

The Twelve Tribes by [Bonar, Andrew](#)

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REUBEN.

In the review we hope to be able to take of the twelve tribes, our object is not so much to inquire into their history, as to trace the descent of each, and mark how each got its complexion from its fore-father. For it is very remarkable that, for the most part, each tribe is spoken of both in Jacob's prediction and in Moses' blessing in terms that bear reference to the patri-arch who founded it, and to circum-stances connected with his personal history. As the sin of Adam spread its dark shadow over all his race, so in some degree the special acts of the twelve patriarchs affected all generations of their descendants. Mysterious truth! but truth that cannot be gainsayed!

We begin with Jacob's first-born-, Reuben.

In Gen. xxix. 32, we have the record of his birth. It was with something like proud exultation over Rachel that Leah exclaimed, *****"Behold ye have a son! Come and see what the Lord hath given me!" She had been for a time suffering the consequences of the part she took in the deception practised upon Jacob by Laban.

She had felt sorely the coolness of Jacob's love toward her, and had discerned also the apparent frown of Jehovah in her temporary barren-ness. But now the sun has shone through the cloud, and very beautifully does she acknowledge the giver: "Surely Jehovah hath looked upon my affliction." She traces events to their true cause, the loving-kind-ness of "The Father of lights," who sends every good gift. Family trials, as well as family mercies, are all from Him. Secret wounds, heart-burnings, gloom, and smiles, are not unnoticed, nor uncared for. Then further, Leah expected much comfort from this gift. "My husband will love me." This is to be one result. This son shall be the corner-stone of the family building. "See, a son!" This is another expected result, combined with the anticipation that of course she shall be looked upon with wistful envy by others. But alas! like Eve with Cain, she was destined to be disappointed in the main subject of her exultation. As Eve fondly hoped that Cain, "a man gotten from the Lord," was to be her comfort and joy, yet found him her bitterest sorrow; so did Leah, too, soon discover that this son of her womb was to be a sword in her bones, when in after--years "he defiled his father's bed" (xxxv. 22).

Sad indeed was the after-history. Jacob (Gen. xlix. 4) felt it profoundly, and was directed by the Holy Ghost to express God's abhorrence of the incestuous act by that prediction, "Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel:" effervescing, or boiling over *****in insolent pride and uncontrollable desire, thou shalt pay the penalty.

"Reuben, thou art my first-born,

My might, even the first fruit of my strength,

Pre-eminent in dignity, pre-eminent in power."

This thou art by natural right; yet because of thy sin, the frown of Jehovah visits thee and thine;

"Thou shalt have no exaltation,"

no distinction above thy brethren. The leadership of Israel is thus withdrawn from him, along with the birthright, as 1 Chron. v. 1, 2, particularly notes. Neither he nor any of his tribe rose to commanding influence in Israel.

Sorrowful Leah! With thee, in thy crushed hopes, well could Eve have sym-pathized. If thou mournest over an adulterer of no common degree, she mourned over a murderer, a fratricide. Let no parent after this embark too much hope in such bulrush-vessels. The gift may be prized, but must not be over-valued nor trusted in. There is only one such vessel of which it is safe for us to boast: it is not Cain, nor Reuben, but another son, "The Son given to us" (Isa. ix. 5). Of Him let us boast. "Behold a Son indeed!" God's Son. He disappoints no hopes, and to Him must Eve repair in her bitter grief, and Leah with her blighted prospects, and Eli weeping his eyes blind over Hophni and Phinehas, and David groaning till his kingdom hear it, over Absalom. "Behold a Son!" *****The true Reuben is God's Firstborn.

When Moses (Deut. xxxiii. 6) speaks of the tribe of Reuben, it is quite plain that the same Spirit is guiding his utterance. There is the same tone in his words-

"Let Reuben live!

Let not Reuben die, and his men be few!"

This is all. No pre-eminence, even though his tribe multiply as to numbers. His people are to be ***** "mortals," not "warriors" in any remarkable manner. It was at best the blessing that came on Ishmael, "Oh that Ishmael might live before thee" (Gen. xvii. 18). The sin of this patriarch-father deserved death in every sense; extinction from Israel, as well as degradation. But pardon is granted: he is to "live, and not die;" though from him must pass away the birth-right office of chief-ruler, and all notable pre-eminence. His history sounds through Israel's hosts in all generations: "Flee youthful lusts!" "Whoso committeth adultery, lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul: a wound and dishonour shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away" (Prov. vi. 32, 33).

Still, Reuben was spared and pardoned; his name was on the High Priest's breast-plate, and a loaf stood for him on the golden table. And we find him in after-days walk-ing softly (may we not say?) in his appointed lot beyond Jordan. He did nobly in the seven

years' war under Joshua for the pos-session of Canaan, when associated with Gad, and the half tribe of Manasseh, and along with them received the meed of praise for brotherly help and faithfulness to his pledged word (Josh. xxii. 1-9). But this is the one only time that Reuben shines, and even then he has no pre-eminence above Gad and Manasseh. So also when he con-tributes his share to the 120,000 valiant men who came to David "with all manner of in-struments of war" (1 Chron. xii. 37), there is no superiority claimed for him. On the other hand, he shrinks back in the day of battle, when Barak and Deborah go forth (Judges v.16).

"At the streams of Reuben

There were great resolves of heart;"

but what did they end in? In inactivity and unbrotherly withholding of help, unlike his earlier days (Josh. i. 12-15); so that the prophetess upbraids him, and stigmatizes his unworthy attitude:

"Why abodest thou among the sheep-folds,

To hear the bleating of the flocks!"

rather than come on the battle-field, and hear the trumpet and the clash of arms.

We read of the early captivity of this tribe (1 Chron. v. 6). It was among the first of the tribes carried into exile: proud Nineveh witnessed the spectacle of Beerah, Prince of Reuben, led along her streets in chains-the last prince of the tribe! His brethren, left behind in their land, were roused to effort, and, under energetic chiefs, recovered possession of the region "from Aroer to Nebo" (1 Chron. v. 7, 8); and finding the pastures of Gilead unoccupied, quietly settled down upon them, enjoying a short season of tranquillity. But it was only the lamp shooting up "a flickering flame" ere it sank away in its socket.

We said that once only did Reuben's light shine brilliantly. We may, however, add that in the days of Saul they got some renown by a victory over the Hagarites (1 Chron. v. 10). In after-times they sink out of view. Once only was their territory signalized by any remarkable exploit. That one event was the Battle of Medeba (1

Chron. xix. 7-19). Within their boundaries also stood that mountain, never to be forgotten, viz., Nebo, with its summit, Pisgah, whence Moses viewed the land; a mountain of melancholy interest, a grave and a monument. And let us note that Heshbon and Elealeh, of which Isaiah says (Isa. xvi. 9), "I will water thee with my tears; Jazer too, and Sibmah, over which Jeremiah (Jer. xlviii. 32) plain-tively laments, "I will weep for thee with the weeping of Jazer," were in Reuben's land. Dibon also and Bajith were here, to the high places whereof "they went up to weep." Altogether we see the stamp and gloom of their forefather's sin ever re-appearing in this tribe.

Nevertheless in the latter day, Reuben's stains shall no more appear. In Ezek. -xlviii. 6,7, we find his portion between Ephraim and Judah-a position of honour surely, indicating restoration from the fall in which his forefather involved him? "Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!" Let Israel know that spiritual adultery, as a people, has been their ruin. They left Jehovah: and when He came to his own, clothed in our humanity; when He stood on their hills, and wept over them; they sternly rejected Him. And never since that hour have they prospered. "They shall not excel," is Israel's doom, as it was Reuben's, until they shall come in the latter day to wash away the stain of their enormous sin in "the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness" (Zech. xiii. 1). Then shall they return to honour and excellency.

PISGAH IN THE TRIBE OF REUBEN. (DEUT. xxxiv. 5.)

"SWEET was the journey to the sky,
The holy prophet tried;
'Climb up the mount,' said God, 'and die:'
The prophet climbed and died.
"Softly, with fainting head, he lay
Upon his Maker's breast;
His Maker soothed his soul away,
And laid his flesh to rest.
"In God's own arms he left the breath
Which God's own Spirit gave;

His was the noblest road to death,
And his the sweetest grave."

WATTS.

SIMEON.

THE ear of God is at the world's tent-door; He hears the cry of its sin. His ear is at the tent-door of every family; He listens to what is said in love or hatred, in prayer or praise, by parent or by child.

But the I notice He takes of what He hears is not by words only; more frequently it is by deeds. Leah knew this when she named her second son "Simeon," which means "Hearing," significantly intimating that the Lord by the providence of this birth had taken notice of the unhappy disagreements of Jacob's family. "Because the Lord hath heard that I was hated, He hath therefore given me this son also" (Gen. xxix. 33). The Lord had heard the upbraiding, the bitter word, the unkind remark, too frequent in Jacob's dwelling, from the lips of Rachel; and to rebuke her, sent this gift of a son, not to her but to her hated sister.

Earth is the Lord's larger family. "Behold, all souls are mine" (Ezek. xviii. 4). His providence is testifying among his own people that He hears the report of their deeds, as well as their words; and soon they who speak "often one to the other" (Mal. iii. 16) shall discover that "the Lord hearkened and heard," for his book of remembrance and his reward shall testify it to the full. Soon, too, all earth shall know it, for the due reward shall overtake each man, and compel him to say, "Ah, the Lord heard what I said and did! He has rendered to me according to my deeds."

Because of the import and early associations of the name, it became common among the families of the other tribes, so that we have Simon Peter, or the Sea of Galilee; old Simeon, at Jerusalem; Simon, of Cyrene; not to speak of others historically famous also. At Simeon's birth, it was what his parents spoke and did that was specially marked; but in after-years it was Simeon's own evil report that came up into the ears of God. Simeon and Levi joined in unholy brother-hood to take vengeance, deceitfully, cruelly, and sacrilegiously, on the men of Sychem. O Simeon, Jehovah is a God

that heareth! In the days of Sodom, "the cry of it came up to Him," and "the cry was very great," like the cry of the blood of Abel from the ground; but thy very name, Simeon, might have warned thee that thy deeds also must come to his ear. Accordingly, his own father, with breaking heart, must utter Jehovah's sentence on him and his seed (Gen. xlix. 5-7).

"Simeon and Levi are brethren,

(Yes, brethren in guilt and sin):

Their swords are weapons of wickedness.

O my soul, come not thou into their counsel;

With their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united,

For they slew men in their fury,

And houghed oxen in their wantonness;

(They spared neither man nor beast).

Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce,

And their fury, for it was cruel."

This, therefore, (says dying Jacob) is the sentence which I am called upon by the Lord to pronounce on them, as a protest against all deceit and violence. I utter it with reluctance, and yet without one misgiving as to its justice.

"I will divide them in Jacob,

And scatter them in Israel."

Born at a time when his father's house was in a state of disunion, Simeon, in after--days, by his own cruel deeds, dissociated himself from the sympathy of his father and brethren; and now he hears that in the days to come, the tribe that is to descend from him shall ever bear the impress of this unhappy beginning. It shall be a scattered and divided tribe.

Now, was it so?

We turn to the farewell blessing of Moses in Deut. xxxiii. to seek for Simeon and any word of favour to him there; but in vain. In their encampments at that period his tribe used to pitch side by side with Reuben, as we find in Num. ii. 12: "And those which pitch by him shall be the tribe of Simeon," a host of 59,300 men. And yet Moses, whose eye had so often rested on these tents, has no

blessing for him at the last. Did the infamous sin of "Zimri, the son of Salu, a prince of a chief house among the Simeonites" (Num. xxv. 14), slain in the act of his adultery by Phinehas, witness against the whole tribe, and bring to remembrance their first father's sin; as a recent wound often revives the smart of scars left long ago? At all events, Moses had no blessing to bestow on unhappy Simeon. Not that he forgot him, for in the commencement of Judah's blessing, it seems as if he had the name of Simeon in his thoughts when he thus began: "Hear, Lord, the voice" *****. Be to Judah in the better way what Thou has from the first been to Simeon in the way of rebuke.

Simeon's tribe was one of the foremost in going to battle against the Canaanites after Joshua's death. He nobly went up with Judah to war: "Judah said unto his brother Simeon, Come up with me into my lot, and I likewise will go with thee into thy lot" (Judg. i. 3). And they went together (ver. 17), and at Zephath, or Hormah, won complete victory. Judah fulfilled his pledge of helping his brother, for this Hormah was allotted to Simeon by Joshua (Josh. xix. 4). But then it turns out that this city and all the cities given to Simeon (such as Beer-sheba and Ziklag) were "out of the inheritance of the children of Judah;" so that Simeon is dispersed among the tribe of Judah, and has no separate portion assigned him as his own. In this way, Jacob's prophetic words begin to be realized; and yet at the same time, in this very way, the dew of the blessing pronounced on Judah by Moses falls in part upon Simeon also. Indeed, at one juncture they seem to have outstripped Judah in zeal. For, in the days of David's trial, Simeon furnished 7100 "mighty men of valour" (1 Chron. xii. 25) to the Lord's cause, while Judah sent only 6800.

But the after-history of the tribe was destined to set forth a far fuller illustration of Jacob's words regarding their being "divided and scattered." Simeon (as we have seen) never had any compact territory of his own, and probably it was because of this that he was ready to go forth beyond the borrowed possessions yielded up to him by Judah. We find him, at any rate, setting out upon an

expedition against Gedor, pos-sessed by the sons of Ham. This was in the days of King Hezekiah (1 Chron. iv. 39-41). Perhaps the defeat of Sennacherib's mighty host may have revived the old faith and courage in the men of Israel, who could not but see that the Jehovah who fought for Joshua was Jehovah still. We find thir-teen chiefs of Simeon leading a band of elect warriors to this Gedor, where they come upon a people living in idolatry, quiet and secure (as quiet and secure as their father Simeon had found the men of Sychem, though in far other circumstances), upon whom they burst like a flood that sweeps all before it. It was an exploit that resem-bled the assault of the Danites on Laish, this occurring in the far south of the land, as did that other in the far north, but both furnish-ing (may we not say?) a sample of the Lord's ways toward a thoughtless world. "When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction shall come upon them, and they shall not escape" (1 Thess. v. 3). It has been thus; and it shall be thus with all the earth when the Lord himself shall come.

Here Simeon found pasture "fat and good," but far from his proper lot, so that he is "scattered and divided." And then yet more; it is recorded in 1 Chron. iv. 42,43, that his valiant men turned their arms against a remnant of Amalekites who had settled among the hills of Seir. That band of 500 warriors was led on by four redoubt-able leaders, all sons of one man, Ishi, who had named his sons at their birth by names that spoke of the true ground of confidence, viz., Pelatiah, "Jehovah delivers;" Neariah, "Jehovah is the light;" Rephaiah, "Jehovah is the healer" (or, "Jehovah is the true Giant"); and Uzziel, "God is my strength." Their expedition was crowned with success, and Mount Seir became another settlement for the tribe of Simeon. Simeon is blessed, but he is "scattered and divided," found in Judah, in Gedor, and in the hills of Seir.

People of Israel, why are you "scattered and peeled" at this hour? Why are you not a compact nation in your own land? Is it not because you have had fathers who without any provocation (in this far worse than Simeon and Levi at Sychem) "slew men in their

fury"? What men? The Man Christ Jesus, the God-man, and his people.

"Why are Jacob's sons afflicted?
Why is Israel still a slave?
Has it not been long predicted
That the Lord would Zion save?
"Why do heathen, proud oppressors,
Rule her sons with iron hand?
Why are Gentiles now possessors
Of her long-neglected land?
"Go and trace the sacred story,
There we read the awful cause:
They have slain the Lord of glory,
They have trampled on his laws."

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LEVI.

THE Lord works for his own glory by rais-ing "the poor from the dust and the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes." Out of strange materials, surely, did He rear up the house of Israel! And nothing might excite in us more amazement than his dealings with LEVI, from whose loins He is pleased to cause a most noble line of priests and sanctuary-ministers to descend. Sovereign grace! what may not thy love and wisdom bring to pass! In the tribe of Levi, as in Reuben and Simeon, we trace in all after-ages the taint of his first father's sin, and find that sin giving a peculiar complexion to his lot; while, at the same time, we trace no less distinctly throughout all after-generations, a reference to the origin of his name, which means "Joined," or in an abstract form, "Joining."

1. At his birth Leah thought (Gen. xxix. 34) that Jacob would be completely won over by this third son, presented to him as another arrow wherewith to fill his quiver. "Now, this time shall my husband be joined to me, because I have born him three sons." She knew the power of benefits, how a gift makes room for a man, pacifying anger, and pros-pering a man's plans (Prov. xvii. 8 and

xviii. 16). Probably her hope was realized, for her next son gets the thankful name of "Praise" (Judah), as if all were going on to her mind. From his birth, then, Levi was one whose province and mission seemed to be to join together parties that otherwise might have stood aloof and alone.

2. Next follows the history of his youth; and there he teaches how sin may join men together. In Jacob's prophetic utterance (Gen. xlix. 3) he appears as the close confederate of Simeon in cruelty and blood-

"Simeon and Levi are brethren."

What a union!

"O my soul, come not that into their secret."

They combine; hand joins in hand, and the enterprise appears successful. But they who sin together must suffer together they must be joined in punishment. And so the sentence comes forth on Levi, as on Simeon: "I will divide him in Jacob,

And scatter him in Israel."

He drags this clanking chain on his foot in all succeeding time. He gets no portion or lot like his brethren, no compact territory; but is divided and scattered over the length and breadth of the land, getting forty eight cities for his habitation, furnished by the other eleven tribes. He is to be found north, south, east, and west; in Judah, in Ephraim, in Asher, in Gad, in Reuben, "scattered and divided," because he joined Simeon in sin.

3. But there are other aspects of his history. The history of his descendants, who were joined to Moses at Sinai, teaches God's way of joining alienated men to Himself. It was the day of the golden calf and its terrible scenes. The proclamation ran through the camp, "Who is on the Lord's side? let him come unto me" (Exod. xxxii. 26). None stirred a foot but the men of the tribe of Levi; and they joined Moses in executing the Lord's vengeance on the idolaters; for they girded on their swords, passed from gate to gate through the camp, slew all they met, even brothers, and companions, and neighbours-all, in order to win the blessing promised. For the clause of the proclamation was to this effect,

"Consecrate yourselves to-day unto the Lord, every man upon his son and upon his brother, that He may bestow upon you a blessing to-day." In this they honoured the holiness and justice of the Lord, dreadful as the action might appear; and this homage to Jehovah's justice and holiness was accepted at their hand. Is it not ever thus? It is when a sinner is brought to sympathize with the Lord's views of sin, and with the Lord's justice in his wrath against it, that the Lord is reconciled to him. The sinner's acknowledgment of the cross, where the sword smote the man who was our Brother and the Almighty's Fellow, is equivalent to the action of Levi, in drawing the sword against the sin around him.

4. Yet again. The history of Levi's descendants, who ministered before God in the sanctuary, teaches us yet more fully God's way of joining to Himself alienated men; for the Levites stand there, from age to age, handling the sacred vessels, and engaging in the rites that exhibit the Divine plan of reconciliation. It is they, and only they who, as priests of Aaron's line, present the sacrifices-the blood, the fat, the incense, the drink-offering-all, in short, that tells of man re-joined to God. He is LEVI ("JOINING") in all his history. Day by day thus he, in the atoning sacrifice, set forth God's justice honoured; God's holy abhorrence of sin; God's flaming and consuming wrath against the sinner who goes on in his trespass, refusing to bring it to the altar and to the blood. Levi at Sinai, and Levi in the tabernacle and temple, is alike a witness for God's unbending holiness and immaculate justice, even while He receives the guilty in the appointed way.

It was on Levi as joined to the Lord, and as thereafter to be the tribe which should in a manner join others to the Lord, that Moses poured out his full and fervent blessing (Deut. xxxiii. 8-11). He begins, in that blessing, with the mention of the "Urim and Thummim" (Lights and Perfections; i.e., complete light and complete perfection), but he nowhere describes what this Urim and Thummim mean. Many are the theories on the subject; but perhaps the simplest of all is that which understands it to be the LAW, which in the ark was written on tables of stone, but which within

the folds of the breastplate was written on some other material, yet set forth the same truth, viz., that He who goes for us into God's presence, as priest and mediator, must have the law on his heart, must honour and magnify that law, which is perfect, and which is all light and no darkness at all. With allusion, then, to this typical priest, Moses sang-

"Let thy Urim and thy Thummim belong to the man of thy Holy One;"

let it be ever in charge of the appointed priest. The priest is called ***** "the man of thy Holy One" (like Ps. lxxx. 17, *****); that Holy One whom they tempted at Massah, along with the other tribes of Israel. Their share in that provocation is mentioned that they might in no wise be elated because of this honour. Let the breastplate which contains the law be ever in charge of the priest who is at the head of thy tribe; and be thou ever zealous for that law, even as when at Sinai thou showedst thyself on the Lord's side, in spite of father, mother, brethren. This is the tribe who shall in all after-ages have the high honour of teaching all Israel-
"They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law;
They shall put incense before Thee, and whole burnt-offerings upon thine altar."

A blessed work, surely! showing men by type and symbol, as well as by clearer word, the way of acceptance with God-the way of acceptable worship-the way of daily service. And in so doing his "substance" is blessed, his "works" are pleasing to God, and his "foes" are powerless, smitten by the God whom Levi serves.

Now, this tribe being scattered all over the land in their forty-eight cities, with their enclosures (not "castles," as translated in 1 Chron. vi. 54) for cattle and flocks, walked everywhere as witnesses for God in the: happy days of their early service; for Malachi (ii. 6) declares about Levi in those days, "The law of truth was in his mouth and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity." See those men of Levi at Hebron, teaching that lately arrived manslayer, who has there found a city of refuge! See that Levite at

Sychem, near Jacob's Well, gathering round him a group of the men of Ephraim, to teach them the teachings which daily go on in the temple at Jerusalem! See them opening up the law to a company on the fragrant hills of Gilead beyond Jordan; see them at Ramoth Gilead, or at Mahanaim, or by the banks of Arnon, testifying by their very presence for God's justice, holiness, mercy, and loving-kindness. This is a joining tribe all over! He is LEVI in his history, as well as in his birth.

5. But Levi is rich in suggestive lessons, in almost every view you can take of him. We might teach from his case much about sin; e. g., sin separating man and man, as seen in Jacob's family at the time of Levi's birth; sin separating man and God, as seen in the effects of his foul conspiracy against Shechem; man, separated by sin, brought back to God through justice honoured. More particularly we might weave a whole web of spiritual truth from the threads of Levi's history by using different stages of his ex-istence- to illustrate different doctrines. It stands thus: (a) In the turning of his curse into a blessing, or, in other words, by making use of his scattered and divided condition as the very means of pervading Israel with the knowledge of Jehovah, we have an illustration of the Lord's way in redemption. While Simeon's curse (divided and scattered) is left unalleviated, Levi's is used for great ends of good. This is altogether like the Lord, who in sovereignty passes by whom He will, and shows favour where He will, but in both cases from reasons of highest holiness and wisdom, though hidden from us. (b) In the history of Levi's youthful days we see a full-length portrait of the natural man. It is forbidding and repulsive, exhibiting all the strength of original corruption. He was educated in Jacob's tents, under a godly father's care; was accustomed to stand at God's altar and see the sacrifice; often heard the story of his father's vision at Bethel; was kept as much as Joseph from the Canaanite idolatries; and yet, alas! the evil is unsubdued, and godly education is thrown away upon the man. Nay, fierce, cruel passions appear, and the young man rushes forth to gratify them. Under Jacob's roof the viper is nourished; under

Jacob's shadow grows the all-blasting upas-tree; self-will, revenge, murderous hatred, are de-veloped amid holy counsels and holy ex-ample. Levi, with his brother Simeon, even dares to use the sacrament of circumcision as a preparation for assault, urging the men of Shechem to use it only in order to unfit them for defence. It was a deed as foul as if we had persuaded an unarmed company to sit down at the Lord's table, and then came upon them with weapons of death as they were eating the bread and taking the wine. And what is all this but the unfolding of the natural heart, "deceitful and desperately wicked"? Over such a one hangs the curse, the indig-nation, and wrath of an insulted God. "I will divide them, I will scatter them!" (c) Yet see how God can change the natural man and remove the curse. Go to the foot of Horeb on the day of the golden calf (Ex. xxxii. 25-29), and there you find how the Spirit of God had silently been penetrating Levi's families. Not only were Amram and Jochebed illustrious instances of grace and faith, with their three renowned children, Miriam, Aaron, and Moses; but now behold, the tribe, as a whole, rises up on the Lord's side! How different from the days of Shechem! It is even as when the jailor was awakened by the Spirit, and his whole household with him. And thus Levi is con-secrated to the Lord for ever, and becomes a tribe that does nothing but serve and minis-ter for God. (d) But again; in him we see the privileges of the new man. The Lawgiver himself (so just is it to deal bountifully with the forgiven) pronounces the ample blessing of Deut. xxxiii. 8-11. He gets guidance and guides others: God guides Levi, and Levi guides Israel. As it is still in the Church; God teaches sinners by a man taken from the same pit and miry clay, from the same curse and corruption. He has fellowship with God, approaching Him with the in-cense, in prayer, praise, meditation, and mul-tiform service. There is blessing on his substance, too; and he is accepted in his works (1 Cor. xv. 58): victory is before him; he is more than conqueror. (e) Once more, here are the new man's duties. Chosen, but not for any good in him beyond his breth-ren, he handles no more "instruments of cruelty" (Gen. xlix. 5), but, on the contrary it

is his part now to bear the vessels of the tabernacle (Numb. iii. 6-8), or, as it is expressed, "to keep the instruments of the tabernacle of the congregation." They enter into God's assembly, and each has his own department of work: none is idle; for gratitude constrains them, forgiving love presses them onward. But, as in the Church still: they do not all serve in the same manner. There are three families in Levi, of whom one (Gershon) carries the tent, with its co-verings and hangings; another (Kohath), the table, candlestick, and altar; and the third (Merari) the boards, bars, pillars, and sockets. So everyone serves, none envying the other, none complaining, none inter-fearing; for God has appointed each one's sphere. They served in the desert, on its sands; they served in Zion, but at last they reached the gold-covered floor of Solomon's temple. Is not all this the history of the saints?

Besides all these teachings, Levi might furnish many other lessons. "THE LORD was his inheritance," is often repeated, telling all men where they will find enough. A true Levite's song was Psalm xvi. 5, 6. Again; this was the tribe that furnished so many singers to the Lord's service, the Korahites, and other bands, with Heman, Ethan, Asaph, and the like. This tribe sent its representatives to David's help armed for battle (1 Chron. xii. 26-28) with twenty and two captains. Of this tribe many were the thousands who gave up for the Lord houses and lands, glebes and manses, in the days of Jeroboam (2 Chron. xi. 14). And there is something in reserve for them in the latter days, when "the sons of Zadok," descendants of Phinehas (whose zeal won special promises for his seed), shall minister in that mysterious temple spoken of by Ezekiel the prophet (Ezek. xlv. 15).

How strange to find a name LEVIATHAN ("the joined serpent") resembling Levi's. But very different is their history and work. While Levi, joined to God, and joining others, is a blessing in the earth, Leviathan (Isa. xxvii. 1) joined in his scales, is forming confederacy and gathering together earth's kings against the Lord and his Anointed. This crocodile of Egypt was the emblem of

Antichrist, that enemy of God, who, with all his violence and power as "king over the children of pride" (Job xli.), seeks to disjoin men from their only Saviour. But the Lord's sword smites him (Isa. xxvii. 1); while Levi, who drew the sword for his Lord (Ex. xxxii.), receives the blessing, and along with his brethren takes root again, and re-appears in holy beauties in the glory of the latter days (Isa. lxvi. 21).

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JUDAH.

THERE is nothing sweeter than a true song of praise. Every ear listens to it, every heart is moved by it, and God Himself bends his heavens to hear. In Moses' record of a fallen world's history, the first time that "praise" occurs is in Gen. xxix. 35. It bursts forth from the house of Jacob and the lips of Leah, and may be said to accord well with that joyful boast of the Psalmist in after-days, when he is led to sing that it is "in the tabernacles of the righteous" you may expect to hear "the voice of rejoicing and salvation" (Ps. cxviii. 15). It is in Jacob's tents that we first see one wearing "the garment of praise."

There had been a succession of blessings, like waves from the deep ocean, breaking at the feet of Leah; and when this fourth son was given, her exulting heart rose above its former self in gratitude. She takes up the harp; "Now"-("this time" is the literal rendering, as if she had her eye on Adam's exclamation of delight in Gen. ii. 23)-"Now I will praise Jehovah!" and even as the happy mother holds the harp she turns to her new -born son and calls him "JUDAH," which may mean not simply "PRAISE," but "one for whom Jehovah is praised." Indeed, the word is most expressive, involving as it often does the idea of acknowledging and confessing. Where the being and works, the name and excellences, the heart and hand of Jehovah, are spoken of, this is praise; and thus it is used-Psalm cxlvii. 12: "Praise" (be a Judah to) "the Lord, O Jerusalem." It is instructive to observe how the Lord by repeated mercies has melted Leah's heart, so that now, at any rate, if not before, her sel-fishness is drowned in praise. Nothing is so fitted to

give a deadly blow to our selfish-ness at any time as real praise. Praise raises its note over buried self. Praise is sung when self is low and God high in our thoughts; and at such times, burdens roll off into Christ's sepulchre. It is at such times that heavenly work is done by men.

Such was JUDAH'S beginning; like earth's foundations, laid amid the songs of the morn-ing stars (Job xxxviii. 7). And if Judah himself did not very remarkably call forth praise in after-days, his posterity surely inherited this blessing-the sons of him over whom praise was offered became men of note Jacob on his deathbed foretells (Gen. xlix. 8-12), with reference to the name, and perhaps hinting at the sad feelings of his heart previously in speaking of Reuben, Simeon, and Levi-

"Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise;"
not only thy mother's sons, but "thy father's sons" also: the children of Rachel, and Zilpah, and Bilhah shall all "bow down to thee."

And there shall be good reason why thou shouldest be thus honoured and praised; for

"Judah is a lion's whelp,"

one who shall early show that he is to command others. And did not this soon appear in Judah taking the lead in the desert march, and in going up foremost after Joshua's death to take possession ? But "the young lion" grew, and became indis-putably terrible to foes. Jacob sees him arrived at pre-eminence, anticipating the time when the historian of the past should write, "Judah prevailed over his brethren, and of him came the Chief Ruler" (1 Chron. v. 2); and so he continues his delineation of that career which was to entitle him to the name JUDAH.

"From the prey, my son, thou hast gone up!"

Is not this the reign of David specially, when every nation round felt the tremendous power of Judah's King, when David prospered whithersoever he went, and when he dedicated of the "spoils won in battles" (1 Chron. xxvi. 27), an immense amount, for the Lord's use?

But see, says Jacob again-

"He has lain down; he has couched like a lion!

And like a lioness, who shall rouse him up?"

A lioness is peculiarly fierce if her cubs be threatened. All this imagery sets before us the days when Solomon was King of Judah and Israel, quietly seated on his throne, honoured and feared by all the nations, none daring to do wrong to one of his happy subjects. It was then that Judah was at the height of his pre-eminence, the praise of all lands. After that period, never-theless, he still held the high place assigned him; for did not all the noblest and best of the kings spring from Judah's soil? and the most renowned of the prophets? and all the sweet singers whose psalms and songs have been handed down to us? Judah retained dominion too. "The lion" was still his emblem; and looking on through long centuries, Jacob was inspired to sing of this feature also in Judah's history-

"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah,

Nor the lawgiver (a ruler's staff) from between his feet,

Till SHILOH come, and the notions be gathered to Him."

Judah held his place as a kingdom till Messiah was born, growing up unnoticed "as a tender plant;" for SHILOH is no other than Messiah, the name signifying "One who has peace," or rest, or security. Messiah had rest and peace in Himself, and came to give it to others: "My peace I give unto you" (John xiv. 27). And this name given to Him here corresponds very much with "SOLOMON"; the man who "has peace," and who makes others share it. In all probability, it was in reference to this name of Messiah, that the ark was so long kept at Shiloh, the town of Ephraim that bore the same signification. In due time, Messiah, long expected (but whose peace was not found at the town Shiloh, nor in the days of Solomon), did come; and ever since He came, "the na-tions," not the tribes of Israel only, have been gathering round Him, and giving will-ing obedience to Him. From year to year, Shiloh has been gathering willing subjects, and shall never cease till He has gathered all nations as well as all Israel (Ps. cii. 22). There may be an allusion to the fact that for a time Jerusalem, was to be the resort of all true worshippers; but only till Shiloh

should come (John iv. 21-23).

O Judah! what praise belongs to thee! What honour! Divine sovereignty has given thee the birthright pre-eminence. Well may thy brethren in all the earth join with thy "father's sons," in almost envious gratulation. Thou art he who wert honoured to give birth to Messiah, the King of kings, the Prince of Peace, the Saviour of sinners, the blessed and only Redeemer of the lost sons of men! All eternity shall remember thee.

On account of all this honour, and because of all that his possessions in the land yielded him, Judah was yet further spoken of by Jacob as a tribe abounding in blessing. At this day the inhabitants of Lebanon, when at vintage season they have stript off the rich clusters of grapes, and thrust them into the wine-vats, tie to the vines the asses that have been helping them, letting them eat the leaves and branches as they please. In allusion to this very ancient custom, which spoke of vintage satisfactorily gathered in, and hinted at the gatherers having gone away to the wine-vats, there to tread out the grapes, Jacob describes Judah's plenty of all good things-

"Binding his ass to the vine, and his ass's colt to the choice vine," etc.,

enjoying all that might make the eye -sparkle and the face flush with ruddy glow, while also they had their full share of the land "flowing with milk." Think of Eshcol and Hebron, with hills terraced to the top with vines. Think of plains and valleys covered with cattle and goats. It would be easy to enlarge, but our limits forbid us to dwell on this feature of Judah's praise. We might add also that Shiloh the Prince of Peace, being a man of Judah as to his humanity, might be shown to embody in Himself all the leading features of the tribe; praised-a man of might, the lion of the tribe, and yet the peaceful one (Friedreich), introducing the gathered people into an inheritance flowing with milk and honey, an inheritance better than Canaan.

In the blessing of Moses (Deut. xxxiii. 7), there is, at first sight, an apparently intentional ignoring of the name of Judah in reference

to praise. It is of prayer we hear him speak:-

"Hear, Lord, the voice of Judah!"

But this also is part of Judah's pre-emi-nence. Yes, he is remarkable above others for prayer. Was his first father so? Was not Judah that brother of Joseph who pleaded with his brethren (Gen. xxxvii. 26, 27), and then so pathetically interceded with Joseph himself? (Gen. xliv. 18-34). That voice touched Joseph's heart; and in after-days, the heart of Jehovah was touched by descendants of this same Judah, who were mighty in prayer. Such was Jabez; such was David; such was Solomon; such was Asa; and such was Hezekiah; not to mention more of the Lord's famous remembrancers. And in Judah, above all, stood The Temple, to which the chief allusion may be made here; for it was "The house of prayer," from which ascended supplication continually from the days of Solomon's prayer down to the days of the publican who cried, "O God, be mer-ciful to me a sinner!" No wonder Moses selected, by the Spirit's guidance, this feature of Judah's tribe. We might further notice that it is Judah who has given name to the whole nation. They are "JEWS;" that is, Judahites; be-cause the tribe of Judah remained at Jeru-salem, when the ten tribes went into captivity and disappeared from view. And so again, O Judah, thy brethren and the nations praise thee!

But listen to one who loved thee truly--Paul who sat once at the feet of Gamaliel in Jerusalem; listen to him reminding thee: "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, but he is a Jew who is one inwardly, whose praise is not of men, but of God" (Rom. ii. 29). Come and join us in adoring Shiloh, greater than all the mighty kings, the true "Men of the tribe of Judah" (Rev. v. 5), and of David's line. He rests at the Father's right hand. Come and praise Him, for He has shed the true glory over thy tribe. He is the true Judah; praised by his innumerable saved ones to all eternity, to whom He gives far better than the wine and milk of your famed Judea. O Judah, the Gentiles love thee for Shiloh's sake; for He was thy brother, while He was also thy Lord, David's Son and David's Lord. We love thee, and all thy brethren; and we sing in our

dwellings songs that breathe out our longings for the day when thou shalt again be a "name and a praise among all people of the earth" (Zeph. iii. 20), when "Judah shall dwell for ever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation" (Joel iii. 20).

"When the fair year
Of your Deliverer comes,
And that long frost, which now benumbs
Your hearts, shall thaw; when angels here
Shall yet to man appear,
And familiarly confer
Beneath the oak and juniper.

"When the bright Dove,
Which now these many, many springs
Hath kept above, shall with spread wings.
Descend, and living waters flow
To make dry dust and dead trees grow.

"Oh, then, that I
Might live, and see that olive-tree
Bearing her proper branches! which now lie
Scattered each where,
And without root and sap decay,
Cast of the husbandman away.

"And sure it is not far;
For, as your first and foul decays
Forerunning the bright Morning Star,
Did sadly note his healing rays
Would shine elsewhere, since you were blind;
And would be cross when God was kind;

"So, by all signs,
Our fulness, too, is now come in,
And the same sun, which here declines.
And sets, will few hours hence begin
To rise on you again, and look
Toward old Mamre and Eshcol's brook.

"For surely He

Who loved the world so as to give
His only Son to make it free-
Whose Spirit, too, doth mourn and grieve
To see man lost-will, for old love,
From your dark hearts this veil remove.
"Faith sojourned first on earth with you,
You were the dear and chosen flock;.
The arm of God, glorious and true,
Was first revealed to be your Rock.
You were the eldest child, and when:
Your stony hearts despised love,
The youngest, e'en the Gentiles, then
Were cheered, your jealousy to move.
"Thus, righteous Father, dost thou deal
With brutish men! Thy gifts go round,
By turns and timely, and so heal
The lost son by the newly found."

VAUGHAN.

DAN.

FROM time to time, during the long sojourn in Egypt, the blessings which Jacob pronounced on his deathbed would be spoken of, sung of at the brick-kiln, and then on the parched soil of the desert, taught to their children, and kept in memory as pledges of future good. Who can tell how often the bondmen encouraged each other under the blows of the taskmaster, with the prophecy that Shiloh should yet arise, and Judah yet be the mighty lion? But to teach them, when they had reached Canaan and its happy seats, not to rest as if they had found all that the soul could win, the patriarch Jacob, while in spirit in the midst of these future scenes, is heard breathing out his longing desire for more than his words have described. Pausing after his glowing delineation of Judah's lot, and his stirring sketch of the prowess of Dan, he is led by the inspiring Spirit to exclaim (Gen. xlix. 18)-

"I have waited for thy salvation, O Jehovah,"
as if he had said, "All that development of greatness and power in

Israel is not enough. Oh that the salvation of Israel were come!" It was the first of a long succession of similar bursts of desire which used to find utterance when gleams of the glorious Saviour touched the chords of the believing heart. In the days of David we hear the worshipper cry, "My soul fainteth for thy salvation;" "Mine eyes fail for thy salvation;" "I have hoped for thy salvation, O Lord;" "I have longed for thy salvation, O Lord" (Ps. cxix. 81,123,166, 174). Isaiah cries, "Say to Zion, Behold thy salvation cometh" (Isa. lxii. 11), as if Zion were impatient with long expecting. Old Simeon exclaims at last, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation." (Luke ii. 30), when at Christ's first coming he held "The Child born to us" in his arms. And the whole Church shall soon raise the joyous cry, at his second coming, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us" (Isa. xxv. 9).

"I know that my Redeemer lives,
He lives, and on the earth shall stand;
And though to worms my flesh He gives,
My dust lies numbered in his hand.

"In this reanimated clay
I surely shall behold Him near;
Shall see Him in the latter day
In all his majesty appear.
"I feel what then shall raise me up--
The Eternal Spirit lives in me.
This is my confidence of hope
That God I see to face shall see.
'Mine own, and not another's eyes,
The King shall in his beauty view.
I shall from Him receive the prize,
The starry crown to victors due."

C. WESLEY.

But we have somewhat anticipated. Let us go farther back than to Jacob's blessing, let us go back to the birth-time of Dan, as recorded in Gen. xxx. 1-6.

Man's heart has been called a microcosm and a family is a

miniature world. What we find in Jacob's house exhibits very correctly the state of the world at large. All things in Jacob's house seem out of order, envy, discontent, murmuring abound on one side, pride and the vauntings of rivalry prevail on the other. Rachel is against Leah, and Leah is against Rachel. Jacob cannot rectify the disorder; but at length Rachel hints that she has hit upon a plan which may adjust matters. She suggests that her handmaid Bilhah may have children by Jacob, and she will adopt her handmaid's children. It is a plan such as only the unsatisfactory relations of polygamy would have admitted; but Rachel prayed over it (she says, "God hath heard me." v. 6), and the Lord made use of it. A son was born to Bilhah accordingly; and while Rachel adopted the child, and held him up as her own, she exclaimed, "God hath judged me, and hath given me a son;" and so his name was called "Dan," judging. Now this term, "judge" (which in Hebrew may be expressed by two verbs indiscriminately, ***** or *****), is one that includes much. It is, indeed, properly the expression for managing and ruling; putting in order things that were all confusion, or that threatened to cause distress. And so God is "the widow's Judge" (Ps. lxxviii. 5) when He manages her affairs for her in her helplessness; and He comes to "judge the earth," as Gideon, Samson, Samuel judged and ruled Israel. It was this rectifying and adjusting of affairs in Jacob's house that Rachel referred to when she uttered the exulting words, "God hath judged me!" The storm of passion is quieted; the boasts and vaunts of rivals are stilled; order begins to reign in the tents of Israel, as well as in Rachel's distracted heart. In bitterness of soul and rash rebelliousness of feeling, she had said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die;" the Lord had heard her, too, but He had also heard her bemoaning the sin, and crying to Him to overrule all. And the Lord did overrule, for "He judged." Even as He shall do in reply to the prayers of his elect, who cry day and night to Him, "Avenge me of mine adversary" (Luke xviii, 7). Men have, like Rachel, strange plans of their own for putting right a disordered world; but the Lord will over-rule all.

In after days, Jacob foretold regarding Dan, with a reference to his name and the circumstance of his birth-

"Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel." He shall have his turn in judging Israel. And as he at his birth brought about a temporary cessation of strife and envy, so, when he shall have become a tribe, he shall be found performing a similar service. All this came to pass when Samson was raised up from this tribe at a critical period of the nation's history, to be to the whole land a deliverer and ruler. Not only did Samson for twenty years clear Israel's troubled sky, but he left his impress on the nation, who saw in him what might their God was able to communicate, so that truly one could chase a thousand. He caused the nations round, also, to know the same, and to stand in awe. But again, when he shall judge Israel, he shall do it in a peculiar manner.

"Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, That biteth the horse-heels, so that the rider falleth backward." In marching through the desert, Dan brought up the rear of the camp, and may often have driven back the retreating foe. But the special allusion here is to Samson again; for like the serpent and the adder, see him suddenly, abruptly, and by most startling strokes, assailing the Philistines from time to time. Yet more, Jacob may refer to the Danites, in characteristic suddenness and force, coming down upon the city Laish. These at any rate are outstanding facts regarding this tribe, related by the sacred historian in a way that may lead us to suppose that, on other occasions besides, Dan exhibited a similar peculiarity of tempera-ment and character. But further, let us note, Dan, in all these deeds, was adjusting the balance, or "judging;" for even the affair of Laish was suggested by the tribe finding itself over-crowded, and by some-thing of Rachel's desire to equal their rivals in prowess and possessions. It may be because of the singularity of the description, "A serpent-an adder," that there arose a whisper among the Jews and the early Christians, that Antichrist should spring from the tribe of

Dan-Antichrist: that serpent, that adder, and yet mighty ruler. Some of the fathers thought their opinion confirmed by the fact that Dan set up the graven image of Micah (Judg. xviii. 31), and also by the omission of the name of Dan in Rev. vii. But for that omission sufficient reasons of another kind can be given; and when we turn to Moses' blessing, in Deut. xxxii. 22, there is no hint of evil having its peculiar source in Dan. Moses omits Simeon, but he mentions and blesses Dan-

"Dan is like a lion's whelp, that is wont to leap from Bashan." He is never to be like Judah-a full-grown lion and lioness; he is to be "a young lion," making efforts at great deeds; and specially like the young lion in his daring leaps. It was in conformity with this trait in his character that he sent out his warriors from the south, where his lot seemed fixed, to the far north, leaping at once from the one end to the other end of the land. While adjusting affairs in his own tribe, he does unlooked-for things on the foe-coming on Laish all suddenly and irresistibly. Shall not the Judge of the earth do the same? Shall He not come all suddenly, as the leap of a lion's whelp, upon an unthinking world, when they are saying, "Peace and safety"?

There is a most interesting variety in the Lord's people; the Lord's tribes have each a characteristic of their own. Cephas is not Apollos, nor is either of them a Paul. There is variety in their gifts, and graces in their lot and in the results of their assigned work. Often the Lord uses a man for some one great and important purpose, and then the man disappears from view. Micaiah announces Ahab's doom; Daniel's three companions pass unscathed through the furnace; Joseph of Arimathea takes down the body -of Jesus from the cross; and no more is heard of these men of God. So the tribe of Dan performs two great exploits, or rather comes twice into bold prominence, and then disappears. In 1 Chronicles, while the other tribes have a place and mention in the catalogues of genealogy, Dan has none at all. So also Dan has one famous city, Joppa, but only this on that can be spoken of as renowned. This is the Lord's way, judging as He sees best, managing and ruling

according to his will among the inhabitants of the earth. One other fact about Dan. The architect of the Temple of Solomon was the son of a Tyrian; but his mother was of the tribe of Dan (2 Chron. ii. 14): "a woman of the daughters of Dan," who had married a Gentile proselyte, but was soon left a widow. How, then, is this woman said to be "of the tribe of Naphtali," in 1 Kings vii. 14? Because, she being born in that part of Dan which is in the north, and probably in the town called Dan, or Laish, had passed over to the adjoining tribe of Naphtali; and probably while residing there had met with a man of Tyre. In her widowhood, the Lord comforted her by giving her son singular talents, and sending him to stand before kings, and, better still, to direct the building of the house of the Lord. Was not the "Lord judging the widow," managing her case kindly and well? And was He not teaching us that Gentiles were to come to the light of the Lord, and build his true temple along with Israel? Yes, Dan (true to his name and early history) suggests the right adjustment of the jealousy and envy, the boastings and the rivalry of Israel and the Gentiles; for as in purchasing the site for it, a Gentile, Ornan, had his part to act: so Jew and Gentile both are thus represented in building the Lord's house.

NAPHTALI.

SOME theologians doubt whether or not the expression often used among us, "Wrestling with God in prayer," conveys a really Scriptural idea. It seems to imply that the person who wrestles believes that something like unwillingness in God to give the request, or at least that his will needs to be wrought upon by great efforts of ours before He will consent to bestow the coveted gifts. Now, where the blessing is truly fitted to help and benefit us, there never is any un-willingness in God to give; and where it is not so, no wrestling of ours, no efforts, no crying and tears, shall ever bring God to consent to bestow it. On this account, the expression needs to be explained; but it is a mistake to say that it is altogether un-scriptural. In Col. ii. 1, Paul tells of his earnest prayers for the growth in grace of those of whom he speaks, and calls them

*****" * conflict, and Col. iv. 12, Epaphras is represented as
*****," conflicting like a wrestler in prayer to God in behalf
of the Colossians. However, when we use it, let us clearly
understand what we mean. We may use it surely since Paul did so.
We use it not to imply that God is unwilling, or that if we insist in
it sufficiently, He will yield to us even though He had purposed
otherwise; but to express the truth that there are many blessings
which He gives only after much waiting on Him on our part. In
short, importunity in prayer comes up to the true idea of wrestling
in prayer, when it is such wrestling as that of Paul and Epaphras.
And if one asks, why does the Lord in some cases wish us to
employ importunity, and why does He not give the blessing till He
has been urgently and repeatedly besought to do it? The answer is
obvious. Such waiting on the Lord as is implied in importunity, is
fitted to empty us of self, and the longer it is continued may
complete the discovery and deepen in us the conviction of our own
worthlessness, and thus to fix our confidence altogether on the
Lord's own grace. We really wrestle against our own fancied
worthiness. This is a most humbling position; altogether unlike the
other sort of wrestling (usually so called) which would convey the
idea that the person who so prays has something of his own, has
strength, has grace, has earnestness, which all may conduce to his
being heard at last. Many have cherished this delusion, whereas it
is only when we have wrestled against, and been emptied of, any
such idea, left convinced of utter unworthiness, and brought to
expect to be heard simply on account of the Lord's own gracious
heart, that we prevail. Jacob's case (Gen. xxxii. 25) illustrates the
whole matter. There you find the angel wrestling with Jacob,
letting him for a time put forth what strength he had, till at last, in
order to convince him of his real inherent powerlessness and
worm-like worthlessness, he touches him and puts his thigh out of
joint. Upon this, as we learn from Hosea xii. 4, Jacob, reduced to
weakness, and probably agonizing in pain, seems to have fallen on
the Angel's neck, weeping and praying (for he had discovered his
divine nature), and insisting that he should not go from him till he

had blessed him. It was at this second stage that Jacob prevailed; for now the appeal was altogether to the grace and love of Him with whom he had to do. It was only now that Jacob had become a truly Scriptural wrestler, a wrestler like Paul and Epaphras in after times.

* It may be rendered more generally "striving" or "contesting," as in the public games; but Plato is in the habit of using the noun, *****, specially for gymnastic exercise or wrestling. Either way, the violent exertion and effort is expressed. And see Col. i. 29.

We are come to the history of Naphtali, whose name speaks of "wrestling," and this has led us to preface our inquiries by the above remarks. For there is some difference of opinion as to what Rachel's words signify in Gen. xxx. 7, 8: "Bilhah bare Jacob a second son; and Rachel said, With wrestlings of God have I wrestled with my sister, and have prevailed. And she called his name Naphtali; "Hengstenberg and Delitsch maintain her meaning to be, that she had wrestled for mercy in prayer, to get God to deal with her as He had dealt with Leah; and old Onkelas in the Targum, makes her say, "The Lord has accepted my prayer when I did earnestly supplicate that I might have a child like my sister." It is against her sister she has directed her prayer; that her boasting over her might be silenced; and this she calls, "Wrestling with God against her sister," for our version, "great wrestlings" does not express the original. And so we may understand Naphtali's name as nearly equivalent to "one won by prayer." Rachel, like the woman of Syrophcenicia in after days, when apparently frowned upon, continued still to try the hidden depths of God's mercy. She was persevering and importunate in prayer, calling upon Him on the ground of his infinite grace; while her sister Leah, satisfied with the past, made no such appeal to Jehovah. And thus it was that Rachel prevailed, and Naphtali was born,* the fruit of prayer-agonizing, wrest-ling, Epaphras-like prayer.

* Leah speaks of Jehovah, and Rachel of God (Elohim). Probably Rachel felt as if the Lord's treatment of her stood in the way of her

claiming the blessing from Him on any other ground than that He was able to do this thing, able as Elohim, even if not engaged to do it as Jehovah.

It is a mistake to insist that there is necessarily something like unbelief in such wrestling prayer, for it does not at all imply trust in our own efforts, or distrust of God's good will. On the contrary, it is called forth by a fact regarding God's ways, which He has made known to us, and which the be-lieving soul acquiesces in-viz., that He has delight in our continued prayers, and would have us to be constant suitors at his gate, and that therefore He has arranged as to some of his gifts, not to give them at a first or second asking, but only after we have continued perseveringly to ask. "This kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting" (Matt. xvii. 21). Jesus "was all night in prayer to God" (Luke vi. 12); and then obtained that quiverful of apostles. Elijah prays on and on till the seventh time ere the rain-cloud appears. Rachel needed only to pray for Dan, but she must wrestle for Naph-tali; and even then the full gain of her prayers did not appear. Ofttimes it is after we are in our graves that the result of our prayers comes full into view.

I. But we proceed. The gift won by prayer may be expected to be somewhat notable. What, then, have we to say of Naphtali's career as a tribe? We have dying Jacob's blessing on him, Gen. xlix. 21-
"Naphtali is a hind let loose:

He giveth goodly words;"

others read it-

"Naphtali is a spreading terebinth;

He putteth forth boughs of beauty."

Whatever be determined as to the exact rendering of the Hebrew words in this blessing, it is clear that Jacob predicts that Naphtali is to be remarkable for some kind of beauty. Preferring the common render-ing, we find that the grace and beauty of the hind, as it bounds along "with airy step and glorious eye," is Naphtali's emblem. Now, this might well apply to the portion he inherited, for his lot fell in a region abound-ing in graceful and romantic scenery, where the "hind let loose," the gazelle in its beauty, might be seen

at every step, literally and figuratively. In his tribe are "alluvial plains, long undulating ridges, and grace-fully-rounded hill-tops, clothed with ever-green, oak, and terebinth; thickets, too, of aromatic shrubs, and lawns of verdant turf. There are glens, densely wooded, with streams murmuring among the rocks, and glaring with oleander flowers, away down in shady beds. The air is filled with melody--the song of birds, and the music of the forest, as the wind sweeps its chords" (Dr. Porter). And then as to the next clause-

"He uttereth words of beauty"-

it has been suggested that they refer to the natural effect of such scenery in stirring up the soul to speak gracefully, if they do not express generally the fact that Naphtali's happy lot, by its rich scenery and verdurous landscapes, may be said to have been ever calling forth the eulogies of passers by. If, however, we go further, and inquire for the illustration of this blessing in the history and deeds of the tribe, there is nothing recorded bearing on this point except the memorable story of Barak and Deborah, the judge and the prophetess. Yet why should we not suppose an allusion to these illustrious leaders of the tribe, even as in the case of Dan the allusion was so pointedly to Samson? Barak goes forth with his thousand, like the hind let loose, and gains his high places (Psa. xviii. 33; Hab. iii. 19); while Deborah pours forth "words of beauty" in her song. "The hind" was on its "high places" as the prophetess sings (Judges v. 18), and may be said ever after to have stood there, in view of Israel. Individual minds leave their impress on a generation, and on a region too. Barak and Deborah are the representatives of Naphtali. Nor should we forget that it was here Messiah first went forth, preaching the glad tidings, "giving goodly words." Some of his most "gracious words" were spoken here, and six at least of his apostles seem to have been from this tribe.

II. But Rachel's gift won by prayer is celebrated by Moses also in Deut. xxxiii. 23-

- "O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full of the blessing of the Lord,

Possess thou the sea, and the south."

"The thousand captains," with their 37,000 men, each carrying shield and spear, who joined persecuted David (1 Chron. xii. 34), attest the blessing which had rested on the population of their region. And then as to the region itself, some understand the latter clause to mean that "Naphtali shall possess a lot which should combine the advantages of the healthy sea-breeze with the grateful warmth of the south" (Keil). But, more definitely, we may remark that this tribe possessed at once some of the most delightful valleys of Anti-Lebanon (where "favour and fulness of blessing" rested beyond dispute), and at the same time the fertile slopes which close in the Sea of Galilee. On the south of his portion a part of this sea lies; so that when Jesus walked on its shores, the prophet in vision, and the evangelist in after days, exclaimed-"The land of Naphtali, the way of the sea!

The people that sat in darkness saw great light." (Isa. ix. 1, 2; Matt. iv. 15, 16.)

In the plain of Gennesareth, which Josephus calls a very paradise for beauty and delight, and where was concentrated all that might set forth Naphtali as "satisfied with favour, and full of the blessing of the Lord," Messiah delighted to sound his jubilee-trumpet of deliverance, and utter his "goodly words" of light and life. His parables were spoken there, and many of his most gracious words, such as that everlastingly memorable invitation-

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,
And I will give you rest."

Bethsaida and Capernaum were towns of Naphtali, in whose every street might he find some memorial of his mighty works, or some echo of his gracious words.

Even at this time, the traveller climbs the range of hills in this tribe, called "Mount Naphtali," and finds every height well wooded, and often fragrant with the myrtle and aromatic shrubs, with corn-fields at their base. Or he turns aside to the site of the old city of refuge, Kedesh-Naphtali, now called Kedes, and finds its ruins beside a modern village on a knoll, which rises up from a

green vale, with herbage-clad hills beyond, and rich olive-groves close at hand. These are relics of the "favour and blessing" which the Lord once caused to rest here, when this tribe was like "the gazelle let loose," or "the spreading terebinth." It was when Israel turned to idols that the scene changed, and this tribe was the very first carried captive to Assyria (2 Kings xv. 29), its inhabitants swept away to the far-off region where now the Nestorians are found keeping up traditions of the past. Perhaps it is no stretch of fancy to say that, just because this tribe was thus the first to suffer under the stroke of wrath, Messiah, when He came (in the wondrous love and grace that marked all his ways) selected their borders as the scene of his earliest public ministrations. Some of his first and sweetest calls rang through Naphtali's groves and glades, and were echoed by his mountains. But they "received Him not;" and thus they confirmed their doom.

III. Such, then, was Naphtali. Such were the after-fruits of Rachel's wrestlings. It is no vain thing to take hold on God's name and plead importunately. The fruit of such wrestling prayer is, both present and future blessing. Saints under the New Testament have learnt this secret, betaking themselves to such wrestlings of faith, when they would go forth "satisfied with favour, and full of the blessing of the Lord," "like hinds let loose, giving goodly words." One man of prayer, when sent for by his bitter persecutors, in order to be conducted to a prison, calmly replied, "I know not whither you are sending me, but my heart is as full of comfort as it can hold;" and another man of prayer, as he is about to close his eyes in death, cries aloud, "I am full of the consolations of Christ!" All this they possess through Jesus Messiah, accepted and rested in as theirs. We inherit more than Naph-tali's portion, when we welcome Messiah, whose "goodly words" were uttered so often in Naphtali's cities-Chorazin, Beth-saida, and Capernaum. Nor, on the other hand, is it ever to be forgotten how these once famous cities were brought low--"brought down to hell." The Lord Jesus came to them with all his saving grace. He would have gathered him under his wing, and "they would not." What then? Re-jecting Messiah, a

blight passed over them, a withering blight, and soon were they dis-possessed of their pleasant portion, and lost at once the temporal and the spiritual riches that were within their reach. And has not all Israel lost "the pleasant land" by the same unbelief? Why are "few men left" in your land, O Israel? Why are your "cities without inhabitants?" (Isa, vi. 11, 12; xxiv. 6). Your house is left unto you desolate, because you will not say, "Blessed is he that has come in the name of the Lord," for so Messiah has spoken (Matt. xxiii. 39).

Chapter 7 - Orders of the Twelve Tribes [The Twelve Tribes](#) by [Bonar, Andrew](#)

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WE have been taking up the history of the tribes in the order of their first father's birth. But it is curious to observe in what great variety of order their names are given in other places, as if the Lord would show impartial regard to each tribe, by putting one in the place of the other from time to time. We have the following varieties, twenty-one in all:-

The order of their birth (Gen. xxix., xxx., and xxxv.)

Enumeration of Dan at Mamre (Gen. xxxv. 23-26).

Enumeration of Dan on going down to Egypt (Gen. xli. 8-19).

Enumeration of Dan in Jacob's blessing (Gen. xlix.)

Enumeration of Dan when the heads of tribes are named (Num. i. 5-15).

Enumeration of Dan when the males above twenty years are named (Num. i. 20-43).

The order in which they pitched round the Tabernacle (Num. ii.)

The order in which the princes offered (Num. vii.)

The order in which they marched (Num. x.)

The order in which spies from each tribe were selected (Num. xiii.)

The order in which they were numbered in the plains of Moab (Num. xxvi.)

The order in which the princes who were to divide the land were appointed (Num. xxxiv.)

The order in which they stood on Ebal and Gerizim (Dent. xxvii.)

The order in which they were blessed by Moses (Deut. xxxiii.)

The order in which the lot was cast for each (Josh. xiii. xiv.)

The order in which the lot fell for the Levitical cities out of each (Josh. xxi. 4-8).

The order in which the names of these cities for each are given (Josh. xxi. 9-39).

The order in which the same are given in the 1st Book of Chronicles (1 Chron. vi. 55-81).

The order in which their future portion in the Lord is given (Ezek. xlviii. 2-28).

The order in which the gates of the city that bear their names occur (Ezek. xlviii. 31-34).

The order in which the twelve thousand scaled ones from each tribe are given (Rev. vii.)

Sometimes reasons may be assigned for the special orders adopted; at other times we can see none. In the new division of the land in Ezekiel xlviii., Gad (the tribe we now come to speak of) is placed in the far south of Palestine, reaching to Kadesh-barnea. In Rev. vii. 5, Gad stands third in order.

The birth of the father of this tribe is related in Gen. xxx. 9-11.

Leah seeing the success of her sister's plan, and feeling herself neglected, adopts that very plan, and by her handmaid Zilpah gives Jacob another son. Her words on hearing of the birth of this son, have been interpreted by some as simply meaning, "Good luck!" an exclamation of delight and satisfaction; but the better interpretation, which both retains the Masoretic reading of the text, and accords with Jacob's reference to the name in xlix. 19, renders the words, "A troop cometh!" This is the sense given in the margin of our version. Leah probably in-tended to exult over her sister, ix. 8. You must leave the field to me again; for see! here is "A troop coming to my help." Thus understood, Gad's name tells of defeat re-paired, of conquering when all seemed lost, of clouds breaking up and sunshine re-turning after rain.

How often in the scenes of every day life may we hear Gad's name.

A family is threatened with disaster; gloom overspreads every countenance; disease has assailed some beloved one, and death is hovering over the dwelling; but the Lord sends relief, perhaps in the way of leading the family to adopt a remedy which some other has tried. It is blessed; and lo! "A troop cometh;" relief and recovery have come, and drive the enemy from the field. Or the family is poor, care and dismal forebodings harass them; ruin stalks on the threshold. But means of relief are suggested, and found successful; "A troop cometh!" It may be in the shape of employment given, or money sent, or friends raised up. At any rate, the clouds are dispersed, and one says to another, "Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness!" Nor is it less often thus in the family of God. God's children have dreaded their subjection to indwelling sin, for corruption has lifted its head. But "A troop cometh!" and the despairing believer sings, "I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord;" or it may be a host of outward evils assail-"tribulation, persecution, nakedness, distress, famine, sword." But soon there is heard the cry, "A troop cometh!" Paul and all his fellow-believers singing-"I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall separate us from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. viii. 38, 39). Yes, even when Death, the last enemy, assails, this shall be the issue. With Leah's battle-cry he shall drive him from the field.

But let us see what Jacob said of his son Gad, in Gen. xlix, 19. He blesses him thus:-

"Gad, a troop shall overcome him:

But he shall overcome at the last."

This may be rendered, preserving the alliteration of the original, and rendering very literally:

"The troop-tribe, a troop shall troop upon him; but he shall trop upon the heel."

He shall be a tribe much engaged in conflicts, and fitted for such warfare; so that he shall be found "trooping upon the heel," putting

to flight and pursuing his foe. As a tribe, his geographical situation exposed him to invasion from many quarters, such as Moab, Ammon, and the sons of Ishmael; but for this warfare he shall be fitted. Accordingly, we find not only Bani, a Gadite, one of David's mighty men (2 Sam. xxiii. 36), and even Levites, residing in it, "mighty men of valour" (1 Chron. xxvi. 31), but a great band, who are described as "men of might, men of the host fit for the battle, that could handle shield and buckler, whose faces were like the faces of lions" (compare Deut. xxxiii. 20), and who "were as the roes upon the mountains in speed" (1 Chron. xii. 8). And then, along with Reubenites and Manassehites, they of God came, "with all manner of instruments of war for the battle" (xii. 37), forming a band of 120,000 men. We suppose, too, that the incident in 1 Chron. v.18-22, where they join with Reuben and Manasseh against the Hagarites, and Jetur, and Nephish, and Nodab, is but one of a hundred similar expeditions. Out go the troops, all of them "sons of valour," with buckler, sword, and bow, and dash upon the foe; but for a time the Hagarites and their allies "troop upon them" bravely, till "they cry to God in the battle, and He is entreated of them; because they put their trust in Him." Then God and his allies "troop upon the heel" of the fleeing foe, taking 100,000 captives, and immense booty. Nor is it unworthy of notice, that in these instances Gad comes on the field to help others, as his father may be said to have done when Leah cried, "A troop cometh." The same characteristic will again appear in what is said of him in the blessing of Moses (Deut. xxxiii. 20, 21).

The Lord directed that Gad should receive a broad territory, the conquered kingdom of Sihon, where he might have ample room for development eastward, when his warlike propensities should impel him. To this, "blessed be he that entreateth God" has reference; while Gad is described as a "lion" or "lioness, lying down," after tearing "the arm lifted up to defend the crown of the head." Then it is added:

"And he looked out for himself the first fruit,"
for he got his settlement among the very first of the tribes, thus

acquiring what might be called "the first fruit portion." Yet there was no selfishness in this settlement, and therefore "blessed be He that gave him that ample portion."

"For , though ensconced, there, in a territory assigned him by the Lawgiver,

He came (to join) the heads of the people;

In fellowship with Israel,

To execute the justice of the Lord, and his judgements."

The reference here is to the memorable fact that Gad, along with Reuben and half-Manasseh, passed over Jordan with the other tribes, and took part with them in all their wars with the Canaanites. In this, Gad seems to have taken the lead very characteristically, for is it not as at his father's birth, "A troop cometh" to aid in clearing the field and seeming triumph?

Jephthah was of this tribe, and in his own person certainly it might be said again, "A troop cometh," when he so triumphantly drove out the Ammonites, overcoming those who had overcome so long. Jephthah was a man of Gilead, and Gilead belonged to Gad. To Gad, also, belonged several places associated with remarkable events, Jabesh-Gilead, Ramoth-Gilead, Peniel, Mahanaim; but none more renowned than Mount Gilead, the hill of balsam-trees, the spot where Jacob and Laban made their covenant (perhaps under the shade of one of these groves) calling the spot "Galeed," the heap of witness. It has still traces of its former romantic beauty, but no one ever finds the balsam-tree. It has disappeared from Gilead, as it has from the valley of Jericho.

This tribe, warlike as it was, no sooner joined in the idolatries of Israel than it felt itself powerless against Jehovah's anger. It was one of the first portions of Israel's land that fell under the power of Tiglath--pileser, who eventually carried away the inhabitants into captivity. The modern Nestorians are in part descended from Gad, for comparing 2 Kings xv. 29 with 1 Chron. v. 26, we find the region of Gilead was carried to the far-off mountains and rivers of Media and Persia, there described. Yes, Gilead, the very heart of Gad, was torn out of him, and left to the mercy of strangers,

because Jehovah had been forsaken, and his covenant-grace rejected.

"Bless'd tribe of Gad, when Israel's sick,
Sought by physician's skill,
And found the balm which healed their wounds
On fragrant Gilead-hill,
"Troops of disease assailed thee then;
To scale thy heights they passed;
But Gilead's balm gave health to all.
Gad overcame at last.'

"Now all in vain seek we for cure,
O Gilead, on thy brow;
For Him whose grace was Gilead's balm
Thy nation hateth now.

"Not even the types or health and joy
Within thy land remain;
The thorn and thistle have o'erspread
The mountain and the plain.

"Messiah, He is Gilead's balm,
He poured for man his blood.
O Tribes or Israel, welcome Him,
Welcome the Christ of God.

"Long have thy roes, troop upon troop,
Their chains around thee cast;
But welcome Him, and thou art free!
'Gad overcomes at last.' "

ANON.

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ASHER.

IT is a peculiarity of Hebrew names that they almost always express the feelings, or refer to the circumstances, of the parent at the time of the child's birth. In Leah's case there was a good deal that spoke of her dependence on the Lord in the earlier part of her family life; there is little of this looking up to God to be found afterwards. Her handmaid Zilpah (Gen. xxx. 12, 13) bears another

son, and Leah expresses her joy, exclaiming, "This is among my happy things," or, "Happy am I, for the daughters will congratulate me on my good fortune." And thus it was that this son got the name "Asher," the Happy One.

His blessing in Gen. xlix. 20, corresponds with his name at birth, still speaking of felicity-

"Out of Asher cometh fatness as his bread,
And he giveth royal dainties."

He received a very fruitful soil for his lot; the lowlands of Carmel, abounding in olive oil and wheat, "bread and fatness." Some think that it was Asher's territory that furnished the "twenty thousand measures of wheat" that were sent to Hiram by Solomon (I Kings v. 11). His vicinity to Tyre and Sidon enabled him to bring in royal luxuries ("a king's delights") from these princely cities, and to distribute them among the tribes; this may be meant by his "giving." His territory was a narrow strip of land comparatively, but all the more remarkable is its abundance, tempting his people to indolent enjoyment, as Deborah complained in her song-

"Asher continued on the seashore,
And abode in his creeks" (Judg. v. 17).

His happy lot, so far as the produce of the soil went, is again celebrated in the last words of Moses (Deut. xxxiii. 24, 25)-

"Asher is blessed above the sons (i. e., peculiarly blessed among the other sons of Jacob),

Favoured among his brethren,
And he dips his foot in oil."

The Plain of Acre (or Accho) was his; a plain the weeds of which at this day are the richest and rankest in all Palestine, and its crops most luxuriant, on account of the moisture of the soil. Thus was he peculiarly favoured. Then oil, emblematic of richness and fatness, is referred to with special appropriateness, because Asher's hills were not clothed with the vines that enriched Judah, but were planted with the olive-tree; every slope presenting a grove of vigorous olives to the view of the passer by.

"Thy shoes (or, thy bolts, or castles) shall be iron and brass,

And thy languid rest shall be as thy days."

Bolted in, as it were, by his hills (hills that produced iron and copper, and may have at early periods helped to supply Zidon, which Homer calls "***** "), this tribe was not to be distinguished in war, but so long as it continued to be a tribe was to be noted only for this plenty of bread. This "languid rest" (as the word is generally understood to mean) was to be a feature of Asher to the last; and that it was so very early we have proof in the passage quoted from Deborah's song. It may further be, noticed that Asher's "warrior's shoes," or "strong-barred fortresses," which seem to signify his mountains, were his protection against the men of Tyre and Zidon (Josh. xix. 28, 29), who remained unsubdued even in Solomon's days, and must often have threatened to disturb this tribe's repose.

A sort of restful contentedness, we have seen, was a feature of this tribe. Its one noble deed was that mentioned in 1 Chron. xii. 36, when it sent forth its forty thousand warriors, "expert in war," to the help of David. But they fought no battle; and so it seems to have been with those mentioned 1 Chron. vii. 40; their prince's "choice and mighty men of valour," and the twenty-six thousand men "apt to the war and to battle."

Some of the names given to those of this tribe are interesting, as we find them in 1 Chron. vii. 30. There is "Imnah," prosperity, or right-handedness; and his sister

"Serah," abundance. Another female of the tribe (ver. 32) bears the name "Shua," the wealthy one. And then we have (ver. 37)

"Bezer," the golden one; "Hod," honour; "Shamma," renown;

"Ithran," eminence; and the list of names ends with (ver. 39)

"Rezia," acceptableness, or favour, as if re-ferring to Moses' blessing (Deut. xxxiii. 24). In all this there is something very characteristic of Asher, the Happy One.

In Moses' blessing Asher is brought in last, and he (Deut. xxxiii. 29) exclaims, "Happy (Asher-like) art thou, O Israel!" There may be here an allusion to the tribe and his peculiar blessing, for in its essence it belongs to all Israel. Indeed, it belongs to the family of

God, whether we take his name in itself, or the blessings showered down upon him. The family of God are "Asher," happy, because of pardon, as Ps. xxxii. 1, sings. They have seen their sins buried in the depths, and "the daughters of Jerusalem" congratulate them on their felicity. The family of God are Asher, happy, because of holiness begun, as sung of in Ps. cxix. 1; they have entered on the conquest of all their passions, and are get-ting into the inheritance of holy conformity to God's likeness. The family of God are Asher, happy, amid troubles and trials, for all chastening works for their good, as Ps. xciv. 12, has sung. Happy are they in death, for the voice from heaven bids us write on their tomb, "Happy" (Rev. xiv. 13); and happy above all at the Lord's coming again, when they shall be greeted with the welcome, "Happy are they who are called, to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev. xix. 9). Oh, true Ashers, eat your royal dainties. Your bread is fatness; you are blessed above angels your brethren. Dip your foot in oil, and fear no change, for thy walls and bulwarks are salvation, better than the warrior's shoes or the strongest bars of the mountain fortress, and your rest shall continue endless as eternity. Who would not be an Asherite? Receive God's testimony to his Son; believe as Abraham believed, and all this is yours.

And yet again, we cannot but see in Asher's blessing a sample of what all Israel shall enjoy, undisturbed and unchanging, in the latter days, returning home from all lands. The "daughters" -men on earth and angels above-shall call them blessed; they shall have their bread, and fatness, and oil; they shall be blessed above their brethren the Gentile nations; and they shall rest in their lot secure while sun and moon endure. This shall be yours, Oh people of Israel, whensoever you, as a nation, welcome Him who is Earth's true "Asher"; whensoever you call Him blessed, uttering to Him your heart's acceptance, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord" (Matt. xxiii. 39).

One has sung of this tribe in the follow-ing strain:-

" A land of plenty Asher had,
With olive-grove and vineyard clad;

And God's own promise as his plea
That 'as his days his strength should be.'

"Equipped for warfare Asher was
With shoes of iron and of brass,
In God Jehovah's name to smite
The heaven-defying Amorite.

"Enamoured of the fertile soil,
He dipped his foot in corn and oil;
To ease he gave his soul a prey,
In sloth he spent probation's day.

"He saw the Canaanite command
His purple sea, his golden strand; *
Nor quenched in blood of haughty Tyre
Pale Ashtarothe and Baal's fire.

"And when the voice of Barak's war
Went thundering o'er his rocks afar,
He sat and listened by his creek,
Through love of ease enthralled and weak.

"Supine amid his folds he lay,
And slept the promised strength away;
Nor ventured on the mighty plea,
'And as thy days thy strength shall be.'

"For this Assyria's eagle came,
For this, in land of unknown name,
His coward sloth and guilty fears
He mourns with unavailing tears.
"But not for aye. From sands and snow
Of Orient pilgrim streams shall flow;
And Jacob's sons shall turn again
To the returning latter rain.

"Baal and Ashtarothe no more
Shall light their temples on his shore,
When Asher's feet again shall seek
His olive-hills and ancient creek.

* * * *

"Awake, ye slumberers in Zion;
Think not that ease is happiness!
But seek the rest of Judah's Lion
When He shall come, the Prince of Peace."

PAULIN.

* Judg. i. 31, compared with Josh. xix. 21.

ISSACHAR.

OUR God is "The very God of peace" (1 Thess. v. 23) and delights to impart his peace. He has "made peace by the blood of the cross," a peace so full that a sinner may have in his conscience the very counterpart to the satisfaction felt by the Holy One who accepted the out-poured life of the peace-maker. It is this peace which is offered to us; its richness and glorious grace are (so to speak) the hire by which God would hire us into the acceptance of it. And then He would have all who find this peace to be peace-makers, proposing to others the peace they have themselves found; in a manner, hiring men into this blessed peace of God by showing them its nature and results. Yes, "Blessed are the peace-makers" (Matt. v. 9), whether in families, neighbourhoods, or nations, for they shadow forth the Great Peace-maker. But observe, God's peace never leads to sloth or ease. If God speaks peace, his saints do not turn again to folly; whereas man's modes of reaching and maintaining peace do continually result in cherishing inactivity, and indolence, and self-indulgent ease.

We shall find the history of Issachar pre-senting these truths to us in some aspects. The story of his birth is as follows (Gen. xxx. 14-18) :-As Leah had been alienated from her sister for a time so also it would seem had Jacob been alienated from her, perhaps on account of her treatment of Rachel. One day young Reuben found in the field some of the pale-yellow, strong-smelling mandrakes, or love-apples, which to this day in the East are supposed to promote child-bearing, and which, at all events, have exhilarating effects. Rachel prevailed on her sister to give up these to her; but the expected effect did not follow; the Lord hereby teaching Rachel the sin of trusting in human devices and natural means. On

the other hand, and to impress this lesson all the more deeply and memorably on Rachel, the Lord at that very time gave to Leah another son, and did this in answer to Leah's prayers; for God hearkened to Leah (ver. 17), thus answering Leah's faith while He rebuked Rachel's leaning upon sense.

Now, it is to be remembered that Leah had acted hitherto in the main with a view of getting back Jacob's affections and producing peace once more in the household. She had her eye upon this when giving Zilpah to Jacob (ver. 18) at the expense of her own personal feeling; and with this thought on her mind, she exclaims at the birth of this son, "God hath given me my hire!" and bestows on him the name Issachar, "There is reward," or, "Here is hire!" Wages are given her; she sees God in this way owning her efforts.

There was compromise in Leah's dealing. Her giving Zilpah to Jacob was compromise; her giving up the mandrakes on the terms agreed upon was compromise; and the domestic circle enjoyed a calm as the result. In after days Issachar exhibited in his tribe very much of this peace produced by compromise. Jacob's blessing intimates it with sufficient clearness (Gen. xlix. 14, 15).

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

Delitzsch remarks on this blessing, that it says in substance, "Ease at the cost of liberty will be the characteristic of Issachar." He shall be like a labourer that is content to work his day's work and get his hire. This tribe shall be like the strong ass, used in carrying burdens, and much employed in agricultural labour; Issachar shall not aim at, or exert himself to attain, political power. His inheritance, too, shall suit his tastes. "While the men of this tribe would rather submit to the yoke, than give up ease by struggling in the fight for liberty or renown, their portion of the land presented temptations in this direction. For to Issachar belonged Lower Galilee, and the beautiful, fertile, wide and level plain of Jezreel. In order to preserve the quiet enjoyment of this rich inheritance, he

was willing to renounce very much that was nobler. His peace and quiet tended to in-dolence, and inactivity, and self-indulgence, all unlike the peace of God.

In the camp this tribe numbered more men than Ephraim (Numb. i. 29-33), but they did no exploits like him. True, we see the strong ass in the mighty array of men fit for war, and the same is seen again when Issachar's princes come forth with Barak and Deborah to battle. His men of valour leave the great plain of Jezreel, or Esdraelon (which in part is also the valley of Megiddo); Issachar rises up from "couching between the burdens" ("the hurdles," or "cattle pens," where the cattle were safely lodged and fed); he leaves his pleasant rest between Tabor and Gilboa, and the hills and plains on every side, with their security and abundance. In that remarkable day-

"Princes in Issachar were with Deborah!

And Issachar was like Barak

Rushing impetuously into the valley at his feet." (Judges v. 15.)

They showed what the tribe could do, and might always have done; but this very sample of their possible efficiency rendered their inertness and slothful peace at other times more conspicuous.

There was one judge from "this tribe, Tola (Judges x. 1), eminent, but unwar-like, probably a prudent, quiet ruler. In David's time we read of 87,000 (1 Chron. vii. 5); for there is mention first of 22,600, "valiant men of might" (ver. 2), and then (vers. 4, 5) "in addition to these were bands of soldiers for war 36,000 men." This is surely indicative of the "strong ass." At the same time, however, the other feature appears. "They had many wives and sons," indicative of self-indulgence. Those who came to David in his adversity are spoken of as men given to thoughtful contemplation, and men who thus got insight into general principles of acting; for they are described as being "Men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do" (1 Chron. xii. 32). Of these there were 200 leading men, "and all their brethren were at their commandment." Characteristic enough of the tribe, is it not? to find the 87,000 warriors acquiescing quietly in the sway of what

we might call the sages and statesmen of their own race. Tradition says, that these men calculated the exact times for the festivals, studying carefully those seasons, and giving "all their brethren" in Israel the advantage of their study and observation; but "the times" (*****) refers to public events, very much in our sense of the expression, as in Psa. xxxi. 15, and 1 Chron. xxix. 30. At any rate, they understood God's purpose regarding David, the anointed type of Messiah.

It is interesting to know that that godly Shunammite, who entertained Elisha for the Master's sake, was a woman of Issachar, a woman who in the best application of Issa-char's tendency could say, "I dwell among my own people" (2 Kings iv. 13), refusing to go forth from her quiet fields and home.

We have not yet taken notice of the words of Moses in Deut. xxxiii. 18,

"Rejoice, Issachar, in thy tents."

Moses predicts of him the same general characteristic as Jacob did, for it is the same Spirit who inspires both patriarchs. Moses tells of comfortable rest at home, "in thy tents;" and if Issachar seems farther (ver. 19) to be joined with Zebulon in the more active employment of "calling the nations" to the mountain of God, i.e., Jeru-salem, still it was in his case chiefly, if not entirely, by attraction, not by aggression. Men of other nations were drawn to his luxuriant valleys, for part of his tribe was "Lower Galilee," famous for the influx of Gentiles, foreigners who came to trade, and whom the "men of Issachar, who had understanding of the times," would, no doubt, seek to allure to Jehovah's pure worship, imparting to them the knowledge of the only true God and Saviour. Reference has been made to its great plains, Jezreel and Megiddo, where oft in times passed blood has been poured out by contending armies like water, and where, it may be, armies may again ere long meet for the terrible "day of Jezreel" and "battle of Armageddon." In this sense Issachar "bends between two burdens," for armies have met and will meet each other here, using Issachar's level plains for their own convenience without consulting him.

"Where bloomed in pride of beauty fair Jezreel,
There Issachar's majestic strength was spread.
The burden- bearer of the common weal
He bent between the loads his patient head,
Bearing the Assyrian yoke when Egypt fled,
And Egypt's when the Assyrian's curb was broken. *
Thy plain was watered oft with blood and tears;
Grief for Megiddo's slain is still the token
Of future wail, when time's allotted years
Have run their chequered course, and Zion's King appears."

PAULIN.

* 2 Kings xxiii. 29, 30.

Not only was Jezreel in this tribe, Nain, too, where Jesus raised the dead, was here. Nevertheless peaceful Issachar rejected the Prince of Peace, and has shared to the full in the dispersion and desolation of all Israel; but is permitted to look forward to its close in "the day of Jezreel" (Hos. i. 11).

"Blest be thy portion, Issachar! for One
has trod thy plains who came the world to save.

* * * *

But thou in lands afar a tent and grave
For sins of dark idolatry hast found.
Till, taught by heaven to make the better choice,
No home is thine, Yet soon a thrilling sound
Mine ear shall hear; a death -awakening voice
Shall bid thee once again within thy tents rejoice.'

* * * *

Then sighs of deeper grief the air shall fill
Than Hadadrimmon's mourning; for the cross
Seen in salvation's light all hearts shall thrill.
That sight shall change all glory into dross.
The Prince of Peace proclaims the jubilee!
THE DAY of coming time shall that of Jezreel be."

PAULIN.

ZEBULUN.

HERE is a general sketch of the lot and history of Zebulun:-

"While faithful to thy covenant King,
In holy might excelling,
Thy haven welcomed storm-tossed ships, *
Home to thy quiet dwelling.

*Gen. xlix.13

"Thy thousands scattered Jabin's pride, *
In Kishon's stormy fight;
Thy tens of thousands swept away
The conquering Amorite.

* Judg. v. 18

"And when the tribes to Salem poured; *
Their festal tides along,
Thy banner on the hill of God
Waved with the jubilant song.

*Deut. xxxiii.18

"O Zebulun, my valleys spread,
Fair in the morning's sheen;
But fairest when He dwelt in thee, *
The sinless Nazarene.

*Matt. iv. 15.

"Great was thy glory when thou dwel'st
At haven of the sea;
But greatest when He sheltered souls
On thy shore, blue Galilee.

"And even now in Cana's name,
In Nazareth and its hill,
In Magdala, on Tabor's height, *
A fragrance lingers still;

*I Chron. vi. 77

"Which yet shall fill the dewy air,
Of that long-looked-for day,
When He returns who was thy Light, *
Returns to shine for aye!"-PAULIN.

*Matt. iv. 15, 16

In Gen. xxx. 19, 20, we read the narrative of Zebulun's birth-time. There was gladness in the tents of Jacob; Leah's voice was heard acknowledging the kindness of the Lord. "God [He who alone disposes and rules in matters private as well as public] has given me a good dowry;" and she calls it "good," because of what she anticipated would result from it, viz., "For now shall my husband dwell with me." Writers generally suppose that she used the term ***** "to endow," because of its being so far an alliteration with ***** "to dwell," playing on the words in the happy moment of her son's birth. She thinks it sure that her bringing so much to her husband (this being her sixth gift to him) will secure his becoming more warmly attached to her, and his ever after dwelling with her. This last of a cluster of gifts will complete her victory over any remaining alienation that may have for a time existed in his mind. Who does not know that "A man's gift maketh room for him" (Prov. xviii. 16). "Whithersoever it turned it prospereth". (Prov. xvii. 8). Benefits, kindnesses, gifts, succeed in removing distance, coolness, alienation, when other things have failed. It is so between man and man, and it is even so between God and man; that is, God has used this natural instinct of gratitude for favour as a means of melting down man's enmity. His Spirit raises in our hearts the question, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?" It is a remarkable clause in Ps. lxviii. 18, "Thou hast received gifts for men, that the Lord God might dwell among them." View it in two ways. On the one hand, it speaks of gifts inducing the Lord to be a Zebulun to us, to dwell with us, as if persuaded by Christ's gift, Christ's dowry of righteousness, and the glory rendered to the Father's name for us. On the other hand, it speaks of the Lord finding out a way of dwelling with us by leading us to come and dwell with Him. He shows us "the gift of God," and who it is who gives it (John iv. 10), thus subduing our resistance, and prevailing over our alien-ated souls. Was it not thus that (in Zebulun's borders) He prevailed on the "son of Zebedee" (the name signifies "dowry") to follow Him, holding out the gift, "I will make you fishers of men"? Shall we not learn from our God how to allure our

fellow-men, holding out to them God's great gift of his Son? and so we shall in a higher sense become what Zebulun's tribe became in after days, "havens to ships," storm-tossed (Gen. xlix. 13), and callers of others to the mountain, while we show them what God has done (Deut. xxxiii. 19).

Jacob's blessing alludes to the meaning of the name "Zebulun [he whose name signifies dwelling] shall dwell at the haven [or shore] of the seas; he shall be a haven [or shore] for ships; and his border shall be over Zidon" (Gen. xlix. 13). He is to bring in foreigners to dwell with him, by presenting a roadstead for ships—a shore where they may find shelter and anchorage. The Bay of Carmel seems chiefly to be alluded to. "Their border went up toward the sea" (Josh. xix. 11; compo ix. 1); that is, the Mediterranean, here called "the seas," be-cause, perhaps, of the bay suggesting a north and a south sea coming in. Others understand "seas" to refer to the fact that his region stretched from the Mediterranean to the shore of the Sea of Galilee. But what is meant by "his border shall be over Zidon?"* It intimates that his position would give him easy access to Zidon, and might further suggest that by his ships his border may be said to reach even as far as Zidon. However, the simplest view is that *** is to be understood as "over," in the sense of superiority; q. d., though he shall never rival Zidon in merchandise and in naval renown, yet his Bay of Carmel shall attract when Zidon fails. Delitzsch notes that a proof of the genuine antiquity of Jacob's words is furnished by the fact that Zidon, not Tyre, is the city, for Tyre was not then famous; indeed, not founded till the times of the Judges. But renowned as Zidon may have been for luxuries, and even if Zebulun's fisheries, and purple-dye, found on his shores, and such like merchan-dise, should never equal that merchant city, still his tribe has temporal blessings that might allure even Zidon to his borders; besides having the far greater blessings referred to by Moses in Deut. xxxiii. 19, and spoken of clearly by Isaiah (ix. 1, 2).

* See in Ugolinus the treatise by Hasaeus, "De Zabulonis prae Zidone Praestantia." Thomson ("Land and Book," i. 484) supposes

that Zidon may have then been equivalent to Phoenicia; and understands "His border shall reach unto Zidon," to signify that Zebulun's boundaries should stretch towards Phoenicia.

Moses, in his blessing, alludes to one of the characteristics of this tribe, his attractive influence, when he joins him with Issachar in the prediction (Deut. xxxiii. 19)-

"They shall call nations to the mountain;

There they offer sacrifice of righteousness."

The Gentiles were allured to dwell with Zebulun we know well, for "Galilee of the Gentiles" was in part his territory. But Moses seems to say that while these nations were attracted by them to the mountain where sacrifice should be offered, it was in the first instance by Zebulun's produce and merchandise that they were drawn-

"For they shall seek the abundance of the seas,

And the hidden treasures of the sand;"

earthly good things-fish, purple shells, glass, and all besides that their position on "the seas" enabled them to traffic in. In spite, too, of Delitzsch's remark to the contrary,

"Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out,"

is a clause that does seem to refer to this tribe's enterprise and traffic, although we have no record of their undertakings in this department.

But Zebulun was at all times ready not only to draw others in to dwell with him, but "to go out," when occasion required. His numbers stood high in the enumeration in the wilderness, first 57,000, and then 60,000 fighting men. When Barak and Deborah summoned Israel to battle, Zebulun came at once. "Take with thee," said Deborah to Barak, "ten thousand men of the children of Naphtali, and of the children of Zebulun" (Judg. iv. 6); and her song celebrates them as (Judg. v. 18)-

"A people that jeoparded their lives unto the death in the high places of the field."

In Gideon's day they are among those who "came up to meet him" (Judg. vi. 35), when he blew the trumpet, and sent his messengers.

Nor were they wanting in the day of David's trial and distress; for 50,000 of them came to help God's anointed king in his adversity; "men that went forth to battle" (1 Chron. xii. 33), **** comp. **** (Deut. xxxiii. 19)-

"Expert in war, with all instruments of war,
Fifty thousand that could keep rank,
They were not of double heart."

The men of this tribe (2 Chron. xxx. 11) in the days of Hezekiah, if they are not found calling others to the mountain, where sacrifice was offered, at any rate encouraged others to go by sending many of their number up to Jerusalem to keep the Passover. "Divers of Zebulun humbled themselves and came to Jerusalem" (2 Chron. xxx. 11). "A multitude of the people, many of Issachar and Zebulun" (2 Chron. xxx. 18).

Some understand that Ibzan, the judge, mentioned in Judg. xii. 8, was of this tribe; and the Bethlehem, where he was buried, is in that case, the city mentioned in Isaiah xix. 15, the name and remains of which have been found by travellers in the midst of an oak forest. But at any rate, Elon (Judg. xii. 12) was of this tribe; for with curious emphasis it is repeated, "Elon, a Zebulonite, judged Israel ten years," "Elon, the Zebulonite died, and was buried in Aijalon, in the country of Zebulun." And one other fact let us not fail to remember, viz., Nazareth was in this tribe. The tribe, whose name means "Dwelling," was the tribe in whose bounds the Incarnate Son of God dwelt thirty years; and on the shore of one of its seas how often was He to be found? If nought else had distinguished Zebulun, this alone would have been enough in our eyes to fill up the prediction, "His border shall be above Zidon." Rejoice, Zebulun, and call the nations to the mountain where sacrifices of righteousness are offered. In-vite all men hither; for in God manifest in the flesh-Jesus of Nazareth-they shall find better than all earthly wealth, better than the abundance of the seas. They shall find the One great sacrifice which supersedes all others; they shall discover that "the Word made flesh, who dwelt among us," is the best of hidden treasures; and shall agree with us that his

presence has made the border of Zebulun far to excel the border of Zidon.

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JOSEPH; i. e. EPHRAIM AND MANASSEH.

RACHEL loved the Lord, and acknowledged Him in her domestic life. But she had something of the fretfulness of Jonah, peevishly finding "good cause to be angry," because the Lord had shut up her womb. On this very account, the Lord, chastising her as a daughter, long withheld her desire. She on her part ceased not to cry to the Lord, and perhaps was stirred to more importunate pleading by Leah having recently called her daughter "Dinah" (the judgment-one), as if in triumph over Dan. At all events, she did call on the Lord, and "God remembered Rachel" (Gen. xxx. 22), and opened her womb. No sooner was her son born than she gave glory to God; "God [Elohim] has taken away my re-proach; Jehovah will add to me another son," calling his name "Joseph," which has a peculiar combination of allusions in itself. It has "Jehovah" in it; it has ****, "take away," in it; and it has **** "add," in it; so that **** is really "He by whom Jehovah takes away reproach, and by whom He gives a pledge of his readiness to give more."

There is something noble in Rachel's thoughts on this occasion; she adores God in his liberality and willingness to bless. Once let Him begin, and He will go on; for if the hindrance is removed, He de-lights to give. The floodgates once opened, the water pours along. Is it not so in salvation? Has He found his way to us, bestowing "repentance and remission of sins"? Then the way is open for more, and He will give daily mercy, increasing holiness, abounding peace, endless glory. In-deed, Rachel's language, "The Lord will add." is substantially Paul's, "Now to Him that is able [signifying heart as well as hand] to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think" (Eph. iii. 20).

It has been remarked by writers that the birth of a son by a mother who was long childless, is, in Scripture always referred to as a special boon of rare kindness; and that such a son is given to carry

out some peculiar designs. At all events, God's dealing with Rachel was rightly interpreted by her; and her acknowledgment of divine liberality met with divine approval. Her son Joseph's tribe became a most notable illustration of the Lord's bounteous giving "good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over" (Luke vi. 38).

Rachel magnified, we have said, the Lord's liberality. "She opened her mouth wide, and the Lord filled it." Might we not get her ample measure of blessing were we, like her, putting unbounded confidence in his giving heart? The Lord did show Himself in her son's history, far more fully than in her own, as the God who "takes away re-proach," and who goes on "adding" to former favours.

Hear Jacob's blessing (Gen. xlix. 22-26)-

"A fruitful bough is Joseph,
A fruitful bough by a well,
Whose branches run over the wall."

You call to mind Joseph's wondrous great-ness in Egypt, how his power was felt and his kindly shadow in every corner of the land, as well as in Goshen. Next, you call to mind his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, how they increased in their descendants, till they formed two great tribes; "His branches running over the wall:" for no other of Jacob's sons multiplied in this manner. You call to mind how Manasseh's territory was on either side Jordan, Joseph's branches "running over the wall," here again-not to speak of his many mighty ones, and his noble bands, with such men as Joshua, ex-celling in true fruitfulness, in the forefront. But we read on-"The archers sorely grieved him, shot at him, and hated him: But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong

By the hands of Jacob's Mighty One."

His reproach was turned away, and recoiled on his foes, and all this was done by Jehovah; it came-

"From thence, from the Shepherd, the stone of Israel;
From the God of thy father, who shall help thee;
From the Almighty who shall bless thee."

Yes, from him of whom thy mother said, "He shall add;" He shall ever be found true to his character, going on "helping," and going on "blessing." And what a flood of blessing!

"Blessings of heaven above;" the rain and dew

Dropping on his territory plenteously.

"Blessings of the deep that lieth beneath;" fountains

And rivers pouring out their gushing floods.

"Blessings of the breast and of the womb;" increase

Of every kind in full measure.

The giving, or "adding," bounty of Jehovah towards Joseph, is so full, so singularly full, that Jacob exclaims, with allusion to the more general and indefinite blessing, common to all the tribes, pronounced by Isaac, as well as declared to Abraham-

"Thy father's blessings rise high (like the Flood's waters) above my progenitor's blessings;

Up to the everlasting hills.

Let them be on JOSEPH'S head!

On the crown of the head of him who is distinguished among his brethren."

The surpassing richness of his territory, even to the summit of its hills (witness the hills of Samaria, Bashan, and Gilead!) with the accompanying abundance of all things, and the population revelling in this luxuri-ance; this, and much more, is included in this blessing on him who was "separated," in the sense of being above the rest in dignity and influence.

But shall we be able to trace in Moses' blessing (Deut. xxxiii.

13-17) any recogni-tion of Rachel's God, who shows in Joseph's case that He will honour them who hesitate not to expect that He will give and give again? It is even so. Moses does discern in Joseph's lot the same exuberant bounty of Jehovah. We need not quote the words in full; but there are a few things specified which illustrate the history of Joseph's double tribe. He sings of the accomplishment of Jacob's blessing in the gift of copious, overflowing, plenteous waters; and the precious productions ripened by the "sun and moon," and given to Joseph at the regular

periods in succession, so that his very "hills," with their olives, vines, metals, pastures, spices, contributed to form a sample of "earth and its fulness"; and all through the "goodwill of His who dwelt in The Bush," i. e., the free sovereign favour of Jehovah who at The Bush intimated how He meant to dwell with undeserving men, blessing and not consuming them. But Moses proceeds to tell some distinctive features of Joseph's tribe-namely, in regard to its double nature-

"The first-born of his bullock, glory is to him;
Even buffalo-horns are his horns."

This is Ephraim, whom Jacob raised to the position of first-born (Gen. xlviii. 8). Ephraim was to have special honour; he was, in Joshua, to push the nations of Canaan, and in after days to seat himself on the throne of the Ten Tribes.* But at the same time, it is not only in Ephraim, "the mighty tribe," that Joseph is to be represented; in this instance one son of Jacob is to originate two tribes-

"And they [these sons of Joseph whom you see] are the myriads of Ephraim!

And they are the thousands of Manasseh!"

* In the symbolical sealing, Rev. vii. 8. Joseph evidently stands for Ephraim, for verse 6 has Manasses separately

Who does not feel that the horn of plenty has been emptied on this Tribe?

"Blest of the Lord was Joseph's land
With sacred treasure of the dew and deep;
Blest by the moon in Nature's hour of sleep,
And by the sun with autumn's golden heap,
To fill the Reaper's hand.

"His was the strength of ancient hills,
The treasure of the pasture and the mine;
And, crowning all, a blessing more divine,
Clear in that light that made The Bush to shine,
Leapt his rejoicing rills.

"Blest was his portion when beside

The well of Sychar sat the Holy One,
Footsore and weary 'neath a shadeless sun,
Opening to one who sin's career had run
Salvation's healing tide.
"Bald Ebal and fair Gerizim,
Ages have passed, but lightly o'er your brow;
But o'er your wandering tribes hangs even now
The curse that hath avenged the broken vow
Of faithless Ephraim.
"Yet to his record's promise true,
The Man of Sychar cometh once again,
All Gerizim's rich blessings in his train,
To pour on Joseph's land the latter rain,
And Shiloh's life renew."-PAULIN.

It would not be possible, within our limits, to sketch with any fulness, the history of the teeming thousands and ten thousands of Joseph. We might speak of cities, Shiloh, Sychem, Tirzah, Samaria; and of Manasseh's inheritance on the west of Jordan, stretching from Bethshan to where afterwards rose Caesarea; and then of his portion in the east, where stood the sixty cities called Havoth-Jair, where the hill of Bashan reared its head, with a plain at its foot extending in one unbroken expanse, flat as the surface of a lake, for fifty miles. Truly Joseph's spreading branches "ran over the wall."

We may, however, glean a few less known facts about these sons of Joseph from the book of Chronicles. It is recorded that "there fell some of Manasseh to David, as he went to Ziklag, Adnah, and Jozabad, and Jediah, and Michael, and Jozabad, and Elihu, and Zilthai, captains of the thousands that were of Manasseh" (1 Chron. xii. 20). These seven leaders and their men took the part of the despised and persecuted son of Jesse, casting in their lot with him in the day of his calamity; "And they helped David against the band of the rovers [the roving Amalekites and others]: for they were all mighty men of valour, and were princes in the host." In verse 31 it is said that they numbered eighteen thousand men. This

was on the west side of Jordan; but their brethren on the east side also came, "Of the half tribe of Manasseh, on the other side of Jordan," along with a company of Reuben-ites and Gadites, reminding us of the early days, when these allied tribes crossed over to the help of Joshua. They came "with all manner of instruments of war for the battle, an hundred and twenty thousand." Very deep hold had the cause of David taken on their hearts, and David's cause was the cause of God; so that we may say there was in those days no common interest felt for the things of God in Joseph's borders. It was most honourable to them, and is a noble example to us; for in this there is a type. As they adhered to David, the anointed, in his day of adversity, so are we to follow the true David in days of evil, such as the pre-sent times are; for "if we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him." We should have noted that Ephraim also sent to the same cause his "twenty thousand eight hundred" (verse 30), "mighty men of valour, famous throughout the house of their fathers." Well did it become the descendants of Him who is described as "shot at by the archers, sorely grieved, and hated" (Gen. xlix. 23), thus to come forward and take the part of God's servant in days when the archers shot at him, as he sang in Ps. lxiv. 3, 4.

From another part of First Chronicles we glean something more. In chap. vii. 15, we find Machir, of Manasseh, marrying Maachah, of Benjamin, thus again illustrating Joseph's branches "running over the wall." In verse 16 it is told that this Maachah called her first-born "Peresh," as if alluding to this spreading of Joseph's vine, for "Peresh" signifies "spreading." But we gather more regarding Ephraim. In that same chapter, verses 21-23, we find that he to whom the blessings of Jacob and of Moses held up such bright visions of prosperity was at first the most vexed and tried of all Jacob's sons, even like his father Joseph, and Joseph's mother, Rachel. For after he had called one son Zabad, "dowry"; another Shuthelah, "plantation of greenness"; another Ezer, "help"; and another Elead, "God adorns," his prospects were suddenly and sorely darkened. The men of Gath (native Hittites, it may be,

before the time of the later Philistines), in some engagement, slew these promising sons of Ephraim! It is thought that these sons of Ephraim had gone out of Goshon and entered Palestine, and assailed these men of Gath, perhaps thinking that God would at that time give the people into their hands, pushing them before them, since the land was theirs by promise. But, as afterwards, in the siege of Ai, the Lord taught that it is not a good cause itself that gives victory, but the actual and present help of Him whose cause it is. Ephraim mourned bitterly and long, perhaps alarmed as well as amazed; for it seemed as if Jehovah's words were falling to the ground. He called his infant, then born, Beriah, "one born in misfortune." But the clouds soon broke; his daughter Sherah (verse 24) is found on the high-lands of Palestine, near where her brothers perished, and becomes renowned, building the two towns of Beth-horon the nether and the upper—a woman, the founder of Ephraim's greatness, as if a foreshadowing of the time when the Virgin should bring to earth its true ray of hope! There flowed also ere long a full stream from Beriah's fountain, beginning in Rephah, and Reseph, "riches," and "flame of lightening," till it reached Nun and Joshua (verses 25, 26, 27). It was thus that the Lord tried faith before He honoured it, appearing to extinguish the hopes of Joseph's first-born ere He brought them to full perfection. Such is the way of our God; the sorrow goes before the joy, even as Messiah is first the Man of Sorrows, and then crowned with glory and honour.

Nor has Joseph been finally given over.

His blessing is in reversion; for Jeremiah says (Jer. Xxxi. 5, 12, 14) of "Ephraim, the Lord's first-born" (ver. 9, 20).

"Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountain of Samaria;

The planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things,

For there shall be a day when the watchman upon Mount Ephraim shall cry,

‘Arise, and let us go up to Zion, to the Lord our God.’

* * * * *

And they shall come and sing in the height of Zion,

And flow together to the goodness of the Lord,
For wheat and for wine, and for oil,
For the sons of the flock and of the land;
And their soul shall be like a well-watered garden,
And they shall not sorrow any more at all.

* * * * *

And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness,
And my people shall be satisfied with my goodness."
Surely this is the very God of Joseph!
BENJAMIN.

THE only one of the twelve patriarchs born in Palestine was Benjamin. The circumstances of his birth are well known. His mother Rachel (Gen. xxxv. 16-20), after an interval of nearly twenty years, got this other son from the Lord; but it seems she was feeble and desponding as the hour of birth drew near, and had hard labour. Though her attendant sought to comfort her by saying, "Fear not, for this also is a son for thee"-words fitted to recall her own faith when her first son was born (chap. Xxx. 24)-she heeded not, but despondingly pronounced, "Ben-oni," son of my sorrow, over the child, and expired. Tradition still points out the spot where she was buried; every traveller to this day knows "Rachel's Tomb," midway between Jerusalem and Bethlehem. But Jacob would not perpetuate the sadness, or at least would fain throw over it a gleam of sunshine, and therefore names the child "Benjamin," son of the right hand, expressive of what he hoped for him, as well as declaring his strong affection to him for his mother's sake. Jacob in this did well; he looked at what God might bring out of this calamity and not simply at the sad event itself. See the patriarch, full of faith, after all the toil and weariness of his long wanderings, and after the bitter anguish caused by Dinah's sin, and her brothers' cowardly and atrocious murder of the Sychemites-see the aged saint standing at Rachel's tomb, "looking not at the things that are seen, but at the things which are not seen," anticipating blessing in the Lord's time and way for this sorest bereavement that had befallen him, and by the name "Benjamin" sealing his faith. Rachel

looked at affliction on the side of human feeling, and judged by her frame of mind; Jacob viewed it as it can be seen by faith. Nature sees only gloom, and cries Ben-oni! Faith penetrates the gloom, and discovering light beyond, cries Benjamin! Faith is not

"Like moonlight on a troubled sea,
Bright'ning the storm it cannot calm."

Faith calms the waves, for it brings to us Him who can say, "Peace, be still." Jacob's blessing on Benjamin (chap. xlix. 27) has reference to this scene. Indeed it is as if his heart were torn up by the memories which the mention of Benjamin called up. But, in truth, the future lot of Benjamin and his descendants was to be in keeping with their starting-point-scenes of sorrow passing into scenes of joy.

"Benjamin is a ravening wolf."

He shall be marked by having to do with scenes wherein tearing asunder and violent rending shall be prominent, even as his birth-time was a time of rending ties asunder; and yet there shall be to him results of peace and scenes of triumph. He shall afterwards be like the wolf in its den, leisurely feasting on its prey after the carnage is over-

"In the morning he shall devour the prey;

In the evening divide the spoil."

Some of the old Rabbins refer to the fact that Jerusalem and its altar properly belonged to Benjamin; so that in the sacrifices, morning by morning, day by day, for about fifteen hundred years, Benjamin was seen "ravening like a wolf, devouring the prey." If so, we would add, "In the evening he divided the spoil;" for if he was Ben-oni in having to do with blood and death, with victims slain and cut in pieces, with the skin flayed, and the bones divided, and the fat distributed, yet was he also Benjamin in having the privilege of seeing by faith the great sacrifice, through these types of the Lamb of God to be slain for sinners, and afterwards the wondrous honour of actually having that great sacrifice present in the temple. Others illustrate Jacob's words by referring to the history of the deliverance of Israel by Ehud's singular deed of

blood, and to the wolf-like ravening of the tribe in defence of Gibeah (Judges xx.), which was forgotten ere long in the ex-ploits of Saul, the first king of Israel. They add also the happy times that at a later period passed over scattered Israel through Mordecai and Esther, both belonging to this tribe, in whose case certainly everything at first had the sad aspect of Ben-oni, but passed completely over to the cheerful sun-shine of Benjamin. One other fact should not be forgotten: if in the earlier period of this tribe's history the Ben-oni aspect pre-vailes-"the ravening of the wolf"-yet in Saul's days "little Benjamin" (Psa. lxxviii. 27) became mighty (1 Sam. ix. 21, comp. with xiv. 47, 48); and after the days of David you see the Benjamin-aspect ap-pear more decidedly still-the dividing of the prey in peace; when this tribe was associated with Judah in holding the sceptre till Shiloh come, returning with Judah from Babylon. In Ezek. xlvi. 23, we find him side by side with Judah still, bordering on the Holy Oblation. Some of the Fathers were convinced that the prophecy went even further in minute fulfilment. They saw in it the history of a notable man of his tribe-Saul of Tarsus--making havoc of the Church like a wolf (*****), and the dividing the prey with the Church when his heart was turned. Saul becoming Paul the Apostle is, in their view, as Ben-oni becoming Benjamin.

The blessing of Moses (Deut. xxxiii. 12) gives us the cheerful side, as if he had been led by the inspiring Spirit to dwell as much upon the Benjamin characteristic, as Jacob had done on the Ben-oni.

Hence he calls him, " Beloved of the Lord"-q.d., not beloved of Jacob only, but of the Lord also-a title which is specially appropriate to him as in part possessing that token of God's favour, the Temple and part of the Holy City within his borders. The sense of the other clauses may be given thus:-

"He shall dwell in safety by Jehovah,
Who shall cover him all the day long."

Jehovah shall be his canopy (*****, compare the ***** of Isa. iv. 5), "Jehovah shall dwell amid his hills," especially referring to Jeru-salem and his portion of it; though others explain the words,

"Benjamin shall be like a son whom his father carries on his shoulders" (Deut. i. 20, Delitzsh). Oh world, the favour of our God changes the lot of sorrow into joy; but your lot, though it is a Ben-jamin's portion in measure (Gen. xliii. 34), shall soon become Ben-oni.

It is a singular fact in the history of this tribe, that so many of them were left-handed, and yet "could sling stones at a hair's breadth." It is singular that so many "Ben-jamin's" should be "left-handed," but specially that this apparent defect and disadvantage should have been remedied by the marvellous skill which distinguished the left-handed ones. This fact is noted of Ehud (Judges iii. 15), and of the army of Gibeah, in which were "seven hundred chosen men left-handed" (xx. 16). Was there not something here of Ben-oni turned into Benjamin? It is not less interesting to find of this tribe "mighty men who could use both the right hand and the left in hurling stones and shooting arrows out of a bow" (1 Chron. xii. 2). These men of might, "helpers of the war," were of "Saul's brethren, of Benjamin," so that the dark cloud that lowered on David from the side of Benjamin in the person of Saul is now giving forth bright beams. The Dames of their leaders are given in full; and then again, at verse 16, "men of Benjamin" joined with men of Judah in going to David, with Amasai at their head. It is still the dark cloud followed by the clear, shining after-rain. How honourable and noble these "brethren of Saul," who, in the day of calamity, discovered God's anointed one, and followed him at all hazards. Fit representatives of the true disciples of the Lord now, who forsake kindred and friends to take the side of Christ, suffering with Him that they may in due time reign with Him--content to be Ben-onis for a time, that they may for ever be Benjamins.

In 1 Chron. viii. there is full information given about the descendants of Benjamin on account of their connection with Saul and Jonathan. In the close of that genealogical table appears the infant son of Merib-baal, or Mephibosheth, namely, Micah. In him Jonathan's line was brought very low, almost to extinction; but

verses 35 and 36 tell how Micah's family grew and was strong. The first two names in it are "Pithon," enlarge-ment, and "Melec," king; and after a cata-logue has been given of illustrious descen-dants, verse 40 ends by saying, "The sons of Ulam were mighty men of valour, archers, and had many sons, and sons' sons, an hun-dred and fifty. All these are the sons of Benjamin." It is still the same story, the Ben-oni aspect first, and then the "right hand." The Lord enlightens the darkness; and in the latter days thus it shall be with this tribe, and with all Israel. Their whole past history might, in some respects, be spoken of as sad and sorrowful; but their future shall be all joy and singing, when the Lord brings back the captivity of his people.

Thy birth-night was a time of love and tears;

Thy mother travailed sore.

"Son of my sorrow!" Rachel feebly moaned,

Then sank, and all was o'er.

"Son of my right hand," weeping Jacob cried;

"Dearest of sons to me!

That name bear thou; of her who gave thee birth

In endless memory."

Deep-written in thy tribe's sad history,

One name too oft appears;

From Egypt, * Gibeah, ** and Gilboa's *** height,

Ben-oni looks in tears.

* Gen. xliii. And xliv. ** Judges xix., xx. *** I Sam. xxxi.

But when of Israel's revolted tribes

The star in night had died,

"Son of the right hand," faithful Benjamin,

Still sat at Judah's side.

And though, Ben-oni, ages have swept past,

While thou hast worn the chain,

When evening comes, thou must "divide the spoil."

Rise, Benjamin, again!