint upon the souls of many who came under their influence ; who, though recommended to England's generosity by the dying breath of her greatest naval officer, was buried in a foreign land by the hand of charity—unlike her, Joseph was not compelled to sink from opulence to penury, from gilded vice to galling wretchedness, from lofty honor to utter neglect. No such impenetrable clouds shrouded the declining years of him who could say, "God meant it for good." No such despondency was his as that which brooded over the last days of Cardinal Wolsey, the counsellor of Henry VIII., forcing him mournfully to exclaim : "Had I but served God as diligently as I have served the king He would not have given me over in my grey hairs."

Though he had been the victim of basest treachery, he seems not to have lost faith in humanity. Far from growing morose, petulant, or censorious, he retained the simplicity and womanly tenderness of early life. The sorrows of youth are not permitted to cloud the joys of age. He is calm, contented, cheerful, hopeful ; thankful for the past, trustful for the future. Such a condition, how enviable ! A happy old age, what greater blessing does life possess ?

Like most of those who meet adversity bravely, he may have found comfort in the remem-

brance that his trials had been the legacy of unflinching rectitude. He, who has kindly and fearlessly adhered to duty during the active period of life, is quite certain to enjoy a rich recompense during the period when failing energies invite reflection. Compared with this joy, what other deserves the name? Excellence has its own rewards; moral strength its own supports. In the calm which succeeds the tempest, it is pleasing to observe that the force which bent the reed but strengthened the oak; and in old age it is surely a comfort to be able to perceive that adversity was an indispensable agency in the development of that sterling character whose rewards are eternal bliss. "To you it is given to suffer;" one of Heaven's choicest gifts.

"Oh, fear not in a world like this,
And thou shalt know ere long,
Know how sublime a thing it is
To suffer and be strong."

Though age is impairing Joseph's physical energies, it has not chilled his affections. "He saw Ephraim's children of the third generation; the grandchildren of Manasseh were also brought up upon his knees." What picture is more touching than that of the aged pilgrim on Jordan's bank, gazing, now with strained eyes to catch glimpses of loved ones who are to welcome him on the further shore, now on the prattling babes whom he is to leave behind him. If reverence for age is a lesson which all nations

have emphasized, certainly interest in the character and success of the young is a duty which piety has been careful to inculcate both by example and by precept. If *he* cannot love an unseen Father who has no reverence for an earthly one, is it not equally true that we cannot love the children of our Heavenly King without being deeply interested in the little innocents whose future veils such vast possibilities of good or of evil, of joy or of anguish? It is by love of the young that we keep ourselves young—interested in all that is worth living for. It is a beautiful sight to see age lovingly embracing infancy, instructing youth, cautioning maturer years, and earnestly endeavoring to persuade the inexperienced voyagers on life's boisterous sea to accept God's Word as a chart, hope in Christ as an anchor and Heaven as their destined haven. Desiring to be remembered for the good done, to live in the influences left behind them, the aged if sincerely devoted to God are deeply solicitous, ere the wearied body drops into the not unwelcome grave, to direct infant feet into the paths of honor.

What more enduring monument than souls inspired with holy principles could the Christian desire to leave behind him. No marble shaft which art and wealth can erect is as honorable, as enduring, as beautiful. This, though the measure of the sleeper's perishable riches, or a visible embodiment of surviving affection, is at

best but cold and silent ; that is living, active, reproductive. The one, though it should endure the wear of time's on-coming centuries, is perishable nevertheless, like the earth upon which it rests ; the other is a spiritual gem destined to an eternal place in Immanuel's glittering crown. Is it possible, then, to deny that the Christian's best remembrance is the good he has done ? The heaven that comes to us on earth from unfaltering adherence to man's highest interests, is the living witness to the credibility of a heaven beyond. Heaven on this side the narrow river is the best possible proof of Heaven on the other shore. If I see a well-travelled road leading down to the rivulet, reason enables me to affirm, " It continues on the other side." Gravitation, I am able to affirm, is a law regnant throughout the universe ; on Alcyone and Orion as well as on the earth. And yet my investigations are confined within narrow limits. But I evolve therefrom a law universal in its operation and eternal in its measureless sweep. When, therefore, I am able to perceive that in the moral government under which I am now placed there is a law, according to which virtue brings happiness and vice misery, am I not justified in affirming, " The law extends into the hereafter—there is a Heaven ; there is a hell."

The narrative contains much incidental proof of the simplicity and humility of Joseph's heart. The splendor of the court, the honor of his sta-

tion, the favor of a powerful monarch, a degree of success which falls to few, an extent of power which kings might have envied, opportunities of acquiring measureless wealth and of forming alliances which would perpetuate the influence of his family for centuries to come—these, which would have rendered some weaklings dizzy, failed, in this case, of producing that sense of superiority which is strongly prone to treat humble brethren with arrogance or with studied neglect.

Though the alienation of feeling, which so often arises between those whose pathways in life have greatly diverged, is due perhaps quite as often to pride on the part of those in humble station as to haughtiness on the part of those in exalted position; still, there can be little question that to the successful belongs the privilege of making the first advances toward social intercourse and the cultivation of those kinder feelings which prevailed ere the barriers of wealth and of social divergence separated them. This obligation Joseph recognizes. He endeavors to make his brethren feel that adventitious circumstances are no obstacle to the continuance of friendship. The warmth of affection manifested by him is in strong contrast with the coldness displayed by them. While wealth enabled him to give substantial evidences of attachment, and poverty restricted them to the verbal expression of an inward feeling, they do not seem to have given even this

testimony to the existence of brotherly affection. It is perhaps safe to affirm that for the latent animosity which exists between the upper and the lower classes, the latter are quite as responsible as the former. The conviction that life has been a partial failure chills the affections quite as effectively as the arrogant assumption that it has been a pre-eminent success. Wounded pride is as unrelenting as that which has grown colossal in the sunshine of prosperity.

Though many are disposed to think otherwise, pride, we may rest assured, is no necessary attendant on exaltation. The great may be meek, the little inflated. The rich may be humble, the poor proud. It is entirely possible that the man whose home is a rude cabin on the unbroken prairie; who eats his scanty meal from a slab-table underneath which his children are playing on a floor of earth; who courts "nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep," beneath a roof through whose decaying thatch he can count the twinkling stars, may be as proud as the millionaire in his palatial residence—nay, prouder. His daughter, blooming into womanhood and fired with hopes of future conquests, may have more pride in the gaudy ribbon which before a broken piece of a mirror she adjusts about her flowing hair, than the queen has in her costliest diamond that flashes under the brilliant light of the ball-room. Pride has its dwelling-place in the heart, not in externals.

There are those in lofty station, and upon whom Providence has poured the full horn of plenty, to whom these things, so ardently coveted by many, are but a thin drapery, beautifying but not concealing simplicity of soul, purity of heart, spirituality of mind, meekness of temper and humility of spirit.

The time is coming—oh how rapidly!—when the record of our lives shall be made up; when we, like Joseph, shall stand facing eternity. Ere the recording angel shall make the last entry, and seal the volume for the day of judgment, may it be ours to look backward upon a well-spent life, and forward to a hopeful eternity.

CHAPTER XIV.

JOSEPH'S DYING FAITH.

“ I believe !
Now the giddy world stands fast,
Now my soul has found an anchor
Till the night of storm is past.
All the gloomy mists are rising,
And the clew is in my hand,
Through earth's labyrinth to guide me
To a bright and heavenly land.”

HEINRICH MÖWES.

THOUGH Joseph is nearing the curtain, he has lost neither faith in God nor interest in his countrymen. He still trusts the promise made to Abraham. He gives commandment

concerning his bones—a commandment which, as we shall subsequently see, had reference to the welfare of his kindred after life's troubled dream should be over with himself.

The narrative reminds us of the memorable orders given by Lord Nelson when dying. As his comrades raised him from the deck where he had fallen after receiving the fatal wound, he exclaimed, "I die." On his way to the cabin, whither they immediately conveyed him, his observant eye perceived that the tiller ropes had been shot away. Still interested in circumstances from which he was soon to take a final departure, he instantly gave the order, "Replace the ropes." Laid upon a cot, he said to the attendant surgeon, "Leave me; render aid to those who can be profited by it."

Entertaining the same twofold conviction he entertained when he issued the order for battle—victory for England, death for Nelson—he lay calmly awaiting the anticipated result. Thinking, apparently, of the signal which for the encouragement of his soldiers he had exhibited from the mast-head as the two fleets came within range—"England expects every man to do his duty to-day"—he whispered, "I have done my duty." As Hardy, the captain of the ship, reported, "The victory is complete," he slowly raised himself upon his arm to give his last order: "Bring the fleet to anchor to-night." When reminded that this duty would devolve

upon another, he sternly exclaimed, "Hardy, obey my order; anchor to-night." Obedience to that dying order might have saved many a dismantled ship and hundreds of lives. But when the winds which scattered and nearly wrecked England's victorious navy were howling through the torn rigging and sinking one disabled ship after another, the voice which gave this needed order, and could have enforced it, was silent in death.

Nelson's last energies were expended in giving a command in the interests of a nation whose honor he had died in defending: a command which he hoped would be obeyed after his death, though it might call for the surrender of present advantages in the anticipation of future security. Believing fully that a severe storm was pending, he gave an order which, though it could be of no value to him, might prove if obeyed an inestimable blessing to those who should survive him, and might save England's victorious fleet.

In this incident three facts are especially worthy of note, as having a parallel in the dying words of Joseph: the conviction that he stood by death's river, that victory awaited his countrymen, that they needed an order which should be obeyed after his death.

The faith of him, the incidents of whose life we have followed through a hundred and ten years, is remarkably exemplified in the calmness with which he meets death; in his unshaken

confidence in God's promises ; in giving an order which should keep prominently before his countrymen an ancient prediction of the departing of the children of Israel and their settlement in Canaan.

The calmness with which he meets death appears especially remarkable, when we bear in mind that at this early era in the divine revelations the faithful enjoyed but dim visions of future blessedness—a period in reference to which we dare not confidently affirm that the dying possessed light sufficient to enable them to anticipate celestial joys in a world where happiness is unmarred and eternal. Nor, apparently, were they then under the temptation, as many are now, of imagining that almightiness will confer blessings nearly or quite independent of personal character and individual exertion, receptivity being the only condition demanded ; that to become the possessors of imperishable riches one has only to open the heart, passively receiving them as the bank vault receives the precious metals deposited therein. Hence this calmness is a pleasing evidence of the possession of a character which enabled Joseph to face death without fear.

The record makes no mention of excited ejaculations, of confident anticipations which in shadowy outline float through the hazy atmosphere, foundationless though beautiful ; spectres which delight the soul as it is hurrying

into the august tribunal where realities are the only bases of the judgments rendered. There is no recital of cherished hopes, no nauseating exhibition of religious emotions which contrast painfully with the spirit which has ruled the life now ebbing to a close. There is the simple grandeur of assured faith.

This is as we might expect. The good lay little stress upon the incidents of the last scene ; much, nearly everything, upon the character of the past life. Are we not justified in concluding that it is feverish curiosity or morbid sentimentalism, which attaches undue importance to the expression of confident anticipations of coming glory. These, though sometimes ardently longed for by attendant friends, are not the best evidences of a blissful immortality. Unquestionably the life-long Christian may die under a cloud, and the deeply guilty, who have spent life's energies in the service of sin, may pass away amid the transports of ecstatic joy. To assume that the preparation of the latter is better than that of the former, is to be guilty of pronouncing a slander upon divine justice. The condition of the mind at the hour of death has little worth, except as it harmonizes with the past life. Correct living is the best preparation for hopeful dying. The business of religion is to teach us how to live ; death will then take care of itself. It is not so much her mission to record the last faltering accents of hope in a

Saviour's pardoning mercy, as it is to record noble, virtuous, self-denying deeds from life's glowing page. Who cares for hosannas? Perhaps they who are uttering them to-day were persecuting the Lord yesterday, and if they live, to-morrow they may be shouting, "Crucify, crucify him."

The greatness of this dying faith is considerably enhanced by being exercised amid surroundings which render continued existence exceedingly desirable. Are we not safe in affirming that in proportion as the existing condition of things seems desirable, man is prone to prefer the enjoyment of the present to the hopes of the future? When, therefore, we find Jacob's favorite son resigned in death, though within a palace where plenty reigns and every gratification is within easy reach, do we not perceive that he furnishes stronger evidence of faith than would be furnished by one who had little to hope for from prolonged existence?

A rare conquest was his, the victory over worldliness while her enchantments were still around him. As it is not the world, nor its honors, nor its enjoyments, which Scriptures condemn but the love of these, he has exhibited noteworthy faith in being able to possess them without becoming ensnared by them. He has them, and yet love for them has not taken such possession of his heart as to persuade him that religion is secondary; as to induce

him to fear the Lord and serve other gods ; as to render him satisfied with that Pharisaiism which, while conforming to the customs of society and indifferent to spiritual matters, is feeding the soul on hopes which shall turn to ashes in the hour of anticipated realization. Alas, how often has it happened that this spirit of formalism, which during the lifetime of its helpless victim has led him to regard indifference as charity, looseness as liberality, treachery as cunning and cowardice as becoming prudence, has induced him in the dying hour, being still subject to its fatal charm, to regard the form of godliness as an entirely satisfactory basis of eternal life.

Nor is his faith less clearly evinced in the confidence he reposes in God's promises than in the calmness he manifests as he views death's gradual approach. He seems to possess an unshaken conviction that the land which Jehovah had promised to Abraham shall yet become the home of his descendants.

Something like three centuries had already elapsed since the promise was first given, and lo, as yet they own not a foot of Canaan except a burial-place, and withal are in a distant land—yea, are in circumstances seemingly far preferable to any they could hope for in the country promised to their fathers. But he not merely hopes against hope, but fully believes what appears, under the circumstances, to the last de-

gree improbable, not to say impossible. Such faith was evidently worthy of ranking with that which "had subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."

Viewed under another aspect, this faith appears still more worthy of honorable mention. In contemplating the removal of his posterity, he had to surrender the inheritance of honor and influence to which his eminent services had entitled them. Not as yet had "another king risen who knew not Joseph;" nor had servitude rendered the Israelites dissatisfied with Egypt. Consequently, with no human motive to desire their removal but with innumerable inducements to advise their remaining, the request he so urgently makes evinces a reliance upon the simple word of God such as is seldom manifested by even the most illustrious servants of God. He had established them in a land where they seemed destined to grow to greatness and influence. Accordingly, whatever may be the promptings of faith, worldly policy unquestionably dictates this counsel: "Strengthen the ties already formed. Wisely employ the advantages my position has secured for you, permitting no court sycophant to wrest them from your grasp. Listen to no advice, by whomsoever tendered,

which looks toward uprooting a colony planted so securely, and having prospects so unprecedented." But no ; a higher motive actuates him. Trusting the word of the Lord, and believing that obedience thereto is the condition of happiness and prosperity, he rises above the inducements of worldly policy and recommends removal to Canaan. Rare faith !

A person with less strength of faith might easily have argued : " The Most High promised us Canaan, it is true, but He did not command us to settle there, much less enjoin us to surrender acquired advantages for shadowy uncertainties. A promise to confer it, provided we took measures to secure it, does not carry with it an obligation on our part to make sacrifices in order to accept the gift. Whatever may have been advisable three centuries since ; whatever Abraham may have coveted, confidently believed and warmly commended to his posterity, it is well to bear in mind that times change, and with them human policies. Then was then : now is now. Remain in Egypt."

If not disposed to adopt some way of explaining away the promises, he might at least have maintained silence, leaving his descendants to form their own determination, uninfluenced by his mighty counsel. Not so, however. He prefers to advise a literal and complete fulfilment of the conditions, an unhesitating obedience of the divine commands, an entire reliance upon the

promise. He was no doubt desirous that his kinsmen should become a great and powerful nation ; it was for this reason that he sought to induce them to sink all considerations of human wisdom and implicitly trust the simple word of the Most High, confidently anticipating the fulfilment of a prediction which three centuries had as yet, apparently, done nothing toward fulfilling, had in fact environed with difficulties which might embolden infidels to question God's interest in human affairs, and might tempt the faithful to question the reality of the revelation. To concentrate the aspirations of his countrymen upon the ancient promise, and to induce them to walk by faith, not by sight, were evidently his highest ambition.

So great was his faith that it enabled him to disregard all considerations of selfishness. As the reward of great toil he had acquired a position scarcely second to the monarch himself. He had secured wealth and influence, which he might transmit to his family. His life-work had been an eminent success. Let those, therefore, who may be disposed to question the reality of his faith, or who fail to perceive that his reliance upon God, under circumstances so unpropitious, fully justifies the selection of this incident as a striking illustration of entire trustfulness in God, contemplate for one moment what he was called upon to surrender. He gave up that which un-sanctified nature is extremely reluctant to part

with—all he had sought for with avidity and gained by great exertion. They are few indeed who in old age can advise the complete destruction of that which they have spent a lifetime in erecting, especially when it has attained a degree of success which is the admiration of friends, and when its continuance, if simply undisturbed by themselves, seems well fitted to prove a lasting memorial of their own greatness. Some perhaps may attain to this degree of unselfishness, provided there are many and cogent reasons inducing the conviction that altered circumstances call for the origination of an entirely new policy, but certainly there are very few who against all the inducements of worldly prudence, and in simple reliance upon the unsupported word of an invisible Deity, are willing and even anxious to have their life-work destroyed ; who in death are desirous of securing from surviving friends a pledge of utter disregard to the advantages won by arduous efforts, and the preference of shadowy hopes in the remote future—of hopes founded on a promise which the lapse of time has already rendered, in the judgment of most persons, as untrustworthy as it appears unsubstantial. Manifestly, it requires great faith to attain such marvellous triumphs over selfishness.

Nor does the command, "Ye shall carry my bones from hence," furnish less satisfactory evidence of Joseph's marvellous faith in the unsupported promise of Abraham's God.

The form in which the promise is given makes it apparent that he desired his embalmed body to remain among his countrymen till they removed to the land of promise, and then be buried in the country they might call their own. Had he coveted no more than a grave with his fathers in Machpelah, his wishes might have been complied with soon after his decease. His brethren accompanied, as they no doubt would have been, by the nobility of Egypt, might have lowered his remains to the tomb beside Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, amid pomp and pageantry which would have indicated the burial of earthly greatness. No ! though lapse of time will be certain to diminish the lamentation, and to render the consequent separation more transient in the public mind—the consignment of his shrouded form to the earth becoming in the dim future an affair of little moment, without tears and devoid of display such as marks the interment of the great and the honored—he prefers that his lifeless corpse shall remain among his kindred. He has been separated from them during much of his life ; he will be near them after death.

Of this seemingly strange procedure some explanation is demanded. Is it possible to discover therein a new evidence of faith ? Probably. For though affection may have prompted the request—though, possibly, if we measure his character by the ordinary standard, we may be inclined to imagine that he desired to create

upon Egypt and its court the impression that he considered his adopted country the permanent home of his family—it seems more likely, particularly when we note the entire tenor of his dying words, that he desired his unburied body should remind his descendants that Egypt was but a place of temporary sojourn. His bones are to be an unspoken sermon. He hopes that when his tremulous voice can no longer command, "Have faith in God," that his unburied body may. It shall be a memento of faith. If in the hour of coming prosperity his kindred shall be tempted to forget God's promise to Abraham; if in seasons of future adversity dependency shall leave their souls the easy prey of unbelief, his silent form shall whisper of faith in an eternal Jehovah. If under abounding temptations to idolatry, one after another shall renounce Jacob's religion till no voice is raised in its advocacy, his children and his children's children shall enjoy the privilege of standing beside a body yet unsepulchered, and being reminded by legend at least that he who won Egypt's honors laid them at the footstool of Abraham's God, and died breathing faith in an invisible Deity. Though desire for the realization of the ancient promise may perish, through removal to Canaan may come to be considered as impossible as it now appears improbable and even undesirable, there shall be a reminder that one of Israel's sons had faith suffi-

cient to believe that God's command is best, and is attainable.

To proclaim fearlessly during our lifetime what we believe to be true is one thing, and indeed a very rare thing—few daring to give utterance to all their convictions, especially if these are in antagonism with those dominant around them—but to adopt measures for their promulgation after death—who does not perceive that this demands even stronger faith? However strongly one may be convinced that the measures he advocates are worthy of man's indorsement; however confident he may be that the doctrines he announces are heaven-inspired and consequently deserve attention, there are few whose faith attains that eminency which prompts them to believe that these measures and these doctrines will be best in the changed circumstances which may arise in the lapse of centuries; and who, accordingly, are anxious to stake the reputation they shall have in the future not solely upon the truth of the opinions they now entertain, but upon the estimation in which these views shall be held after their advocacy of them is silenced in death. Surely, great was Joseph's faith.

Besides commanding that his body should remain unburied till the "departing of the children of Israel," he enjoined that it should be interred at last with his fathers. Evidently he looks forward to Canaan, not only as the possession of his children, but as their permanent

possession. There will he be entombed, where his family, now rapidly increasing into a nation, shall become powerful, and shall acquire lasting possessions, being wanderers no longer.

Men live after they are dead, some in their good deeds, some in their bad. Who will presume to deny that it was Joseph's faith, and the deeds thence emanating, which has handed down his name from the time when the pyramids, now hoary with age, were in their infancy ?

Death's ravages extend over the entire period of human existence. Of the large company who start life together, only a few come down to a ripe old age ; along their pathway they leave many graves, some honored, some dishonored. The aged are like Joseph, nearly or quite alone.

We have ended our consideration of Joseph's last will and testament. It contains no mention of property, though he had much to dispose of—much, which without his authoritative command might cause angry contention and long continued animosity. His thoughts, however, are not about perishable riches, but eternal possessions, obtainable through obedience to divine commands. When we are nearing the Great Curtain, may we feel as he did ; may we possess the faith which induced Patrick Henry, when writing his will, to insert : “ I have now disposed of all my property to my family. There is one thing more I wish I could give them, and that is the Christian religion. If they had that, and I had

not given them one shilling, they would have been rich ; and if they had not that, and I had given them all the world, they would be poor."

With faith in an overruling Providence, Joseph leaves his wealth, his brethren, his children, all in God's hand. He merely disposes of his bones. His possessions are unmentioned ; his honors unnamed. A significant fact, one which the wealthy and the proud do well to remember. Let inflated emptiness demand splendid interment, pompous ceremonies, and imposing processions ; greatness makes this modest request : " When God visits you, and in fulfilment of the promise gives you Canaan, let me rest in your sacred burial-place." Let littleness exult in hollow pomp ; Joseph, like one of England's most illustrious queens, prefers an unostentatious funeral.

Having lived in obedience to divine law, he died in hope. Having acted bravely, conscientiously, his end was peace. Hope gilded his own prospects for eternity, and smoothed the asperities of life's journey for those he left behind him. Egypt's nobles may have followed his sarcophagus to its temporary resting-place in some imposing mausoleum ; silver and gold, linen and purple may have decked the stony receptacle of greatness ; not the perishable beauty of these, however, but the grandeur of his self-sacrificing life is that around which the hopes of his bereaved friends centre, is that

which has given him a place in the world's history. The prince as well as the beggar has at death nothing worthy of honor save the nobility of a past life. In the doorway of eternity all things earthly shrink into insignificance. God and goodness—upon these we fall back at last. When everything else has slipped away, and we stand, life's record in hand, facing the realities of an eternal world, may the rays of celestial hope penetrate a gloom that were otherwise appalling.

We have completed the biography of this truly great, this eminently good man. In every situation in life we have found him amiable, conscientious, noble, faithful to God and kind to men. Goodness is not a mere dream, nor simply worldly prudence. Adherence to the right has earthly rewards and imperishable honors. "God's favor is life." In the pathway of rectitude follow honor, wealth, happiness, and hope for eternity. Genuine merit the world will honor. Its rewards, though slow in coming, are sure.

FINIS.

