THE PENTATEUCH

IN CONTRAST WITH

THE SCIENCE AND MORAL SENSE

OF OUR AGE.

By A PHYSICIAN.

"Zufällige Geschichtswahrheiten können der Beweis von nothwendigen Vernunftswahrheiten nie werden—Contingent historical truths can never be demonstration of necessary rational truths."—LESSING.

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And are they in the right who, free from doubt,
Can sit in sweet abstraction from each thought
Of Earth, pondering the lives of those who fought
The battles of Jehovah; viewing the rout
That Israel spread as God's own act, the shout
Upraised for victory, glorious most when fraught
With deepest ruin to the foe, as taught
By the Creator! 'T may not be! Without
The special faith that suffers me to view
In one among the multitude of creeds,
Each by its advocates alone held true,
The truth, or other than the pregnant seeds
Of discord among men, I take my flight
From blood-stained legends, Nature, to thy Light!

THE PENTATEUCH—THORA, THE LAW.

GENESIS.

"IN the beginning," it is said, "God created the heaven and the earth." What are we to understand by a "beginning"?

The epoch in eternity, doubtless, which the writer of this part of the Hebrew Scriptures imagined to have dawned when God created or fashioned, or set about creating or fashioning, heaven and the earth, first or oldest of things in his belief.

Is this belief borne out by what natural philosophers conclude as to the constitution of heaven and the earth?

Heaven, to the modern philosopher, is no firmament or solid sphere stretched above and subordinate in some sort to the earth, as it was to the Hebrews, but is infinite space, only to be conceived of as co-eternal with, and an element in the nature of, Deity; whilst the earth is but a middle-aged member of one of the great astral systems that stud The Boundless, and a much more recent production, in its compact form, than the whole of the planetary bodies that circle round the sun in orbits outside its own.

Creation, to the modern philosopher, is therefore something different from the creation, evoking, or fashioning out of nothing of the Hebrew writer.

It is impossible to conceive *some*thing coming out of *no*thing. But God *was*, and with and of God were the elements, which, in conformity with the laws of force and matter, also inherent in the nature of God, took form and fashion as suns, planets, satellites, and comets amid infinite space and in time.

Creation, as now apprehended, implies evolution—evolution from what?

As regards the particular aggregations in space, whereof the *solar system* is one, and the earth we dwell on among the least of its members, from a mass of nebulous matter, extending, in the first instance, far beyond the limits of the outermost of the planetary bodies which, with their satellites, now circle round the sun.

Vast intervals of time must be presumed to have elapsed between the epochs when the first, or outermost, and the last, or innermost, of the planets that attend the sun took form and fashion?

Such is the conclusion of modern philosophers; the planets outside the earth's orbit being regarded as the older, those within it as the younger members of the family, the great sun itself being the youngest or latest formed of all.[a]

"The earth," it is said, "was without form and void."

The earth, in conformity with the laws of attraction, repulsion, and cohesion inherent in matter, could never have been without form, and could not have been void, if by void emptiness be understood. From the moment of its acquiring, and even before it had

[a] The reader is referred to an admirable paper ascribed to Mr Hennessey, headed "Recent Astronomy and the Nebular Hypothesis," in the *Westminster Review*, July, 1858. In this able essay the GENESIS of the Solar System is treated exhaustively, though briefly, in conformity with the most advanced views of natural philosophers.

acquired, consistency it was a globe, revolving on an axis, flattened at the poles, bulging at the equator, and made up, in the several stages of its evolution, of gaseous, vaporous, liquid, and solid matters, as it is at the present hour, though these matters must all have existed in states far different at first from those in which they now present themselves.

"And darkness was upon the face of the deep."

As yet the deep was not; and at no time, probably, did absolute darkness prevail in the universe. Any light that reached the earth, however, could not have been of the bright kind that is shed from the sun as it now exists. There must have been light, nevertheless, as well from the nebulous matter which had become compact in the older planets and in the earth, and was still undergoing compaction into the younger planets within the earth's orbit and into the sun itself,—not to speak of the nebulous and stellar masses plunged in the depths of space, that were either in process of condensation, and so eliciting a feebler light, or that had already acquired the density which fitted them as fixed stars or suns to shine more brightly.

"Bright effluence of bright essence increate,"

light was a principle in the nature of God, and must have existed from eternity:

"Before the sun,
Before the heavens thou wert, and at the voice
Of God, as with a mantle, didst invest
The rising world of waters dark and deep,"

sings one of the great heroic poets, inspired by the diviner mind he had through his more perfect organization.

"And the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters."

The spirit or breath of God (ruach Elohim) was *in* the waters and moved in rhythmic harmony with them as with all things else. It was not only *on* or outside of the waters and other things, but *within* and of them, even as the manifestation we call life is within and of the organisms, vegetable and animal, wherein and whereby it is made known to us.

"And God said, Let there be light, and light was."

Not called into being, however, as but just said, at some particular moment of time, not distinct from the Godhead:

> "[But] of the Eternal, co-eternal beam,
> . . . . . since God is Light,
> And never but in unapproached light
> Dwelt from Eternity, dwelt then in thee,"

sings in lofty rhyme our own inspired Bard.

"And God divided the light from the darkness, and he called the light day, and the darkness he called night."

The writer speaks of darkness—a purely negative state or condition,—as if it were a positive something. But darkness is a mere consequence of the absence of light; and it is obvious that he could not have known by what name God called either the light or the dark: God *ordained* the light and the dark, but he left man to give them names.

"Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters; and let it divide the waters from the waters."

The writer fancied that the over-arching canopy of the sky was a transparent solid, in which the sun, moon, and stars were set, somewhat perhaps after the manner of the precious stones in the breast-plate of the high priest; and that as there was an ocean below or on the earth, so must there be an ocean above or in heaven, from which at times—on certain sluices, presumably, being opened—rain fell to moisten the ground and fit it for the growth of plants.

"Let the waters on the earth be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear."

Geological facts and reasonable inferences from them lead to the conclusion that the earth, on its emergence from the nebulous or gaseous state in which it first existed, appeared as an incandescent fluid, and next as a semi-solid ball, when all that was still vapourable in its constitution surrounded the glowing mass as a heterogeneous atmosphere, something, in all probability, like that which we now believe to constitute the photosphere of the sun. Heat, however, passing off into space, precipitation first of the more and then of the less refractory substances took place, and a crust of some consistency was formed. This, shrinking on the still melted mass within, caused it to burst through in lines and at particular points, whereby mountains and mountain-chains were formed, and the surface was made uneven. The temperature continuing to fall lower and lower, the aqueous vapour of the atmosphere was finally in great measure precipitated and condensed into water, which, running down the slopes, gathered itself into the hollows and there formed rivers, lakes, and seas, with more or less of dry land between; irregularities of surface, doubtless, exerting a paramount influence on the future distribution of land and water. For with shrinkings or subsidences here, and upheavals there, in combination with the tremendous rainfalls that must have occurred in the earlier geological epochs of the earth's history, whole continents with mountain-chains for their backbones, were disintegrated and swept away, whilst mighty oceans congregated here, were dissipated in vapour and dried up there; that being made over and over again the wet which had been the dry, and that the dry which had been the wet.

The rainfalls in these early geological epochs we cannot but presume must, indeed, have been tremendous?

If we only consider that the whole of the water now stored in the oceans that cover so large a portion of the earth's surface was once suspended first as gas or viewless vapour and then as steam in the atmosphere, we may form some idea of their extent and influence in fashioning the crust of the earth as it now appears. The mass of the stratified rocks which compose the proper crust of the globe is index enough of the extent of the continents that must have been disintegrated and ground down to supply the vast amount of material of which they consist, and of the combined powers of the rain and rivers that strewed this material at the bottom of the shoreless oceans where the strata took shape, as well as of the degree of heat still present in the central mass that fused or welded them into the solids they now present.

Disintegration of the first consolidated body of the earth did not, however, presumably supply the whole of the materials that now enter into the constitution of its stratified crust?

By no means; from all we know it seems reasonable to suppose that some very considerable proportion of these was furnished by the matters still suspended in the vaporous state amid the fiery atmosphere that must long have surrounded the incandescent body of the globe. It was not the water only of our present oceans, lakes, and rivers, the oxygen of our earthy and metallic oxydes, the carbonic acid of our mineral carbonates and coal measures that existed in the first instance as gas or vapour about the glowing globe; the salts, the metals, and the mineral substances most useful to man, and most prized by him, must probably all have been there originally in the form of elements, and only acquired their distinctive states and qualities when the temperature had fallen low enough to allow the law of the elective affinities to come into play. (See Appendix A.)

"And God called the dry land earth, and the waters called he seas."

It is the Hebrew poet himself who calls the dry land *Arets*, and the gathered waters *Imim*—words which we translate Earth and Seas. Had God called these aggregates of solid and liquid matter by any names—and we venture to think that he never did, otherwise than through the mouths of men,—the writer of the sentence quoted could very certainly no more have known what they were than he could have known by what names day and night were called.

"Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed and the tree yielding fruit."

The waters which at several epochs and for such lengthened periods covered the whole or a vast proportion of the globe, were undoubtedly the source, seed-bed, and nursery of the vegetable tribes which at length, and after the lapse of countless æons, gained a footing on the land, and from the lowly forms of sexless flags, lichens, mosses, ferns, horse-tails, &c., finally acquired sexuality, and showed themselves as the palm and pine, the fig, orange, olive, vine and host of other seed and fruit-bearing herbs and trees that prepared the way for the advent of the higher organisms, the conscious living creatures which made their appearance on the earth at last.

"Let there be lights in the firmament of heaven to divide the day from the night, to be for signs and for seasons, for days and for years, and to give light upon the earth."

In our modern geological cosmogony we feel assured that a long interval elapsed between the formation of the moon and the definite formation of the sun as he now exists—if indeed the formation of the sun can yet be said, with any propriety, to be definite or complete. The moon, we conclude, circled round the earth in a period other than that she now observes, and shed a paler light than she does at present upon

its unpeopled surface, whilst the sun yet showed a disc less fiery than that he now presents, but of millions instead of hundreds of thousands of miles in diameter. The formation of the sun and moon, however, was simultaneous, according to the Hebrew poet, and had reference solely to the convenience of man. But the moon is some hundreds of thousands of years younger than the earth, and by æons older than the sun; and though man finds his advantage in the light and other attributes of these great bodies, they certainly took shape and had motions and qualities irrespectively of him, but in harmony with the laws which inhere in matter and bring about phenomena. The phases of the moon give man the *week*, and her period about the earth the *month*, as the course of the earth about the sun—of the sun about the earth in the olden belief—gives him the *seasons* and the *year*.

"Let the waters bring forth the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly above the earth."

The waters were doubtless the womb in which the germs took shape that finally and in virtue of inherent powers eventuated not only in senseless vegetable forms, but in those gelatinous atoms with implanted sensibilities and aptitudes which by evolutionary efforts turned at length into radiates, molluscs, articulates, insects, fishes, amphibians, mammalians, and man. The absolutely *dry* is the absolutely barren; the *moist* is the source of life; hence the rise, in the heathen mythology, of Aphrodite, emblem of the generative power, from the sea.

"Let the earth bring forth the living creature after his kind, cattle and creeping thing, and beast of the earth."

The Hebrew poet thought that the tenants of the dry land must have had their origin thereon, as he believed the tenants of the waters had theirs therein. Regarding the whale as a fish, he referred his birth to

the waters—and truly, in one respect, for his formation fits him for life in these alone; but the whale and his congeners the porpoises are not fishes any more than their allied kinds the walruses, dugongs and seals; for they all have warm blood, breathe by means of lungs, bring forth living young and suckle them precisely as do the mammalians that live on the land.

"And God said: Let us make men in our image, after our likeness. And God created man in his image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." (Eng. Vers. and De Wette.)

Man, the Hebrew poet necessarily saw as the crown and consummation of the creative energy. But we may be permitted to regret that he should have imagined and should have said that man was made in the image of God; for God as all-pervading Spirit or Force, Essence or Cause, is without parts or proportions, and so is without figure—a truth subsequently acknowledged in more than one part of the Hebrew Scriptures by other writers. God fills the universe, and is necessarily impersonal and unimaginable in any shape. It is the converse of the writer's statement that is true: it is man who has fashioned God like himself. In harmony with the law of sexual distinction in all the higher classes of animals, man on his appearance on Earth is here fitly presented as cognate male and female, from the first.

And God gave the herb bearing seed, and the tree bearing fruit for meat, to the conscious creatures evolved, we venture to assume, in virtue of aptitudes inherent in certain of the inorganic natural elements, prime instruments of God, and possessed of powers which finally formed flesh and blood and nerve and brain, with the wonderful appanages of feeling, the moral sense, the religious sense, understanding and reason; faculties by which man comes at length to conceive a Supreme Being to whom reverence and obedience are due, to arrogate rights for him-

self, and to own obligations to his fellow-men. It is to be regretted that the Hebrew writer should not have noted that God had also given the flesh of animals as well as vegetables for food to man and other creatures,—flesh to be supplied by the sacrifice of the weaker by the stronger and more highly organised among animals, man, as the most highly organised and most intelligent of any, sacrificing every other living thing that is fit for food to satisfy his appetite, and only attaining to the highest perfection of his powers where he diets on a mixture of vegetable and animal substances.

"Thus were finished the Heavens and the Earth and all the host of them."

The writer gives his Elohim—God or Gods—much less time in which to complete the marvellous work than from its constitution and self-revealed history we now feel assured was necessarily employed. He had Eternity to draw on; but he has not used his privilege beyond the scanty measure of a few days. Any term, however, of any conceivable length he could have fixed on, would still have fallen short of that which God may have used in fashioning the vast assemblage of systems of which the Earth, in so far as mass is concerned, is so insignificant a part.

"And God rested the seventh day from all the work which he had made."

The writer here obviously fancies Elohim like himself. Weary with six days' work, he gladly rests on the seventh day, and so fancies that God must have done so too. But God never rests; for God is not to be thought of as prime or inceptive Cause only, but as persistent, ever-active Cause of all that is and of all that comes to pass. Were God to rest for an instant of time, the fair fabric of harmonious nature would be the Chaos out of which the Hebrew writer presumed it to have arisen.

Thus far we have a connected account of the

creation of heaven and the earth and its inhabitants—what is to be thought of the tale?

As of a simple, beautiful poem, the work of a man of thoughtful and imaginative mind, having the culture of the age in which he lived, and writing the language of his country in the highest state of purity to which it ever attained; a writer, therefore, of relatively recent times in the history of the Jewish people—one, moreover, who drew little or nothing from either oral or written tradition or legend, but gave shape in words to the ideas and fancies that spring up in minds of thoughtful and poetic mould. The account of Creation, as contained in the first chapter of Genesis, must be the work of a writer who lived during or immediately after the reign of Solomon, before the Hebrew tongue had begun to decline from its purity and become mixed with Aramaic words—one of the Isaiahs or Lyrists who penned the finest of the Psalms, the glory of the Hebrew literature, and that cannot be said to have their like in the letters of any other people.

The narrative of the first chapter of Genesis is not, however, the only account we have in the Hebrew Scriptures of the early history of the world, and more especially of the circumstances under which man began his career on earth?

There is a second account, commencing with the fourth verse of the second chapter of the Book of Genesis, which differs notably from the first, and begins abruptly in these words: "These are the generations of the heavens and of the earth when they were created."

It might almost be presumed that there was something wanting here?

So much of the document, seemingly, as gave the generations referred to. The verse, however, has every appearance of an interpolation, intended to connect the narrative that is to follow with that which has

gone before. But so little affinity have the two accounts, in fact, that a new hand is at once suspected by the critical reader, who soon finds his suspicion turned into certainty by the diversity of treatment he observes and the different name by which he finds the Deity now designated, the title in the first account being always Elohim—translated God in the English version, and in the second Jahveh or Jahveh-Elohim—translated Lord and Lord-God with us. Nor is this all. A multitude of minor differences in the style and kind of information given, meet the critical eye, which proclaim not *two* but *four* writers, who must have lived at times remote from one another, and had access to legendary and documentary matter that did not always agree in its terms. The first account we have, however, is characterised by biblical scholars and critics as being from the pen of one of the Hebrew writers called *Elohists*, the second from that of one or more of those entitled *Jehovists*, all of them apparently belonging to the priestly caste, but deriving their information from different and often discrepant sources.

What is the first particular we have from the new writer—the Jehovist—in his account of the early world?

Passing by all the particulars connected with the formation of the heavens and the earth as we have them from the Elohist, he begins by informing us that Jahveh-Elohim, the Lord-God, besides the heavens and the earth, had also created "every plant of the field before it was in the earth, and every herb before it grew." He appears to have imagined that trees and herbs were made by God much in the way that artificial flowers are made in the present day, and then planted in the ground, as he himself was wont to see husbandmen at work planting pot-herbs round Jerusalem.

What reason is assigned for God's procedure in

thus making herbs and trees, instead of evoking them from the ground like the Elohist?

It is because "the Lord-God had not yet caused it to rain on the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground."

The writer of these words could not, it is obvious, have known of the Elohist's account of Creation, in which there was not only water enough and consequently rain, but herbs and trees growing and yielding their seed and fruit, and both man and woman to tend the plants and till the ground, supposing that to have been needful to the growth of vegetables in a state of nature, which it is not. The vast and vigorous growths that gave rise to the carboniferous strata of the earth all took place myriads of years before there was a man to till the ground, though there must have been rain enough and to spare, and carbonic acid in the air in such excess as was probably incompatible with the existence of any but the lower forms of animal life,—certain it is that none of the higher forms had as yet made their appearance when the mighty morasses spread and the forests grew that now lie buried in our coal measures.

Have we not evidence in geological records of rain having fallen on the earth not only before the appearance of man on its face, but even before that of any of the higher forms of animal life?

Yes, ample; on sand-stone slabs deposited during the tertiary period of the earth's existence we not only find pit-marks like those made on sand and mud by falling showers at the present day, but even learn the quarter whence the wind blew when the showers fell! More than this, we find the foot-prints of a frog or toad-like creature with a heavy tail, indicated by the trail or smoothed line obliterating the rain-pits in the wake of the footsteps! Yet more, and in strata much older than those to which the sand-stone slabs belong that preserve these interesting records,

we find abundance not only of vegetable, but of animal remains. So that we are enabled positively to say that plants grew, that animals lived on them, and on one another too, and that rain fell hundreds of thousands—it may be millions of years before there was a man to till the ground.

The Lord-God—Jahveh-Elohim—we are then informed, caused a mist to go up from the earth to water it, and make the plants he had fashioned to grow; further, that he made man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and he became a living creature (not *soul*, as in the English translation, the word soul leading to metaphysical conclusions not contemplated in the text); finally, that he planted a garden in Eden, and therein put the man whom he had made.

This is according to the text; but the physics of the writer are at fault, for if the earth had the water necessary to supply the mist which was to fall in rain, it had already the moisture needful to make plants grow. And then he makes his deity fashion the man as a statuary fashions his statue, and only put life into him at last by breathing into his nostrils; he knew nothing of the *law of evolution* which the science of our modern world discovers in nature's acts, which we are still to look on as the acts of God in his quality of Cause, and so of Creator.

The garden in Eden is carefully planted?

With every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food; the tree of life in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil; permission being given to the man freely to eat of the fruit of every tree in the garden save and except of that of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Of this tree he is not to eat; for in the day he does he is told that he shall surely die.

What is the next step in the proceedings of Jahveh-Elohim, according to the writer?

He is made to say, as if it were a discovery or afterthought, that it is not good for the man to be alone, and that he would therefore make a help-meet for him. Before proceeding with this kindly purpose, however, the writer makes Jahveh-Elohim turn off to form the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, which he brings to the man, who is now named Adam, "to see what he would call them, and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof."

Adam's nomenclature has not reached us?

It has not, though it might as well have been preserved as many of the particulars given by the writer. It was probably simpler if less copious than that of his successors, the modern naturalists. Still, "for Adam," it is now said, and despairingly as it were, "there was not found an help-meet for him."

Jahveh-Elohim is made by the writer to proceed in a very roundabout way to supply the deficiency?

He causes a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, from whose side a rib is taken, out of which a woman is made and brought to the man, who styles her Isha, feminine of Ish, man.

This seems a poor conceit in face of the omnipotence of God and is in palpable contradiction with the statement in the Elohistic account of Creation, according to which and in harmony with the great law of sexual distinction, God is said to have made man male and female from the first. May we not, therefore, without irreverence, say that if the Elohist's account be correct, that of the Jehovist cannot be true?

Surely it is a puerile contrivance as prelude and pretext for what the man is immediately made to say: —"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man." But God took no rib from the side of man to form his counterpart, woman: "Man-like, but different sex," Isha needed not to be taken

in this childish and inconceivable way from the side of Ish to be of one flesh with him; she was so by God's fiat when simultaneously with him she came into being, and long before he and she together had attained to the higher state of conscious life, worthy of their noble collective Aryan designation Man, from the reason (manu skr.) wherewith they were endowed.

Adam is charmed with his helpmate?

Of course he is:—

> "So lovely fair was she,
> That what seemed fair in all the world seemed now
> Mean, or in her summed up, in her contained,
> And in her looks. * *
> Grace was in all her steps, heaven in her eye,
> In every gesture dignity and love,"

according to the version of our own great king of song.

The man and the woman do not, however, according to the narrative, long enjoy the happy state of innocence and bliss in which they were placed at first?

The serpent, says the story, was more subtil than any beast of the field, and said to the woman: "Yea, hath God said ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?"

And the woman?

Said to the serpent: "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden God hath said: Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it lest ye die."

The serpent answers?

"Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

The serpent shows himself a subtil beast indeed,

apt in using as in understanding human speech, and excelling in persuasive power! The Elohist, in his account, gave man the dominion over the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air; but the Jehovist reverses the picture and makes man dominated by the reptile that creeps upon his belly, and, in popular belief, lives upon dust!

The woman yields to the suggestion of the insidiously friendly and familiar serpent?

She sees that the tree is good for food, pleasant to the eye, a tree to be desired to make one wise; and so she takes of the fruit and eats, and gives to her husband also, and he eats.

With the result?

That the eyes of both are opened—not, however, in any intellectual and moral sense, as might have been presumed, but in a sense purely physical, for they only now discover, it is said, that they are naked, and to hide their nakedness that they sew fig-leaves together to make them aprons—scanty covering enough, but which Jahveh-Elohim, according to the writer, improves on subsequently by making them "coats of skins." The fig-leaves were at hand; but it has been made a question as to whence came the skins, and as to who it was who slew and flayed the animals that bore them, and shaped and sewed together the garments! And thus do men land themselves among the absurdities that crop up when they are guilty of the folly of anthropomorphosing the Infinite Supreme; and of giving a literal meaning to Eastern tales, the product of early and ignorant ages of the world!

The discovery of their nakedness was but a slight initiation for the man and woman into the knowledge of good and evil that was to follow on eating the forbidden fruit. Having senses, indeed, they needed not to have partaken of it to learn that they were naked. But is it in the nature of things, that aught

taken into the mouth could have given man first to know whether he were naked or clothed?

It is not; knowledge of the kind comes through the senses of sight and feeling, not of taste, and where these senses exist such knowledge is already possessed.

Or that fruit of any kind eaten should teach mankind the difference between good and evil?

In so far as sweet, sour, bitter, and other savours are concerned, and as wholesome or unwholesome qualities are good and evil—Yes; but as regards the moral good and evil implied though not expressed —No. God has connected the knowledge of what is good and evil from a moral point of view with certain parts of the brain, the functions of which are faculties of the mind, and it is by means of these that man knows and makes distinction between moral good and evil; even as it is by the nerves of the tongue that he distinguishes between sweet, sour, and bitter, the sapid and insipid, &c., by those of touch and sight that he knows the difference between the rough and the smooth, the nude and the clothed, &c., and by those of the stomach and body at large that he is made aware of what is wholesome or deleterious.

The discovery of their nakedness by the man and the woman is sometimes interpreted otherwise than literally?

But as it seems by a somewhat forced construction; the effect of eating the forbidden fruit being said to have been to engender concupiscence, carnal desire,—as if that had been a sin! But God had created man male and female, and put desire for one another into their minds; blessed them, too; said to them, Increase, multiply, and replenish the earth, and furnished them forth for the work. Neither, if we may trust our own Poet of Paradise, was Eve

> "Uninformed
> Of nuptial sanctity and marriage rites;

Nature herself wrought so in her that she,
Seeing her husband, turned,
And with obsequious majesty approved
His pleaded reason."

The feeling that leads man to cover certain parts of his body in lands where he has no need of clothing, may be said to be an element in his nature, almost as much his peculiar heritage as his religious sense, and must have made itself felt in the very prime of his emergence from mere brutality into properly human though still savage life. There seems, therefore, no occasion to see any recondite meaning as underlying Adam's discovery that he was naked. Such knowledge he certainly never had from eating any even such fruit as is said to have grown in the garden of Eden.

What interpretation is commonly put on the appearance and part played by the serpent?

That it was the impersonation of Evil, designated Satan or Devil, who in guise of a serpent was the spokesman and tempter.

Is there any warrant in the text for such an assumption?

There is none. The words are explicit: "The serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field."

Is there anything else against the vulgar interpretation?

Yes; the dualism implied in the recognition of a Principle of Evil apart or distinct from a Principle of Good—a recognition entirely foreign to the conception of Deity and the religious system of the Jewish people. If we constantly meet in the sacred writings of the Jews with Deity in the two aspects of Good and Evil, their God, whether called El or Jahveh, is still ONE only. Though no more than the greatest among the Gods, he is ever to them the Supreme, Lord of the Dark as of the Light, source himself of the

Evil as of the Good that befals. "Shall there be evil in a city and I have not done it, sayeth Jehovah." Amos iii. 6. "I form the light and create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I the Lord do all these things." Isaiah xlv. 7. We say nothing here of the absurdity of Evil personified and called Satan or Devil; for that is one of the earliest errors of mankind, as it still continues among the unworthy superstitions of the present day.

The prominence given to the SERPENT and the TREE —the whole idea of the garden in Eden, indeed, appears foreign to the Jewish theocratic system?

Most obviously; and so must the idea have been derived by the writer from what he or his countrymen had learned through intercourse, commercial or otherwise at some earlier period, through exile in later times, with the Medes and Persians, in whose religious system the dualism of Deity is an essential element; the beneficent principle in nature, typified by Light, being called Ormuzd, and the adverse principle, symbolized by the serpent, named Ahriman. It is not unimportant to observe that nowhere else in the Hebrew Scriptures save in this early part of the Book of Genesis do the serpent and Satan appear as counteracting the benevolent purposes of Jehovah. On the contrary, the image of the reptile, as in the instance of the brazen serpent which Moses lifted up in the Wilderness, is rather assumed as the emblem of healing:—propitiated by worship and sacrifice the death-dealing principle in nature stays the pestilence; and Satan, once admitted into the celestial hierarchy of the Hebrews, is seen but as one among the other ministers or agents of Jehovah—tempting and trying the faith of mankind, it may be, but never appearing as the adversary of the Supreme (Job *passim*).

What, according to the narrative, follows on the discovery of their nakedness by the man and woman?

Hearing the voice of Jehovah-Elohim "walking in

the garden in the cool of the day!" they hide themselves among the trees. Jehovah-Elohim, not meeting them as usual, it might seem, calls Adam and says, "Where art thou?"

Adam answers: "I heard thy voice in the garden and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself."

Adam does not, therefore, honestly and at once acknowledge his disobedience of the commandment he had received, but lays the fear he feels to face the Lord-God to the score of his nakedness.

So says the record; and Jahveh-Elohim, as if he needed the information, asks: "Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?"

To which Adam, shifting the blame of disobedience from his own shoulders in a regretable and somewhat cowardly way, makes answer: "The woman thou gavest to be with me gave me of the tree and I did eat."

What next?

Turning to the woman, Jahveh-Elohim says: "What is this that thou hast done?" And on her meek reply, "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat;" addressing the serpent, he proceeds: "Because thou hast done this thou art accursed above all cattle and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life."

The serpent, as he had shown himself familiar with human speech, could scarcely be supposed to be ignorant of that which was divine, and so the writer felt himself at liberty to make his God inform the serpent of the penalty he was to pay for his interference.

But is the serpent really cursed above all other creatures, or does God truly curse any of his handiworks?

The serpent, like all other creatures, is fitted for his state in every particular. He never progressed save upon his belly, and is no more cursed than any creature else that, in the course of nature, has come into life. He is even more agile in his movements than many other animals much higher in the scale of organisation than himself, glancing through the herbage and striking his prey or throwing his deadly coil about it with the rapidity of lightning. Neither does he eat dust, but lives on animal food like other carnivorous creatures, which he also has the skill to secure alive for himself. Far from being cursed, indeed, the serpent, in many of his kinds, is favoured with such an instrument of destruction in his poison fangs as gives him superiority over every other creature, no matter how much larger, stronger, and more knowing than himself, man, the lord of creation himself, not excepted.

There is something said about especial enmity put between the woman and the serpent?

"I will put enmity between thee and the woman, says the story, "and between thy seed and her seed, it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise its heel."

What may be the meaning of this?

It must be allegorical, like so much else that has already been commented on; it certainly can have no such meaning as is usually put on it by theologians. A reasonable interpretation of the enigmatic words, however, may be found by a reference to certain ancient Indian sculptures, where the Sun-God, Krishna, source of life, is seen with one foot on the head of the snake, Kaliga, emblem or source of darkness and death; or to the modern planisphere, where the kneeling Hercules, one of the Sun-Gods, is represented with uplifted club treading on the head of the mighty snake that coils about the pole, emblem of winter and the surcease of life. The reference, therefore, is probably astrological, and the meaning of the

myth scarcely doubtful:—The sun, escaping from the inferior or wintry to the superior or summer signs of the zodiac at the vernal equinox, triumphs over winter, and awakens the earth from the sleep of death to renovated life. Feigned to have died and lain buried for a season, and mourned over as Osiris, Adonis, Tammuz, &c., he is hailed anon with acclamations and rejoicings as newly risen from the dead.

So much for the serpent. What is said to the woman?

"I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow shalt thou bring forth children, and thou shalt be subject to thy husband and he shall rule over thee."

And to the man—?

"Because thou hast hearkened to the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, thou shalt not eat of it; cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken—dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

Can we conceive God multiplying sorrow on man as a penalty for yielding to such an impulse as the desire to know good from evil; an impulse, moreover, implanted by himself?

It were surely impious to think of anything of the kind in connection with the idea of God.

Or of God inflicting pain on woman in particular, as a penalty for putting forth her hand and tasting of fruit within easy reach, fair to look on, pleasant to the taste, enlarging the scope of her mental vision, and not injurious to her body?

It is absurd to speak of God as dealing in any such way with any of his creatures.

What were man, did he not know good from evil?

He were then no better than the beasts—more helpless, indeed, than they; for in their finer senses of sight, touch, smell, and taste, they discriminate more nicely than man in many cases between the good and the bad, in so far as their bodily state is concerned.

The *desire to know* is even a primary impulse, one of the great gifts of God to man?

It is so, indeed; and is the one desire which man in his most advanced state sees it of the highest moment to cultivate; source, as it proves to be, of all the pleasures he has in his higher intellectual existence; of so much, therefore, that gives him his true title to be looked on as lord of the creation.

But man was threatened with death did he eat of the forbidden tree: "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," says the record. Yet not only did Adam not suffer bodily death at the time of his eating, but he may be said to have then awakened to his higher intellectual and responsible life.

Theologians cannot therefore be warranted in their assumption that man became obnoxious to death through disobeying the arbitrary commandment said to have been given him?

What follows immediately shows that the writer believed man to have been created mortal from the first: He is driven out of the garden in Eden lest he should take also of the tree of life, eat, and so like the Elohim—the Gods, live for ever. It is not true, therefore, according to the Hebrew tale itself, that death was brought into the world through man's infringement of an order not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Immortality was no item in the original charter either of man or any other creature or thing; and it is even impious to speak of the natural and inevitable surcease of life as a penalty: a *necessity* in the nature of things, it can be no penalty. It has been well and truly said that

the natural term of man's life is about three score and ten years. The few who reach extreme old age, between four score and four score and ten, mostly find the length of the way more than wearisome long before its end; the load of years grows heavy to be borne, and there are few who are not well content to lay down the burthen at last.

Death being regarded as the greatest of evils that could befall mankind, and as a punishment for disobedience, by the Hebrew writer, can he be warranted in speaking of the pain connected with child-bearing as imposed on the woman by way of peculiar penalty for the active part she took in aspiring after other knowledge than that which she had through her mere senses?

Pain under any circumstances is first and in the natural fitness of things an admonition to beware of influences injurious to the bodily state, and, in the case of the woman about to become a mother, of the great event in her life that is imminent, putting her on her guard and bidding her make provision for the safety of herself and the fruit of her womb. And then it would seem that the effort necessary to bring forth children cannot, in the nature of things as they are (and so as they could best be), be dissevered from more or less of suffering.

Might not the woman, however, have been so framed by the Mighty Workman as to have brought forth without suffering?

No; if pain be suffered in the process, we may feel assured that it was inseparable from it. Constituted as she is, we may be certain that she could have been advantageously constituted no otherwise than as she is. All things are precisely as they could be. The pain inevitably connected with child-bearing is brief, the joy of motherhood is for life.

Is the ground truly cursed because of the man's participation in the woman's desire to know and

become as one of the Gods; or, like a school-boy, for having eaten an apple fair to view and on proof made found savoury and not unwholesome, though forbidden to put forth his hand by the owner of the garden?

God curses nothing that by his fiat is or comes to pass in conformity with his laws. If the ground bears thorns and thistles it also yields spontaneously the herbage on which so many creatures live, and on the flesh of which in turn man and other carnivorous tribes subsist. It supports the luxuriant vegetation of the tropics unsolicited, and in the warmer latitudes yields with little care the cereals, roots and fruits that minister to man's most pressing wants; under less favourable aspects of clime and site, it still gratefully responds to forethought and ingenuity when brought to bear upon it:—Anticipating results and using means to ends in harmony with nature's laws, the barren heath under man's fostering care puts on a smile, and waving harvests look up to the sun where scarce a blade of grass had grown, and the harsh or sapless wilding is turned into the melting pulp of our summer fruits. To speak of the ground as cursed of God is to libel the Supreme—if that indeed were possible. At the price of labour man has all his most necessary wants supplied by the kindly ground. One of God's best gifts to man, indeed, has been said to be the necessity to work, by one who was himself among the busiest of workers whilst he lived, and who has done so much through the work he did to free the world from superstition and the base idea that idleness is a boon.

What can be said for the information Adam receives that he is dust and shall to dust return?

That the body of man is made up in but small measure of the dust of the ground; it is in fact much more the creature of water and the air than of any kind of earth. And as to the interpretation put on the text that instead of the eternal life intended for

him at first he is henceforth to have a merely temporary existence, this is readily disposed of by acknowledging God's purposes as they are from eternity so are they eternal; and man, as he has a determined existence in time, to have been from the first precluded from the possibility of living for ever. That death came not into the world because of any transgression by man of a commandment of God is certain; for that the earth was peopled by myriads of animals which lived and died æons before man appeared upon the scene is certified to us by the remains of these we find entombed in such profusion in the strata that compose the crust of the globe. The law of evolution, of birth and death, instituted as it undoubtedly was from the beginning of life on the earth, may without irreverence be spoken of as a necessity in the nature of things: were this not so, the law would not now exist; for neither God nor the revelation he makes of himself in his laws suffers essential change.

Would immortality on earth be verily a boon?

As it is not given, so the divine wisdom proclaims that it would not. In the Pagan mythology Heracles penetrates to the garden of the Hesperides, slays the dragon that guards the tree of life, gathers the fruit, and brings it forth for the use of man; but Pallas Athene meets him on the way and takes the fruit from his hand, knowing that it were not good for man to eat of it and gain, like the Gods, immortal life. Progress were, indeed, impossible did not one generation of men succeed another. Succession is the law, which, as it now obtains, so did it ever obtain. Kinds, indeed, only continue to appear so long as the conditions necessary to their existence prevail; when these cease the living things that depend on them—plants or animals—die out and are seen no more. Time was when man was not; and the time may come—will in all likelihood necessarily come—when, with

change in the cosmical, telluric, atmospheric, and other conditions wherewith his life is bound up, he, like the mammoth and megatherium, will have disappeared from the face of the earth.

Man, however, to return to our text, had disobeyed the commandment said to have been given by God; but he was still in the garden in Eden, and could not be suffered to remain therein?

The Lord-God, according to the story, is made to say: "Behold the man is become as one of us to know good from evil; and now lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live for ever; therefore the Lord-God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, and placed cherubims and a flaming sword which turned every way to keep the tree of life."

The qualities of things eaten, we have seen, consist in such as affect the palate and the bodily health—how, then, conceive a tree bearing fruit possessed of the power to confer everlasting life?

How, indeed! Everlasting life belongs to God and the manifestation he makes of his Being in the Universe; to nothing else.

The tale must, therefore, be an allegory—a myth, an Idea clothed in words, possibly transmitted by legendary tradition through long ages before it reached the Hebrew writer who moulded it into the indifferent shape in which it meets us now. Several interpretations have been given of the allegory?

Several; among others one of an astronomical character. By turning to a celestial globe it will be seen that as Virgo (Eve) with the ears of corn or fruit-bearing bough in her hand, followed by Arcturus (Adam) sinks in the West, Perseus (the Cherub armed with the flaming sword) rises in the East and seems to drive the woman and the man from the sky. There are other interpretations, however, on legen-

dary grounds, that better consort perhaps with Hebrew history than this, which implies a knowledge of the constellations and of celestial phenomena of which we find few traces in the Book of Genesis.[b]

The first account of Creation ended as we saw with God's resting from his labours and seeing that *all was very good.* The second has a less satisfactory conclusion; for here, as we have just seen, we find God cursing the ground, inflicting pains and penalties for the transgression of an arbitrary commandment, and expelling the man and the woman from the garden of delight he had planted for their happy dwelling-place, thwarted in all his benevolent purposes by the serpent!

These two accounts differ so essentially that it seems impossible to conceive them as emanating from the same individual or delivered through inspiration, as said, from one source?

They differ so entirely and deal with such dissimilar elements that they must be held to have proceeded not only from different individuals of the same family of mankind, but even to have originated among different races of men. The first or Elohistic account may be spoken of as purely Semitic; the second as essentially Aryan in its character. The Elohistic narrative in its rhythmical and balanced proportions is obviously the product of a single mind, creating in conformity with the rules of Hebrew poetical composition:—it is a connected history of Creation by a Poet. The Jehovistic account cannot be seen from the same point of view. It has every character of a compilation from tradition and legend, and assimilates in many leading particulars with the myths and beliefs of the western branch of the great Aryan family of mankind which find expression in its Sacred Scriptures, the Zend-

[b] See Dr Kalisch's learned Commentary on Genesis.

Avesta, as the views of the Eastern branch of the same race are comprised in the Vedas. The Elohistic account might have originated among any of the ancient peoples somewhat advanced in civilisation and possessed of the leisure needful for speculation and literary labour. The Jehovistic account, on the contrary, without poetic verve or semblance of constructive talent, is a kind of chronicle of imaginary doings, it is the work of an archæologist or antiquary and cherisher of mythical and legendary lore,—a character we miss entirely in the Elohist, in whose brief and grand summary we note no reference either to myth or legend, and no *statement on which a single dogmatic conclusion could be hung*—no word that does not accord with a pure and simple sense of the power and goodness of God as Creator of the world. In the incoherent narrative of the Jehovist, on the contrary, we meet with nothing that cannot be referred to myth or legend, derived moreover, for the most part, from sources beyond the boundaries of Judea, pertaining to peoples other than the children of Israel, and *supplying foundations for the entire superstructure of Christian Dogma.* The Jehovistic account may even be said to sin in transferring essentials of the religious system of the Medo-Persian people to that of the children of Israel.

Which of these two accounts is believed to be the more ancient?

The Elohistic; although this is questionable, for both accounts can be said with great certainty to date from relatively recent times—the Elohistic being clearly enough shown, by the finished character of the work and the purity of the diction in the original, to be the product of an age not earlier nor yet much later than that of Solomon; the Jehovistic being as safely assignable to a time subsequent to the Babylonian captivity, when the Jews had been brought into contact with a people entertaining dualistic ideas

of Deity, and in their ritual addicted to Light or Fire, Tree and Serpent worship—Light or Fire, having Ormuzd, representative of the Good or Creative principle in nature, symbolised by the Sun and the Tree; Darkness, Destruction and Death, having Ahriman, in eternal antagonism to Ormuzd, with the serpent as his emblem.

This would account for the prominent places occupied in the Jehovist's story by the Tree and the Serpent?

The worship of the Tree and the Serpent was among the earliest and widest spread of all the ways in which man sought to show his sense of dependence on a something, a Power, beyond and stronger than himself. Unless it be the rising of the sun—"Great eye of God," no phenomenon in nature is so notable in temperate lands as the awakening of the vegetable world from death to life on the return of Spring; and save the lightning's flash, nothing is seen so deadly as the serpent's fang. No marvel, therefore, that the tree was chosen by man awakened to reflection as symbol of the Life-giving power, or the serpent selected as type of the death-dealing influence around him. These symbols personified and called by names became Brahma and Sçiva, Ormuzd and Ahriman, Osiris and Typhon, Jehovah and Satan, God and the Devil. Detached from the Nature in which they inhere, and thought of as causes of the good and evil that befals, they were then sought to be communed with in thankfulness or in fear, and, approached with praises, prayers, and offerings, all the elements of the religious ideas and ritual observances of mankind make their appearance.

The history of the garden in Eden, of the Tree of Life and the subtil serpent continue, we may presume, to occupy a prominent place in the religious annals of the Jewish people?

It is very notable, nevertheless, that the tale is not

even once referred to by any of the succeeding Old Testament writers; nor indeed until we pass the epoch of the Christian æra do we find it exerting the slightest influence on the religious opinions of the Jewish people. Neither Jesus of Nazareth nor his immediate friends and followers appear to have known anything of the garden of Eden, or

> "Of man's first disobedience and the fruit
> Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the world and all our woe."

It was not until Paul of Tarsus came upon the scene that the tale, taken in its most literal sense, began to bear fruit. Connecting the myth of man's disobedience with the Messianic Idea, in the modified shape it had assumed in his day, with the moral and religious teaching, the beautiful life and cruel death of Jesus of Nazareth as they were orally related to him, Paul, the one man of culture, seemingly, among the dissidents of his day from the religion of his country, made it the foundation of the NEW DOGMATIC RELIGION he taught with such unwearied zeal, which has so long exerted so vast an influence in the world, and is only now beginning to lose its hold on the minds and imaginations of mankind.

Returning to our story, we find the man and the woman after their expulsion from Paradise knowing each other in the way ordained of God and bringing children into the world—Cain and Abel, according to the unhappy tale of the Jehovistic writer, earliest record of dissension between man and man, of the first murder done in time, of the parties to the difference Brothers, and its ground Religion!

True—according to the story:—Cain the husbandman's offering of "the fruits of the earth" was not respected of Jehovah, whilst Abel the shepherd's sacrifice of "the firstlings of his flock and the fat thereof" was accepted.

We might have imagined that the laborious husbandman's offering of the products of his industry and skill would have been at least as well received by Jehovah as the idle herdsman's lamb and kid?

Certainly, and with good reason we might. But as Jehovah in the later Jewish ritual, of which alone we have the record somewhat complete, is only to be approached with blood-offerings, it would not have suited the modern priestly compiler of these mythical tales of early times to have had the fruits and flowers of the earth—God accursed, as said—as grateful to his God Jehovah as the blood or Life, and the fat and flesh, of his daily and periodical sacrifices.

Cain is described as dissatisfied with the rejection of his offering and the preference shown to that of his brother?

So it is said—his countenance fell; and turning his anger against his brother, they had words,—they had a quarrel; and as they were in the field Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him. The blow therefore could not have been of malice prepense,—nor meant to be fatal, as unhappily it proved.

Cain is not informed why his offering of fruit and flowers was not respected?

He is not; he is only told that "if he does well he will be accepted, and if not well that sin lies at the door;" but where he had done amiss, and so had his offering rejected, is not set forth in this enigmatical sentence. With the Jewish ritual as subsequently instituted before us, however, we are at no loss to interpret it. To the Hebrew mind there could be no remission of sins without the shedding of blood—the terrible idea that forms the foundation of the dominant Christian faith, though it certainly has no part in the religion of Jesus of Nazareth.

Jehovah is wroth with Cain for his foul deed, and tells the criminal that he is now cursed from the

earth; that when he tills the ground it will not yield its strength, and that henceforth he should be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth.

Does not the writer here make physical results depend on moral conditions?

He does; but if Cain, with his hands all embrued in his brother's blood, tilled a fertile soil with the requisite skill and care, the land, by a prior fiat of God, would not fail to yield its increase; and the most pious and moral man who settled on a desert, or who brought neither skill nor care to bear on his work even under circumstances favourable in themselves, would have failure for his portion. He who conforms to the laws of nature in their several domains, whatever his moral or religious character, will not fail of his return; as he who does not so conform himself, no matter what his pious disposition, will necessarily go without reward.

Cain, however, is to be protected from violence?

Jehovah, it is said, set a mark on him, lest any one meeting him should slay him.

Such a precaution would imply that there were other people in the earth besides Adam and Eve and their son Cain?

It would so; but the book is full of like inconsistencies, as in this place it is very notably, with the commandment elsewhere delivered, that he who knowingly took life should surely himself be put to death.

Cain and Abel are the first children of the first man, Adam, and his wife, Eve, according to the Jehovistic narrative. Does this agree with the Elohist?

It does not. The Elohist's story, interrupted after the third verse of the second chapter of Genesis, is resumed at the first verse of the fifth chapter in these words: "This is the book of the generations of Adam;" and Adam's first son is not Cain, neither is

the second Abel; but the first and only son he has whose name is mentioned is Seth, and though Adam is reported to have lived hundreds of years afterwards and begotten sons and daughters, neither they nor their descendants are named. The genealogy of Seth alone is continued, he begetting Enos, Enos Cainan, Cainan Mahalaleel, and so on, till we come to Lamech, who begets Noah, the next personage who plays an important part in the mythical tale in the study of which we are engaged.

The terrible tale of the murder of Abel by his brother Cain may therefore be the work of one of the later Jehovistic writers?

It has every appearance of being so; and if we may imagine the writer thinking it desirable to have the earliest possible authority for the blood-stained altars of his day, we can divine his motive for inventing the story of the offerings and of the preference shown by Jehovah for the bloody over the bloodless sacrifice, inserting it where it stands, and adding the murder of the one brother by the other by way of giving colour and force to his picture. No man in his senses, freed from prejudice and possessed of the requisite information, can believe for a moment that the Jehovistic writer could have known that Cain killed Abel, or that the three sons of Noah were Shem, Ham, and Japhet.[e]

[e] Subsequently to the time when Nehemiah was Governor of Judea under Cyrus, says M. Albert Reville, the office of High-Priest, as conferring the chief authority in the country, became an object of ambition, not only between one priestly family and another, but between different members of the same family; and in a certain instance in which two brothers were aspirants to the office, so high did the rivalry run, that the one killed the other. It were not presuming too far, perhaps, as all fiction has a foundation in fact, and as we are now so well assured of the relatively modern date of by far the greater portion of the Pentateuch, to find in this recent instance of fratricide the source of the story of the murder in

God, in calling men and women into the world, had endowed them, as well as all other conscious living creatures, with the wonderful faculty of producing their like, and continuing themselves in their kind?

He had virtually said, in the power bestowed, but not in words: "Increase and multiply and replenish the earth," a commandment they were no more loth to obey in times gone by than they are in the present day. But Jehovah, as it appears by the record, had been less careful than might have been expected in selecting the race by which the world was to be peopled; for, to say nothing of the murder of Abel by Cain, no more than ten generations of men had lived on the earth before their wickedness was found so great, the imaginations of their heart so continually evil, that, according to the record, it even "repented Jehovah that he had made men upon the earth."

This is extraordinary language in connection with the name of God?

With the idea of God, as we entertain it, certainly, but not with that of the Jehovah of the Hebrew Scriptures, who was but a powerful man of the early, jealous, revengeful, arbitrary, variable, and often savage type. The statement, nevertheless, stands part of the sacred writings of the Jews, still held inspired not only in their precepts and ordinances, but in every word and letter, and believed by more than they are denied among Christians to be the word of God to man.

Can we, however, presume that God ever repents of anything he has done, or changes his mind as to aught he had intended to do?

Man may repent and change; God cannot do so.

the olden time of Abel by his brother Cain.—(Comp. *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 1ier Mars, 1872.)

Is there any reason given for the great wickedness charged upon mankind?

There is none.

Is not the disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit assigned as its cause?

It is not once referred to; and if it had been so, the disobedience as *consequence* of an untoward disposition could not be its *cause*.

Is there anything else in the text that may be held adequate to bring about the evil imaginations imputed?

There is absolutely nothing. The sons of God, indeed, are said to have seen the daughters of men that they were fair, and to have taken them wives of all they chose; and this incomprehensible statement has been laid hold of as a means of accounting for the prevailing wickedness. But the sons of God, whoever they were, must be presumed, from their title, to have been of higher nature than the daughters of earth, and to have improved, not deteriorated, the breed.

And this, indeed, in so far as we can judge by what is said, appears to have been the case; for we learn that the children born to the sons of God cohabiting with the daughters of men became mighty men, which were of old men of renown?

So runs the tale; and the myth or legend helps to no solution of the matter. The wickedness of men, however, was great in the earth, and every imagination of man was evil continually, so that Jehovah said at length; "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast and creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them."

The beasts and creeping things and fowls of the air had done nothing to deserve extermination?

Nevertheless they were to share in the doom of man and be destroyed.

Certain reservations, however, are to be made to the general portentous resolution come to by Jehovah?

Addressing Noah, who is characterised as "a just man and perfect in his generations," Jehovah informs him that the end of all flesh had come before him, and that he had resolved to destroy them, and all wherein is the breath of life, by means of a flood of water which he will bring upon the earth. With Noah, however, he will establish his covenant. Him and his family, of all mankind, he will save alive by means of an ark, or great ship, which he is ordered to construct of certain materials, of certain dimensions, and in certain ways, in which he and his family, and two and two, male and female, of every living thing, are to be housed whilst the whole earth is laid under water.

Noah does all he is ordered?

He does, and with his wife, his sons and daughters, their sons and daughters, and the pairs to be saved alive, is safely housed in the ark. Then, it is said, are the foundations of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven opened, and rain falls for forty days and forty nights, and the waters prevail exceedingly, covering the higher hills fifteen cubits and upwards, so that all in whose nostrils was the breath of life are destroyed from the face of the earth, Noah alone and they that were with him in the ark remaining alive.

How long is the flood of waters said to have prevailed?

After increasing for a hundred and fifty days, the fountains of the deep, it is said, are stopped, and the rain from heaven is restrained. The waters then begin to assuage; but it is not until the first day of the tenth month that the tops of the highest lands are seen, when the ark grounds on the mountains of Ararat; and only after the lapse of a whole year of imprisonment that Noah, finding the ground dry,

takes off the covering of the ark and goes forth, he and his family, and all that had been saved alive, with the blessing of God upon him and them, and a renewed injunction to be fruitful and to multiply upon the earth.

Noah was ordered to take into the ark pairs of *every* living thing. Every living thing would include whales, seals, fishes, and the inhabitants of the waters generally—crustaceans, molluscs, radiates, &c.—yet we find no mention made of them.

There is none; but if they were to be saved, some provision was as necessary for them as for the other air-breathing land animals. With the obvious difficulty of providing in the ark for the inhabitants of the water, however, they are left to take their chance in the Tohu-Bohu of the flood. Every inhabitant of the water, nevertheless, has a definite sphere assigned it, for which it is fitted, and out of which it cannot live. Natives of the salt water cannot, for the most part, live in the fresh, nor can those of the fresh generally live in the salt. The whalebone and spermaceti whales, among many others, would have proved especially awkward occupants of the great ship!

There is provision made for feeding the host of living creatures there gathered together?

There is, but for the vegetable feeders only.

How, then, were the flesh feeders to be kept alive?

By accommodating themselves, say the apologists for every untenable statement within the lids of the Bible, to the dry fodder of the phytivorous kinds—by feeding *with*, not *on* them.

The lion, tiger, wolf, and weazel eat hay and straw like the ox and sheep?

So most of our authoritative exponents of the difficult Bible passages say. But the structure of the teeth and jaws of the carnivorous tribes incapacitates them from doing as our learned exegetists would have

them, for they can only cut and tear their food in pieces, not grind it into pulp like the ox and sheep. The structure of their stomach and intestines, moreover, is not of the kind that fits them to digest and assimilate vegetable food.

Was not some provision also necessary for saving the members of the vegetable world alive?

As indispensably necessary as it was in regard to those of the animal kingdom, yet none is made, probably because the writer had overlooked the fact that plants held under water for any length of time are as surely drowned as animals. Scarcely any land-growing plant can be kept for days, weeks, or months submerged without being killed; neither will the plants that live naturally in fresh water exist in salt water, nor will salt-water plants survive in fresh water. The pretty incident of the olive leaf with which the dove sent forth from the ark returned as a sign that the waters were abated, was an impossibility; after steeping in brine for twelve months all the olive trees must have been long dead and their leaves rotten.

And in what state could the Earth have been left. after a flood that covered the highest mountains fifteen cubits and upwards?

What could it have been but a bank and shoal of desolation, bare of herbage of every kind; so that the vegetable feeders saved alive in the Ark must have died forthwith of hunger when released from their temporary shelter.

Had the flesh-feeders been thought of in the Ark, they too must now have starved like the phytivorous kinds when dispersed over the bare, stony, muddy, and depopulated flats?

They would but have been saved from sudden death by drowning to fall victims to a lingering death by starvation.

There are two accounts of the flood, as of so many

other incidents in the Hebrew Scriptures, one as usual by the Elohist, the other by the Jehovist?

There are certainly two different accounts, much intermingled, indeed, yet separable for the most part by careful sifting from one another.

Do they agree?

No; they differ in several important particulars, especially in a distinction made by the Jehovist between what are called clean and unclean animals. Whilst two and two of the unclean are ordered to be taken into the Ark, the clean are to be received by sevens—three pairs and an odd one.

The odd one would have been of little use in helping out Jehovah's final admonition to the pairs on leaving the Ark?

But was necessary to avoid breaking the sets and making the survivor of any pair useless; for a victim must be available for the religious service which Noah is made to perform immediately on quitting his long imprisonment, his first act having been to build an altar to Jehovah and to offer burnt offerings thereon of every clean beast and clean fowl he had had with him in the Ark.

Jehovah is gratified by Noah's pious acknowledgment of the favour shown to him and his?

Jehovah, it is said, smelled a sweet savour, and said in his heart: I will not again curse the ground for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite every living thing as I have done.

This is surely very strange language to be set down as proceeding from his God by the writer!—But if the imaginations of the heart of man were seen in this way by Jehovah after the terrible catastrophe that had taken place, it is obvious that nothing had been done to better the Earth by drowning it?

The almost despairing tones in which the narrative proceeds might fairly lead us to conclude that as little

had been done by the flood to amend matters in the past as to leave them with a chance of improvement in the future. But we are to be careful to assign the account given of what Jehovah said in his heart to its only possible author—the Hebrew writer; for it is very certain that he could know nothing of the purposes of the True God, and that the words ascribed to the Supreme are not his, but the man's.

Jehovah is now made by the writer to appear as though he were even sorry for what he had done, for he makes him go on to say: While the Earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and heat and cold, and summer and winter, and day and night, shall not cease. And I will establish my covenant with you, and for a token I set my bow in the cloud; and it shall come to pass that when I bring a cloud over the earth that the bow shall be seen in the cloud, and I will remember my covenant which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh.

All this is purely human; meaningless in connection with the name of God; but the Hebrew writer had evidently no other conception of God than as a supernaturally powerful, irascible, revengeful, and yet upon occasion pitiful human being, thwarted continually in his kindly purposes by the waywardness and wickedness of the creature he had called into existence.

What is to be concluded in regard to the covenant which Jehovah is stated to have entered into with Noah, whereof the bow in the heavens is the token?

God's covenants were all made with man when he commenced his career on earth, their conditions implemented in the organisation of his body and its aptitudes, all co-ordinate with and in the most perfect possible harmony with the nature of things and the circumstances amid which he began, as he still continues, to be.

What are we to think of the writer's imagining

that God required a remembrancer of aught he meant to do or to leave undone?

Whatever the writer may have imagined, we are to think that God, who is in and of all that is and that comes to pass, needs no remembrancer. The rainbow is a natural and necessary effect of the refraction or breaking up of the difform rays of which light is composed, by the globular drops of water that constitute rain, in virtue of laws inherent in and co-eternal with the nature of God and the qualities of matter. Rainbows *necessarily* spanned the sky countless ages before there was a Noah to observe them; it may have been that one appeared when the several showers fell that have left their records in the sandstone slabs now preserved in our museums!

Looked somewhat closely into, therefore, with an eye couched of prejudice, the story of the Deluge (the Noachian Deluge as it is called to distinguish it from other deluges of which shadowy records are preserved in the legendary annals of several ancient nations) appears to be wanting in every particular that could give it the semblance not merely of probability but even of possibility?

There can be no question of this. The motive assigned for its occurrence, in the first place, is absurd—utterly incompatible with the Idea of the God of reason and humanity. The saving instrument, the ark itself—speaking seriously of the matter for a moment,—was utterly incompetent to the end proposed,—it was not of half the tonnage of our Great Eastern steam-ship! And how conceive all the animals that people the globe packed into any definite space, were it even ten or twenty times the area of the mighty ship! How, again, conceive Noah and his three sons competent even in the course of their reputed long lives to have prepared and put together the materials of such a vessel as the one described. They were assisted by the wicked people about them,

it may be and has of course been said: true, and these were at the end to stand complacently by whilst Noah, his family, and selected pairs from either pole to the equator filed into the ark, and left them outside to drown!

Shut up in the ark pitched with pitch without and within, with a single window in the roof—and no more is mentioned, whatever apologists in face of the difficulty may say—a cubit each way in its dimensions, what must have been the inevitable fate of the included company?

The door could scarcely have been closed, supposing the window to have been left open—and Jehovah himself is made to shut it, as shut it must needs be to keep out the rain—before the whole assembly would necessarily have been stifled. Man, the higher mammalia, and most birds, can live for hours, even for days, without food, but they cannot exist for five minutes deprived of air; and the ark, with its window of a cubit, or eighteen inches, square in the roof, would have proved as inevitably fatal by stifling to the creatures within it intended to be saved, as the waters would be found deadly to those outside destined to be drowned.

So deadly an agent as vitiated air operating immediately would have made any further provision for the maintenance and comfort of the inhabitants of the ark unnecessary; but supposing such a possibility as asphyxia not to have occurred—and it is obviously never contemplated by the narrator—how could Noah and his three sons have distributed their appropriate rations to the several pairs or sevens of all the animals that peopled the earth, now gathered together around them; how have supplied them with the indispensable water, how have got rid of the inevitable excrements?

How indeed!

Why, then, dwell on such childish, impossible, and

even impious tales as those in the Old Testament of the Jews concerning the flood and Noah's ark?

Because they still obtain currency and credence in the world, although they undoubtedly deserve all these epithets, and are in very truth not only childish, impious, and impossible, but misleading, and calculated to give false notions of the God of Nature's dealings with mankind and the world. The tale of the Deluge and the ark is never presented in its true light by the ministers of religion, though as men of culture their eyes must have been opened to its absurdity, and the most imperative of all their duties is surely to speak truth, and to show God's providence in acts harmonious with the great eternal changeless laws, elements in his own nature, whereby he rules the world.

The Deluge and the favour shown to Noah and his family are still advanced as illustrations not only of God's displeasure and justice in dealing with the wicked, but of his goodness and mercy also, and the special favour in which he has the exceptionally good and pious?

This is certainly the case. But God's displeasure and justice are shown by the punishment or reward which men bring on themselves through the violation or observance of his laws. Neither do his goodness and mercy appear any more in the lives saved from flood and tempest, than is his vengeance proclaimed in the lives that are lost. As we proceed in the narrative, indeed, suspicions arise that all the members of the family exceptionally saved were not so worthy of the favour shown them as it seems easy to imagine they might have been. The mythical tale of Noah and the Deluge, with all the unreason attached to it, is nevertheless made to enter as a prominent feature into the Christian system. The infant of parents belonging to several of its churches, and these the most influential of all, does not undergo the initiatory rite of baptism by sprinkling with water, without allusion being

made to Noah and his family, "whom God of his great mercy saved in the ark from perishing by water;" though the connection between a world drowned, with Noah saved, and the sprinkling of a little water on the face of an unconscious infant escapes both common sense and unsophisticated reason.

The tale of the Deluge is one of the incidents recorded in the Hebrew scriptures that rivets itself on the mind and imagination of the young, and, with the further reference made to it in connection with a solemn religious rite, scarcely fails to exercise an adverse influence on the judgment of men and women in riper years?

There can be little doubt of this. The ship-like ark with the nicely-formed figures of its multitudinous tenants, headed by Noah, his wife, and their sons, Ham, Shem, and Japhet, which is presented to almost every child among us when its intelligence begins to dawn, fixes the myth as a positive occurrence in the mind of the vast majority of children born into the world of Christian parents, and it is not every one who can free himself in after life from the absurd and indefensible conclusions to which it leads.

To refer to the goodness and mercy of God in connection with the world he has drowned, is surely beside the mark?

It appears so to the unprejudiced who venture to use the reason and moral sense which God has given them for their guidance, and to see things in consonance with the knowledge of their age. If the earth was filled with wickedness, as said, and it were conceded that wickedness deserved punishment, still drowning does not seem either the reasonable or merciful way of bringing about the amendment which we must presume to be the object of all castigation—the castigation of God in especial. And if Noah and

his family were worthy to be saved alive, they could not have been alone in their worthiness;—there were new-born babes, for instance, helpless infants, and young children, who could not have deserved drowning on the ground that their fathers and mothers were wicked. The hapless animals, also, which perished, had been guilty of none of the disobedience and wickedness alleged against the human kind, and could no more have merited their untimely fate through obeying their natural instincts, than the pairs saved could have merited the preference shown them through fulfilling theirs.

So much for the moral aspects, or some of the moral aspects, of the Noachian Deluge. Can the debacle referred to be comprehended and accounted for on simple physical grounds?

As an universal over-swimming of the earth within the period when man became its denizen, the Deluge of the Bible is incomprehensible; and had it even been possible, yet may we feel confident that it did never occur. The dry land of the earth, indeed, has in every part known to us been at different and generally far remote epochs oftener than once at the bottom of deep seas and vast fresh-water lakes. So much we know for certain; and we further feel assured that the bottoms of many of our present seas and lakes must once have been dry land. The islets that stud the vast Pacific Ocean rest for the most part on the peaks of lofty mountains now submerged. Upon and around these the coral insect, building its own habitation for ages, spreads itself abroad level with the wash of the sea, and furnishes man with resting places amid depths he tries in vain to fathom with the common plummet line. Arctic and Antarctic lands, again, now overlaid with thick-ribbed ice, thousands of feet in thickness, where lichens and mosses are the only vegetable productions sparsely seen, once possessed a luxuriant growth of the trees and shrubs of temperate

lands, and teemed with insect and higher animal life. The temperate regions, again, where nature now smiles for half the year at least, and the soil yields corn and wine and oil to the industry of man, were overlapped in former ages of the world by glaciers hundreds of feet in thickness, pouring down from northern heights, and putting as effectual an end to the life that had been upon them as ever Noah's Deluge could have done; telling the tale of their source and leaving records of their course in the ponderous blocks or boulders they have carried and left among us, as well as by the groovings and abraded surfaces of our hills, on which the eye of science reads the history of another state of things than that which now prevails.

Are there any traces of the presence of man on the earth discoverable among the records of those early ages?

In so far as we yet know it is only in the latest drift—the gravel, sand, and clay of the quaternary period, and in the caves of limestone rocks, that we find evidences in his remains, of man's existence on the earth. Associated as these are with the teeth and bones of animals fitted to live in cold or temperate climates,—the cave bear, the hyæna, the hairy mammoth and woolly rhinoceros, we infer that man as man was present in these northern temperate latitudes in times not exceedingly remote, geologically speaking, from the last great glacial epoch in the earth's history, but still some hundreds of thousands of years ago—how many it is impossible to say.

There may have been—doubtless there *was*—some foundation in fact for the tale of the Noachian Deluge?

Many regions of the globe are still exposed to disastrous floods that sweep away the inhabitants and their cattle by thousands, and we are therefore warranted in saying that in the story of the Noachian

Deluge we have the legendary record of some great flood which occurred in far off times, when the high lands of Armenia and Mesopotamia, whence appear to have come the Hebrews and others of the cognate tribes that peopled Palestine, were other than they are at the present day, or than they were fifty, a hundred, a thousand, or ten hundred thousand years ago. In the earlier ages of the world there must have occurred floodings of extensive districts of country, attended with disastrous consequences to life and possessions, of which we have the shadowy records in the tales of the Noachian, Deucalian, and other deluges. In our own day, indeed, we know that floods as terrible, it may be, as any that ever occurred in pre-historic times, and probably even more destructive to human life, have happened in regions watered by such mighty rivers as the Indus and the Ganges. These, however, we now interpret as having come to pass through no repentant mood or revengeful purpose on the part of God to drown the hapless people for their sins, but in consonance with natural incidents and natural laws, such as the giving way of a mountain barrier that had penned up a mighty lake, disintegrated by frost, and sapped by long-continued rain; the melting of a glacier which stretched across a gorge in the hills, and held back an ocean behind it; excessive rainfalls, accompanied by gales of wind that heaped up the waters of great draining streams at their outlets to the ocean, &c.

So much for the flood; what is said of Noah's doings after it?

He became a husbandman, planted a vine, drank of the wine it produced, and was drunken.

Some years must have elapsed before Noah could have indulged in such an improper way; and whence he had the vines, after all the plants on the face of the earth had been drowned, like its animal inhabitants, does not appear.

What happened next?

Noah's son Ham happening to come into the tent, and seeing his father in an unseemly state of nakedness, and probably asleep after his debauch, was cursed in his posterity by his parent, whilst Shem and Japhet, who covered him over, are blessed. "Cursed be Canaan (one of Ham's sons), a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren," is the form of the malediction pronounced on the son by his father for having had the use of his eyes.

What may be the meaning of this?

Canaan, according to the mythical story, was ancestor of the tribe that peopled the country called after him, which the Jews ravaged with fire and sword, appropriating the territory, and reducing the inhabitants whom they did not slaughter to the state of slaves. The curse of the innocent son—cursing in the Hebrew scriptures not always going by demerit, any more than blessing by desert—may have been contrived as an excuse for the murder and robbery perpetrated in after years by the sept which had Shem for its progenitor.

What is the next remarkable incident recorded in these mythical tales of prehistoric times?

The building of a city on a plain in the land of Shinar, and of a tower in especial whose top was to reach to heaven, all the people being still of one language.

What follows?

"Jehovah," it is said, "*came down* (!) to see the city and the tower." Not approving of the builders' proceedings, apprehensive it might seem that, united by the bond of a common language, their work would be carried to a successful issue, and heaven, his own peculiar dwelling-place, be stormed, he is reported to say further: "Go to! let us go down and there confound the language of the people that they may not understand one another's speech." This being done

—Jehovah coming down and confounding their speech—the inhabitants of the city on the plain of Shinar left off their building, became scattered abroad over the face of the earth, and heaven was not assailed.

The purpose for which this childish story was devised is plain?

It was doubtless contrived as a means of accounting for the diversities of language which the Jewish writer, even in his restricted intercourse with the rest of the world, could not fail to observe. As to God's "coming down to see," and "the tower whose top should reach to heaven," all this is mere childishness, though not unimportant, as enabling us to measure the conception of the nature of Deity entertained by the writer, whoever he was—one of Nebuchadnezzar's captives in all probability, who had had reluctant occasion to see the lofty temple of Babylon, on whose summit, as the metropolitan "High place," the rites of Baal and Mylitta were celebrated. [f]

Have we not two accounts of the Tower of Babel and the confusion of tongues, as of so many others of the mythical tales of the Old Testament?

We have but one account of this particular incident, and that by the Jehovist. It is not even alluded to by the more sensible Elohist. Both writers, however, give genealogies of Noah's descendants; but these do not agree, the Jehovist stopping short at the name of a certain Joktan, not mentioned by the Elohist, who carries on the stock to Terah, the father of Abram, the next most important personage met with in the story of the Hebrew people?

Terah, we are informed, removes with his family from Ur of the Chaldees to Haran—what happens to Abram his son?

Commanded to leave his father's house and kindred,

[f] See Herodotus, Clio, 199, and Appendix B.

under a promise of being made a great nation, Abram departs and comes into the land of Canaan; but a famine prevailing, he goes on, still southward, and reaches Egypt, where he abides.

What particular orders did Abram give his wife Sarai as they neared the land of Egypt?

He ordered her to report falsely of their relationship—to say she was his sister, not his wife, lest the Egyptians, to obtain possession of her, should make away with him.

What came of this?

Sarai, being fair to look on, was taken into the Pharaoh's house—as a concubine, of course, and Abram was well entreated. But Jehovah, it is said, "plagued Pharaoh because of Sarai, Abram's wife," though, to our modern sense of fairness, the parties who most deserved plaguing were Abram and Sarai themselves. Brought by the plagues he suffered—what they were we are not informed, of the kind perhaps which the Scottish poet hints at when he speaks

> "Of the best wark-loom in a' house,
> No worth a prin just at the pinch"—

and led to suspect that he had been imposed on, Pharaoh now summons Abram to his presence, and reproaches him with the falsehood he had suggested; but, only anxious to be quit of the strangers, he sent Abram away with his wife and all that he had.

There is a repetition of this story in another part of these Old Testament writings still held sacred?

There is. Abiding at a later period in Gerar (in Phœnicia), and again "lest they should slay him for his wife's sake," Abram himself reports Sarai his wife as his sister to Abimelech, king of the country, who, like the Egyptian Pharaoh, had taken her to himself. But Elohim (for the story in its present shape, if the title of his God is to guide us, is from the Elohist, as

in its first form it was from the pen of the Jehovist) now threatens Abimelech in a dream with death to himself and disaster to his kingdom,—not because of his concupiscence, however, but by reason of his relations with Sarai, into which he may be said to have been led by the lie that was told him.

To what shift is the writer now driven to save Sarai from dishonour and to help Abram out of the disgrace of telling a falsehood?

He appends a number of particulars to his tale, which may fairly be taken for what they are worth, and then speaks of a more intimate blood-relationship between Abram and Sarai than any that had been hinted at before. But to make Abram the husband of his own father's child—his sister, therefore,—seems on every moral mode of computation a sorry means of helping him out of his difficulty—better to have left him with the lie than laden him with incest. But criticism is thrown away upon the unreason and incongruity of the twentieth chapter of Genesis.

To make confusion worse confounded, is there not another story, the same in almost every particular, connected with the history of Isaac and Rebekah?

There is, and strangely enough, and to puzzle us the more, it is the same, or it may be another Abimelech, King of the Philistines, who now takes the place of the King of Gerar and the Pharaoh of Egypt. Abimelech, King of the Philistines, however, is neither plagued like the Pharaoh nor threatened like his namesake; for, happening to look out of a window "he saw and behold Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife." On this discovery, and inferring the true relationship between Isaac and Rebekah, he challenges the husband with having spoken falsely.

Is Abimelech, King of the Philistines, wroth with Isaac and Rebekah because of the falsehood they had told him?

By no means. On the contrary, he sends Isaac

away, with his wife; "having done him nothing but good." Sarai would seem to have been a singularly attractive person; for when the encounter with Abimelech took place she must have been not less than ninety years old! And this and other such unhallowed tales comprised in these old writings of the Jewish people are still paraded in this nineteenth century of the Christian era as parts of the inspired word of God given for the edification of mankind!

Resuming the history of Abram, who now returns from Egypt, in company with Lot his brother, to Beth-el in Palestine, where, on his southward journey, he had already built an altar to Jehovah,—what happens?

The herdsmen of the brothers having quarrelled, they agree to separate; and Lot, having the first choice, selects the plain of the Jordan, which was well watered "even as that Garden of Jehovah the land of Egypt," before the calamity that befel Sodom and Gomorrah; whilst Abram, for his part, resolves to abide in the land of Canaan, which is again formally promised to him and his posterity as a possession for ever; though it is now many centuries since it was lost to them, and won by the Saracen and Turk.

The history of the Patriarch is interrupted at this point?

By the ill-digested account we find of a great battle fought between four kings against five; of the capture of Lot by Chederlaomer, one of the kings engaged, and his confederates; of the rescue of Lot by Abram and his retainers, and the recovery of all the booty that had been carried off; of the appearance on the scene of a certain Melchizedek, King of Salem, who is also styled Priest of the most high God, who blesses Abram, and in return receives a tithe of all the spoil recovered.

Various interpretations, it is to be presumed, have been given of this episode?

Besides having been seen for that which in all likelihood it is—the legendary record of a raid by one party of petty chiefs against another—a more recondite meaning has been connected with it; the personages brought upon the scene having been referred to the figures still to be seen on our celestial globes, which have all been derived from planispheres of ancient Indian and Egyptian descent, whilst the particulars spoken of and the numbers given are held to be significant of an attempt to reform the calendar. This, owing to the true length of the year, 365 days six hours fifty-six minutes and as many seconds, not being known, was found in ancient times to require frequent adjustments in order to bring the seasons, or the solsticial and equinoctial points into conformity with astronomical data and the computations of the old astrologers.[g]

"After these things," says the text, "the word of Jehovah came unto Abram in a vision, saying: Fear not, Abram, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." Does the Patriarch express himself grateful for this assurance of the Divine favour?

On the contrary, he complains that he is childless, and that the steward of his house is his heir. He is assured, however, that this shall not be so, but that his heir shall be a son who shall come out of his own bowels. Meantime he is bidden to look abroad on the stars of heaven and say if he can number them, and is further assured that so many should be his posterity.

What more?

Abram is now ordered to make a sacrifice of a heifer, a she-goat, a ram, a turtle dove, and a young pigeon. This he does; slaying the victims, he divides

[g] The reader who is curious will find the subject now hinted at discussed at length by Sir W. Drummond in his *Œdipus Judaicus;* and by a German writer of great erudition, Nork, in his *Biblische Mythologie.*

them in the middle and lays the halves one against another, but he does not proceed to consume them with fire as usual upon the altar which we must presume he had built. As the sun was going down a deep sleep fell upon Abram, in which he had a second vision, and was informed that his seed should be strangers in a land that was not theirs; that they should there be afflicted for four hundred years, but should afterwards come out with great substance and possess the land where he then was from the river of Egypt to the great river Euphrates.

What interpretation is to be put on the information thus and at this time delivered?

That it is all information given after the event, and assures us definitively that so much of the text at least as conveys it was written long after the Israelites had been settled in Palestine, and had subjugated the Amorites, Hittites, Kenites, Jebusites, &c. Further, and more particularly, as the Jebusites were only subdued and their city Jebus taken by King David, who changed its name to Jerusalem, we learn that the writer lived subsequently to the reign of that potentate.[h]

By what extraordinary agency were the carcases prepared by Abram consumed?

"When the sun went down and it was dark, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp passed between the pieces." But Jehovah, the titular God of the Jews, is repeatedly spoken of in the Hebrew scriptures as "a consuming fire;" the smoking furnace and burning lamp are therefore to be understood as figurative expressions for the fire which Abram made use of to sublimate the bodies of his victims and make them meet food for his God.

[h] The Bishop of Natal has shown satisfactorily that this passage is by the writer of Deuteronomy,—a very late writer consequently.

Abram, we have seen, has been promised a son of his own; but Sarai his wife bore him no children. She, however, had a handmaid, an Egyptian, Hagar by name, whom she gave to Abram her husband as a second wife or concubine, saying to him: "Go in unto my maid, I pray thee, that I may obtain children by her."

This was a somewhat extraordinary and hazardous proceeding on the part of Sarai?

To modern notions, but not, it would seem, to such as prevailed among the ancient Hebrews. Sarai may, perhaps, have been curious to know whether the "effect defective" lay with her or with her husband.

Abram, however, consents to the proposal?

He is nothing loth; and Hagar conceives by him. But when Hagar knew that she was with child by Abram she despised and probably was insolent to her barren mistress Sarai, who complains to Abram of her handmaid's behaviour.

Abram interposes manfully, of course, between the barren Sarai and the fruitful Hagar, who has now his own child under her heart?

He does nothing of the kind. As he has already shown himself cowardly and untruthful in presence of Pharaoh and Abimelech, Abram now shows himself both unjust and without natural compassion for his concubine, for he says to the envious Sarai: "Behold thy maid is in thy hand; do with her as it pleaseth thee." In her spite, although all had come to be as it was through her own suggestion, Sarai, as said, "dealt hardly with Hagar;" who, terrified, flees from her face into the wilderness.

What befalls her there?

She is speedily reduced to extremity, of course, but is found by a well of water in the desert by the angel of Jehovah (who here, as in so many other places of the Old Testament, turns out to be Jehovah himself), and is admonished to return and submit herself to

her mistress. By way of inducement to do so (and persuaded, doubtless, also by the strait in which she found herself), she receives most liberal promises of an ample posterity through the son whom she is informed she will bear. She therefore returns, and in due season is delivered of a son, whom Abram calls Ishmael, the name which Hagar had received for him from the angel of Jehovah in the wilderness.

What is the next remarkable incident recorded in this extraordinary history?

When Abram is ninety-nine years old, Jehovah appears to him and announces himself as El-Schaddai—the mighty El or God; orders him to change his name from Abram to Abraham—father of many nations, and his wife's name Sarai to Sarah—Princess; "for," says the narrative, "I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee."

The covenant already made with Abram is thus again, but with additions and more solemnly, renewed with Abraham?

It is, and as its seal and testimony for ever the rite of circumcision is commanded: "Every male child among you," says the text, "shall be circumcised; he among you that is born in the house or is bought with money of the stranger, that is eight days old, shall be circumcised; the uncircumcised man-child shall be cut off from his people—he hath broken my covenant."

What may be the meaning of the rite of circumcision thus formally and forcibly announced?

To think of it for a moment as ordered of God were absurd: God sends his work fit for its end into the world; it needs no interference of man to make it so. Among the Semitic tribes, of whom the Hebrews were one, human sacrifices appear to have prevailed universally in early times: the first-born of man and beast—or as the Old Testament scriptures have it, all that opened the womb—belonged to

the God of the tribe, however named—El, Bel, Baal, or Molech—and through countless ages was undoubtedly sacrificed to him by fire. But as time ran on, as civilisation advanced and more humane ideas were engendered, the barbarous practice was seen in its true light, and a substitute for the sacrifice of the whole was sought for, and believed to have been found, in the sacrifice of a *part*.

The rite of circumcision has significance in another, though closely allied, direction?

It has. Besides its symbolical character of substitute, it is intimately connected with the worship paid to the reproductive principle in nature, of which the symbol was the Phallus. The Egyptian priests, priests of the gods of increase—Osiris, Isis—were necessarily circumcised, as the priests of the deities of decay among other peoples—Attys, Cybele, &c. were emasculated. In Egypt the priest appears to have been consecrated to his office by circumcision,—the commonalty of the country were not as a rule subjected to the rite. The Israelites, however, as a people holy to Jehovah, were as matter of course and necessity circumcised: on the eighth day instead of being presented as a burnt offering on the altar of his God, as in the olden time he would have been had he happened to be the first-born, every son of Israel in later days had, and still has, the foreskin of his private member solemnly resected by the priest and consumed in the fire, an offering, disguise it as they may, to the fire-king Melek or Moloch whom their fathers worshipped, and on whose altars they had been used to offer up the first-born of their sons and daughters, of their flocks and herds.

How does Abraham receive the intimation that a son will be born to him by his wife Sarah, that she shall yet be the mother of nations and that kings of peoples shall be of her?

Not so reverently as might have been expected.

He fell on his face, indeed, but he laughed incredulous, and said in his heart: Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old; and shall Sarah that is ninety years old bear! He therefore entreats God for his son Ishmael. But God says to him: "Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed, and thou shalt call his name Isaac, and with him and his seed after him will I establish my covenant everlastingly. And as for Ishmael, him I have blessed, and he shall be fruitful; twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation; but my covenant will I establish with Isaac which Sarah shall bear unto thee at this set time of the year."

There is as usual a second account of this miraculous engendering of a son by persons respectively one hundred and ninety years old?

There is, and from the Jehovist, as that which precedes is in great part from the storehouse of the Elohist—in great part, we say, for interpolations in its course are readily detected by the attentive reader. In the second account "three men" appear to Abraham in the plains of Mamre, as he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day. Abraham addresses them as "My Lord," invites them into his tent, has water fetched to wash their feet, entertains them with the flesh of a calf "tender and good," with cakes baked on the hearth by Sarah, and with butter and milk—a sumptuous Arab shiek's repast, in short, and himself stands by them under the tree as they eat.

What say the three men thus hospitably entertained?

They ask after Sarah, and "he" (the singular now taking the place of the plural) informs Abraham that Sarah his wife shall bear him a son. Sarah, "old and well stricken in years, with whom it had ceased to be after the manner of women," hears the announcement and laughs at the notion of her and her "lord being old also" having a child between them.

Sarah's laugh and implied incredulousness does not pass unobserved?

No. "Jehovah (the name now changed from Elohim) said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying: Shall I of a surety bear a child which am old! Is anything too hard for Jehovah"?

What answer makes Sarah when challenged with her incredulous laughter?

Not being of a perfectly truthful disposition, as we know already, we are not surprised when we find her denying that she had laughed: "I laughed not," says she, "for she was afraid. But Jehovah said: Nay, but thou didst laugh."

What are we to think of such tales, and of such conceptions of the Deity as are implied in them?

That the tales are the conceits of men with the minds of children, and the preservers of them, and above all the believers in them as records of veritable events, involving matter either interesting or edifying, are to be held as ignorant, credulous, superstitious, and incompetent persons.

To the query: Is anything too hard for Jehovah, what answer must be given?

That God the Lord, Supreme Cause, Rule and Ruler of the Universe, never contravenes the laws which are his essence—cannot be in contradiction with himself. Having ordained that when it ceases with a woman to be after the manner of women she shall no longer bear children, we may safely and with all reverence say that God had verily made it too hard for him to have Sarah become a mother. But the Jews had no conception of a universe ruled by General, Invariable, Necessary Law, nor any other idea of Jehovah than as a sovereign prince and ruler, doing and undoing at his arbitrary will and pleasure, having the earth alone of all his works, and the children of Israel alone of all the people upon it, as objects of his fatherly care and consideration.

The narrative proceeds, informing us that the "men" (the plural again) rise up and look towards Sodom, Abraham going with them to bring them on their way. As they go, Jehovah (now it is the singular) is represented as deliberating with himself whether he ought not to impart to Abraham the purpose he had conceived of destroying Sodom and Gomorrah because of the wickedness of their inhabitants, and is here made by the writer to say: "Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grievous, I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it which is come unto me; and if not I will know." The Jews evidently thought of their Jehovah as we think of a person in authority who needs to make inquiry as to the truth or falsehood of the reports that reach him: he came down to look after the builders of the Tower of Babel and confound their language, and he comes down again to take the measure of the sinners of Sodom and Gomorrah, and punish them according to their demerits.

The men turn their faces towards Sodom, but Abraham, it is said, "stood yet before Jehovah." The use now of the plural and then of the singular in this extraordinary narrative will give the candid reader a sufficient hint of the composite character of the Pentateuch. The narrator must have had more than one of the legendary tales that were still floating in his day before him when he wrote (and he could not have written until after the times of more than one of the Jewish kings), and has here, as in so many other places, performed his task of editor indifferently. Abraham left alone with Jehovah, what takes place between them?

The notable parley in which the man Abraham tries to turn his God Jehovah from his purpose of destroying Sodom and Gomorrah. "Wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked?" asks the Patriarch

of the Lord. "Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city; far be it from thee to slay the righteous with the wicked,—and shall not the judge of all the earth do right?" "If I find fifty righteous in Sodom, then will I spare all the place for their sake," replies Jehovah, according to the Hebrew scribe.

Abraham would make still better terms for the city, and continues perseveringly, saying:

"Peradventure there shall lack five—ten—twenty—forty of the fifty;" and Jehovah says: "I will not destroy it for ten's sake." "And Jehovah went his way as soon as he had left communing with Abraham."

What are we in the present day, with our ideas of the immanent ubiquity and necessarily impersonal nature of God, to think of such a tale as this, and of words bandied in such a way between man and the Deity?

The tale is doubtless another of the myths or legends transmitted orally from remote antiquity and preserved by an over-scrupulous editor from the oblivion it so well deserved, if by its means it were intended to convey any true or possible idea of God's procedure in his dealings with mankind and the world. Man does not bandy words with God; neither does he attempt to fix the Supreme on the horns of a dilemma by a series of Socratic questions, each reply to each succeeding query leaving the respondent more in the wrong than he had been before. God's acts are not in time, but from eternity; they are not consequences, whether in advance or in recall of antecedent purposes. God, moreover, does never in any human sense *punish*, neither by condoning misdeed does he ever *forgive* the guilty. Are there ten guilty persons in a great city, they suffer for themselves, if their guiltiness be through violation of any of God's laws; and ten thousand guiltless persons, their fellow-citizens, would not save them from paying the

penalty of their sin. Unhappily the opposite does not hold; for one reckless and guilty person violating a natural law may cause the death of many,—a truth of which terrible illustrations are offered in the explosions that so frequently occur in coal mines and powder mills.

Proceeding with the tale as delivered, we now find "two angels," two of the "three men" presumably who had been entertained by Abraham, going on to Sodom, where they are met and waited on by Lot much in the same way as they had been by his brother Abraham. What next befals?

The narrator, as if to show how well the doomed city deserved its impending fate, presents us with such a picture of the state of morals and customs prevailing among its inhabitants as it seems impossible in these our days even to imagine; Lot and his family, the parties excepted from the ruin hanging over their homes, by their after-doings appearing in scarcely a more favourable light than their detestable fellow-townsmen.

Must not the nineteenth chapter of the Book of Genesis be regarded by us as a most extraordinary element in a volume said by ecclesiastics, and generally believed, to be given by God to the world for its edification in morals and furtherance in religious knowledge?

Looked at with the eye of reason, it can be seen in no other light. So gross and offensive are most of the particulars it contains, that they cannot here be mentioned openly. But to proceed: Lot and his family forewarned, escape from Sodom and flee to Zoar, and then, the sun being risen upon the earth, Jehovah rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Jehovah out of heaven, and overthrew these cities, and the plain, and all their inhabitants, and all that grew upon the ground—the innocent with the guilty consequently—infants and young children,

as well as the grown men and women, all wicked alike, for among them, from what is said, there could not have been found ten that were innocent, else had the cities been saved. The destruction was indiscriminate, and the Jewish God Jehovah himself its agent! Lot, however, has escaped with his family to Zoar, where he did not long remain, but quitting the little town, he went and dwelt with his daughters in a cave—hard by, we may presume.

What happened there?

That of which it shames us to speak. The daughters, as though the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah had been attended with effects as far reaching as the flood of Noah, are made to speak as if their father were the only man left alive in the world. To satisfy a brutal appetite, they are said in this book of the Jewish law, accepted by Christian men and women as inspired by God, to have made their father drunk with wine, and to have sought his bed in succession, the consequence of which is that they both conceive and bear sons, who respectively become in after years the progenitors of the Moabites and Ammonites.

What may be the possible meaning of this foul tale?

The Moabites and Ammonites — cognate Semitic tribes, speaking the same, or dialects of the same, language as the Hebrews, were among the number of those whom the Israelites dispossessed of their lands and reduced to slavery, when they did not take their lives. A vile and unnatural origin had to be devised in after times by way of excuse for the ills which these unfortunate peoples were made to suffer in an age gone by. The daughters of Lot were little worthy of the favour shown them in their escape from Sodom reduced to ashes; but they were wanted by the writer as parts in the machinery of his story.

The wife of Lot escaped with her husband and daughters from the burning, but came to an extraordinary end nevertheless?

She, according to the veracious historian, for having looked back upon the burning town, was turned into a pillar of salt upon the plain, where, if we may believe the traveller who has an eye for the marvellous, she is still to be seen! The transformation, inflicted for a natural and innocent impulse, was as severe as it was extraordinary, no parallel to which, we may believe, has since occurred; though men do still look fondly back upon the homes they are leaving, when sad necessity or prescriptive tyranny—worse than fire from heaven—devotes them to destruction. But the tale of Sodom and Gomorrah is a myth—an idea furnished with accessories and embodied in language. Were such towns ever in existence, as they may well have been, and destroyed in the manner described, it could only have happened by the eruption of a volcano now extinct, like those outbursts of Vesuvius which desolated Pompeii and Herculaneum in more recent times, and of other burning mountains which still bring desolation and loss of life over many parts of the earth's surface. But the Jews, as we have already had occasion to observe, ascribed every event in both natural and human history to the immediate agency of their God Jehovah, believing as they did that all the calamities which befel nations as well as individuals were punishments for acts displeasing to him. Assuming Sodom and Gomorrah to have been overwhelmed by a volcanic eruption in very remote times, *therefore*, was it said, must their inhabitants have been a wicked and abominable race; and further, as the lands of the Moabites and Ammonites were usurped by the children of Israel, so were the Moabites and Ammonites the spawn of the incestuous intercourse detailed.

We have additional evidence of this Jewish view of the special providential ordering of things by Jehovah, immediately after the story about Sodom and Gomorrah, and about Lot and his daughters, have we not?

It is now that we meet with the tale of Abraham's second denial of Sarah as his wife,—on this occasion to Abimelech, King of Gerar; and we learn that Jehovah "visited Sarah, as he had said, and did unto her as he had spoken," Jehovah being thus made, as it were, the immediate agent in the matter, for now it was that Sarah "conceived and bare a son to Abraham in his old age."

Abraham was mindful of the terms of the covenant entered into with him by Jehovah?

He was: when his son was eight days old he was duly circumcised and named Isaac by his father, on the day on which all that opened the womb according to more ancient custom were sacrificed on the altar of burnt offering. Seven days was the first-born, whether of man or beast, to be with the mother or dam; on the eighth it must be given, as his due for the increase and as the price of future favours of the like kind, to the Reproductive Principle in Nature conceived as Deity.

Circumcision was not all that was required in the case of mankind in after times, when the religious system of the Israelites came to be formulated, and a priesthood established?

Then had the first-born of man, besides parting with his foreskin, to be further redeemed by a certain price in money. The first-born of beasts might be sacrificed or redeemed at the option of those into whose herds or flocks they were born, with the single exception of the ass, which was on no account to be offered on the altar, but in case it was not redeemed, was to be put to death by having its neck broken,—that is, by being thrown from a height and killed.

The single exception of the ass as unavailable for sacrifice on the altar of the Hebrew God, and the peculiar mode in which it is ordered to be put to death, seem to require explanation?

Which may be found in the fact that the ass, both

in Ancient Egypt and Palestine, was looked on in the light of an animal at once sacred and accursed. In Palestine he long supplied the place of the horse, and was in regular use for the saddle as well as beast of burthen; but in Egypt he was sacred to Typhon, the brother and enemy of Osiris, and was the victim especially devoted to him, the mode of his sacrifice being that which is commanded in the Hebrew Scriptures. Typhon himself, generally figured in Egyptian sculptures with the head of the swine, is sometimes also met with having the head of the ass; and among the Egyptian drawings there is a very singular one in which Horus has Typhon with the ass's head by the ear, and is belabouring him with the staff he has in his hand—*i.e.*, the early Spring or Summer Sun has vanquished his enemy Winter.[1]

The system of redeeming by money instead of consuming by fire was certainly a mighty step in advance, and, once entered on, was likely to be vigorously enforced in view of the revenue it brought to the priesthood. But there must have been a certain reluctance on the part of Abraham's God to forego his ancient right to the first-born of the patriarch's posterity?

It would seem so by the record, at all events. Isaac had certainly a narrow escape from sublimation by fire, and being sent in the way of a sweet savour as food to the God of his father.

What says the tale?

After his departure from Abimelech of Gerar, Elohe, it is said, did tempt Abraham, saying: "Take now thy son, thine Only (*Jahid*, Hebrew, used as a noun), whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains which I shall tell thee of."

[1] See Movers: Die Phœnizier, B. I. See also a Paper by Herr Hirt in Abhand. der Histor-Philolog. Klasse der Acad. d. Wissensch. zu Berlin aus den Jahren, 1820—21. S. 165.

Does Abraham express surprise at this extraordinary command of his God Elohe?

Not any; he rises up early in the morning, saddles his ass, cleaves wood for the burnt-offering, and sets out on the journey. After three days' travel he sees the place of the sacrifice afar off, bids the attendants he had with him remain with the ass where they were, whilst he and the lad should "go yonder and worship, and come again to them." Abraham then lays the wood for the burnt-offering on his son; takes fire in his hand and a knife, and they go on together.

Is Isaac passive whilst all this is done?

Not entirely: he sees the fire and the wood and the knife, but not the lamb for the sacrifice. His father assures him, however, that Elohe will provide himself a lamb for the burnt-offering. Arrived at Mount Moriah, Abraham builds an altar, lays the wood in order upon it, binds his son Isaac, lays him on the pile, and raises the knife to complete the sacrifice. But the angel of Jehovah (it is no longer Elohe) calls to him out of heaven, and bids him not to lay his hand upon the lad; "for now," proceeds the angel, who, as in other instances, is seen to be Jehovah himself, "I know that thou fearest Elohe, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me." Lifting up his eyes, Abraham discovers a ram caught by the horns in a thicket behind him, which he takes, slays, and presents as a burnt-offering in the stead of his son.

This is an extraordinary story! Can we, as reasonable and passably pious men, believe that God ever tempts mankind,—ever commanded a father to make a burnt-offering of his son?

God, in bestowing on man the wonderful power of paternity, has also put such feelings of tenderness into his heart as makes the entertainment of such an idea abhorrent to his nature. He who should now—and, it is not unfair to presume, in the day also when

the tale was written—imagine that he had received an order from God to slay and make a burnt-offering of his son would be treated as a madman, and mercifully taken care of by his friends. Possessed of our faculties and masters of ourselves, we are not mastered by distressing dreams and phantoms of the night.

Isaac, however, as we see, was not sacrified, although Abraham had received the express commands of his God to make a burnt-offering of his son?

No; and this putting God in contradiction with himself, and the angel of Jehovah calling out of heaven, relegates the story of the Temptation of Abraham to its proper place among the myths and legends of hoar antiquity. Our advanced conceptions of the nature of Deity forbid us to think of God as tempting mankind, as commanding and countermanding in a breath, as calling out of heaven in any sense, or using human speech otherwise than mediately through the mouth of man.

What farther comment may be made on this tale?

Had child-sacrifice lain outside the sphere of Hebrew religious rites, as the modern Jews and bible-commentators all show themselves so eager to show that it did, in face of Jehovah's express order to sanctify to him all that opened the womb both of man and beast, such a commandment as that said to have been given by God to Abraham could never have been imagined. Had not human sacrifice been familiar to the Jewish mind, as it undoubtedly was up to the time of the Captivity, the Patriarch would have been depicted rejecting the order to slay his son as the commandment of a lying spirit.[k]

May not the tale have been contrived in relatively modern times—after the Babylonian Captivity, for instance—to declare that God had ceased to require

[k] *Vide* Vatke, Biblische Theologie, § 22, S. 276.

the human victims as burnt-offerings to which he had been so long accustomed, and that the will might henceforth without offence be substituted for the deed?

The story of the temptation of Abraham has many unquestionable marks of recent composition. It certainly does not date from the period to which the incidents among which it appears are referred; and could indeed only have been invented in times when the better spirits among the Jews had made the discovery that God delighted not in the blood of bulls and rams, and still less in that of human beings.

Much has been made by modern theologians, in connection with the Christian system, of the accredited command of God to Abraham to make a sacrifice of his son?

Very much. But God, as we have said, never commands his creatures to do aught that is not for their own good, or the good of others; and the dogma (entirely foreign to the spirit of the theistic morality taught by Jesus of Nazareth) which makes of this holy personage a sacrifice to satisfy Divine Justice, assimilates the great God of Nature, the father of all flesh, with the Phœnician El-Saturnus, Chronos, or Molech, who was said himself actually to have sacrificed Jeud his only son—Jeud or Jehud—another form of Jahid, Only.

Returning to the family affairs of the Patriarch, we do not find that Sarah, blessed with a son of her own, shows herself any way better disposed towards Hagar, her handmaid, than she had been when she was barren and childless?

It is Sarah's turn now to mock Hagar, the Egyptian. "Cast out this bond-woman and her son," she says to Abraham, "for her son shall not be heir with my son, even with Isaac."

Abraham does not surely yield to this cruel suggestion of the spiteful and ungrateful woman?

Although the thing, as said, was very grievous in his sight, because of the lad, and because of the bondwoman, nevertheless, and as the story goes, having God's sanction for what he did, he yields to Sarah; and charging Hagar with some bread and a bottle of water, he turns her and her son—his own son, too—Ishmael, out into the wilderness to perish, as he must have known, and where, but for the discovery of a well of water when she and her child were reduced to extremity, she must inevitably have died.

Hagar, however, is again succoured in time, although how or by whom—unless it were by the mythical angel of Jehovah as before, we are not informed. But Ishmael and his mother, after this, disappear from the scene, and the whole interest is concentrated on the Patriarch of the Hebrew people and his son Isaac. There is an incident now mentioned, which enables us, with the lights we possess, to see Abraham as no more the exclusive worshipper of the God El or El-schaddai of his forefathers than he is of the more recently introduced Jehovah?

He plants a tree by the well Beer-sheba, and there calls on the name of Jehovah.

What may be the meaning of this?

The word usually translated Grove in our English version of the Hebrew Scriptures mostly signifies a tree or a pillar of wood, when it does not mean the divinity of whom the tree or pillar was the symbol—the Aschera, Astarte, or Ashtaroth of Phœnicia, the Mylitta of Babylonia, the Aphrodite of Greece, the Venus of Rome, the Syria Dea of Lucan, personification of the passive element in the reproductive principle of nature, usually associated with Baal the Sun-God or active generative principle and object of adoration with all the peoples of the ancient world. Abraham, in planting a tree by the well of Beer-sheba, the well itself significant of fertility, made an offering to the God of Increase; and meets us here, as he must

have been in fact, if not wholly mythical, as the Arab Shiek, the worshipper of the Gods of his Fathers, not of the Jehovah of post-Davidic times, when the Thora or Code of Law ascribed to Moses had been compiled, and the Temple of Jerusalem declared the only shrine at which offerings acceptable to the Deity could be brought.

Sarah dies when she is a hundred and twenty-seven years old, according to the record; and Abraham buys of Ephron the son of Zohar, one of the sons of Heth, the cave of Machpelah as a burying place in the land of Canaan where he is sojourning. Well stricken in years himself, Abraham is now anxious to see his son Isaac settled with a wife; but, unwilling to have a daughter of the land of Canaan advanced to this honour, he despatches a trusty servant, whom he binds by an oath, to Mesopotamia, his native country, there, from among the number of his own kindred, to find a helpmate for his son. The servant departs with a handsome retinue of camels and attendants. He entreats Jehovah-Elohim, the God of his master Abraham, for good speed in his mission, and asks him to let it come to pass that the one among the maidens who comes to draw water from the well, outside the city of Nahor, by which he might halt, and to whom he should say: "Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink," and who should reply: "Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also," should be she whom he—Jahveh-Elohim—had appointed for his servant Isaac, "and thereby," adds the envoy, "shall I know that thou hast showed kindness to my master." What happens?

Among others who come out to draw from the well is Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel, son of Milcah, Abraham's brother Nahor's wife, blood relation of Isaac, consequently twice removed; and on Rebekah it is that the choice falls; for, asked for a draught from her pitcher, she immediately repeats the words

which the envoy had resolved should be a sign from Jehovah of his approval,—the Jews imagining that their God interested himself even in the selection of their wives!

The messenger enquires of Rebekah whose daughter she is, and if there were room in her father's house where he and his troop might be lodged. Being informed that she is the daughter of Bethuel, and assured that there was straw and provender and lodging-room in her father's house, he presents her with the mystical gold ring, prototype of the gold ring of the marriage ceremony among ourselves, and having a significance then which it has no longer; and beside the ring, he also presents her with bracelets of price for her arms. What does Rebekah, on the unexpected address of the stranger and the presents she receives?

She hastens home, informs the family of what has passed, shows the ring and the bracelets, and despatches her brother Laban to bid the stranger welcome, and lead him to the house. In short, the parties speedily come to an understanding, and matters are forthwith satisfactorily arranged, as though they had been subject of anxious discussion long time before. Rebekah by and by departs with the messenger as bride elect of Isaac, who meets her as with her escort she draws near his father Abraham's tents, brings her to his late mother's tent, where he instals her; makes her his wife, loves her, and is comforted after his mother Sarah's death. What information have we now that seems to remove Abraham out of the category of possible historical personages?

He is said to have taken a second wife, Keturah by name, and by her to have had a family of five sons—of daughters, who may have been as many, no mention is made—and only to have given up the ghost when he was a hundred and seventy-five years old!

Is this credible?

If we acknowledge the laws of nature, which are the unimpeachable ordinances of God, to be changeless as their author, we answer without misgiving: No, it is not possible, and so is not credible.

What may be said of the extreme ages to which men are said to have attained in these prehistoric times—in these long by-gone ages of the world?

That the tales which transmit them are myths which never had any foundation out of the imagination of their inventors. Instead of getting shorter and shorter as we come down the stream of time, it is certain that human life has become longer and longer. Savages and barbarous tribes are surrounded by numberless conditions and circumstances adverse to life that are mitigated in almost every instance, and in many entirely removed, as progress is made in civilisation and as appliances are discovered that minister to the comfort and security of existence. There is not only no *prima facie* likelihood that primæval and prehistoric man lived longer than the men of the present day, but every presumption that life in by-gone ages of the world was much shorter on the whole than it is now.

Have not certain recent scientific enquiries of unquestionable weight, resting on no fond imaginations of poets, but on physiological grounds, definitively settled the question, not only of the age that may *possibly be attained*, but of the age that *has ever been attained*, by man?

We can now speak positively and say that, whilst the life of man may possibly extend in rare and exceptional instances to a hundred years, and even to one, two, or three years beyond that term, the few of all the millions born into the world who attain to what all now agree in calling *extreme old age*, finish their career between the limits of three-score and ten and four-score and ten years.

So much for the men and women of the present

age, but what of those who lived in ages gone by?

Neither are we without reliable records of the ages at which they who flourished in these finished their course on earth. The skulls of individuals taken from the tombs of Sakara in Egypt, who died and were buried some sixteen centuries before the date assigned to the Deluge, or about the time when, according to the Jewish accounts, the world was created, show the same conditions of bone-structure and dentition as the skulls of the men and women who die at ages familiar to us at the present time. The sutures of these old Egyptian crania are found to approach obliteration in different degrees and to present other marks of age in exact conformity with what is seen in the crania of persons who are known to have died at certain ages among ourselves:—in the younger heads the sutures are distinct, in the older they are obliterated more or less completely, and in the very old they are effaced. In the younger heads, again, the teeth are more or less perfect, in the older they are decayed or gone, precisely as among ourselves in persons who die at every age between childhood and seventy, eighty, or ninety years.

Have we not authentic information on this subject, of even much higher antiquity than any imparted by Egyptian tombs, though their mummified occupants lived so long ago as the second Dynasty of the Pharaohs, or some centuries before the flood?

We have; in the skulls that have of late years been recovered from the drift, and dug out of caves from under loads of stalagmite and breccia, whose owners trapped and contended with the woolly rhinoceros and mammoth, and disputed possession of their sorry dwelling places with the cave bear and hyæna—all extinct at the present time. Carefully examined and compared with recent crania, these skulls of individuals who lived during the quaternary and towards

the close of the last great glacial period in the earth's history, so marvellously preserved through so many thousands or hundreds of thousands of years, present the same essential characters as those of the men and women who die at the usual ages in the present day; and assure us that if they lived as long, they certainly lived no longer than their descendants, the miners and iron-workers of Belgium, who now people the soil which once they trod.[1]

Returning to our story,—what comes of the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah?

As many of the incidents in the sacred writings of the Hebrews are so commonly repeated in connection with each new personage who comes upon the scene, we might almost have anticipated that Rebekah, like Sarah, would prove barren at first, but fruitful afterwards; and so it falls out. Isaac, it is said, "entreated the Lord for his wife Rebekah," so that she conceived at last, and in due season brought forth twins—Esau and Jacob.

What is there notable about these?

Esau, the first born, it is said, was "a red and hairy man and became a cunning hunter;" Jacob, again, was "a plain man, a dweller in tents, or living much at home;" and whilst Esau was loved of his father, because of the venison he found him in the chase, Jacob was loved of his mother.

What came of this unlike disposition in the youths and different likings of their parents?

Returning faint and weary from hunting on a certain occasion, Esau begged some of the pottage of lentils which Jacob had sod and now got ready. But the selfish Jacob, instead of sharing with his brother and ministering to his wants, will only part with his mess in return for Esau's birthright as the elder born. "Behold," says Esau, "I am at the point to die, and

[1] See Professor Owen's admirable essay on Longevity in *Fraser's Magazine* for February, 1872.

what profit shall this birthright do to me." So he bartered his birthright to Jacob for the lentil broth.

It was surely neither kind nor brotherly in Jacob to profit by his brother's state, faint for want, and weary from the field?

It certainly was not, but was of a piece with the rest of Jacob's character and procedure, as we shall see.

What happens next?

Isaac, grown old and his eyesight dim, calls his eldest son Esau and bids him go into the field and take him some venison, that he may have savoury meat once more and find fitting occasion to give him his blessing before he dies.

Whilst he is gone on this filial errand, what does Rebekah, and to what iniquity does Jacob lend himself?

Rebekah conspires with her favourite Jacob to cheat the blind old man, her husband, and to rob Esau, her first-born, of his father's blessing. "Go now to the flock," says Rebekah to her son Jacob, "and fetch me two good kids of the goats, and I will make them savoury meat for thy father, such as he loveth; and thou shall bring it to thy father that he may eat and that he may bless thee before his death."

Does Jacob consent to this unfair suggestion of his mother, or does he not rather object?

He makes no objection, and is only fearful that the plot may miscarry: "Behold," says he, "Esau my brother is a hairy man, and I a smooth man; my father peradventure will feel me, and I shall seem to him as a deceiver, and I shall bring a curse upon me and not a blessing."

What answer makes Rebekah to this?

She says: "Upon me be the curse, my son, only obey my voice and fetch me the kids." This he does forthwith, and she makes the savoury mess of the

kid's meat such as old Isaac loved. She then takes the goodly raiment of her elder son Esau and puts it on Jacob, covers his hands and the exposed part of his neck with the skins of the kids, and gives the mess of meat and the bread she had prepared into his hand. Thus disguised and furnished forth, Jacob comes to his father and says : " My father ! " and he says : " Here am I, who art thou, my son ? "

Jacob, conscience-stricken because of the unworthy part he is playing, must surely answer truly now, and say he is Jacob his father's youngest son ?

No such thing. On the contrary, he lies egregiously, and says : " I am Esau, thy first-born ; I have done according as thou badest me. Arise, I pray thee ; sit and eat of my venison that thy soul may bless me."

What answer makes Isaac ?

How is it, he asks, that thou hast found it so quickly, my son ?

Jacob, for very shame, must needs now own the imposition so far carried on successfully ?

By no means ; he plays the hypocrite now, as he is playing the deceiver and has already proved himself the liar, and answers his father's question in these solemn words : " Jehovah, thy God, brought it to me."

This is shocking ! Old blind Isaac, nevertheless, seems to have had some misgivings about the party who is addressing him, for he says : " Come near me, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not. And Jacob went near to his father, and he felt him and said : The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are the hands of Esau ; and he discerned him not, and so he blessed him."

In spite of having gone so far, Isaac cannot yet have been altogether satisfied of the identity of the son before him ?

No ; for he asks again : " Art thou my very son Esau ?" and he (Jacob) said, " I am."

This reiteration of the lie seems to satisfy all the

misgivings of the old man, for he now eats of the mess prepared for him, and drinks of the wine set before him, does he not?

He does; and bidding his son come near, he blesses him saying: "God give thee of the dew of heaven, and the fulness of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine; and let people serve thee, and nations bow down to thee; be Lord over thy brethren, and let thy mother's sons bow down to thee; cursed be every one that curseth thee, and blessed be he who blesseth thee."

How fares it with Isaac when Esau returns from the chase, brings his savory mess of venison to his father, bids him arise and eat, and asks for his blessing?

Isaac, it is said, trembled with a great trembling and said: "Who is he that hath taken venison, and brought it to me, and I have eaten of all before thou camest, and have blessed him?"

And Esau?

When he heard the words of his father he cried with a great and exceeding bitter cry, and said—"Bless me, even me also, O my father!"

Isaac yields to this passionate and natural appeal?

Nay, indeed! Blessing in the olden time seems to have been restricted to one; for the old man replies: "Thy brother came with subtilty, and hath taken away thy blessing."

Is Esau content?

How should he! he says: "Hast thou but one blessing, my father? bless me, even me, O my father, and he lifted up his voice and wept."

Esau was surely unfairly and cruelly dealt with in all this?

According to modern moral notions he was cheated of his right; and common sense and justice alike would now have required the thief to restore what he had stolen. What motive can we imagine for

the story as it is told ? A mythological meaning, as with many other parts of the Old Testament, has been connected with the repeated supercession we encounter of the elder by the younger born. As Night, esteemed the eldest born of things, gave place to Day, so it has been surmised is Cain superseded in his sacrifice by Abel, Esau by Jacob in his birthright and blessing, Ephraim by Manasseh, Aaron by Moses in command, &c.

But Esau is said further to have been the progenitor of the Edomites, a cognate tribe, and enemies of long standing of the Jews; the poet or fabulist therefore makes Esau sell his birthright for the mess of pottage when he was hungry as a prelude to letting him of his father's blessing, in order that it might fall on Jacob, from whom the Israelites themselves were reputed to have sprung. The preliminary barter of the birthright was doubtless held by the narrator, as it has since been held by apologists for all the right and wrong, the good and evil, that lie within the lids of the Bible, as adequate to cover the subsequent villanous artifices by which the blessing is filched away; for it seems impossible, on simple moral apart from prescriptive religious grounds, to conceive the most consummate impersonation, whether of Jewish, Christian, or Pagan selfishness and dishonesty, approving the act of Jacob, or condoning the means by which his object was accomplished.

The Jews would seem to have held that something of a preternatural character pertained to a blessing, which was not nullified by the means, however dishonest, employed to obtain it ?

It appears so. Old Isaac himself, when he discovers that he has been imposed on, speaks not of recalling his blessing, but says : "I have blessed him (Jacob), yea, and he shall be blessed." But the Jews believed, as we have already had occasion to observe, that their God took a particular interest,

not only in them as a people at large, but in every individual, and in the acts of every notable individual more especially, among them. They did nothing, never entered on any undertaking, or came to any conclusion, without "asking Jehovah," *i.e.*, without drawing lots, consulting the Ephod or Teraphim—domestic idols of which every household appears to have had one or more, and receiving an answer in approval. On the most solemn occasions of all they seem to have referred the case to the High Priest, who then had recourse to the Urim and Thummim he carried on his breast, and to the Seven-branched Candlestick which was so important a part of the furniture of the Altar, and in constant requisition in casting nativities and other kinds of divination.

Is not he who deceives his blind old father and filches his brother's birthright and blessing a villain, deserving of present punishment and failure in his after enterprises, rather than worthy of God's peculiar favour, of man's approval, and of success in all he purposes or puts his hand to?

Morally judged he is so undoubtedly, but men judge mostly by the success or failure that follows action; and God is not truly, as he is commonly thought to be, a kind of celestial potentate or chief magistrate, with powers of prison and gibbet at command. Jacob himself puts the legitimacy of the conspiracy in which he engages with his mother on the sole footing of its success, "Peradventure," says he, "my father will feel me, and I shall seem to him a deceiver, and I shall bring a curse upon me and not a blessing." But he who acquires or gains his end, no matter what it is, does so by conforming to the natural law of acquisition, which has no bearing on moral principles. The accumulator may be the most heartless and unprincipled of mortals; but if he steadily pursue his selfish ends and his purpose of

gathering to himself regardless of others, God will not only not interfere to hinder him of success, but, it may be said, will assuredly favour him in his object; neither will his fellow-men say aught against him if he but grow rich and keep on the safe side of the statute law; nay, they will not only say nothing against, but will even fawn on and flatter him; perchance even speak of raising a statue to him.

The Jews, far from seeing anything dishonourable in the conduct of Jacob, even vaunt themselves on their descent from the unbrotherly, untruthful, and deceitful man?

They do; and making God a party to their approval, they have always spoken of their tutelary Deity Jehovah as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob; so that successful selfishness and untruth have sanctified to them the unrighteous means by which the headship of the family was obtained.

Esau, wroth with his brother, hates him in his heart, and old Isaac having now been gathered to his people, he says: "When the days of mourning for my father are over, I will slay my brother Jacob." Does he take any steps to make good his threat?

We have no information of any. But Rebekah has overheard the rash words, and sends her darling Jacob to Padan-Aram out of the way, until the easy Esau's anger should be abated, and he had forgotten, or shall we say forgiven, the wrong that had been done him.

What befals Jacob on his way to Padan-Aram?

He has a wonderful dream.

About his unbrotherly and unfilial conduct, doubtless; and the bad part he has played being brought home to him, he resolves to make amends and restitut on to the extent in his power?

Nothing of the kind! The sun having set, and the night coming on, he makes a pillow of one of the stones where he is, and lays him down to sleep. And he dreams that he sees a ladder set on the earth

with its top reaching to heaven, up and down which the angels of Elohim come and go, Jehovah himself standing above and over all.

What then?

Jehovah speaks and informs the dreaming man that he is Jehovah, the God of Abraham and of Isaac his father; that he will give the land on which he lies to him and to his seed, which should be as the dust of the earth, and prove a blessing to all the families of the earth; "and," continues the narrative, "I am with thee and will keep thee in all the places whither thou goest, and I will bring thee again into this land, and will not leave thee until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."

Jacob awakes?

And says: "Surely Jehovah is in this place and I knew it not. This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." He then sets up the stone on which he had pillowed his head as a pillar, pours oil on its top by way of consecrating it and calls the spot Beth-El—House of God, the name of the place having at first been Luz (Lux, Light).

What may be the meaning of Jacob's act?

Stones, as enduring things, appear to have been almost universally objects of reverence and worship with men in the long-continued infancy of the human mind. As pillars they had a special significance, and were then looked on as typical of the instrument efficient in the wonderful faculty possessed by living creatures of reproducing their kind. The stone column or token set up by Jacob was neither more nor less than the Phallic emblem, before which he and his forefathers were wont to prostrate themselves.[m] And the oil he poured on its top was a further offer-

[m] Et verisimiliter semen eorum Numini sub symbolo phallico culto proferre, sicut mos adhuc hodie est apud indigenos Terrarum Bengalensium.—Conf. Levit. xviii. 21, and xx. 2.

ing to the divine power it represented for fertility and increase.

Has this respect or reverence for the stone pillar as symbol of the reproductive principle in nature yet died out from among men?

By no means. The Jews through the whole of their history, even to the time when the Temple of Solomon was built, erected pillars of wood and stone to the gods they worshipped—to Baal and Aschēra in especial, before which they presented their sacrifices, and at the feet of whose altars they poured the blood of their victims and their drink offerings. Nor can it be said that the sacred stone, disguised as column, obelisk, or steeple, has yet gone out of date, though its meaning is no longer understood. The obelisk in front of St Peter's at Rome and the spires of our churches are emblematic of the same thing as the stone which Jacob set up, as the columns erected on the "high places" to Baal and Aschēra, and as those that stood before Solomon's Temple. In certain districts of India —the country that gave birth to so many of the religious ideas and to all the philosophy of the world—at the present time every village has its SACRED STONE usually set up under the shade of a TREE, upon which newly-married and barren women come and seat themselves after pouring a libation of ghee or oil on its top. Neither was the sacred stone left out of the reckoning by our own forefathers in the olden time. The King was not held as duly installed in his office unless he were seated on a stone, hence our *Saxon King's-stone* still to be seen railed about in the town of Kingston-on-Thames; the *Scotch King's-stone* carried away from Scone by Edward III., and now preserved in Westminster Abbey under the rude chair which served for a throne; *London-stone* still notable in Cannon Street; and, to go farther afield, the *black stone of the Caaba* of Mecca, to prostrate themselves before which come the thousands of Moslems annually

from their distant homes, there to have the seal affixed as it were to their title-deed to heaven. Nor is the anointing in many instances omitted; the consecration of the king and priest is not held complete without the application of the *chrism* or holy oil; and the poorest adherent of the Church of Rome has extreme *unction* at last by way of passport for the journey from which there is no returning. These are all plainly lingering remnants of a symbolical worship that was once universal in the world, and of which the meaningless traces might now, as it seems, advantageously disappear from among us.

Having set up and consecrated his token, Jacob vows a vow?

Saying: "If Elohe will be with me, and keep me in the way I go, and give me bread and raiment so that I come again to my father's house, then shall Jehovah be my God, and this stone which I have set up for a token shall be God's house." Jacob's God, we are therefore to conclude, had heretofore been El, Elohe or El-shaddai; but, were his prayer granted, he would then take Jehovah in his stead. Here it is impossible to overlook the hand of the late Jehovistic writer. Jehovah was the peculiar Deity of the post-exilic reforming party among the Jews, and it could not but be of the highest moment to him and to them to exhibit their chief patriarch as a worshipper of their God. But Jacob, if there ever really lived such a personage, could never have heard of the Jewish Jehovah; El, El-Shaddai, or some other of the El compounds was the name of the God he worshipped.

Jacob, in fact, bargains with the Supreme Being as he had bargained with Esau for the mess of pottage in lieu of the birthright?

He is made to do so, at all events. If God will do so and so, then will he, Jacob, on his part do so and so in return. To conciliate Jehovah, the God of the writer, Jacob is presented to us as ready to give up

his own old familiar God or Gods, El or Elohim. Jacob always meets us as a dealer or bargain-maker; but shows himself ready in the present instance to give an equivalent, or what he seems to have thought was an equivalent, for the benefits he expected himself to receive. "Of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee," is the concluding item in the compact he enters into with his God—a clause added, we cannot doubt, by a still later hand, one of a brotherhood who never lose sight of their own interest.

The terms do not seem over liberal?

As regards God the giver of *All* they have no meaning; as regards the priesthood, who here stand for the Thou and the Thee, they are even more than liberal.

Do tithes, of which so much has since been made, appear to have been originally bestowed for the peculiar benefit of the priesthood, or the church they represented?

By no means. The tithe of the corn and oil and wine which the land produced, and of the flocks and herds of the year, was to be solemnly eaten by the people themselves in the holy place, that they might learn to fear Jehovah. Tithe was, in fact, to be dedicated to rejoicing and merry-making. Were the place too far off which Jehovah should choose for the festive occasion, the tithe of all was then to be turned into money, and the money spent "on whatsoever their souls lusted after." (Deut. xiv. 22, et seq.) The widow, the fatherless, and the stranger also were to share, and the Levite, as having no possessions, was not to be forgotten. But none of the tithe was to be expended on occasions of mourning, nor was aught of it to be given for the dead (Deut. xxvi. 14); *i.e.*, it was not to be spent on the articles of meat and drink with which the dead among so many peoples in the olden time were provided for the journey to the dis-

tant land, the place of disembodied spirits. Taking the last quoted text for a guide, the clergy of the Church of Rome might possibly see the impropriety of levying contributions on their flocks for masses and prayers for the dead.

Jacob proceeds on his journey and comes to Haran, where he makes acquaintance with his kinsfolk on the mother's side, having halted by a well, precisely as Isaac's messenger had done. As with Rebekah, so now with Rachel, the younger of Laban's two daughters, who comes to the well to water her father's sheep. Jacob is smitten with the damsel, falls in love with her as matter of course, is presented to Laban her father, and agrees (another bargain) to serve seven years with him for Rachel as his wife. This he does fairly and truly, but he is deceived by Laban at the end of the term, he substituting his elder daughter Leah for Rachel the younger, the betrothed, on the bridal night. What happens when Jacob discovers that he has been imposed on?

He complains to Laban of the trick that has been played him, and says: "Did not I serve with thee for Rachel; wherefore then hast thou beguiled me?"

What says Laban to this?

He replies that the younger must not be given in marriage before the first-born; but he adds: "Fulfil her (Leah's) week and we will give thee this (Rachel) for the service which thou shalt serve with me for yet seven years."

Jacob accepts the terms?

He does; fulfils his week manfully with Leah, and Laban then gives him his second daughter to wife also.

The Jews of old must have been less fastidious in such matters than folks of the present day; where in all civilised communities a man may not only not have two wives, and still less two sisters as wives, living with him at the same time—which the Jews them-

selves in later days did not allow,—conditions all of them reasonable enough; but a man may not now marry the sister of a deceased wife,—a prohibition altogether unreasonable; for not only is there no consanguinity between the man and the woman here which might prove a legitimate bar to their union, but there is the strong and natural tie between the living sister and the children—if children there be—of her who has prematurely passed away. What is the upshot of the double marriage?

Leah, who has been imposed on Jacob, naturally enough is not loved by him as he loves Rachel; but "when Jehovah," according to the text, "saw that Leah was hated, he (in requital) opened her womb;" but Rachel, like Sarah, the mother of Isaac, and Jacob's mother Rebekah, is barren at first—for there is incessant iteration of like incidents in these mythical and legendary tales—and only, like the remarkable women referred to, fruitful at length.

Rachel, barren herself for a time, and envious of her fruitful sister, in imitation of Sarah with Hagar, doubtless, gives her handmaid Bilhah to her husband as a concubine or third wife, and she conceives and bears Jacob two sons in succession.

There is more of this, is there not?

Plenty; Leah having ceased bearing, as she imagined, after having given Jacob four sons, follows her sister's example, and gives her handmaid Zilpah as a second concubine or fourth wife to her husband; and she too, like Bilhah, presents the Patriarch with two sons one after the other.

What farther?

It were neither edifying nor seemly to proceed with particulars; for the tale is now of Jacob cohabiting with one and then with another of his wives or concubines, and next of Leah—fruitful again through eating *mandrakes*, it is said, found for her in the wheat-field by her son Reuben, so that she adds a

fifth and a sixth son and a daughter to the four she had already presented to her lord.

And Rachel?

All in good time! As Jehovah by our text had seen that Leah was hated and had opened her womb by way of return, so does he now remember Rachel in her yearnings for offspring: "Give me children or else I die," she had said to Jacob in her passion; and though Jacob's anger is kindled against her, and he has said: "Am I in God's stead who hath withheld from thee the fruit of thy womb?" he continues to cohabit with her, and she, having partaken of her sister's mandrakes, becomes a mother at last, bears a son whom she calls Joseph, and exclaims in her joy: "God hath taken away my reproach;" for the Jews held barrenness in woman to be a sign of imperfection and incapacity, if not even of the divine displeasure.

What is the *mandrake* which Reuben found for his mother Leah, and to which such virtue is ascribed?

The Hebrew word translated mandrake in our version, is rendered "Mele mandragora" by the Greeks, and is commonly said to be the love apple or tomato; but this is probably a mistake. The mandrake was a tap-root plant of some sort; and the name is still given by our unlettered herbalists to the root of the white bryony—a drastic purgative, however, not calculated, as it might seem, to provoke appetite or aid conception, as the Jews believed.

Jacob having now secured his wives and concubines, and with a numerous offspring rising about him, grows weary of his servitude to Laban and notifies his desire to be gone—what says Laban to this?

Laban would have him tarry, and bids him name his own terms if he will consent to do so.

What says Jacob to the offer?

He boasts of the advantage his service has already proved to Laban: "It was little thou hadst when I came, and now it is increased into a multitude," is the

prelude to his proposition for payment not in money but in kind : those among the goats that were already or that should be born ring-streaked, speckled or spotted, and those among the sheep that were brown, were to be for his hire.

Laban consents ?

He does : the flocks are shed and Jacob's parti-coloured lots are driven off under the care of his sons, three days' journey from Laban's white or self-coloured cattle.

What device does the artful Jacob practise now ?

He peels him white streaks in green rods of poplar, hazel and chesnut, which he sets up in the watering-troughs of the sheep and goats ; and so arranges matters that the females shall only conceive when they come to drink, the consequence of which is, as said, that the young produced are mostly ring-streaked, spotted and speckled.

Jacob, the wily, does yet more than this ?

He does ; and always with an especial eye to his own advantage and something like his father-in-law Laban's disadvantage : he only puts his peeled rods in the watering-troughs when the strongest of the cattle are about to become pregnant ; "when the cattle were feeble he put them not in," says the text, which continues : "and so the feebler were Laban's, and the stronger Jacob's."

This does not seem over and above honest in Jacob ?

It is everything but honest ; it is shamefully and barefacedly dishonest. It may be condoned, indeed, by referring to the old Jewish law of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, for Laban had unquestionably imposed on Jacob, and Jacob may be said to have but paid him back in his own coin : "If my father cheat me, I shall cheat my father," said, or is said to have said, a distinguished member of the Jewish community among ourselves, dealing largely in foreign securities, in days not long gone by.

There is another version of this notable story, as of so many more in the Hebrew Scriptures?

There is, and with different circumstances; for Jacob is now absolved of any need to have recourse to craft or to play the part of dishonest herdsman. Here Jacob complains to his wives Leah and Rachel, the sisters, that their father Laban had withdrawn his countenance from him, had changed his wages ten times, saying now that the speckled, and then that the ring-streaked cattle should be his portion; "but the God of my father," he proceeds, "has been with me, and suffered him not to hurt me; for if he said: the speckled shall be thy wages, then all the cattle bare speckled; and if he said thus: the ring-streaked shall be thy share, then bare all the cattle ring-streaked; and thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father and given them to me."

This is surely making too familiar a use of God's presumed interference in the affairs of men?

It is in strict conformity, however, with antique Jewish notions that God took immediate part in even the most minute and intimate relations of their lives; and, farther, that the Supreme had favourites, irrespective of merit, among the children of men. The old Jewish writers had no conception of a world, and of man as one of its elements, ruled by great universal, eternal, and necessary laws, expression to the cultivated mind of to-day of the power and true providence of God.

Jacob has a dream besides, that may have put him on the natural way of securing ring-streaked and speckled cattle for himself without having recourse to the questionable procedure of the peeled rods?

The angel of Jehovah, he tells his sister-wives, spake with him in a dream, saying: "Jacob! and I said: Here am I. And he said: See, all the rams which leap the cattle are ring-streaked, speckled and griseled, and I have seen all that Laban doeth unto

thee; I am the God of Beth-El, where thou anointedst the pillar and vowedst a vow unto me. Now, arise; get thee out from this land, and return into the land of thy kindred."

Have we any fact that might help to explain the myth of the peeled rods used by Jacob in securing the increase of his part among the flocks?

It is not uninteresting to observe that the figure of the man who holds the scales with one hand in the sign of *Libra* on some of the oldest of the Zodiacs has a *streaked rod* or rule in the other. Now, September, the month in which the sun entered Libra in former times, is that also in which the ewes begin to conceive; whence it has been conjectured that the Hebrew writer was taking hints from the pictorial calendar for the composition of his story.

What say the wives to the communication of Jehovah, which may, nevertheless, very well reflect Jacob's own waking thoughts and aspirations?

Seeing, as they say, that they "have no longer any portion or inheritance in their father's house and are counted of him as strangers, for he hath sold us and quite devoured also our money; for all the riches which God hath taken from our father is ours and our children's; therefore whatsoever God hath said unto thee, do."

Laban certainly has not shown himself a strictly honest man in his dealings with the husband of his daughters; but they in turn seem to show little of the love and devotion naturally to be looked for in children to their parent?

This is true: they forget the long years through which their father fed and housed and clothed them. In conformity with the notions of their age, however, they are made to ascribe the increasing poverty of their father to the displeasure, and the growing wealth of their husband to the favour of their God.

The device of the rods, were God like the impar-

tial judge we look for among ourselves, would have brought punishment on Jacob, not yielded him reward?

Premeditated and deliberate dishonesty is the worst of dishonesties, and selfishness is a mean and sorry vice; but the punishment and the reward are with man, not with God, save as he is represented by man.

Jacob hearkens to the counsel of his wives?

He does forthwith: setting his family on camels and stealing away without a word to his father-in-law Laban, who has gone sheep-shearing and hears nothing of the flight for several days, he turns his face towards Gilead with all he has, and there arrived he pitches his tents.

Beside what might be called her own, has not Rachel taken some things that did not rightfully belong to her?

She has "stolen the Images that were her father's."

Images in the possession of Laban, descendant in the direct line from Nahor Abraham's brother, father of Leah and Rachel the wives of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham! This is unlooked for information. The man must have been an Idolater?

The story seems plainly to say as much. But were ever the Hebrews, either then or for centuries afterwards, anything but Fetish worshippers?

They declared emphatically in later times that they were the chosen people of Jehovah, their God; and their descendants, exiles from the land that was promised to them as an inheritance for ever, and scattered over the face of the habitable globe, still believe themselves to be so. This is wonderful enough, all things considered; but still more wonderful is the fact, that the European communities have continued so long to take them at their word, and to look on them as worshippers of the One God.

Laban, absent from home, hears nothing of the flight of Jacob and his wives for three days; but informed of it at length, and missing his property and his household gods, he sets out in pursuit seven days' journey, intending recovery doubtless of the things abstracted, if not more serious reprisals. Before coming up with the fugitives on Mount Gilead, however, he has a communication from Elohim—God.

God, it is said, visited Laban the Aramæan in a dream by night, and admonished him to speak neither good nor bad to Jacob, so that when he overtook him at length, he only ventured to reproach him with having stolen away with his daughters as captives taken with the sword, and adds: Though thou wouldst be gone, because thou sore longedst for thy father's house, yet wherefore hast thou stolen my gods?

Jacob, unaware of this particular theft, denies it: "With whomsoever thou findest thy gods," he says, "let him not live." So Laban searches for his gods throughout the encampment, but in vain; for Rachel, the thief, has secreted them in the camels' furniture and sat down upon them; and as she excuses herself from rising because of a certain natural visitation—the nature of which she is not so delicate as not to explain—the gods cannot be found.

This gives Jacob an opportunity to turn round on Laban, and to be wroth with him?

An opportunity he is not slow to improve: "What is my trespass," says he, "what is my sin that thou hast so hotly pursued after me." Boasting of his long and faithful service, he says roundly to his father-in-law: "Except the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the fear of Isaac had been with me, thou hadst surely sent me now empty away. God hath seen my affliction and the labour of my hands, and rebuked thee yester-night."

How could Jacob know this?

There is no difficulty, the familiar terms considered

upon which the Patriarchs were with their God, who may have informed him!

Laban is appeased, and says to Jacob: Now therefore, let us make a covenant, I and thou, and let it be for a witness between me and thee. What does Jacob?

He takes a stone and sets it up for a pillar, and the two parties, heaping stones about it, call it Galeed and Mizpah, for it is to be at once a witness and a landmark between them, Laban stipulating for good treatment for his daughters, and that no other wives should be taken by Jacob to afflict them, and both agreeing that neither he nor Jacob should pass beyond the heap to do each other harm. Laban then kisses his sons and his daughters, blesses them, and returns to his place, whilst Jacob offers sacrifice upon the mount where he is encamped.

What is the next interesting incident in the history of the patriarch Jacob?

Proceeding on his way and meeting "the angels of God" in a place he calls Mahanaim, he thence dispatches messengers to his brother Esau whom he had so grievously wronged, then dwelling in Seir in the land of Edom, and bids them say "unto my Lord Esau" that "his servant Jacob" is in his territory and hopes to find grace in his sight.

Well?

The messengers return to Jacob and report to him that his brother Esau, informed of his coming, is on his way to meet him with a great retinue of men, four hundred in number.

And Jacob?

Conscience-stricken and fearing his brother's anger, when he hears of the great attendance, he divides his people and his flocks into two; lest Esau coming with hostile purpose smite the one company, then the other should escape.

What more?

He prays to his God, as men mostly do in straits and difficulties; reminds him of the promises already made and of the order to return into his own country now in course of being obeyed, and owns himself unworthy of all the favour shown him. "With my staff," says he, "I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands; deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother Esau, for I fear him, lest he come and smite me and the mother with the children. And thou saidst I will surely do thee good, and make thy seed as the sand of the sea which cannot be numbered for multitude."

Jacob must needs think that his God required to be reminded of his promises?

It plainly enough appears so; but Jacob's idea of God was very different from that of the enlightened of the present day; although not very different perhaps from that still entertained by the vulgar and uninformed.

To conciliate his brother Esau, Jacob makes ready a handsome present in conformity with oriental usage?

A very handsome present, indeed, which he sends on before, he himself following at the head of the train with the handmaids and their children in the van, Leah and her children next, Rachel and Joseph last of all—the least cherished therefore in front, the dearest in the rear, lest Esau should prove hostile.

How does Jacob comport himself in presence of his brother?

Lifting up his eyes and seeing Esau coming on with his numerous escort, he advances and "bows himself seven times to the ground as he draws near his brother."

And Esau?

"Esau ran to meet his brother Jacob" who had bargained away from him his birthright and stolen

from him his father's blessing, "and embraced him, and fell upon his neck and kissed him, and they wept."

Esau must have been of a kindly and forgiving nature?

Surely he was so, or he is made to appear so by the writer who tells the tale; generous too, was Esau, and open and honourable. "Who are all these belonging to thee," he inquires of his brother; and his brother answers: "The children which God hath graciously given thy servant;" and they all bowed themselves; and after came Rachel and Joseph, and they bowed themselves. And he inquired further: "What meanest thou by all this drove which I met?" And Jacob answered: "These are to find grace in the sight of my lord."

And Esau, to the cringing and fair-faced show of his brother?

Answers: "I have enough, my brother, keep that thou hast unto thyself."

To which Jacob?

Replies: "Nay, I pray thee; if now I have found grace in thy sight then receive my present at my hand; for I have seen thy face as though I had seen the face of God, and thou wast pleased with me—take, I pray thee my present (not *blessing* as in our English version) that is brought to thee; God hath dealt graciously with me, and I have all things. And he urged him, and he took it."

Jacob belords his brother still further, does he not?

After putting his brother on a level with his God there was little room for further flattery, yet he uses such phrases as these: "My lord knoweth;" "Let my lord, I pray;" "Let me find grace in the sight of my lord."

The brothers part good friends and reconciled?

They do; Esau returns to Seir; and Jacob wending on his way comes to Shalem in the land of Canaan,

where he buys part of a field and erects a Pillar which he calls El-Elohe-Israel—a compound of the names by which the God of the primitive Semitic tribes possessing Palestine was known.

There is a notable and most extraordinary incident met with in the middle of the narrative of the meeting between Jacob and Esau, but connected with the name of Israel, which we have just seen applied to the pillar erected by Jacob?

A very notable and to modern apprehension extraordinary incident indeed. As Jacob is journeying towards Seir to meet his brother, he is "left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day; and when the man saw that he prevailed not against Jacob, he touched the hollow of his thigh, so that the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint as he wrestled with him; and he said: Let me go, for the day breaketh! And Jacob said: I will not let thee go unless thou bless me. And the man said: What is thy name; and he said Jacob. And the man said: Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel (Prince of God), for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed."

Does not Jacob also question his opponent as to who or what he is?

Jacob says: "Tell me, I pray thee, thy name," and his adversary answers: "Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?" But Jacob's question was most pertinent; for in days when there were believed to be many gods it was very necessary to know who the One was with whom intercourse was had; and this could best be done through the name and title of the individual.

Jacob's opponent does not tell his name nor say who he is?

He does not; but owning himself in some sort worsted in the encounter, only escaping from Jacob's

grip indeed by touching a tender part of his body, he blesses Jacob, who calls the place where the encounter happened Peniel (the face of God); for says he: "I have seen God face to face and my life is preserved." Jacob's opponent would, therefore, seem to have been no *man*, as said in the text, but El, Elohe, or God himself in person.

What interpretation can be put upon this strange and obviously mythical tale?

More than one has been attempted; but its sense has mostly remained to orthodox expositors as dark as the darkest of the night in which the wrestling match is said to have occurred. From the narrative, Jacob evidently supposes that it was his God El with whom he had been striving, though to our modern notions the idea of man struggling with God in flesh and blood seems even too extravagant to have been possibly entertained. Jacob, however, does say that he had seen God face to face; so that on this point there can be no question. It is then to be noted that the opponent desires to be let go when "the day begins to break;" and that "the sun rises" on Jacob as he passes over Peniel halting, yet with a blessing from the encounter. These particulars, aided by a small amount of mythological knowledge, give a key to the mystery involved in the tale: It is allegorical of the struggle between Light and Darkness, *i.e.*, between the beneficent and the adverse aspects of Nature, combined in the Hebrew conception of the Deity. The tale is probably a fragment of a larger document, dissevered from the rest of the record which told of the Light or Sun, Moon and Planet worship followed by the far-off forefathers of the Hebrew race, before they had swarmed away from the hills and valleys of the high lands of Armenia and Mesopotamia. It has no connection, save by inference, with anything that has gone before, nor with anything that comes after in the Hebrew Scriptures—not even with

the change of Jacob's name, for that had been mentioned already.

The hollow of Jacob's thigh is said to have been put out of joint in one part of the narrative (xxxii. 25); in another (v. 32) it is a sinew which is said to have shrunk—"the sinew which is upon the hollow of the thigh; therefore," it is added, "the children of Israel eat not of the sinew which shrank unto this day."

The meaning of this, too, must be allegorical?

No doubt of it. The part which the children of Israel "eat not unto this day" is neither the great sciatic nerve, as is sometimes said, nor any tendon connected with a muscle.

Have we not a story akin to this in what is called the Pagan Mythology?

We have—in the myth of the wrestling bout that takes place between the Tyrian Heracles and Zeus, in which Heracles, like Jacob, comes off halting with a dislocation of the thigh. But why the story here should be characterised as pagan and called mythological and incredible, whilst the Hebrew tale is looked on as sacred and held worthy of belief, is not so obvious. The two myths have doubtless a common origin. The Tyrian hero, the god in his favourable aspect, contends with the Father of gods and men in his adverse aspect, precisely as Jacob—Israel the wrestler, assumed as symbolical of light, contends with Elohe in his quality of darkness, or the night. But Phœnicians, Tyrians, Canaanites, Israelites, &c., were all alike children of the same Semitic stock, spoke closely allied dialects of the same language, and in their religious ideas, rites and ceremonies were at one.

There is another version of the wrestling match between Hercules and an adversary, which throws additional light on the Hebrew fragment?

It is that in which Hercules contends with Antæus.

The sun—Hercules, wrapt in the lion's skin, had his domicile in the zodiacal sign Leo; Antæus had his in that of Aquarius. But Leo is the sign in which the sun is supreme, and summer is in the ascendant; Aquarius the sign in which the sun is at the lowest point of his annual course, and winter rules the year. Hercules' adversary is aptly named Antæus, Opponent, —his opposite or other self, in ceaseless contention with whom he is alternately the victor and the vanquished, the light now getting the better of the dark, the dark in turn becoming superior to the light, but each destined ere long again and in endless succession to yield to the other.

What happens after the brothers Jacob and Esau have taken their several ways?

Dinah, the daughter of Jacob by Leah, is violated by Shechem, son of Hamor the Hivite, who, however, inconsistently as it seems, then makes suit through his father to Jacob to have the damsel to wife.

Does Jacob agree to the proposal?

We have no account of his objecting, but his sons are wroth with Shechem when they hear of the wrong he has done to Dinah their sister. Nevertheless, to the proposals made for reparation by marriage, they answer deceitfully, and say they cannot give their sister to one that is uncircumcised, but if every male of the Hivites will consent to circumcision, then say they we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to us, and we will dwell with you and become one people.

The Hivites agree to the terms; do Jacob and his sons keep faith with them?

Far from it; there is small account of good faith between man and man in the legendary and mythical accounts we have of these early times. On the third day, when the circumcised Hivites are sore from the operation, Simeon and Levi, two of Jacob's sons, "take each man his sword and come upon the city

boldly and slay the males," despoiling and carrying off all it contained in the shape of cattle and other wealth, and leading the women and their little ones into captivity.

Deception and cruelty seem to have been very much at home with Jacob and his family?

So it plainly appears. Jacob, however, is not altogether satisfied with the daring act of his sons. But it is not with their faithlessness and barbarity that he quarrels; it is because by what they have done they have made him "to stink" among the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites and Perizzites; and "I, being few in number (he says), they will gather themselves together against me and slay me and my house."

'There is happily an air of improbability about this story which seems to take it out of the sphere of history, is there not?

There is, and not only of improbability, but of impossibility. Two men, even with every advantage of arms, could scarcely enter the smallest hamlet, slay all the males, load themselves with the spoil, drive off the flocks and herds, and carry away the women and children with impunity. There are two accounts, moreover, of this business in the same chapter of Genesis, one of which may be read complete without a word of the slaughter and spoil which figure in the other; and, as that seems to be the older record, let us also trust that it is the more truthful of the two.[n]

What incidents worth noting occur in Jacob's onward journey?

Ordered by his God to go up to Beth-el and there to erect a pillar, he commands his household and all who are with him to put away the strange gods that are among them.

[n] See Bernstein's Origin of the Legends of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob for a new and probably correct explanation of this fable.

This is an extraordinary order! How should Jacob, the familiar of his God and father of the Israelites, have suffered strange gods in his family? But they obey?

They give Jacob all the strange gods that were in their hand, and their rings also, and he buries them under the Oak that was by Shechem?

Jacob and his family would seem from this to have been, like Laban and his daughters, idolaters?

That they were and did long continue to be so there can be no doubt. The strange gods were, of course, household images of small size, such as Rachel had stolen from her father Laban.

But the rings were not gods?

No; but rings of all kinds—ear-rings, nose-rings, finger-rings, bracelets, anklets—were amulets or fetiches, emblematic of the Yoni or female element in the reproductive power of nature—of which the cosmical snake—the symbol of eternity—with its tail in its mouth, was the prototype. The Egyptian divinities are always represented with what is called the Key of the Nile in one hand—a circle or loop with a cross below—the circle, sign of eternity, the cross significant of the four great epochs in the flight of time, or of the moments when the sun, in his annual round, crossed the equator at the vernal and autumnal equinoxes, and attained his highest summer and lowest winter meridian altitudes.

The place where the strange gods and the rings are buried has also its significance, has it not?

No doubt it has; they were buried under the Oak as a propitiatory offering to the life-giving principle in nature, universally typified among the earlier races of mankind by trees.

Jacob comes to Padan Aram, and there God, as it is said, appears to him again, informs him that he is El-Schaddai — God the mighty; tells him that his name shall not any more be Jacob, but Israel; bids

him be fruitful and multiply; says that a nation and a company of nations should be of him, and that kings should come out of his loins, whilst the land that had been promised to Abraham and Isaac should be confirmed to him and to his progeny for ever. "And then," continues the narrative, "God went up from him in the place where he talked with him."

Have we not had much of this story already, with certain strange accessories?

Certainly; where we had the account of the wrestling match that took place in the night season, and only ended with the dawning of the day; when Jacob's name was changed to Israel, &c.

Can man, reasonable and cultivated man, really and truly accept such tales as inspired revelations from God, or as guides to piety and purity of life?

They are, undoubtedly, accepted as revelations, and still believed in as actual occurrences, though the end to be served by them in the direction indicated is not so obvious. To the emancipated from superstitious beliefs, however, it is inconceivable how they should still pass current in the world, or be received as supplying examples that are not rather to be shunned than followed. Had not men determined beforehand that they had come from sacred and inspired sources, their details and tendencies would assuredly never have led to the conclusion that they had had any such hallowed origin as that ascribed to them.

Reading the Hebrew Scriptures as thus, with unsealed eyes, and by the light of collateral knowledge, mythological and other, are we not forced on conclusions as to the origin, worth, and real significance of these ancient writings, very different from such as are generally entertained?

So much follows of necessity; and we are then left at liberty, from the book of nature and our own minds, to form nobler and more worthy conceptions of God and his Providential rule of the world than

any that are to be gathered from Hebrew sources; and, further, to think that better books than the Bible may be found to aid in the education of the young.

Journeying from Beth-el, what happens?

Rachel is taken in labour, and dies in giving birth to her son Benjamin; then there is a foul tale of Reuben in connection with Bilhah, one of his father's wives or concubines; lastly, Jacob visits his father Isaac in Hebron, where the old man dies at an incredible age, and is buried by his sons Jacob and Esau. Jacob then continues to dwell in the land of Canaan, in which his father was a stranger, and Joseph, his son by Rachel, now seventeen years old, tends the flocks of his father along with his brothers, the sons of Leah, Bilhah and Zilpah.

Joseph is not liked by his brothers?

No; Joseph as the elder-born of Rachel, Jacob's first love, and because he was the child of his old age, "was more loved by Israel than all his children." This naturally begat jealousy and dislike among the others; and then, as we are told that Joseph "brought to their father evil reports of his brothers," this assuredly would not make them love him any the more.

Joseph has a dream besides that still further inflames the dislike of his brothers?

He dreams that as he and his brothers were binding sheaves in the field, his sheaf stood upright, and all his brothers' sheaves stood round about and made obeisance to his sheaf.

Has he not yet another dream?

He dreams further that the sun, moon, and eleven stars made obeisance to him; and when he tells this dream to his father he is rebuked by his parent, who says, identifying himself, Rebekah, and his eleven sons with the sun, moon, and stars of the dream: "What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother and thy brethren indeed come to bow

down ourselves to thee?" Jacob, nevertheless, "observes the saying," and Joseph is naturally hated more than ever by the other members of the family.

The Jews of old thought more of dreams than do men of culture in the present day?

Than men of culture, certainly, though dreams still puzzle and terrify the ignorant and superstitious vulgar. The Jews of old thought that "dreams were from God;" they generally interpreted them literally, though sometimes also allegorically; and the great bulk of their presumed communications from God appear to have been received in dreams and visions of the night, a mode of communication little trusted at the present time, wherein men rely more and more advantageously on knowledge and waking thoughts than on sleeping fancies.

The further account, leading to the catastrophe that is in preparation, informs us that Israel sends Joseph to Shechem as a spy upon his other sons: "Go, I pray thee," says Jacob, "see whether it is well with thy brothers, and well with the flocks, and bring me word again." A delegate of the kind would not be apt to be over well received?

Hardly; and the brothers, when they saw him afar off, even before he came near them, conspired against him to slay him. "Here cometh this man of dreams," say they; "and now let us slay him and cast him into one of the pits, and we will say some evil beast hath devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams."

Reuben, however, interposes, and bids the rest "shed no blood, but cast him into a pit," intending thus, it would seem, to save his life and restore him to his father?

According to a second account it is Judah who interferes: "What profit," says he, "will it be if we slay our brother and conceal his blood; come let us sell him to the Ishmaelites (a troop of whom,

going towards Egypt, have come in sight); let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother."

There appear to be two accounts of this bad business, drawn from different documents, and jumbled together, as in so many other parts of the Jewish sacred writings. In one it is Reuben who saves Joseph alive; in another it is Judah. Here it is Judah and the brethren who sell Joseph to Ishmaelites, there it is Midianitish merchants who draw him out of the pit and sell him to Ishmaelites, who carry him to Egypt; and again it is Midianites who sell him in Egypt to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh; and yet again it is Ishmaelites who effect the sale.

What inference may be drawn from such diversity of statement?

That the idea of supernatural inspiration in connection with the Jewish Scriptures ought to be abandoned, and the matter seen as it must needs be in fact—viz.: that the compiler or editor is here, as elsewhere, drawing now from one document or tradition, and then from another, and that with the superstitious respect for the letter which characterised the Jews of old, and without a show of critical discrimination, he mixes up the several accounts into what he intended should be a continuous and consistent narrative.

Reuben, who is not made a party to the sale of his brother, returns to the pit, and "behold, Joseph was not there! and he rent his clothes and came to his brethren and said: The child is not, and I, whither shall I go!" The brothers take little heed of his wailing, but proceed as they had purposed?

They take Joseph's coat of many colours, and having killed a kid, they dipped the coat in the blood, and brought it to their father, who knows it, and in his grief exclaims: "It is my son's coat; an evil beast hath devoured him!" So he rends his clothes, puts sackcloth on his loins, mourns for his son many

days, and refusing to be comforted, says : "I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning." A true and beautiful picture of natural affection sorely tried, and doubtless from the hand of one among the earliest of the true poets whose writings have come down to us !

We have several particulars now related, not always of the most delicate and moral kind when viewed in the light of the more advanced ideas of delicacy and morality of the present day ?

Particulars which, nevertheless, are interesting from an antiquarian and ethnological point of view, and important as marking intervals of time, and showing how little faith is to be attached to many of the narratives in the Hebrew Bible as embracing historical truths.

What are these ?

Joseph is seventeen years old when he is sold into Egypt ; and as Leah bears Issachar and Zebulon between the birth of Judah and that of Joseph, Judah must have been about twenty-four years of age at this time. Judah now takes Shuah to himself as wife, and she bears first one son, Er, then another, Onan, and yet a third, Shelah. Er, Judah's first-born, is old enough to have a wife given him—Tamar ; Er dies (he is said to have been "wicked in the sight of the Lord, and so the Lord slew him"). Judah desires his second son Onan to take his late brother's wife to himself, in conformity with the usage of the country, and raise up seed to his brother. But Onan does not like the match ; and though he obeys his father in so far as the union went, he resolves, and so acts, as to raise no seed to his brother. This, it is said, "displeased the Lord, and he slew him also." Tamar, for the second time a widow, ought now to have been given in marriage to Shelah, Judah's third son ; but she had proved so disastrous a bargain to Er and Onan, that Judah must have hesitated to ven-

ture on her with his sole remaining son. Tamar was dissatisfied when she sees that Shelah, though grown to man's estate, is not given to her as her husband; and she, the widow of two of his sons, resolves to seduce Judah himself. With this view she casts off her widow's weeds, veils herself, shows herself in an open place as an harlot, and is addressed by Judah. "What wilt thou give me?" says Tamar to Judah when solicited by him. "I will give thee a kid from the flock," he replies. "Give me a pledge till thou send it." "What pledge shall I give thee?" "Thy signet and thy bracelets, and the staff that is in thine hand." And he gave her all. Immediately after her incestuous intercourse with Judah, Tamar resumes her weeds, and when Judah sends the kid by his messenger desiring to have back the pledges he had left with her, she is nowhere to be found.

What does Judah?

He desires the kid to be disposed of, or given away, nevertheless, "lest," as he says, "he should be shamed."

What next in this edifying story?

Judah is by and by informed that Tamar has played the harlot, and is with child; and he says: "Bring her forth and let her be burnt."

What does Tamar?

When brought forth she shows the pledges she had had, and says: "By the man whose these are am I with child; discern, I pray thee, whose are these—the signet, the bracelets, the staff."

And Judah?

Acknowledging the pledge, he declares that she has been "more righteous than himself, because that he had not given her to wife to Shelah his son."

Can we as moral beings conceive accounts of proceedings such as these to have been written under the inspiration of God for the instruction and improvement of mankind?

It is impossible.

Or that God has in especial favour the men who are guilty of doings such as these, and the race who think them not unworthy of a place among their sacred annals as a people?

This, too, even on the vulgar showing, is impossible.

Or that we do well in putting the book which contains such foul tales into the hands of our children as a means of furthering them in a knowledge of that wherein virtue and propriety of conduct consist?

It is only brutal ignorance, blind bigotry, and gross superstition that can say it is well to do so. God has no favourites among his creatures, or, if he has, they are such alone as conform themselves to his laws —physical and moral. Through the understanding and higher moral nature wherewith man is endowed, God proclaims his condemnation of acts that are only worthy of the beasts of the field. But these tales are from the traditions of ages barbarous and long gone by, and only committed to writing in much more modern times,—traditions descending, it may be, from the *Stone Age* of the world, when men had no better tools than such as were poorly supplied by chipped flints, when they ate one another, and grilled and split the long bones of their sires for the marrow they contained.

Joseph is brought to Egypt by the merchants or slave dealers, and sold to an officer of the Pharaoh, Potiphar by name, whose favourable opinion he forthwith secures by his good conduct and intelligence. Attempted to be seduced, and in her anger falsely accused by Potiphar's wife, however, he falls into disgrace and is thrown into prison. Here, again, the propriety of his demeanour wins him the notice and confidence of the keeper of the prison; and having successfully interpreted the dreams of two of Pharaoh's servants who had been put in ward for some offence,

he is brought under the notice of Pharaoh as a seer, Pharaoh himself having dreamed a two-fold dream, which none of the magicians or wise men of Egypt could interpret. Summoned to the presence, the Pharaoh tells his dream to Joseph, and he, from its tenor, interprets it as a notice from God of the coming on of seven years of plenty, to be followed by seven years of dearth. Joseph is careful to take no credit to himself for his dream-interpreting powers; in conformity with Jewish ideas, he says he had but given "the answer of peace which he himself had received from God."

The Pharaoh accepts Joseph's interpretation of his dream?

He does, and is so much pleased with the interpreter, that he takes him into his counsels; appoints him as head over his house; takes the ring from his own finger, and puts it upon Joseph's; arrays him in fine linen; hangs a gold chain about his neck; gives him to wife Asenath, daughter of the Priest of On, and makes him ruler over all the land of Egypt. "Only in the throne will I be greater than thou," adds the confiding sovereign ruler of the land.

This is a great and sudden rise?

A great and sudden rise, indeed; and all on the faith of the still untested truth of the interpretation of a dream! Needful, however, as an introduction to the narrative that follows, viz.: The arrival of Israel and his family in Egypt, in consequence of the famine that conveniently prevailed at this time in the land of Canaan; the touching incidents of the meeting of Joseph with his unnatural brethren, and the retributive justice which the writer would show to wait on evil, and the reward that follows well-doing.

The years of plenty, succeeded by the years of famine, as predicted by Joseph from the Pharoah's dream, follow, of course?

Of course they do; and Joseph gathers store of

corn, as the sand of the sea, into all the granaries of Egypt; so that, when the years of famine arrive, though dearth prevails in all the neighbouring lands, there is bread in Egypt. When the famine begins to be felt, Joseph unlocks his stores, and is liberal enough to sell, not only to the natives of the country, but, in aid of the story, to strangers also. Hearing that there is corn in Egypt, Jacob says to his sons, "Why look ye one upon another? Behold, I have heard that there is corn in the land of Egypt; get ye down thither, and buy for us from thence that we may live and not die."

The sons depart?

Ten of them; for Jacob will not part with Benjamin, his youngest son, "lest, peradventure, mischief befall him." They arrive in Egypt; and Joseph "knew his brethren, but they knew not him." They bow themselves with their faces to the earth before the great Governor of Egypt; and Joseph, remembering his dreams, when he sees them in this position, and, doubtless, not entirely forgetting the cruel usage he had had at their hands, then speaks roughly to them, asks them whence they came, and says to them, "Ye are spies; to see the nakedness of the land are ye come."

They excuse themselves?

"Thy servants are no spies," say they, "but twelve brethren, the sons of one man in the land of Canaan; and, behold, the youngest is this day with our father, and one is not."

"By the life of Pharaoh," answers Joseph, "ye shall not go hence, except your youngest brother come hither. Send one of you," according to one version of the tale (for here we have two as usual—"let one of you be bound in prison," says the other version), "whilst the rest carry corn for the famine of their houses, but bring your youngest brother to me, so shall your words be verified, and ye shall not die."

Then come the compunctious visitings upon the brethren for what they had done to Joseph; and still, in the presence of the Governor, and speaking in their own tongue, they accuse one another of their hard-heartedness, not witting that Joseph understood them, "for he spake to them by an interpreter."

Simeon is bound as hostage, and the rest depart with provision for the way, their sacks full of corn, and the money of each returned, tied up in the mouth of his sack. They reach home, and narrate to their father all that has befallen them?

And communicate the conditions on which Simeon is to be released; but Jacob refuses absolutely to part with Benjamin: "My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he is left alone; if mischief befal him by the way, then shall ye bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave." But, the famine continuing, when they had eaten up the corn they had brought out of Egypt, Jacob bids them go again and buy a little food.

The sons consent to go?

Only on condition that Benjamin is suffered to go with them: "Slay my two sons," says Reuben to his father, "if I bring him not to thee again." "Send the lad with me," says Judah, "and we will arise and go; that we may live and not die, both we and thou and our little ones; I will be surety for him; of my hand shalt thou require him."

Jacob yields to their entreaties, and to sore necessity?

"If it must be so now," says the old man, "do this: take of the best fruits in the land, and carry down the man a present,—a little balm, and a little honey, spices and myrrh, nuts and almonds; and take double money in your hand; the money that was brought again in the mouth of your sacks carry again in your hand; peradventure it was an oversight; take also your brother, and arise, go again unto the man, and

God Almighty give you mercy before him, that he may send away your other brother and Benjamin: if I am bereaved of my children, I *am* bereaved!"

They depart, and stand a second time before Joseph. When he sees Benjamin among them, he orders the ruler of his house to bring his brethren home, and to slay and make ready; for these men, says he, shall dine with me at noon?

Brought into Joseph's house, they are much afraid, because of the money they had found returned in their sacks; they excuse themselves to the steward; inform him of the money they had found, and show both this and that which they had now brought to buy more corn.

The steward consoles them?

Saying: "Peace be to you; fear not; your God and the God of your father hath given you treasure in your sacks. I had your money; and he brought Simeon out unto them."

They make ready the present they had provided for Joseph, and bow themselves to the earth before him, when he comes home. Joseph asks kindly after their welfare, and says: "Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake, is he yet alive?" "Thy servant our father is yet alive, he is in good health." And lifting up his eyes, and seeing Benjamin, his mother's son, he asks: "Is this your younger brother of whom ye spake? And he said, God be gracious unto thee, my son! And he made haste, for his bowels yearned upon his brother; and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber and wept there. And he washed his face and went out and refrained himself."

Prosperity and his wonderful rise in the world had not hardened Joseph's heart, as so often happens?

Joseph is an impersonation of goodness and forgiveness, drawn by a master's hand in simple and beautiful words. But it is a tale such as belongs not

to the age of the world with which the name of Joseph, the son of Jacob, is connected. It is the conception of an Isaiah or a Micah, or of a mind more delicate and refined than either of these—a beautiful and touching story, unsurpassed in its treatment and its pathos; a story over which our eyes were wont to fill whiles we were children, as they fill now, after seventy years and more, perhaps, have passed over the heads of the men!

Joseph would seem to have taken some little pleasure in frightening his naughty brothers; for he bids his steward put their money into the sacks of all as before, and his own silver drinking-cup, beside the money, into the sack of the youngest, so as to make it appear that the cup had been stolen. Dismissed on their way homewards, and outside the city gates, Joseph says to his steward: Up, follow after the men; and when thou dost overtake them, say unto them: Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good? Is not this the cup in which my lord drinketh, and whereby indeed he divineth?

Joseph, it would therefore seem, was not only an interpreter of dreams, but a diviner in other ways?

Fortune-telling from the cup is still practised—more, perhaps, in jest than in earnest—among ourselves. It is no golden jewelled goblet, however, such as we must presume Joseph's to have been, with beads and rivulets of precious liquor stealing down its sides, that is now in use by our gossips. It is the homely tea-cup and the grounds adhering to the bottom and sides which are the hieroglyphics that prompt the Pythia in her responses.

Accused of having purloined the cup, the men, in conscious innocence, rebut the charge; but are confounded when, on the sacks being undone, the cup of my lord the Governor of Egypt is found in the sack of Benjamin. They rend their clothes, relade their asses, and return into the city. Joseph would then

detain his brother Benjamin beside him, whilst the rest returned to their home; but Judah pleads touchingly against the Governor's purpose: "Oh, my lord," says he, "let thy servant, I pray thee, speak a word in my lord's ears. My lord asked his servants, saying: 'Have ye a father or a brother?' and we said unto my lord, 'We have a father, an old man, and a brother, a child of his old age; and his brother is dead, and he alone is left of his mother, and his father loveth him. Now, therefore, when I come to thy servant, my father, seeing that his life is bound up in the lad's life, it shall come to pass, when he seeth that the lad is not with us, that he will die, and thy servants shall bring down the grey hairs of thy servant, our father, with sorrow to the grave; for thy servant became surety for the lad unto my father, saying, 'If I bring him not unto thee, then I shall bear the blame unto my father for ever.' Now, therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad, a bondsman to my lord, and let the lad go up with his brethren."

Joseph can hold out no longer: "Cause every man to go out from me," he exclaims; and, turning to his brethren, he says: "I am Joseph; come near me, I pray you; I am Joseph your brother whom ye sold into Egypt. And doth my father yet live? Now, therefore, be not grieved nor be angry with yourselves that ye sold me thither, for God did send me before you to preserve life. Haste ye then and go to my father, and say unto him: Thus sayeth thy son Joseph: God hath made me Lord of all Egypt; come down to me, tarry not. And ye shall tell my father of all my glory in Egypt, and ye shall haste and bring down my father hither. And he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and he kissed all his brethren and wept upon them." The good Joseph! and the sweet poetic mind that still makes our hearts to throb in sympathy with its own as it wove the

tale, though it has been stilled so many hundred years!

The brothers return home and tell the wondrous story to their father, whose heart faints within him at first, for he scarce believes them. But seeing the presents with which they are loaded his spirit revives, and he says: "It is enough; Joseph my son is yet alive; I will go and see him before I die." He takes his journey accordingly with all belonging to him?

With his sons and daughters and his son's sons and daughters, their cattle and all the gear they had gotten in the land of Canaan, they move away, three score and six in all, making up with Joseph, his wife Asenath and the two sons she had borne him, the three score and ten persons—the mystical number seventy—connected with Jacob who come out of the land of Canaan into Egypt.

The wealth, in cattle especially, said to have been possessed by Jacob and his sons in the land of Canaan might seem to make removal to Egypt on account of famine unnecessary?

So we might suppose; with their flocks and herds they could have been in no want of animal food; and if the land was in a state to produce "balm and honey, nuts and almonds, spices and myrrh" as presents for the Governor of Egypt, it was also in a condition to yield corn for Jacob and his sons, and herbage for their cattle?

So we might fairly suppose. But continued peaceful settlement in the land of Canaan would not have enabled the Jewish scribes to exhibit their people in any peculiar or very striking way as the special favourites of their God Jehovah. Neither would he have had the occasion required to show the many strange signs and wonders they describe in proof of his almighty power and his superiority over the gods of Pharaoh and the Egyptians. Neither indeed would such a course have left any excuse for the cruelties so

wantonly committed against the Egyptians, or the invasion of Palestine and the indiscriminate slaughter of its inhabitants, accounts of which are laid up in the Hebrew annals as acts approved—nay commanded by God, meritorious in themselves and worthy of imitation by posterity.

But the famine, as foretold by Joseph to the Pharaoh; and, presumed to have extended to Palestine, is the cause which led immediately to Jacob's removal with his family from the land of Canaan to Egypt?

The famine, too, must be a myth—part of the machinery brought into play by the writer. Occasional droughts with consequent dearths have, doubtless, at all times prevailed in Palestine, as in other lands within the variable latitudes, but the geographical position of the country and all we know of its climate forbid us to believe that drought and dearth for seven successive years are within the sphere of possibility. Egypt, again, not depending on its local rainfall for the productiveness of its soil, but on the waters of the Nile, whose source is more than a thousand miles away, is as necessarily inundated once a year and fertilised, as winter and summer come alternately over the northern and southern halves of the globe. *Total* failure of the crops in Egypt, even for *one* year, may be said not to be possible. The rise of the river in one year being more than in another, and the acreage effectually irrigated and cultivated being in consequence less or more, there may in different years be relative abundance or dearth, but never entire failure of the land's increase, never even scarcity for such a period as seven years in succession.

Jacob and his son's wealth consisting in cattle of different kinds, the land of Egypt, so wholly agricultural, would not seem the most advantageous conceivable for the location of neat-herds and shepherds?

This difficulty is got over by Jacob and his family

being settled by Joseph, with the Pharaoh's approval, in the land of Goshen, a district on the northern borders of Egypt adapted to grazing, but which will be looked for in vain upon the map of such extent as might suffice to support the population that is said finally to have possessed it.

There was a special objection, moreover, to the settlement of Jacob and his kindred in the land of Egypt proper?

Besides the first and most obvious objection that presented itself to the writer's mind—the impossibility of having herds and flocks among the polders and canallated fields of the great valley of the Nile, shepherds are said to have been an abomination to the Egyptians.

What may be the meaning of this?

An obscure epoch in the history of Egypt is probably referred to, when the country was invaded and for a time dominated by a barbarous people called Hyksos or Shepherds, of whom little that is not conjectural is known—a wild Arabian tribe in all probability of the same Semitic stock as the Hebrews—who broke in upon peaceful Egypt out of the neighbouring desert and made themselves masters of the country for a season—how long it is impossible to say—but who were finally either absorbed into the general population, or, as the ruling class, were got the better of and exterminated or expelled.

Jacob however takes his journey with all he has, and as in his other significant moves does not fail to have a fresh vision and communication from the God of his father Isaac?

God, says the text, speaks unto Israel (Jacob) in a vision of the night, and announces himself as the God of his father, bids him not fear to go down into Egypt; for, adds his interlocutor: "I will go down with thee, and will bring thee up again and make of thee a great nation."

A long time elapsed, however, as we learn from another page of these scriptures, before God redeemed the repeated pledges he is said to have made to the Patriarchs?

Four hundred and thirty years, according to one of the accounts, between the promise now made to Jacob and the Exodus from Egypt, when the first steps may be said to have been taken which, after forty years more of wandering in the desert, were to lead to fulfilment of his engagements. But it is man who makes promises and enters into covenants; God makes and enters into none, save in the eternal, changeless laws which are his essence, and these are not in time but from eternity.

And, then, were the Jews ever a great nation; numerous as the stars of heaven or the sands of the sea shore?

Never. They did not even at any time obtain entire possession of the land they believed had been promised to them, and were alternately tributaries to the Moabites, Philistines, Phœnicians, Egyptians, Assyrians, Babylonians, Greeks, and Romans, by all of whom they were at different times conquered, amerced as tributaries, or led into captivity as slaves.

The promises made them, therefore, can only have been in their own imaginations?

They certainly cannot have been from God, for they were never kept.

But to return—Jacob on his arrival in Egypt is dutifully met by Joseph in his chariot, and by him is presented to the Pharaoh. Inquired of by the sovereign how old he is, what answer makes he?

"That he is an hundred and thirty years old;" and rather ungratefully and untruly, as it seems, from all we know of his history, he adds: "Few and evil have been the days of the years of my life."

Can we fancy the successful superseder of his elder brother and filcher of his father's blessing, the un-

vanquished wrestler with Elohe himself, and the prosperous possessor of herds and flocks, and a numerous progeny, to have given such an answer?

Not if he were speaking in sober seriousness. His own life had been prosperous; the evil in it had all fallen upon others.

The famine continuing in the land of Egypt, how does Joseph proceed?

Warily and with a view to aggrandise the ruler, harshly and so as to impoverish and break the people; for he first gathers into his own hand all the money in the country by the sale of his hoarded corn; then he says, "Give me of your cattle if money fail;" and the year coming to an end with no abatement of the scarcity, he finally buys up all the land, every man selling his field for bread, and removes the people into the cities from one end of Egypt to the other.

Does he not make one exception in this getting possession of the soil?

He does: "The land of the priests bought he not," a piece of information which enables us surely to divine what he was who tells the story.

A priest?

Undoubtedly. Nor was Joseph yet at an end with his hard conditions to the people. In return for the seed they received to sow their fields, he made it a law over the land of Egypt unto this day that Pharaoh should have the fifth part of the produce, except of the land of the priests, which became not Pharaoh's.

Another exception in the same line, and with the phrase "unto this day," assuring us not only of the probable calling of the narrator, but of the comparatively late period when he lived and wrote?

It does so assure us, very certainly. The children of Israel, however, prosper in the land of Goshen, having no hard conditions imposed on them by the

Governor; and Jacob, we are told, lived for seventeen years thereafter among his children.

The longest life, however, comes to an end at last, and we have more than one account of the incidents attending Jacob's death?

It appears so. In the first that meets us he calls Joseph to his side and engages him by the oath held most sacred among the Jews to dispose of his body in the way he desires: "Put, I pray thee, thy hand under my thigh (admove manum tuum testibus meis) and deal kindly and truly with me; bury me not in Egypt. but I will lie with my fathers, and thou shalt carry me out of Egypt and bury me in their burying-place." In the second account given of the patriarch's end Joseph is *told* of his father's sickness, and taking his two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, in his hand, he visits his parent, who on his part is *told* of his son's arrival, when he "strengthens himself and sits upon the bed." Seeing Joseph's sons he asks who they are, for his eyesight is dim. Being informed, he says, "Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them."

He blesses them?

He does; but imitates his own father Isaac in so far that, though he blesses both of the lads, he gives for no imaginable reason the preferential blessing with the right hand to the younger son. In this second account he says nothing about desiring to be buried out of Eygpt, but having blessed Joseph he adds, "I die, but God will bring you again into *the land of your fathers*."

Jacob, therefore, speaks of the land of Canaan as his own country and the country of his fathers?

He does so; and when we read of the ample possessions of Abraham and of Jacob and of Esau, called Duke of Seir, it is impossible not to see that the land of Canaan had already been given by God to the Patriarchs and their seed; for they could not have be-

come proprietors of hundreds of camels, of thousands of oxen, and of hundreds of thousands of sheep and goats, had they not also been lords of the soil.

Such considerations as these might lead us to infer that the first coming of the Israelites into Egypt was due to another cause than the famine at home, the one assigned?

It seems more likely, from the context and other parts of the imperfect history we possess, to have been owing to the fortune of war,—the truth in al likelihood being that a body of them was carried to the land of the Pharaohs as captives at some period unnamed in their history, they having been deported, in conformity with ancient usage, from their own homes to those of their conquerors, and by them treated as slaves. The Hebrew Scriptures indeed are silent as to any Egyptian captivity similar to the captivities of Assyria and Babylon; but when we discover the Jewish physiognomy among the trains of captives depicted in the temples, we are authorised to conclude that the position of the children of Israel in Egypt was never anything other than that of slavery. This would better account for the hard usage they are said to have suffered at the hands of their masters in after-times, which led to revolt and flight, than the reason assigned in the record. The posterity of Jacob, after a peaceful residence for centuries in Goshen, could not have been looked on as intruders and to be feared, nor treated with harshness, more than any of the other inhabitants of the land of Egypt.[o]

[o] Movers refers to a curious passage in 'The Birds' of Aristophanes, to show that the Israelites in early times must have been slaves in Phœnicia as well as in Egypt. The Cucku arrived in Phœnicia at the time of the wheat and barley harvest, and his call interpreted by the Greek comic writer is to this effect: Circumcised to the field! The Israelites must therefore have been the bondmen, field labourers to their more civilised and powerful neighbours.—('Die Phœnizier,' ii. 314.)

Jacob distinguishes Joseph from his other sons ?

He does by the legacy he leaves him. After giving him his blessing, he adds : "Moreover I have given to thee one portion above thy brethren which I took out of the hand of the Amorite with my sword and with my bow." In no part of the Scriptures, however, is there any mention made of early feuds between the descendants of Abraham settled in Canaan and their neighbours, nor of any feat of arms performed by Jacob against the Amorites in particular. Jacob, on the contrary, is characterised at the outset of his history as a plain or peaceful man, so that the verse here may be an after-thought of the writer for the greater exaltation of Joseph, although Jacob's boast may lead us to suspect that we have by no means the history of the Hebrew people complete.

Jacob blesses or addresses some words of farewell to his other sons before he dies ?

He does; but what he says can be less interpreted as blessing than as prophecy : "Gather yourselves together (he says) that I may tell you what will befal you in times to come; gather yourselves together and hearken, ye sons of Jacob, hearken to Israel your father !"

He then addresses each in succession, saying first to Reuben as his eldest—

"Reuben, thou art my first-born, my might, the beginning of my strength ! * * * * Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed, then defiledst thou it."

We have had the story of Reuben's transgression already, which seems so unnatural and abominable that an allegorical interpretation has been sought not only for it, but for the whole of the 49th chapter of Genesis, to which our survey has now brought us. What may be the nature of this interpretation ?

We have already seen Jacob assuming that he, his wife, and his other sons were the sun, moon, and

eleven stars of Joseph's dream, and there can be little doubt of the twelve tribes of Israel having been constituted as representatives of the twelve signs of the zodiac through which the sun passes in his annual circuit round the earth, as understood by all the nations of antiquity. Antiquarian writers of the highest authority are further agreed in concluding that the several tribes (in much later times than the age of Jacob, however) carried banners with devices distinctive of each upon them, these being. in fact, no other than the figures of animals, men or things to be found, with little variety, on the planispheres or zodiacs of the Indians, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, and ourselves.

What is the interpretation given to the Patriarch's address to Reuben in conformity with this, which may properly be spoken of as the enigmatical and astrological meaning that underlies the language of this as of so many other parts of the Hebrew Scriptures?

The tribe of Reuben is believed to have carried the sign of Aquarius on its banner. Now the sign of Aquarius is typified by a human figure with a pitcher or urn out of which water is flowing: hence Reuben is unstable as water; he defiles his father's bed when he cohabits with the Patriarch's concubine Bilhah, and so forfeits his birthright as eldest born, which is given to Joseph. And oriental astronomers designate one of the asterisms in the sign of Aquarius by the name of *Bulha*, which rises when the sun is yet in Capricornus,—the house of Saturn, the star of Israel,—and sets at the precise time when Aquarius also dips under the horizon head foremost, and by reversing his urn was held by the ancients to cause the overflow of the Nile.

This is certainly curious and is not usually adverted to by commentators on the Hebrew Scriptures, although it has great semblance of probability for its truth. What says the Patriarch further?

"Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations; in their anger they slew a man," &c. Now the sign allotted to them was PISCES, the fishes, a sign held of specially malignant influence by the old astrologers; for whilst the sun is in Pisces all the constellations that were considered adverse are seen above the horizon; and with his setting in this sign the disasters of the reign of Typhon, *i.e.* of winter, begin; for then it is that Orion sets and is feigned to die from the sting of the venomous scorpion who rises, and that Osiris is entrapped and slain by Typhon. In their self-will these brethren are further said to dig down a *wall*—the Hebrew, more correctly translated, meaning to maim, or it may be to emasculate a bull; and in the Mithriac monuments in particular, when the sun in Pisces sets, the scorpion is represented gnawing the genitals of the vernal bull—*i.e.*, the reproductive power of nature falls into abeyance, and the destructive principle asserts its power.

What is said to Judah?

"Judah is a lion's whelp; his hand is in the neck of his enemies, and his father's children bow down before him."

The interpretation of which is?

That the sun having in the olden time attained his highest northern meridian altitude in Leo, the cognisance of the tribe of Judah, all the other constellations are beneath or may be said to have become subject to him; hence, the hand in the neck of enemies, and the father's children bowing down before him.

The sceptre it is said shall not depart from Judah nor the ruler's rod (not *lawgiver* as in the English version) until he come to Shiloh and the people obey him. How may this be interpreted?

The constellation Cepheus, as King of Ethiopia, is still seen on our celestial spheres with a crown on his

head and a sceptre in his hand. This constellation rises towards the end of July under Leo, as it were, and continues the paranatellon or concomitant asterism of Leo until the sun enters Scorpio. Cepheus, the King, sets about the time Scorpio rises, and then ceases as it seems to attend upon Leo; the brighter of two of the most conspicuous stars in Scorpio, called *Shuleh* by Arabian astronomers, then making its appearance on the visible horizon.

What may be the meaning of the sentence where Judah is said to bind his ass's colt to the vine and to wash his garments in wine?

It probably alludes to the influence of the sun in bringing to maturity the fruits of the earth, those of the vine in especial, whose noble product, wine, gladdens the heart of man.

Zebulon, says the Patriarch in continuation, shall dwell at the haven of the sea, and shall be for a haven for ships. How may this be interpreted?

The standard of Zebulon was Capricornus; and on turning to a celestial globe we observe that the ship Argo, with the most brilliant star in the southern heavens—Canopus—visible in Egypt, by us unseen, sets as Capricornus rises.

ISSACHAR is the next in order?

Issachar is a strong Ass couching between two burthens; and Issachar bore on his banner the sign of *Cancer*, in which are the stars called the Asses. Had the sun had the turning point in his course as now in Cancer, instead of Leo as at the time the zodiac was designed which the writer of Jacob's death-song must have had before him, we should find no difficulty in interpreting the couching as between the burthen of the past and the burthen of the future. But the translation of the Hebrew by the English word *burthens*, seems to be erroneous, the proper rendering being *partitions* (Drummond), *Viehhürden—cattle hurdles* (De Wette). Issachar saw that rest

was good, yet bowed his shoulder to bear—he couched at the turning point of the summer half of the year.

DAN it is said shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse's heels so that his rider shall fall back?

A sentence which finds its ready interpretation in the fact that the tribe of Dan bore the sign of Scorpio on its banner. This was one of the accursed signs according to the ancient astrologers; for with the entrance of the sun into Scorpio commenced the reign of Typhon, the death of Orion, and the emasculation of the vernal bull. Close to Scorpio we see the serpent Ophiucus,—the adder that bites the horse's heels,—the head of this serpent ascending along with the feet of the Centaur, or Hippocentaur, to obtain the element of the horse, the heels of which are said to be bitten by the reptile. It is not without interest to note that in the record of the doings of the tribe of Dan elsewhere recorded (Joshua, ch. xix.), we read of their taking the city of Leshem and giving it the name of their chief or father, Dan. Now, the bright star in Scorpio which we call Antares was called Leshat by the Chaldeans and Lesos by the Greeks, so that the astrological significance of what is said of Dan is not doubtful.

Of GAD it is said a troop shall overcome him, but he shall overcome at the last?

In Capricornus there is a cluster of stars called variously Gadia and Gadi by the Chaldeans and Syrians, Giedi by the Arabians. It might be presumed at first sight, therefore, that Gad must have had Capricornus for its cognisance. But the cognisance of Gad was *Aries*, the Ram, in which sign the sun crossed the equator in the olden time, as in times still older he made the passage in Taurus, and from the inferior mounted triumphantly, victorious as it were, over the inferior signs, in the lowest of which,

Capricornus, comprising the cluster or troop of stars called Gadia, he was feigned to have been born at the winter solstice: pressed on symbolically by a troop at one time, the sun advancing in his course prevails over it at last.

Out of ASHER the bread shall be fat, and he shall give the dainties of the King (De Wette).

Libra was the sign carried on the banner of Asher, and when the sun had reached this sign the happy season of the year had come, with skies still mild and the earth burthened with the load of ripened and ripening fruits which under the fostering influence of the God of Day it had produced. Hence the allusion to the big loaf and the dainties for a King.

NAPHTHALI is a hind let loose; he giveth goodly words.

Tradition allots Virgo to Naphthali. The word translated *hind* had probably a different signification in the original, and what is implied by the goodly words he gave it is not easy to conjecture.

JOSEPH is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over a wall.

The writer compares Ephraim, who assumed the standard of his father Joseph, to a young bull, and tradition assigns TAURUS to the tribe of Ephraim—Taurus, the sign in which the vernal equinox occurred in very ancient times, and when the vegetable world was starting into life. Hence the allusion to the fruitful bough, spreading abroad in its luxuriant growth. "The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him and hated him; but his bow abode in strength, pliant the power of his hands, made strong by the hand of the mighty Jacob" (De Wette), continues the text. Now it happens that immediately after the sun has passed into Sagittarius, the head of Taurus begins to set, whence we can easily conclude as to the archer who shoots at him in hate. But the whole of the matter here can only be satisfactorily

explained by referring to the Mithriac monuments, delineations of several of which are given by Hyde in his classical work, 'Veterum Persarum et Medorum Religionis Historia." In these, Mithras the sun in Taurus is represented on the back of a Bull, whose side he pierces with a dagger, and its blood, the symbol of life, flows down to vivify and fertilise the earth, whilst a flying arrow is seen directed against the breast of the animal, and the scorpion is observed gnawing his genital organs.

"BENJAMIN shall ravin as a wolf; in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil."

This tribe bore the wolf on its banner, and one of the ancient eastern symbols of the sign Gemini is the wolf. Further, Gemini was the sign in which the god with the dog or wolf's head, Anubis, had his station, who, besides announcing the rise of the Nile, was also the planet Mercury, which changes alternately and so rapidly from an evening to a morning and from a morning to an evening star, whence the possible allusion to the prey and the spoil in connection with the night and the morning.[p]

In concluding his death song, Jacob commands his sons assembled around him, precisely as he had commanded Joseph individually in the first account we had of the death-bed scene, not to bury him in Egypt, but with his fathers in the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a burying-place. Having made an end of commanding his sons, he brought his feet together on the bed and departed, and was gathered to his people.

[p] The writer mainly followed in the above astrological exposition is Sir W. Drummond, in his 'Œdipus Judaicus;' with some hints from Nork's 'Biblische Mythologie.' Where the Scripture texts given differ from the accredited English version, De Wette's unrivalled translation of the Bible has been followed.

What is the conclusion now come to by the abler and better informed of the critical exponents of the Hebrew Scriptures in regard to the prophetical death song of Jacob?

That it is a poetical *prophecy after the event,* largely interlarded with allegorical and astrological matter, and not composed, in all probability, until after the epoch of the Kings of Judah. Dr Davidson agrees with those critics who think it may have been written by Nathan (*vide* 'Introduction to Old Testament,' i., p. 198). "The Deity," says this ripe scholar, able critic, and liberal theologian, "did not see fit, so far as we can judge, to impart to any man like Jacob the knowledge of future and distant events. Had he done so, he would not have left him to speak on his death-bed like an Arab chief of no higher blessings to his sons than rapine and plunder, and without the least reference to another and better state of existence on which he believed he should enter, and on which he might counsel his sons to act continually." That the death song is allegorical is obvious enough to us, and if it have the astrological meaning assigned to it by such scholars and thinkers as Kircher, Jablonski, Dupuis, Drummond, and Nork, it seems as if it could only have been produced after the Babylonian captivity, when the Jews had received a lesson in the astrological lore of the Chaldeans; they themselves up to the time of the exile appearing to have been profoundly ignorant of all beyond the fact that there were lights in the sky—sun, moon, planets, and fixed stars, which influenced them as they fancied in their estates, and were set in heaven, moreover, for their peculiar advantage.

Joseph and his brethren, now reconciled, like dutiful sons, carry out their father's injunctions in regard to the burial?

Joseph commands his servants the physicians to embalm the body of his father Jacob, and having the

Pharaoh's leave of absence he sets out with all the adult members of his father's house for the land of Canaan, where, after a grievous mourning, characterised in the text as "the mourning of the Egyptians," he buries his father. He then returns to Egypt with his brethren, who fearing that Joseph would now hate them, their father being dead, and requite them for the evil they had done him, send a messenger to him and entreat forgiveness for their trespass and their sin.

Joseph, as we know him, does not deny them?

"Fear not," he says; "for stand I not under God? Ye thought evil against me, but God turned it to good, to bring it to pass as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore fear ye not; I will care for you and for your children. And he comforted them and spake kindly to them." (Eng. vers. and De Wette.)

Joseph lives long in Egypt, and sees the children of the third generation of Ephraim his son; the children also of Machir, the son of Manasseh his own son, were brought up on his knees—this implies a long life?

Joseph, according to the text, lives a hundred and ten years and then dies. Before being gathered to his fathers, however—and we might say as matter of course and in emulation of his father Jacob—he says to his brethren: "God will surely visit you and bring you out of this land unto the land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob." He also takes an oath of his kinsmen binding them to carry his bones from Egypt to the ancestral burying-place in the land of Canaan. His life at an end, his body is embalmed and put into a coffin in Egypt.

APPENDIX.

(A.) GENESIS OF THE EARTH.

The elements and their compounds probably existed at first in states far different from those in which they now present themselves: water as oxygen and hydrogen; the saline, earthy, and metallic oxides, carbonates, chlorides, &c., in the form of their constituent elements. A vast amount of heat must also have been set free whilst the atmosphere and crust of the earth were undergoing condensation and consolidation from the gaseous and vaporous into the liquid and solid states in which they now exist, which could not all have been dissipated in space, and so lost to the earth. Concentrated into mighty flashes of lightning—electric sparks of portentous power,—it was probably used in bringing into play the elective affinities of the elements or simple substances, and so producing the compounds in which we now meet with them, the heat itself from sensible becoming latent in these.

(B.) THE CONFUSION OF LANGUAGES.

Can any reasonable explanation be given of the myth of the Tower of Babel?

From its geographical position on the Euphrates—now a sedge-grown stream creeping sluggishly along among sand-banks and over shallows, but in former ages rolling a much mightier tide to the sea—Babylon

lay in the direct line of communication between the East and the West. This naturally brought men of different tongues together, and after the wars of Nebuchadnezzar and his deportations from the conquered countries it became a kind of centre in which numerous different races of the human family were made to congregate. Hence, such the diversity of language said to have prevailed that the inhabitants of one quarter of the great city did not understand the tongue of those of another. The inventor of the mythical tale may have been one of the deported Israelites, and well acquainted with the confusion of tongues *that prevailed in Babylon.*

(C.) TEMPTATION OF ABRAHAM.

Have we not parallels in the old mythologies of like intended but interrupted sacrifices of children by their fathers?

We have already referred to one at least where the sacrifice is said to have been completed: Kronos, arrayed in his royal robes, to stay a pestilence, offered up his son Jehud to his father Uranos. But Athamas, King of Iolchos, about to sacrifice his son to Jupiter Laphystius, in fulfilment of the terms on which he held his kingdom, like Abraham, was prevented, the god considerately substituting a golden-fleeced ram for the son; Iphigenia, about to bleed on the altar of Diana, was replaced by a hind, &c.