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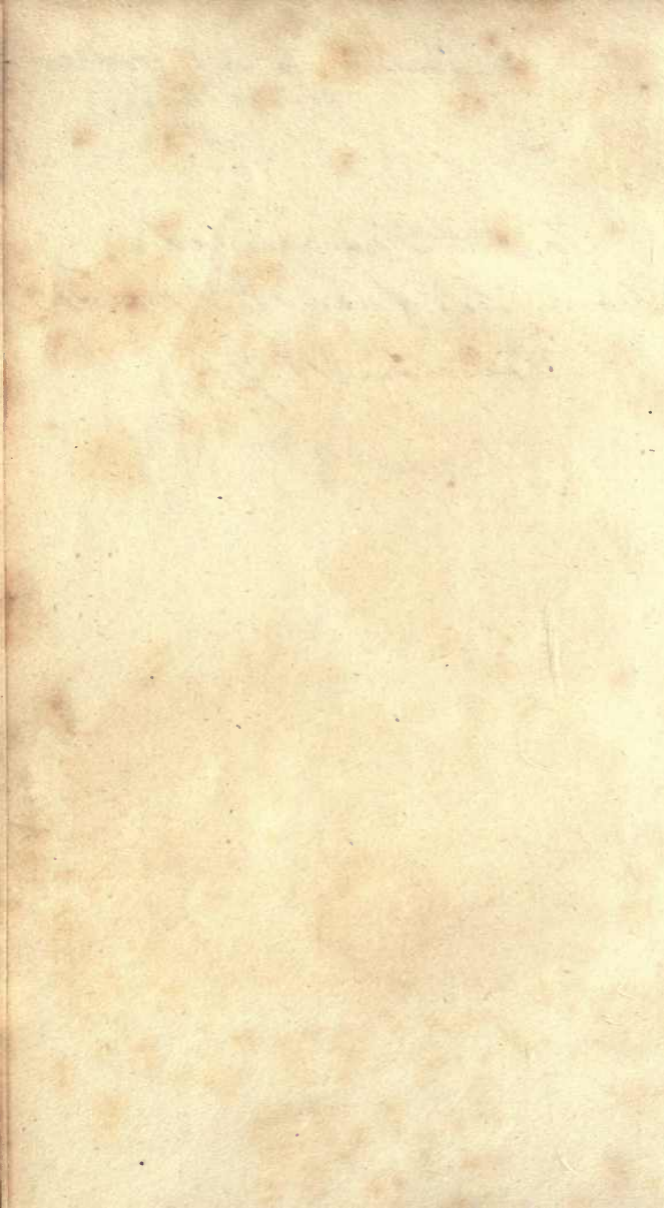
En souvenir d'A. L. Lovelle
Dec. 1910

To P. C. Fancourt,

From her friend E. L. Burt

London 1837

Cover 1 p. 149





Oriental Fragments.



Drink, my lord:

Gen. XXIV. 18.

ORIENTAL FRAGMENTS.

BY MARIA HACK.

Which serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things.

Heb. viii. 5.

Those who have studied the Oriental languages and histories, or have travelled into the Eastern parts, have made many discoveries of late years, which have surprisingly confirmed the Scripture accounts.

Hartley.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR HARVEY AND DARTON,
GRACECHURCH-STREET.

1828.

P R E F A C E.



AN attempt to illustrate the accuracy of Scripture, by reference to the customs and peculiarities adduced in the following pages, may, in the apprehension of some, resemble *the tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin*, brought to the sacred treasury. We should, however, recollect, that it was not the trivial nature of these offerings, but the omission of important duties, that incurred the censure of our Lord. Those evidences of revealed religion, which may be compared to *the weightier matters of the law*, indisputably claim our first attention; but, in proportion as the understanding and affections are engaged in the examination of the subject, and sensible of its paramount importance, we shall probably feel

desirous of investigating another kind of testimony, resulting from an infinite variety of concomitant circumstances; which, making up in number what they individually want in weight, are capable of affording no small help towards the clearer understanding of the Sacred Records. He, who has *never left himself without a witness*, has permitted these apparently casual illustrations to be so widely diffused, that, towards whatever department of knowledge our researches are directed, we may, if so disposed, “make every kind of study pay its contribution to the Oracles of God.”

These illustrations are furnished by accounts of the natural history, customs, and manners, of Eastern nations, contained in the writings of European travellers, who are esteemed for their general knowledge and accuracy of observation; and also from various passages in Jewish, heathen, and Mohammedan authors, collected by Harmer, and other able writers of later date.

Such testimonies are peculiarly valuable, because far the greater part of them are obtained from witnesses who had no *design* of illustrating or confirming the accuracy of the sacred historians; neither could they suspect that their remarks would hereafter be applied to such a purpose. Their object was to instruct or amuse, by a faithful account of what they deemed worthy of observation in the countries they describe; but they frequently present us with occasions of admiring the wisdom of Providence, in permitting the unchanging character of the Orientals to become subservient to a higher purpose. Those nations are, at the present day, holding up, as it were, a mirror, in which the metaphors, images, and allusions, employed by the sacred penmen, are often clearly reflected; enabling us to perceive the force and intent of expressions, on which the difference of our own habits and circumstances might lead us to put a false construction.

To a great number of young persons, and,

perhaps, to some of maturer age, the study of the Scriptures will become more interesting, from opening a connexion between it and other branches of knowledge; and, considering the inaptitude of many for receiving instruction of a character exclusively religious, it seems a duty to strengthen, by every innocent means, associations which may lead to the happiest results. It is said of Lord Cobham, that no species of learning, at that time held in esteem, escaped his attention. The novelty of Wicliff's opinions engaged his curiosity: he examined them as a philosopher, and he became a Christian. Are the doctrines of prophets and evangelists less convincing than those of our venerable reformer?

While examining the store of facts accumulated by writers of diligence and ability, I have attempted to select a few which seemed likely to be interesting; not only as confirming the accuracy of the sacred historians, or placing certain passages in a clearer light, but as susceptible of

important practical application; and, for this use of the labours of Harmer and others, I am responsible. Though conscious of many defects in the execution of my design, I could not regard this as a sufficient reason for suppressing observations which spontaneously arose from the subject, and might, possibly, lead to useful reflection.

Lavant, 1828.

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ORIENTAL FRAGMENTS.

I.

POURING OUT WATER AT THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

JOHN, vii. 37, 38.

THESE words are said by the Evangelist, to have been spoken by our Lord with reference to *the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive*: it is supposed that they also contain an allusion to the ceremony of pouring out water with solemnity at the Feast of Tabernacles, which was

probably going forward at that moment in the presence of his auditors. In the account given by Moses, (LEVIT. xxiii. 34—43,) of the institution of this festival, there is no mention of such a ceremony, unless the expression *drink offerings*, v. 37, may be understood as referring to it. The feast is described as a memorial of the children of Israel dwelling in tents during their sojourn in the wilderness: it was also a time of rejoicing before the Lord, on account of gathering in the fruits of the earth. The prophet Zechariah, who was sent to stir up the Jews to greater zeal and diligence in rebuilding the Temple, after the seventy years' captivity, mentions the observance of this festival as being connected with the rains which were expected soon to follow. *It shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which come against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even*

*upon them shall be no rain**. Hence it appears, that attending the Feast of Tabernacles was connected with obtaining the rains of autumn, which are so essential after the drought of a Syrian summer: it therefore seems probable, that pouring out water in the Temple, with solemnity, as before God, was understood to be the means of effectually procuring the desired blessing. Dr. Lightfoot informs us, that it was thus represented by the rabbi Akibah. “The law saith, Bring an *omer*† of barley at the Passover, for that is the season of barley, that the corn may be blessed. Bring wheat and the first fruits at Pentecost, which is the season of trees, that the fruit of trees may be blessed unto thee. Bring the libation of water at the Feast of Tabernacles, that the showers may be blessed to thee. And accordingly it is said, that whoever will not come to the feast of Tabernacles, shall have no rain.”

In an early period of the Jewish history

* Zech. xiv. 16, 17.

† 6 pints, wine measure.

we have an account of the solemn pouring out of water, under circumstances which would lead one to suppose that it was supplicatory, and expressive of praying for rain. After the Philistines had sent back the Ark, and while it still remained in Kirjath-jearim, the Israelites are represented as *lamenting after the Lord**. The prophet Samuel expostulated with them concerning the grievous idolatry of which they had been guilty during their long subjection to the Philistines; and, on condition of their putting away these *strange gods*, and gathering together at Mizpeh, he promised to pray for them to the Lord. There is no account of the Philistines having inflicted any new hardships upon them; but we may suppose that some particular judgment had been the means of rousing them from their preceding state of indifference to religion, and carelessness about the Ark and worship of the Lord. What this judgment was, may be conjectured from the eleventh chapter of Deuteronomy, in which Judæa is spoken of as a

* 1 Sam. vii. 2.

land that *drinketh water of the rain of heaven*; a land under the special oversight of Providence, in which *the first rain and the latter rain* should be given in their due seasons, while the Israelites continued steadfast in the worship of their God; but if they turned aside, and served other gods, the Almighty threatened to punish them by shutting up the heavens and withholding the rain. Idolatry was the sin which Samuel called upon them to renounce, as the means of obtaining a return of the Divine favour, and it had probably been visited by the specified indication of God's displeasure. This supposition is strengthened by the circumstances recorded: the Israelites *drew water, and poured it out before the Lord*, humbly acknowledging at the same time the sin of which they had been guilty. While thus occupied, they were alarmed by intelligence that the Philistines, having heard of their assembling together, were marching against them. This increased the earnestness of their desire that Samuel should plead with the Lord in their behalf. He therefore offered up a lamb in sacrifice, and while he

was yet engaged in prayer, *the Lord thundered with a great thunder* upon the advancing army of the Philistines, and *discomfited them*. Thus, in all probability, graciously answering the twofold petition of the prophet, and dispersing the enemies of his repentant people, by the same means which produced a plentiful rain, and averted the impending danger of famine: thunder being frequently the forerunner of rain in those countries.

We learn from many passages of Scripture, that Jehovah claimed the sole power of bestowing rain; and that he claimed it as distinguishing himself from idols. By his command, the prophet Jeremiah represents the penitent Israelites as saying: *Are there any among the vanities of the Gentiles that can cause rain? or can the heavens give showers? art thou not he, O Lord our God? therefore we will wait upon thee: for thou hast made all these things*.*"

But though the pouring out of water before God, might occasionally be practised in

* Jer. xiv. 22.

times of drought, we have no account of its *becoming an annual ceremony*, till after the Babylonish captivity. Among the ancient Persians a similar rite was observed, about the time of the autumnal equinox, when rain was expected and anxiously desired. It has been thought that the Jews, who must, during their long captivity, have grown familiar with the custom, determined, on returning to their native land, to add this rite, as an acknowledgment of rain being the gift of Jehovah, to that ancient national solemnity which Moses had enjoined them to observe at this season of the year: the time of the Persian festival nearly corresponding with that of the Feast of Tabernacles. We have already noticed that Zechariah, who then prophesied among them, had declared the regular observance of this festival to be the condition of obtaining those fertilizing showers, without which their land would cease to yield its increase. By presenting the first fruits of their corn and their trees, as commanded in the Mosaic ritual, they were taught to acknowledge that they received these blessings from God; and con-

sequently, if they were not expressly enjoined to pour out water at this festival, the offering was accordant with the spirit of their ancient customs.

Our Lord often took occasion, from some circumstance striking to the senses, to direct the attention of his followers to spiritual truths. So now, *on the last great day of the feast*, while with solemn libations the Jews were imploring *rain from heaven to fill their hearts with food and gladness*, he proclaimed Himself to be the channel through which richer blessings should flow to all *who would come to him and drink*. The Divine energy accompanying his words, impressed the hearts of the bystanders, so that many exclaimed, *Of a truth, this is the Prophet*. Others said, *This is the Christ*. Even the officers commissioned to seize him, pleaded, as an apology for not executing their orders, *Never man spake like this man*. But nothing could overcome the obstinate prejudices of the Pharisees, who pleaded their own unbelief as a satisfactory argument against him: *Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed on him?*

II.

METHOD OF WATERING THE GROUND
IN EGYPT.

For the land whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs; But the land whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven: A land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.

DEUT. xi. 10—12.



WE must not conclude from this passage that the Almighty did not care for Egypt: he had, indeed, judged it expedient to single out the family of Abraham, in order to preserve the knowledge of himself amongst them, while the rest of the world was sunk

in ignorance and idolatry. This family was also the depositary of a series of prophecies relating to the Messiah, which were designed to prepare the minds of men for his subsequent appearance, and to furnish convincing evidence that he was the promised Deliverer to whom all the prophets had in succession given witness. It also pleased the Divine Wisdom, that this chosen family should become the subjects of a peculiar administration of Providence—that their good or ill conduct should, *in this life*, meet with its specified reward or punishment, in the enjoyment or the privation of temporal blessings: thus, before the awful truth of a future state of retribution had been revealed, rendering it sensibly evident, even in a time of general darkness and ignorance, that there is a God who judgeth righteously, and who has power to render to every man according to his works.

But though the descendants of Abraham stood in this peculiar relation to the Almighty, we are not on that account to infer, that *He, who hath made of one blood all nations of men*, evinced any thing like an

unjust partiality, or withheld the bounties of his Providence from other lands. The periodical inundation which rendered Egypt so fertile, that in ancient times it was regarded as the granary of the surrounding nations, was as much the result of his gracious superintendence, as the rain that descended on the hills of Judæa. This was not, indeed, quite so *apparent*, because the art and industry of man were still required to distribute the waters of the Nile, in order that the country might derive the intended benefit from them. It is true that the lands immediately contiguous to the river, and those to which the inundation spontaneously extended, required no further watering to render them abundantly productive; but immense labour was requisite to conduct the water to many parts of the country. Hence originated those stupendous canals, which are justly esteemed the most admirable works of the ancient kings of Egypt. The construction of them must have been an oppressive labour to the people employed; yet the benefit resulting to the country was so great, that we need not be surprised to find an

idolatrous and vain-glorious king forgetting that his canals would have been useless, if the bounty of Providence had not replenished them, and thus incurring the divine displeasure: *Behold I am against thee, Pharaoh, king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself*.*" If, when we are rejoicing in the success of our schemes, we should ever be tempted to ascribe the auspicious result exclusively to our own sagacity, we may receive a salutary warning from the example of one, whose opportunities of contemplating the government of Providence were so inferior to those enjoyed under the Christian dispensation, that such arrogance was, in his circumstances, comparatively venial; yet to him the prophet was commissioned to declare, *The land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste; and they shall know that I am the Lord; because he hath said, THE RIVER IS MINE, AND I HAVE MADE IT†.*

* Ezek. xxix. 3.

† Ib. xxix. 9.

We may form some idea of the astonishing labour and perseverance displayed in these undertakings, from the account of Maillet, who tells us he was assured that the large canal which fills the cisterns of Alexandria, and which is at least fifteen hundred leagues long, was entirely paved, and its sides lined and supported by walls of brick, which, when he visited Egypt, were as perfect as they had been in the times of the Romans.

Sesostris, the son and successor of that Pharaoh who perished in the pursuit of the Israelites, is said to have attempted the construction of canals on a very extended scale. To him is ascribed the grand design, afterwards abandoned, but completed under the Ptolemies, of making a canal from the Nile to the Red Sea, thus effecting a communication between it and the Mediterranean*. He also caused a vast number of canals to be dug, in order to facilitate the transportation of goods from one city of Egypt to another; and as a means of rendering the country inaccessible to the cavalry of his enemies †. It

* Rollin, *Hist. Anc.* tome i. p. 34.

† *Ib.* p. 96.

is therefore no unfair supposition to conclude that his father, who is said to have employed none but foreigners in his public works, imposed similar labours on the Israelites, whose lives, we know, *were made bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field.* If this were the case, with what pleasure must they have listened to the words of Moses, implying that the country to which they were going would require no canals to be dug—no bricks to be prepared for paving and lining them; a labour which had proved so bitter to them in Egypt.

The fertility of Egypt is justly represented as depending on the annual inundation, but we must not therefore conclude that it *never* rains there. Maillet quotes Pliny as affirming, that “there were no rains, no thunder, no earthquakes in that country;” and the prophet Zechariah speaks of Egypt as *having no rain**: this must, however, be understood in a qualified sense, as meaning that it is very uncommon. Maillet saw it rain

* Zech. xiv. 18.

several times, and witnessed two earthquakes during his residence there. When Pitts was at Cairo, it rained so heavily, that, owing to there being no kennels or other contrivance for carrying off the water, it was ankle deep in the streets, and in some places half way up the leg. Bishop Pococke also informs us, that when he was in Upper Egypt, he saw it hail and rain nearly the whole of one morning; and that, in the course of a few days afterwards, there were several showers. But still, the distinction made by Moses is characteristic of the two countries: Egypt is indebted for its fertility to the Nile, and Judæa *drinks water of the rain of heaven* *.

One circumstance mentioned in our text still remains to be noticed: Moses describes Egypt as being a land *watered with the foot*. The expression is thus explained by Dr. Shaw, who witnessed the operation. He informs us, that such vegetables as need repeated supplies of moisture, are refreshed by water drawn out of the river, and preserved

* See Harmer's Observations.

for that purpose in large cisterns. The various kinds of pulse, melons, sugar-canes, &c. are usually planted in drills, and when they require watering, the plugs are struck out of the bottom of the cisterns, and the gardener conducts the water from one drill to another in the following manner. He stops the course of the stream *by turning the earth against it with his foot*, while at the same time he opens with his mattock a new trench to receive it. This mode of watering, by conveying a little stream to the roots of the plants, is very generally practised, and affords one proof among many, in which the unchanging character of Eastern customs increases our respect for the accuracy of the Sacred Writers. When the trivial circumstances which they mention incidentally, are found to be thus scrupulously correct, great additional weight is given to their testimony in matters of importance. *He that is faithful in the least, is faithful also in much*.*"

* Luke, xvi. 10.

III.

INDICATIONS OF RAIN.

When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower, and so it is.

LUKE, xii. 54.

AN intelligent traveller, who was at Jerusalem in the month of November, 1774, observed that the wind which usually brought rain blew from the north-east. He mentioned the fact to Mr. Harmer, who was surprised at it, as being at variance with the declaration of our Lord, and coming from a gentleman whose accuracy of observation was unquestionable.

In this difficulty, he thought of consulting Dr. Russell's account of the weather at Aleppo, the climate of that city greatly resembling that of Jerusalem. He found that the wind, in the months of November, De-

ember, and January, usually blows from the north and east, taking that direction about the commencement of the rainy season. Towards the end of February the wind begins to blow from the west, and continues to do so till May: after that month it is unusual for any more rain to fall until the autumn, when the wind is generally north-east.

At Aleppo the severity of the winter lasts only about forty days, from the 12th of December to the 20th of January. This interval the natives call *The Murbania*. Then commences the season of flowers: the narcissus cheers even the coldest season, and immediately afterwards the hyacinths and violets make their appearance. As February advances, the fields are covered with a pleasing verdure, and the gardens are adorned with the blossoms of the almond, apricot, and peach: for some time the weather continues exceedingly pleasant, but the flowers and verdure of spring disappear by the middle of May; and before the end of that month, the whole country puts on so parched and barren an aspect, that one would scarcely think it capable of producing any thing, very

few plants being sufficiently vigorous to resist the extreme heat.

On comparing this account with our text, and taking into consideration the acknowledged resemblance of climate between Aleppo and Jerusalem, we may conclude that our Lord made this observation to the people, *in the spring*; his words describing the wind and the rain as they appear in that country during the spring, and only during that season. *The lilies* which are mentioned in the 27th verse of the same chapter, might then very probably be growing before the eyes of his auditors. The parched appearance of the country immediately succeeding the verdure of the spring, gives peculiar energy to his description of *the grass, which is TO-DAY in the field*, blooming in beauty surpassing the glory of Solomon, and, scorched and dried up by the intolerable heat, *TO-MORROW is cast into the oven*.

And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. And it came to pass in the meanwhile, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain.

I KINGS, xviii. 44, 45.

The kind of cloud seen by the servant of Elijah, has been considered as an unmeaning circumstance in the prophetic history; but we learn from the testimony of modern travellers, that in the East such clouds are at this day regarded as the natural prognostic of rain. Sir J. Chardin, in particular, observed that they usually appeared before great storms; and on reading his account of this phænomenon, an ingenious clergyman residing in Suffolk, remarked that he had witnessed the same appearance in England. "I saw," said he, "a cloud *like a man's hand*, on a high hill at Beachborough in Kent, immediately followed by a violent shower, then fair again."

Dr. Adam Clarke, the editor of Harmer's

Observations, remarks, in a note on this passage, that *he* also had noticed this at sea; and had seen it repeated several times on the same day, in the English Channel. A cloud, about the size of a man's hand, first appeared: this gradually increased, till the whole heavens were robed in black, and a dreadful storm succeeded. When the storm had discharged itself, and all was comparatively clear, the re-appearance of the *hand-like cloud* was the forerunner of another storm.

IV.

SEVERITY OF THE WINTER IN JUDÆA.

He giveth snow like wool; he scattereth the hoar frost like ashes; he casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold?

PSALM cxlvii. 16, 17.

WE have remarked that the *Murbania*, or Syrian winter, lasts only forty days, and that the narcissus is in flower during the whole of that time. Supposing this account to be correct, we may perhaps conclude, that the description given by the Psalmist in our text must be exaggerated; but there is ample testimony that the occasional severity of the weather in the Holy Land, is such as fully to justify his strong representation. It is, indeed, true, according to the report of Dr. Russell, that, even in the depth of winter, when the sun is out, and there is no

wind, it is warm, and sometimes almost hot, in the open air; but the violent storms of wind, hail, and rain, frequent in that country, are accompanied by piercing cold. The historians of the third Crusade speak of dreadful sufferings arising from this cause. About the middle of January, 1192, while the crusaders were holding a consultation, whether they should at that time make an attempt on Jerusalem, the Turks, who had shut themselves up in that city, were greatly distressed by the inclemency of the season. Violent hail and snow, (which do not appear to lie on the ground as in cold countries, but to melt at once,) occasioned great torrents from the mountains, sweeping away the horses and cattle in droves, and killing others with the violence of the cold. The army marching under the command of the English Cœur de Lion also suffered exceedingly: the wind drove the frozen snow in their faces; the hail descended with such force as to rebound with violence; the rain occasioned torrents which threatened to overwhelm them. Driven from their camp, between Lydda and Ramla, by the heavi-

ness of the rains, they advanced to the foot of the hills in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, where the cold was so intense that many of their beasts perished. Violent storms of rain, hail, and wind, continued to harass them: the stakes of their tents were torn up, and carried to a distance; the greater part of their provisions were spoiled, the biscuit soaked through, the bacon decayed; their arms were rusted, and their clothing greatly damaged. Similar disasters attended the followers of Baldwin, one of the first Christian kings of Jerusalem, in the mountainous district of Arabia, bordering on the Dead Sea, where they encountered "horrible hail, "ice, and unheard-of snow and rain." If this *unheard-of* snow resembled that observed by sir John Chardin in Iberia and Armenia, it might well surprise Europeans. He describes it as falling in soft, loose flakes, *the size of walnuts*, presently covering and overwhelming the traveller. To such snow, the comparison used by David in our text seems intended to apply: *He giveth snow like WOOL.*

St. Jerome, who resided a long time in

Judæa, speaks of the cold in that country as being frequently too severe to be endured, by persons who might wish to conceal themselves in the recesses of the mountains from the pursuit of their enemies; and he understands in a literal sense, the direction of our Lord to his disciples: "Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter." A lively comment on these words is also furnished by William of Tyre, in his account of the distresses of Saladin's army, after their defeat near Ascalon. Sinking under the hardships they endured, they were daily taken captive in the woods and mountains: sometimes even throwing themselves in the way of their enemies, rather than perish with cold and hunger.

V.

PLEASANTNESS OF THE SPRING.

Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.

CANT. ii. 10—12.

THE word *hassetav*, here translated *winter*, is supposed by Harmer to mean what the inhabitants of Aleppo express by the term *Murbania*. It occurs nowhere else in the Old Testament; another word being used to denote the rainy season, which constitutes the winter of the East.

If this be admitted, the invitation of the bridegroom may be understood as referring to that delightful weather which immediately follows the *Murbania*; and Dr. Russell's account of the first appearance of spring at Aleppo, and of the rural excursions of the English

merchants residing there, furnishes a pleasing, though undesigned comment on our text. He says that these gentlemen frequently dine abroad, under a tent, in spring and autumn; but in April and part of May they live in their gardens. About the middle of February, a small crane'sbill appears on the banks of the river, which is quickly followed by a profusion of other flowers. Nightingales abound there, and not only afford much pleasure by their songs in the gardens, but are also kept tame in the houses, and let out, at a small rate, to divert the inhabitants of the city: so that, in the spring, no entertainment is given without a concert of these birds. They also enliven the solitudes of Judæa with their varied notes. Thevenot informs us, that he visited the Jordan on the 16th of April, and found the little woods on the banks of the river filled with nightingales, in full song. From these accounts we may infer what were the birds which Solomon distinguishes from turtle-doves, when he makes the bridegroom say, *The time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.*

VI.

VICISSITUDES OF TEMPERATURE.

In the day, the drought consumed me, and the frost by night.

GENESIS, xxxi. 40.

THE complaint made by Jacob of the climate of Mesopotamia, accords with the testimony of modern travellers; and the same variation of temperature between the day and night, appears to be common in the neighbouring countries. Rauwolf, in going down the Euphrates, was glad to wrap himself, at night, in a frieze coat, on account of the frost and chilling dew. When Thevenot travelled in Mesopotamia, his forehead was swollen by the heat, and so exceedingly scorched that the skin peeled off. He says, this happened *although* he wore on his head a great black handkerchief, which he could see through:

he should rather have said, *because*; for though this method of defending the head is common in the East, there can be no doubt that the practice is very injudicious, and that Thevenot's sufferings were greatly increased by his adoption of it. All dark colours absorb the rays of the sun, and transmit considerable heat to any substance placed beneath them; as is clearly shown in an easy experiment described in Percival's Father's Instructions.

Sir John Chardin, who travelled both in winter and summer in Arabia and Mesopotamia, bears express testimony to the truth of Jacob's complaint. He was "scorched with heat in the day, and stiffened with cold in the night;" and adds, that this contrariety of temperature in the twenty-four hours, is, in some places, too great to be imagined by those who have not witnessed it: it seems like passing suddenly from the violent heats of summer to the depth of winter. Thus has it pleased Providence to temper the heat of the day by the coolness of the nights, without which these countries would be a barren desert. Another traveller,

Mr. Drummond, who went from Aleppo to the Euphrates in the month of August, informs us, that he “always found the mornings cold, and the day scorching hot.” It seems strange to hear of cold mornings in August, in the deserts of Arabia; but we see that the experience of modern travellers confirms the testimony of Jacob.

VII.

EFFECT OF RAIN UPON BUILDINGS IN
THE EAST.

Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand : And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house ; and it fell : and great was the fall of it.

MATT. vii. 26, 27.

One built up a wall, and lo, others daubed it with untempered mortar ; Say unto them which daub it with untempered mortar, that it shall fall : there shall be an overflowing shower ; and ye, O great hailstones, shall fall ; and a stormy wind shall rend it.

EZEK. xiii. 10, 11.

IN the Holy Land, rain during the winter season is not very frequent ; but when it does occur, it usually pours down with violence for a considerable time. This, in a

hilly country like Judæa, causes inundations, very dangerous to buildings which happen to be exposed to the action of torrents thus produced. To such accidents the words of our Lord appear to refer. In the preceding verse, he had been speaking of the wise builder, who, by digging deep, and laying his foundation on *the rock*, insured the safety of his house. Maundrill's account of the appearance of the country, affords a pleasing illustration of this passage. On the sides of the hills he observed traces of torrents; and he describes the soil as being in many places extremely rocky, but covered with a thin coat of earth. From the want of proper channels to carry off the water, inundations are common; and a house built only on the loose, shallow soil, would evidently be unfit to resist the sudden action of an impetuous torrent. Dr. Russell says, that, at Aleppo, the violent rains often wash down stone walls; and, in the Castravan mountains, a hamlet and a fig-garden were, by a torrent arising from this cause, removed suddenly to a considerable distance.

Another kind of misfortune is sometimes

occasioned by the gentler operation of continued rain, on the ill-constructed buildings common in the East. The same intelligent observer witnessed a remarkable instance of this, which he thought might throw some light on the passage we have selected from the prophecy of Ezekiel. While Dr. Russell was at Tozer, in the year 1727, a small drizzling rain fell, and continued for about two hours. Several of the houses, which were built of palm branches, mud, and tiles baked in the sun, *fell down*, merely in consequence of imbibing the moisture of the shower. Had the rain continued longer, or fallen with greater violence—had it been, as the prophet expresses it, *an overflowing shower*, the whole city would probably have been dissolved, or rather would have dropped to pieces. It does not, however, appear from Dr. Russell's statement, what connexion the effect of rain upon the unburnt bricks or tiles, with which the houses of Tozer were built, has with the *untempered mortar* mentioned by the prophet. Chardin, who refers to the same text, gives a more distinct account of the matter; whence it appears that

the walls, built, as we have stated, of unburned bricks, are covered with a coating of plaister. When this plaister is not properly prepared, it absorbs the wet: the wind afterwards dries and cracks it; consequently, when the building is again exposed to heavy rain, it soaks into the cracks, and getting between the plaister and the bricks, they are presently dissolved.

In order to complete our illustration, we must have recourse to a third traveller, Dr. Shaw, who gives an account of another kind of mortar used in the East, which is extremely durable. It is composed of one part of sand, two of wood-ashes, and three of lime: these ingredients are well mixed together, and afterwards beaten incessantly, for three days and nights, with wooden mallets. Perhaps it might be in opposition to mortar prepared with so much art and labour, that Ezekiel applied the word *untempered* to the inferior kind, which was incapable of resisting the action of the weather.

If this be admitted as a satisfactory explanation, it obviously applies only to the plain, literal sense of the passage. But the prophet

had another meaning. In the Bible, instruction is frequently conveyed by sensible images; but we are not to expect that the figure employed shall apply in every particular: religious improvement, not critical accuracy, is the object in view; we must, therefore, be careful not to press the resemblance too closely. We are in greater danger of falling into this error, than the persons to whom the Scriptures were originally addressed. A mere allusion to objects already familiar to their observation and experience, was sufficient for them: such images became at once lively emblems of spiritual truths; and their application to the subject treated of could be immediately comprehended, without the same risk of the attention being diverted from the instruction which these figures were intended to convey. *We* are differently circumstanced: our ignorance of the climate, country, and local customs which furnished these allusions, must, in some degree, be removed, before we can perceive the justness and beauty of the metaphors employed. Such inquiries are a source of very great pleasure and entertain-

ment: they bring us into familiar acquaintance with the occupations and customs of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles; but unless we apply the knowledge thus acquired to higher purposes, we may study even the Bible, diligently, without being at all the better for it.

VIII.

ANCIENT WATERPOTS.

And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing three or four firkins apiece.

JOHN, ii. 6.

AT Cana in Galilee are the ruins of a church, said to have been erected by St. Helen, on the spot where our Lord performed his first miracle. While walking among these ruins, Dr. Clarke* observed a great number of large and massy stone waterpots, answering the description of the vessels anciently used for that purpose. In this particular the custom of the country seems to have undergone a change; for these large vessels are not preserved or exhibited as

* See Travels, vol. ii. p. 445.

relics by the present inhabitants, who appear to be unacquainted with their original use, and suffer them to lie about unnoticed. The number of them was, however, so great, that Dr. Clarke thought it evident that the practice of keeping water in such vessels, each holding from eighteen to twenty-seven gallons, was once common in the country.

IX.

DRESS OF THE ARABS OF SYRIA.

Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout.

JOHN, xix. 23.

THE dress of the Arabs in the vicinity of Nazareth, and indeed throughout Syria, is described by Dr. Clarke* as simple and uniform. It consists of a blue shirt, descending below the knees; the legs and feet being exposed; or sometimes the latter are covered with buskins. In the neighbourhood of Jerusalem they wear sandals, exactly like those represented on Grecian statues. The upper garment is a cloak, of very coarse and heavy camel's hair cloth: it is generally decorated with broad black and white stripes

* See Travels, vol. ii. p. 421.

passing down the back: in this part there is usually a seam. The cloak consists of a square piece, with holes for the arms; and when woven *without the seam*, it is considered of greater value. Such, probably, were the form and materials of our Saviour's garment, for which the soldiers cast lots. It was the ancient dress of the inhabitants of the country.

X.

THE WIND CALLED SAMIEL.

Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.—The angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and fourscore and five thousand; and when they arose early in the morning, behold they were all dead corpses.

ISAIAH, xxxvii. 7 and 36.

THE suffocating wind of the Desert is frequently mentioned, or alluded to, in the Scriptures. It appears to be spoken of historically, in our text; and, in a figurative sense, it furnishes Isaiah with one of his sublime comparisons. The twenty-first chapter opens with a prediction of the taking of Babylon by the Medes and Persians. The prophet seeing, as it were, at a distance, the

dreadful storm which was hereafter to burst upon that devoted city, exclaims: *As whirlwinds in the south pass through; so it cometh from the Desert, from a terrible land.* The countries south of Judæa, Arabia and the African deserts, are peculiarly subject to this tremendous visitation, which is frequently spoken of by modern travellers. Maillet, in describing the dangers encountered by caravans passing between Egypt and Nubia, mentions the hazard of losing their way in those vast tracts of sand. He then adds: “The danger is infinitely greater when *the south wind* happens to blow in these deserts. It not only dries up their stock of water, which they carry in leathern bottles or goat-skins, thus depriving both man and beast of the refreshment most necessary to them; but this terrible wind, which the Arabs call poisonous, stifles immediately those who are so unfortunate as to breathe it. In order to guard against its fatal effects, they throw themselves hastily on the ground, with their faces close to the burning sand, at the same time covering their heads with a piece of cloth or carpet,

“lest in breathing they should inhale the
“deadly vapour which is passing over them.
“They may think themselves happy if this
“wind, which usually blows with violence,
“does not raise up large quantities of sand
“with a whirling motion, darkening the air,
“and rendering it impracticable to find the
“way. Sometimes whole caravans have
“been thus overwhelmed, and buried under
“the sand raised by these whirlwinds.”

A Turk, who had been twice on pilgrimage to Mecca, informed Dr. Adam Clarke*, that he had repeatedly witnessed the dreadful effects of this pestilential wind in the Desert: he had known all the water dried out of their *girbahs*, in a moment, by its influence. The only intimation they had of its approach, was from the camels making a noise, and burying their mouths and nostrils in the sand. This was an infallible token of the near approach of the Samiel; and those who observed and imitated the camels, escaped suffocation.

Mr. Jackson, who performed what is called the journey overland, from the East Indies

* See his note in Harmer.

to Europe, in the year 1797, has given the following particular account of this extraordinary wind : “ On the 10th of June, being
“ on the river Tigris, about five days’ journey
“ from Bagdad, I had an opportunity of ob-
“ serving the progress of the hot winds, call-
“ ed by the natives *Samiel*, which sometimes
“ prove very destructive, particularly at this
“ season. They are most dangerous be-
“ tween twelve and three o’clock, when the
“ atmosphere is at its greatest degree of
“ heat. The force of these winds entirely
“ depends on the surface over which they
“ pass. If it be over a desert, where there
“ is no vegetation, they extend their dimen-
“ sions with amazing velocity, and then their
“ progress is sometimes to windward. If
“ they blow over grass, or any other vegeta-
“ tion, they soon lose much of their force :
“ if over water, they lose all their electrical
“ force and ascend. Yet I have sometimes
“ felt their effect across the river, where it
“ was at least a mile broad. An instance of
“ this happened here. Mr. Stephens, (a
“ fellow-traveller,) was bathing in the river,
“ having on a pair of Turkish drawers. On

“ his return from the water, there came a
“ hot wind across the river, *which made his*
“ *drawers and himself perfectly dry in an*
“ *instant.* Had such a circumstance been
“ related to him by another person, he de-
“ clared he could not have believed it. I
“ was present, and felt the force of the hot
“ wind; but should otherwise have been as
“ incredulous as Mr. Stephens*.” This
account agrees with the relation of the
Turkish pilgrim.

The remark of Jackson respecting the
deadly power of the Samiel being weakened
in its passage over vegetation, is confirmed
by the experience of the celebrated traveller,
Dr. E. D. Clarke. He was exposed to its
influence while on a visit to Djezzar Pacha,
in his camp on the plain of Esdraelon, near
Mount Tabor. That vast plain, the scene
of so many remarkable events, he describes
as one extended meadow, covered with the
richest pasture. When he arrived in the
tent of the Pacha, he found it open on all
sides: the Simoom was blowing at the

* See Harmer.

time ; and though he speaks of its parching influence pervading every place as if it came from a furnace, and threatening them with suffocation, it is evident, from the circumstances mentioned, that however oppressive this Wind of the Desert might be, its presence did not excite those apprehensions of danger with which it is contemplated when blowing over barren sands. The Pacha and his guests, while actually exposed to its influence, conversed, dined, and afterwards composed themselves to sleep. Dr. Clarke appears to have been the only person who was made really ill : in him it produced the symptoms usually attending a violent fever.

This wonderful phenomenon has been more particularly described by Bruce. His account of it is as follows. In the first place it may be proper to observe, that *Samiel*, *Simoom*, and *Siphon*, are different names for the same meteor.

“ Idris (the guide) said, what he feared
“ most was that extreme redness in the air,
“ which was a sure presage of the coming of
“ the Simoom. I begged and entreated Idris
“ that he would not say one word of that in

“ the hearing of the people ; for they had
“ already felt it, and were already nearly
“ distracted at the apprehension of finding
“ it here *.”

“ At eleven o'clock, while we contem-
“ plated, with great pleasure, the rugged top
“ of Chiggre, to which we were fast ap-
“ proaching, and where we were to solace
“ ourselves with plenty of good water, Idris
“ cried out, with a loud voice, ‘ Fall upon
“ your faces, for here is the Simoom !’ I
“ saw from the S. E. a haze come, in colour
“ like the purple part of the rainbow, but
“ not so compressed or thick. It did not
“ occupy twenty yards in breadth, and was
“ about twelve feet high from the ground.
“ It was a kind of blush upon the air, and it
“ moved very rapidly ; for I scarce could
“ turn to fall upon the ground, with my head
“ to the northward, when I felt the heat of
“ its current plainly upon my face. We
“ all lay flat on the ground as if dead, till
“ Idris told us it was blown over. The
“ meteor, or purple haze, which I saw, was

* Bruce's Travels, vi. p. 461. 8vo. edit.

“ indeed passed ; but the light air that still
“ blew, was of heat to threaten suffocation.
“ For my part, I found distinctly in my
“ breast that I had imbibed a part of it ;
“ nor was I free from an asthmatic sen-
“ sation till I had been some months in
“ Italy, at the baths of Poretta, near two
“ years afterwards.

“ An universal despondency had taken
“ possession of our people. They ceased
“ to speak to one another, and when they
“ did it was in whispers, by which I easily
“ guessed their discourse was not favourable
“ to me ; or else that they were increasing
“ each other’s fears by vain suggestions, cal-
“ culated to sink each other’s spirits still fur-
“ ther, but from which no earthly good could
“ possibly result. I called them together,
“ and both reprimanded and exhorted them,
“ in the strongest manner I could. I bade
“ them attend to me, who had nearly lost my
“ voice by the Simoom ; and desired them to
“ look at my face, so swelled as scarcely to
“ permit me to see : my neck covered with
“ blisters : my feet swelled and inflamed, and
“ bleeding with many wounds. In answer to

“ the lamentation that the water was ex-
“ hausted, and that we were upon the point
“ of dying with thirst, I ordered each man
“ a gourd full of water more than he had
“ the preceding day, and showed them, at
“ no great distance, the bare, black, and
“ sharp point of the rock Chiggre, wherein
“ was the well at which we were again to
“ to fill our girbahs, and thereby banish the
“ fear of dying by thirst in the Desert. I
“ believe I never was at any time more elo-
“ quent, and never had eloquence a more
“ sudden effect. They all protested and
“ declared their concern chiefly arose from
“ the situation they saw me in; that they
“ feared not death or hardship, provided I
“ would submit a little to their direction, in
“ taking a proper care of myself. They
“ intreated me to use one of the camels, and
“ throw off the load that it carried; that it
“ would ease me of the wounds in my feet,
“ by riding at least part of the day. This I
“ positively refused to do, but recommended
“ to them to be strong of heart, and to spare
“ the camels for the last resource, if any

“ should be taken ill and unable to walk any
“ longer.

“ This phænomenon of the Simoom, un-
“ expected by us, though foreseen by Idris,
“ caused us all to relapse into our former
“ despondency. It still continued to blow,
“ so as to exhaust us entirely, though the
“ blast was so weak as scarcely would have
“ raised a leaf from the ground. At twenty
“ minutes before five, the Simoom ceased,
“ and a comfortable and cooling breeze
“ came by starts from the north, blowing
“ five or six minutes at a time, and then fall-
“ ing calm*.”

“ We had this day enjoyed, as it were,
“ a holiday, free from the terrors of the
“ sand, or the dreadful influence of the
“ Simoom. This poisonous wind had made
“ several attempts to prevail this day, but
“ was always overpowered by a cool breeze
“ at north†.”

“ We had no sooner got into the plain,
“ than we felt great symptoms of the Si-
“ moom; and about a quarter before twelve,

* Bruce's Travels, vi. p. 462—464. 8vo. edit.

† Ib. p. 469.

“ our prisoner first, and then Idris, cried
“ out, ‘ *The Simoom!*’ ‘ *The Simoom!*’ My
“ curiosity would not suffer me to fall down
“ without looking behind me. About due
“ south, a little to the east, I saw *the coloured*
“ *haze* as before. It seemed now to be
“ rather less compressed, and to have with
“ it a shade of blue. The edges of it were
“ not defined, as those of the former; but
“ like a *very thin smoke*, with about a yard
“ in the middle tinged with those colours.
“ We all fell upon our faces, and the Simoom
“ passed with *a gentle ruffling wind*. It
“ continued to blow in this manner till near
“ three o’clock; so we were all taken ill that
“ night, and scarcely strength was left us to
“ load the camels, and arrange the bag-
“ gage*.”

“ The Simoom, with the wind at S. E.
“ immediately follows the wind at north, and
“ the usual *despondency* always accompanied
“ it. The *blue meteor* with which it began,
“ passed over us about twelve, and *the ruf-*

* Bruce’s Travels, vi. p. 484. 8vo. edit.

“*fling wind* that followed it continued till
“near two. Silence, and a desperate kind
“of indifference about life, were the imme-
“diate effects upon us; and I began now,
“seeing the condition of my camels, to fear
“we were all doomed to a sandy grave, and
“to contemplate it with some degree of
“resignation*.”

“I here began to provide for the worst.
“I saw the fate of our camels approaching,
“and that our men grew weak in propor-
“tion: our bread, too, began to fail us, al-
“though we had plenty of camels’ flesh in its
“stead. Our water, though to all appearance
“we were to find it more frequently than in
“the beginning of our journey, was never-
“theless brackish, and scarcely served the
“purpose to quench our thirst; and above
“all, the dreadful Simoom had perfectly
“*exhausted our strength, and brought upon*
“*us a degree of cowardice and languor that*
“*we struggled with in vain.* I therefore,
“as the last effort, began to throw away

* Ib. p. 487.

“ every thing weighty I could spare, or that
“ was not absolutely necessary*.”

To this account of the sufferings occasioned by the Simoom, may be added, the following description of its effect where the influence was fatal. It is extracted from a translation of D’Obsonville’s Essays on the East.

“ I have twice had an opportunity of con-
“ sidering the effect of these Siphons with
“ some attention. I shall relate simply what
“ I have seen, in the case of a merchant and
“ two travellers, who were struck *during*
“ *their sleep, and died on the spot.* I ran
“ to see if it was possible to afford them any
“ succour; but they were already dead, the
“ victims of *an interior suffocating fire.*
“ There were apparent signs of the disso-
“ lution of their fluids; a kind of serous
“ matter issued from the nostrils, mouth, and
“ ears; and in something more than an hour,
“ the whole body was in the same state.
“ As to the meteor itself, it may be exam-
“ ined with impunity at the distance of three

* Ib. p. 488.

“ or four fathoms: the people of the coun-
 “ try are only afraid of being surprised by it
 “ *when they are asleep*. Neither are such
 “ accidents very common; for these Siphons
 “ are only seen during two or three months
 “ of the year; and, as their approach is *felt*,
 “ the camp guards and the people awake,
 “ are always very careful to rouse those who
 “ sleep, who also have a general habit of
 “ covering their faces with their mantles*.”

Among the particulars mentioned in these
 accounts, we may observe the following.
 The meteor seen by day-light resembles a
 thin smoke, or haze. It passed over Bruce
 and his companions like a gentle ruffling
 wind. By enfeebling the body, it produced
 despondency of mind and cowardice. It is
 peculiarly dangerous to persons who are
 asleep. Its extent is frequently consider-
 able; but sometimes its influence is so circum-
 scribed, that it may be examined at a short
 distance with impunity.

We may now compare the nature and
 effects of the Simoom with the facts men-

* Calmet, Frag. No. IV.

tioned in our text, and in the corresponding account, 2 Kings, xix. 35: *Behold, I will send A BLAST upon him.* The word rendered *blast* (RUACH) is said * not to imply a vehement wind, but a gentle breathing, a breeze, a vapour, an exhalation: thus perfectly agreeing with the description given by our travellers. The army of Sennacherib was destroyed *by night.* The confident boastings of which the sacred historian gives so full an account †, favour the presumption, that the king and his officers, entertaining no doubt of success, were reposing in full security. It is also probable that the Assyrians, not being accustomed to the visitations of this meteor in their own country, might not take the usual precautions against it; and if the soldiers on guard were overpowered by its fatal influence, those who were sleeping must necessarily inhale the poison. The whole number of Sennacherib's army is not mentioned; but, from his boasting message to Hezekiah, we may conclude that it was very great: in the seven-

* Harmer, i. p. 96. *note.*

† 2 Kings, xix. 10—13.

teenth verse of the preceding chapter, it is called *a great host*. If, then, the extent of the meteor is supposed to be half a mile, or a mile, it is easy to perceive that, in passing over a camp, it might destroy many thousands of sleeping persons, while those on each side of its course escaped. These, rising early in the morning, surveyed their companions, and *behold, they were all dead corpses* *.

The survivors do not appear to have entirely escaped the influence of this awful visitation; as we learn from Josephus †, on the authority of Berosus the Chaldean, that Sennacherib was “in a great dread, and “in a terrible agony at this calamity; and “being in great fear for his whole army, he “fled with the rest of his forces to his own “kingdom, and to his city Nineveh.” Thus he appears to have abandoned the conquest he had so presumptuously anticipated, as if seized with the despondency and cowardice described by Bruce as “always accompany-“ing” the Simoom.

* 2 Kings, xix. 35.

† Ant. x. i. 3.

Boswell gives it as the opinion of Dr. Johnson, "that *some powerful natural agent, most probably the Samyel,*" was employed in the destruction of the Assyrian army. Dean Prideaux also ascribes it to the same cause*; and Dr. Clarke, the editor of Harmer, remarks, on a comparison of the two verses of our text, that the fatal agent, called, in the thirty-sixth verse, *the Angel of the Lord*, is in the seventh verse termed a *blast*, which he regards as determining the sense in which this passage should be understood.

The word *angel* signifies a messenger, and may be applied to whatever is appointed by the Almighty to execute the purposes of his providence. When *fire and hail, snow and vapour, or stormy winds fulfil his word*†, they are his *angels—ministers of his that do his pleasure*; and, on this view of the subject, the fulfilment of the prophecy we are considering, was as much under the Divine direction, as if one of the heavenly host had literally gone forth, and slain the

* Prideaux's *Connexion*, i. p. 51, 52. † Psalm cxlviii. 8.

Assyrians with the sword. When we speak of the operation of what are termed *natural causes*, we must not forget by whose power these agencies were created :

“ Nature is but a name for an effect,

“ Whose cause is God.”

The truth of revealed religion has been proved by the evidence of unquestionable miracles; but it gains no additional confirmation from pressing doubtful facts into its service, or from representing any particular interposition of Providence as a direct violation of the order of nature. On the other hand, we should also be careful not to suffer the exalted idea we entertain of that suspension of the accustomed order of things, which constitutes a miracle; or of that peculiar direction of the agents employed, which sensibly indicates a Divine interposition, to lower our conception of the *reality* of that administration of Providence under which we live. He who *upholds all things by the word of his power**, while his beneficence

* Heb. i. 3.

is maintaining the beautiful order which he has established, exerts a control over nature equal to that displayed in the most astonishing of his recorded miracles; and, since he is *a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart**, his moral influence must also be unbounded. Why then do we not strive to realize the idea of his continual presence? The firm conviction that we are living under the Divine government—that even the most distressing and perplexing events which are permitted to befall us, form part of a salutary course of discipline, directed by infinite wisdom and goodness, is the only effectual support and consolation amidst the trials and conflicts of life. Tossed on this agitated ocean, unable to discern what the next moment may produce of joy or of sorrow, surrounded by dangers which we are incapable of avoiding, we are instructed that every thing less than Divine assistance is too little. If we are truly sensible of this, our dependence will be gradually withdrawn from human supports and comforts, and

* Heb. iv. 12.

transferred to the One unfailing source of help and strength. Happy they, who are conscious of progressive advancement towards this state, in which alone we can find *rest to our souls!*

XI.

EASTERN DOORWAYS.

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

MATT. xix. 24.

THIS comparison has appeared to many so strange and unnatural, that they have wished to substitute the word *cable* for camel. Instead of desiring to accommodate the sense of Scripture to *our* notions, we should patiently endeavour to discover the real meaning of such passages as, at first sight, seem to be harsh or obscure.

We think of the camel as "the ship of the Desert," pursuing its toilsome and hazardous course across the trackless sands. The idea of such an animal being put to force its way through a narrow aperture, does not

suit our partial knowledge of its habits, and, consequently, the figure employed in our text seems inapplicable. This difficulty, like many others, may be removed by a little inquiry.

The lawless habits of the Arabs sometimes impel them to acts of violence, and it is said they are accustomed *to ride into the houses* of those whom they intend to harass. In order to prevent this outrage, and the mischief that might follow, it is common, in places liable to such attacks, to make the house-door, or rather the door of the enclosure which surrounds the house, very low. Thevenot informs us, that the door of the house in which the French merchants resided at Rama, was not three feet high; and that all the doors in that town were made equally low, to prevent the Arabs from entering on horseback. He also mentions a large door of the church at Bethlehem, which had been walled up, and only a wicket left in it, three feet high and two feet wide: this was done to hinder the Arabs from riding into the church. Other writers have related the same fact; and a gentleman, who lived many

years in Morocco, describes the entrances into houses in that country, as being made extremely low, in order to guard against the same danger.

These facts may perhaps affords an illustration of the following passage: *He that exalteth his gate, seeketh destruction, or calamity**. It can hardly be supposed that Solomon, a prince so remarkable for the magnificence of his taste in architecture, would regard a lofty gateway as objectionable, without some urgent reason; but, if it were common for bands of Arabs to avail themselves of such entrances, in the manner we have described, there is great propriety in his singling out this mark of ostentation as an instance of presumptuous folly.

But though the Arabs, who are almost centaurs, and seldom tempted to dismount in their sudden incursions, are kept out by this simple contrivance, we should imagine that the inhabitants purchase exemption from unwelcome visitants at the price of much inconvenience to themselves. They

* Prov. xvii. 19.

make great use of camels, and must often want to bring them into their inclosed courts; but, since these animals are much taller than the Arabian horses, it seems impossible for them to go through an opening that will not admit a horse. The desired end is effected, by training the camels to creep on their knees through these small doorways. No doubt, the operation is, sometimes attended with difficulty; but, since camels are often forced to pass through a very small aperture, there is nothing *incongruous* in the metaphor used by our Lord: it is to be regarded as an example of that figure of speech called hyperbole, or heightening the expression beyond the truth, which seems to be peculiarly agreeable to the taste of the Orientals. Indeed, this particular comparison is so frequently employed in the East, that it has become a proverbial mode of expressing *impossibility*. Thus, in the Koran, "The gates of heaven shall not be opened unto them, nor shall they enter into Paradise, *until a camel pass through the eye of a needle.*" A similar metaphor is found in the writings of the Rabbins: "They do not show a man a palm-tree of

“gold, nor *an elephant going through the eye of a needle*.—Perhaps thou art one of those of Pumbeditha, *who can make an elephant pass through the eye of a needle*:” that is, says the lexicon called *Aruch*, “*who speak things that are impossible* *.”

From the above account it seems probable, that our Lord, on this occasion, made use of a common proverb, already familiar to his auditors, as expressive of impossibility. They were, indeed, *exceedingly amazed* at his application of the proverb to the conversion of *a rich man*; but, we must recollect, that the disciples were themselves *poor*, unacquainted with the snare which great possessions often prove to their owners. They were, also, at that time, unconscious of the extraordinary sacrifices which were about to be required of the first converts to Christianity. *Behold*, said Peter, *we have forsaken all, and followed thee*; WHAT SHALL WE HAVE THEREFORE? This was a very natural inquiry; since, under the Patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations, temporal prosperity had

* See Harmer, on the passage.

been the reward of obedience; and it is evident that the disciples fully embraced the popular persuasion, that the Messiah would restore to their country the independence and the glory it had lost. It was not till a much later period that they learned to look beyond the things of time and sense, to *the glory hereafter to be revealed—to rejoice with joy unspeakable*, even while they were compelled to acknowledge, that *if in this life only they had hope in Christ, they were of all men most miserable*. When we read the accounts of their labours and sufferings, can we wonder that it should seem *easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle*, than for one brought up in ease and self-indulgence to embrace such a life! *He who knew what was in man*, saw the thing to be morally impossible. He was therefore willing to be made lower than the angels, to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; and not only to leave us an example of perfect virtue, but to promise the help of his Spirit to all who sincerely ask it. Thus, what is *impossible with men*, becomes *possible with God*.

XII.

LIGHT THE EMBLEM OF PROSPERITY.

How oft is the candle of the wicked put out, and how oft cometh their destruction upon them?

JOB, xxi. 17.

IN modern times, the houses of Egypt are never without lights. Maillet informs us, that lamps are burned all night long in every inhabited apartment; and that the poorest people would rather retrench part of their food, than deprive themselves of this indulgence.

If we suppose that this account affords a true representation of what was the ancient custom of the Egyptians, and of the neighbouring countries of Arabia and Judæa, it may serve to illustrate our text, and several other passages of Scripture. Jeremiah,

speaking of the state in which Judæa would be left at the time of the Babylonish captivity, mentions *taking away the light of the candle**, as one of the tokens of general desolation.

A lamp is, on the contrary, the emblem of prosperity, or prolonged security. It is said of Abijam, though he was a wicked king, *for David's sake did the Lord his God give him A LAMP in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem †*. In another place, we read that *the Lord would not destroy the house of David, because of the covenant that he had made with David, and as he promised to give A LIGHT to him and to his sons for ever ‡*.

Such being the ideas associated with the light of a lamp or candle, we are prepared to expect that public illuminations would, in the East, be adopted as the sign of national rejoicing; but, as their houses have few or no windows, except such as open into a court or quadrangle in the interior of the

* Jeremiah, xxv. 10.

† 1 Kings, xv. 4.

‡ 2 Chron. xxi. 7.

building, the manner in which these illuminations are displayed, becomes a subject of inquiry. At Cairo and Aleppo, they place a great number of lamps before the doors of their houses. The Jews are said, by Maimonides, to have celebrated the Feast of the Dedication, or, as it is, from this circumstance, otherwise called, *the Feast of Lights*, in the same manner. The splendour of these illuminations under Herod the Great, is alluded to by the poet Persius, who describes some old Romans sitting in the sunshine, and talking over the sights they had seen in their younger years. One of these old men, admiring the magnificence of the feasts of Flora at Rome, another reminds him of the superior grandeur of Herod's illuminations in Judæa: "When your lips moved with
" silent admiration, and you were pale with
" astonishment at those festivals of the un-
" circumcised."

The Turkish Feast of Tulips consists in the illumination of a garden. Vases of every form, filled with natural and artificial flowers, are distributed among an infinite number of lanterns, coloured lamps, and wax candles

in glass tubes, reflected in all directions by mirrors placed among them for that purpose. At the *Feast of the Dedication*, the Jews mingled violets with their lamps*.

* See Harmer, vol. i.

XIII.

METHOD OF FASTENING NAILS IN THE
WALLS OF HOUSES.

And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place.

ISAIAH, xxii. 22, 23.

Two curious particulars are alluded to in this passage, which refers to the exaltation of Eliakim to office under king Hezekiah. The key is an emblem of trust; and it was formerly a token of authority, (as *the seals* are at this day in England,) denoting that he who bore it could admit others to many privileges, or exclude from them. It seems extraordinary to us, to hear of a key being borne *upon the shoulder*; but the locks and keys of the ancients were very different from

ours. The key appears to have been of considerable size and weight, and its form has been compared to that of the constellation Cassiopeia: the stars to the north representing the curved part, which was introduced into the lock; the southern stars the handle, which was very long. Such a key might lie upon the shoulder.

Isaiah is peculiarly distinguished for his frequent reference to Christ, and the Gospel dispensation. On this account, he has been called "the evangelical prophet," and "the fifth Evangelist." The passage before us appears to be one of those which have a twofold application: literally, or immediately, to the exaltation of Eliakim;—prophetically, to the power and office of Christ, through whose mediation we can alone hope for admission into the kingdom of Heaven. In the third chapter of Revelations, we find our Lord applying to himself the very words of the prophet: *These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.*

I will fasten him as a NAIL, may seem to

us a mean or insignificant comparison, because we are not acquainted with the thing spoken of, and have no term to express it by, but one which conveys to us a low idea. In ancient times, houses were more simply built, and had not that variety of furniture with which they now abound. The walls of their apartments were not painted or papered, like ours, but hung with curtains of various materials. In the East, the walls were furnished with spikes, large pegs, or *nails*, as our translators have rendered the word; so contrived, as not only to support the ornamental covering, but to strengthen the edifice. Sir John Chardin gives the following account of this matter. “They do not drive with a hammer the nails that are put into Eastern walls: the walls are too hard, being of brick; or, if they are of clay, too mouldering; but they fix them in the brick-work, as they are building. They are large nails, with square heads like dice, well made; the ends being bent, so as to make them cramp-irons. They commonly place them at the windows and

“doors, in order to hang upon them, when “they like, veils and curtains*.” Surely it would be no harsh metaphor, if we ventured to compare these *nails* to the motives and principles which constitute the strength and ornament of the Christian character; not introduced with sudden violence, but gradually, as the edifice is prepared to receive them, and wrought, as it were, into the substance of the building, till, *fitly framed together*, it *groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord*†. “The evangelical prophet” has, however, so closely connected the comparison of a *nail* with the preceding metaphor of *the key of David*, that we must suppose them both to have the same reference, immediately, to Eliakim—prophetically, to Christ. This idea is strengthened by another application of the same metaphor, in Ezra: *Grace hath been showed from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us A NAIL in his holy place*‡; that is, as explained in the margin of our Bible, “a constant and sure

* Harmer, i. 191; and Lowth, on the passage.

† Eph. ii. 21.

‡ Ezra, ix. 8.

“abode.” What is the “sure abode” of the Christian? Our Lord himself has informed us by another metaphor: *As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me**.

* John, xv. 4.

XIV.

SUPPLYING TRAVELLERS WITH WATER
TO DRINK.

Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily, I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.

MARK, ix. 41.

THE person who receives a charitable donation, may be benefited in proportion to the intrinsic value of the gift; but the merit of the giver is to be estimated by the *motives* which influenced him. This is exemplified in the case of the poor widow, whose *two mites* were preferred by our Lord to the rich offerings of the affluent*. The same lesson appears to be inculcated in our text; although the comparative importance of the

* Mark, xii. 43, 44.

gift is much greater in the East than amongst ourselves.

Furnishing travellers with water, is there regarded as a meritorious instance of liberality, and much expense is incurred in order to supply travellers with that necessary refreshment. Hence, in the accounts of those countries, frequent mention is made of fountains and reservoirs of water; not only in the immediate vicinity of towns, but in the fields and gardens, by the side of public roads, and of the beaten tracks among the mountains. Many of these are constructed by order of humane persons, while they are living: the expense of forming others has been defrayed by legacies bequeathed for that purpose. The Turks regard such works with high approbation, and seldom leave the place where they have enjoyed this refreshment, without gratefully blessing the memory of the founder. On this account, Jacob seems to have been regarded as a public benefactor, by the people of Sychar. *Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well*?*

* John, iv. 12.

Forbes relates some interesting facts respecting the present customs of Gujerat, which bear a strong resemblance to those of patriarchal times. The villagers seldom visit cities, and are distinguished by an innocent simplicity of manners. The women are modest and delicate: their garments, however coarse the material, are rendered becoming by an elegant carelessness of the folds; and their attitudes are peculiarly graceful. Agreeably to the practice of ancient days, the young women daily draw water from the public wells; and sometimes carry two or three earthen jars, placed over each other, upon the head, which requiring perfect steadiness, gives them an erect and stately air.

An English lady, residing in India, who took great delight in illustrating the Scriptures, by comparing the accounts of the Sacred Writers with the modern manners and customs of the Hindoos, was one day reading to an intelligent native the narrative of the interview between Abraham's servant and Rebecca, at the well: when she came to that passage which describes the virgin as coming out *with her pitcher upon her*

shoulder *, her attentive auditor exclaimed: "Madam, that woman was of *high caste!*" He inferred this from the circumstance of her carrying the pitcher on her shoulder, and not on her head. Some of the highest classes among the Brahmins do the same †.

Giving water to the thirsty traveller appears to have been a very ancient mode of exercising charity: it is still practised in the East, and may perhaps be regarded as a relic of the simple religion of the Patriarchs, who sometimes *entertained angels unawares* ‡. The name of Abraham was, we know, held in great and general estimation; and he was regarded by the principal sects as the great reformer of their religion. From him the Brahmins are thought to have derived their name and descent—*Abrahamans*, or Sons of Abraham §. A singular custom, probably of great antiquity, is said to be still practised among the Hindoos. They will sometimes go a considerable distance to fetch water, and boil it, that it may not be

* Gen. xxiv. 15.

† Oriental Memoirs, ii. 78.

‡ Heb. xiii. 2.

§ Law's Considerations, p. 79.

injurious to travellers who have over-heated themselves: they will then patiently take their stand in some great road, where there is neither well nor rivulet, and wait there from morning till night, to offer, in honour of their gods, the water they have thus prepared to be drank by the passengers*.

The idea of this custom being a relic of Patriarchal religion, seems to be strengthened by reference to the prayer of Abraham's pious servant, when he was anxious to be rightly directed to the maiden whom he sought. Having made his camels kneel down beside the well at the gate of the city, at that hour of the evening, when, according to the custom of the country, the daughters of the inhabitants came out to draw water, he supplicated that the Almighty would be pleased to determine his choice by a sensible interposition of Providence. Abraham was a man of princely rank, and he had directed Eliezer to choose the wife of Isaac from amongst *his kindred* †: it is, therefore, pro-

* Harmer, *ib.*

† Gen. xxiv. 4.

bable, that, when the faithful messenger saw Rebecca coming forth, bearing her pitcher in the manner appropriate to high-born damsels, and when he also observed that *she was very fair to look upon**, he hoped that *she* might be the person he was appointed to seek; and, anxious to bring this question to the proof he had solicited, on her return from the well, *he ran to meet her, and said, Let me, I pray thee, drink a little water of thy pitcher. And she said, Drink, my lord: and she hastened, and let down her pitcher upon her hand, and gave him drink†*. Probably no maiden would have refused so trifling a favour: her courtesy, in this point, could therefore afford no indication; but when Rebecca offered to draw as much water for the stranger's camels as they chose to drink, she voluntarily took upon herself an office imposing great personal labour, to which it was very unlikely that a female of her rank should be accustomed. Indeed, had she not been divinely strengthened for the occa-

* Gen. xxiv. 16.

† Ib. 17, 18.

sion, it seems impossible that a delicate young woman could have endured the fatigue of drawing water in such quantity, as to satisfy a train of camels just arrived from a long journey. The hopes of Eliezer were now confirmed: *he bowed down his head in reverent thankfulness, and worshipped the Lord**.

In contemplating this patriarchal story, we should not regard the sign requested by Eliezer as a token selected at random. She who promptly relieved the weary traveller, doing cheerfully even more than he required, was likely to be remarkable for active benevolence. *This* must ever be regarded as the fruit of that Divine principle, implanted in our nature by Him who *created man in his own image*†, and by it his servants are always distinguished. Under every modification of religion—every variety of custom and climate, even amidst the darkness of superstition and idolatry, the precious seed of benevolence springs up in minds disposed to cherish it; showing *the work of the law to be*

* Gen. xxiv. 26.

† Ib. i. 27.

written in their hearts*, and leaving none without a witness, in the happiness resulting from its exercise, that man, weak and erring as he is, is yet the offspring of Him whose compassions fail not†, who delighteth in mercy‡. Under the Gospel dispensation, we still find that *Charity*, in its most enlarged sense, is the bond of perfectness§, uniting all as the children of one Parent—the followers of one Master; teaching them to bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ ||.

The more we reflect upon this subject, the more clearly we shall perceive the strength of the motives which ought to engage us to regulate our conduct and affections by the Law of Love. It has been well said, by one who had deeply studied the principles of Christian philosophy, that “the great com-
 “posure, and peace of mind, which those
 “persons enjoy, who make benevolence,
 “piety, and the moral sense, the rule of
 “their lives, is a strong inducement to us to

* Rom. ii. 15. † Lam. iii. 22. ‡ Micah, vii. 18.

§ Col. iii. 14.

|| Gal. vi. 2.

“ imitate their example. As we desire to
“ learn all other arts from those who prac-
“ tise them in the greatest perfection, so
“ ought we the art of living. The persons
“ in whom this peace is most observable,
“ were the authors of the books of the Old
“ and New Testaments; and these books
“ may be distinguished from all other books
“ by this remarkable circumstance, that the
“ authors appear to have been quite free
“ from that dissatisfaction, doubt, care, and
“ fear, which are so obvious in the discourses
“ and writings of other persons. However,
“ the same thing appears in a less degree, in
“ the discourses of all good men, even hea-
“ thens; as in the discourses of Socrates,
“ preserved by Plato and Xenophon; and
“ may be observed in the conduct and be-
“ haviour of all such, by those who are con-
“ versant with them. Eminently pious and
“ benevolent persons seem to be in posses-
“ sion of some great secret—some *catholicon*,
“ or philosopher’s stone. They pass through
“ life unhurt, as to the peace of their minds,
“ by the evils of it; and find abundant mat-

“ter for praise and thanksgiving to God in
“it. All which appears to be owing to
“their being guided by the true principles
“of action*.

* Hartley on Man, ii. 355.

XV.

THE ACCURACY OF THE SACRED
WRITERS.

Sir, come down ere my child die.

JOHN, iv. 49.

IN the account of the nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum, the circumstance of coming *down*, or going *down* to that city from Cana, where Jesus then was, is mentioned three times. The testimony of modern travellers proves, in a vast number of instances, how accurately the descriptions, or incidental remarks of the Sacred Writers, correspond with the geographical situation of the places mentioned, and with the present appearance of the country. This is a very strong argument in favour of the authenticity of the Scriptures—an evidence that they were actually written in the countries where the

scene is laid, and that the transactions related were described by eye-witnesses. When Dr. Clarke was at Cana of Galilee *, he was forcibly struck by the correspondence between the situation of that place, and the expression of coming *down*, so repeatedly used by the Evangelist. The whole route from Cana being, in fact, *a continued descent towards Capernaum*.

The deplorable state of ignorance and superstition in which this intelligent traveller found the present inhabitants of the Holy Land, and the absurd traditions they related concerning those places which are the most interesting to pilgrims, determined him and his companions to make the Scriptures themselves their guide through the country; and he acknowledges, with delight, the internal evidence of their accuracy, which was thus obtained. He appears to have anticipated much pleasure from the inquiry; but the result far surpassed his expectation. He met with such extraordinary instances of correspondence between the particulars recorded,

* Travels, ii. 443.

and the customs now actually subsisting—the simple narratives of the Gospel were so often confirmed or illustrated by present appearances, that he regretted the shortness of the time he could devote to so interesting an inquiry.

Among other particulars, he relates, that he had scarcely reached the apartment prepared for his reception at Nazareth, when, looking from the window into the court-yard of the house, he beheld *two women grinding at the mill**, in the manner alluded to by our Saviour. They were preparing flour, to make bread for the strangers who had just arrived. The women, seated on the ground, opposite to each other, held between them two round, flat stones. In the centre of the uppermost, there was a cavity for pouring in the corn; and, beside it, an upright wooden handle, for moving the stone. The operation began by one of the women, with her right hand, pushing this handle towards the woman opposite, who again sent it towards her companion. By this means, they gave

a rapid whirling motion to the upper stone; and, while the bran and flour escaped from the sides of the machine, the left hands of the women were continually employed in supplying the cavity in the upper stone with fresh corn, in the room of that which they had ground. Such were the primeval mills of the world. In Scotland they are called *Querns*: they are common in Lapland, and indeed are found in all countries where the simplicity of ancient contrivances has not been superseded by the improvements of civilization. The employment of grinding with such mills is confined to females; and it is an interesting fact, that a custom alluded to by our Lord, should still be existing in the place of his earliest residence*.

The monks at Nazareth affirm that the ancient city stood to the east of its present situation, and on a more elevated spot. Dr. Clarke, after carefully comparing the account given by Luke†, with the situation

* Clarke's Travels, ib. p. 342, & 428.

† Luke, iv. 29.

of the modern town, is of opinion that it occupies precisely the same site as formerly. The monks show a precipice which, they say, Jesus leaped down to escape the rage of the Jews. They pretend also to show even the impression left by his hand as he sprang from the rock; but our traveller, directed by the evangelic history, went *out of the city, unto the brow of the hill whereon the city is built*, and came to a precipice so corresponding with the words of the text, that he concluded it to be the same mentioned by St. Luke*.

A strong testimony to the *accuracy* of the Sacred Writers is also given by Usko, a learned foreigner, who visited the countries they describe. He concludes the narrative of his travels in these words: "I must here declare, to the honour of the Bible, that I did not find *one* circumstance in the Holy Scriptures, contrary to the present manners and customs of the East; or to geography,

* Clarke, *ib.* p. 437.

and the situation of the different places mentioned therein; but, on the contrary, all is conformable to the different prophecies and descriptions in the Sacred Writings*.

* Harmer, iv. 464.

XVI.

JACOB'S WELL.

Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water?

JOHN, iv. 11.

THE woman of Samaria, ignorant of the power and character of Him with whom she was conversing, supposed that he meant *running water*, or that which *bubbled up freshly* from a spring. (Such waters were, in the East, and by some of the heathen poets, termed *living*, in opposition to the water of cisterns or ponds, which is motionless, or *dead*.) She therefore informed him of the depth of the well, which we are told by a modern traveller * is thirty-five yards: too deep, certainly, for the water to be reached by one unprovided with the means of drawing it.

* Maundrell.—See Scott, on the passage.

Jacob's Well continues to be an object of veneration; but if it had not been visited by pilgrims in all ages, Dr. Clarke is of opinion, that its situation is so distinctly marked by the Evangelist, and so little liable to uncertainty, from the circumstance of the well itself still remaining, and from the features of the country, that it might, even independently of tradition, be identified by the traveller.

The fourth chapter of John abounds in the incidental mention of particulars, which is justly regarded as a strong internal evidence of the truth of any history. The *descending road* from Cana to Capernaum we have already noticed, and may now observe that Jesus is represented as *necessarily* passing through Samaria, in his way from Judæa to Galilee: *He must needs go through Samaria.* A bare inspection of the map will show that he could have gone no other way, unless he had taken a long circuitous route, through the countries to the east of the Jordan*. With concise simplicity the

* See Dr. Carpenter's interesting work on the Geography of the N. T.

narrative then describes him approaching the ancient metropolis of the country, then called Sychar, afterwards Neapolis, and now bearing the name of Napolose: *being wearied with his journey he sat down by the Well*, while his disciples went forward to the city in search of refreshments. All this accords with present appearances: Jacob's Well is a short distance from Napolose, *beside the road leading from that city to Jerusalem*. Agreeably to Eastern custom, a female comes to draw water, and enters into conversation with the stranger, who has surprised her by asking for water to drink: a kind of intercourse forbidden, by the traditions of the Pharisees, to take place between the Jews and the Samaritans. The story is very naturally told. The woman does not mention the prohibition—does not *inform* the stranger of it; but alludes to it as a fact well known, to him as a Jew, to her as a Samaritan. *How is it that thou, BEING A JEW, askest drink of me?* The Evangelist, in relating the circumstance, observes that *the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans*. But this is his own comment on the

passage: (as writing his narrative for the use of persons unacquainted with these particulars:) it forms no part of the conversation*. Our Lord and the woman speak like persons who are mutually conscious that no explanation is necessary: they already understand the customs and prejudices of their own country. Here is strong evidence of its being a real transaction. She then informs Jesus of the *depth* of the well, a circumstance which it was likely that a stranger should *not* know; but, as we have seen above, it was remarkable. She also mentions the worship on Mount Gerizim. We learn from Dr. Clarke, that the inhabitants of the neighbouring city, originally deserters from Judæa, forming a sect at variance with the other Jews, continue to maintain their peculiar tenets at the present day. With reference to this chapter of St. John, he observes, that “a volume might be filled
“ with the illustration it reflects upon the
“ history of the Jews, and upon the geo-
“ graphy of their country†.

* Whitby, in Scott.

† Travels, ii. p. 511—517.

XVII.

THE INHERITANCE OF JOSEPH.

And Israel said unto Joseph, Do not thy brethren feed the flock in Shechem? come, and I will send thee unto them.

GENESIS, xxxvii. 13.

And the bones of Joseph, which the children of Israel brought up out of Egypt, buried they in Shechem, in a parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the father of Shechem for an hundred pieces of silver; and it became the inheritance of the children of Joseph.

JOSHUA, xxiv. 32.

THE sympathy which, from our earliest years, we are accustomed to feel for the character of Joseph, gives peculiar interest to every circumstance connected with his story. We can, therefore, readily enter into the feelings of Dr. Clarke, while he describes

with enthusiasm the effect of these early associations on his own mind, when he arrived in Shechem, the scene of the transactions recorded in the thirty-seventh chapter of Genesis, and in view of objects still existing as they were described above three thousand years ago. Accidental circumstances contributed to strengthen the impression: along the valley he beheld *a company of Ishmaelites, coming from Gilead, with their camels bearing spicery, and balm, and myrrh*, who would gladly have purchased another Joseph of his brethren, and conveyed him as a slave to some Potiphar in Egypt. On the surrounding hills, flocks and herds were feeding, as in the days of the Patriarchs; nor did the simple dress of the shepherds of Samaria present an appearance repugnant to the idea which might be entertained of the sons of Jacob. The beginning and the end of Joseph's eventful history were before him; for here, *in the parcel of ground* bequeathed to him by his dying father, his embalmed body, after accompanying the Israelites through their long wanderings, was finally deposited.

When we read that the body of Joseph *was put in a coffin in Egypt**, we must not imagine it to have been placed in one of the perishable chests or boxes we call by that name. The receptacles in which the ancients deposited the remains of men of princely rank, were more like cisterns, hewn with incredible labour out of one immense block of solid stone. The tomb of Joseph still bears his name: it is unaltered, and the veneration paid to it by Jews and Christians, has preserved through successive ages the knowledge of its situation. It is revered even by the Mohammedans, its present masters, who have erected a small mosque over it. The steps of the curious traveller are also directed to other sepulchres in the neighbourhood of Shechem; particularly to that of Joshua, who resided there during the last twenty years of his life†. These tombs are hewn in the solid rock, and are calculated to endure as long as the hills out of which they were excavated: they are monuments on which the lapse of ages effects no change,

* Genesis, l. 26.

† Josephus Antiq. v. i. 28.

being as perfect at the present day, as they were on that in which they were finished.

Another interesting memorial is the Well, mentioned in our last fragment, of which *Jacob drank himself, and his children, and his cattle*. It is situated in the spot where the narrow valley of Shechem, or Sichein, opens into a wide field; probably part of *the parcel of ground* mentioned in our text. Here also are the mountains, Ebal and Gerizim, where Joshua built an altar to the Lord, and read in the audience of the people all the words of the law of Moses*. Between these two mountains, the town (the Sychar of the New Testament, the Napolose of the present day) is situated. One of the finest prospects in the Holy Land is seen from the neighbouring heights. As the traveller descends towards the city, it appears embosomed in the most fragrant and delightful bowers, half concealed by rich gardens, and groves of stately trees. It is no wonder that so beautiful a situation

* Josh. viii. 30—35.

should have been chosen for the site of one of the first settlements of the Israelites. The most ancient name of the town was Shechem; and even in the time of Joshua it was a place of consequence, being one of the three cities of refuge appointed by him*. It is now the metropolis of a very rich and extensive country, abounding with provisions, and better supplied with all the necessary articles of life than the town of Acre. Dr. Clarke found white bread, of superior quality, exposed for sale in the streets; and he was received and entertained by the governor, with all the magnificence of an eastern sovereign. Trade appears to flourish among the inhabitants: the goods manufactured in the town not only supply the immediate neighbourhood, but are exported to a great distance upon camels. Our traveller witnessed the arrival of caravans from Grand Cairo, and observed others reposing in the olive plantations near the gates of the city †.

I have given to thee one portion above thy

* Josephus Ant. v. i. 24.

† Ib. 505—517.

brethren, were the words of the dying Jacob. Maundrell, delighted with the verdure and fertility of the spot which is believed to have been the Inheritance of Joseph, says, "It may well be looked upon as a standing token of the affection of that good patriarch to the best of sons*." The natural advantages of its situation appear indeed to be great; since it has been a place of consequence during so many ages, and still retains its pre-eminence, even under the Turkish government.

* Maundrell, in Pinkerton's Voyages, x. 337.

XVIII.

FERTILITY OF JUDÆA.

The Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and figtrees, and pomegranates; a land of oil-olive, and honey; A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it.

DEUT. viii. 7—9.

SUCH was the Promised Land when it was bestowed upon the Israelites; and the description Josephus has given us of its state in his days, accords with that of Moses. Dr. Clarke speaks with admiration of its beauty and fertility, which he describes in the following manner. Leaving Napolose an hour after midnight, he proceeded towards Jerusalem: the road led through the valley between the two mountains, Ebal and

Gerizim, so frequently mentioned in the early history of the Jews. He passed the Sepulchre of Joseph and the Well of Jacob, where the narrow valley of Shechem opened into a fertile plain. As the morning advanced, the heat became excessive; and before noon, the mercury in Fahrenheit's thermometer, in the most shaded situation that could be found, stood at 102 degrees. The umbrellas of the travellers afforded some protection from the direct rays of the sun; but the reflection from the ground was nearly as insupportable. They followed their guides in silence, along a narrow, stony track, over a mountainous country, and by the edge of precipices; yet the cultivation was every where marvellous, presenting a most striking picture of human industry. The limestone rocks and stony valleys of Judæa were entirely covered with plantations of figs, vines, and olive-trees: not a single spot seemed to be neglected. The hills, from their bases to their upmost summits, were entirely covered with gardens: all of them free from weeds, and in the highest state of agricultural improvement. Even the sides of the most

barren mountains had been rendered fertile, by dividing them into terraces, like steps, rising one above another, whereon soil had been accumulated with astonishing labour. Among the standing crops, were millet, cotton, linseed, and tobacco; and occasionally small fields of barley. Dr. Clarke observes, that “ a sight of this territory can alone
“ convey any adequate idea of its surprising
“ produce: it is truly the Eden of the East,
“ rejoicing in the abundance of its wealth.
“ The effect of this upon the people was
“ strikingly pourtrayed in every counte-
“ nance: instead of the depressed and
“ gloomy looks of Djezza Pacha’s desolated
“ plains, (the neighbourhood of Acre,)
“ health, hilarity, and peace, were visible in
“ the features of the inhabitants. Under a
“ wise and beneficent government, the pro-
“ duce of the Holy Land would exceed all
“ calculation. Its perennial harvest, the
“ salubrity of its air, its limpid springs, its
“ rivers, lakes, and matchless plains, its hills
“ and vales: all these, added to the serenity
“ of its climate, prove this land to be indeed
“ *a field which the Lord hath blessed; God*

*“hath given it of the dew of heaven, and
“the fatness of the earth, and plenty of corn
“and wine.”*

Such is the testimony of a respectable eye-witness. The poet of Amwell must have been strangely misinformed, when he wrote the following lines:

Ask Palestine, proud Asia's early boast,

Where now the groves that pour'd her wine and oil,
Where the fair towns that crown'd her wealthy coast,
Where the glad swains that till'd her fertile soil?

Ask, and behold, and mourn her hapless fall;

Where rose fair towns, where waved the golden grain,
Thrown on the naked rock and mouldering wall,
Pale Want and Ruin hold their dreary reign.

Where Jordan's valleys smiled in living green,

Where Sharon's flow'rs disclosed their varied hues,
The wandering pilgrim views the alter'd scene,
And drops the tear of pity as he views,

XIX.

VIEW OF JERUSALEM.

Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great king.

PSALM xlviii. 2.

CONTINUING his journey southwards from Napolose, Dr. Clarke, after about six hours' travelling, found himself in a narrow valley, between two high rocky hills. Here were the ruins of a village, and also of a monastery, on the spot where the Bethel of Jacob is supposed to have been situated. The nature of the soil is an existing comment on the accuracy of the sacred historian, who describes Jacob as *taking of the stones of that place, and putting them for his pillows**.

* Gen. xxviii. 11.

At two in the afternoon our travellers halted for rest and refreshment near a well, beneath the shade of a ruined building; then, remounting their horses, proceeded on their way. Such were the eagerness and zeal with which the expectation of soon approaching Jerusalem animated the whole party, that sensations of heat and fatigue were forgotten or disregarded. Each individual pressed forward, in hopes of being the first to announce to his companions the joyful intelligence that they had arrived in view of the Holy City. They passed some ruins; but whether of ancient buildings or of modern villages they stopped not to examine or inquire: every mind was engrossed by the same great object of interest and curiosity. At length, after about two hours had been spent in this state of anxious expectation, while they were ascending a hill towards the south, "HAGIOPOLIS!" exclaimed a Greek in the van of the cavalcade; and instantly, throwing himself from his horse, his companions beheld him bareheaded, upon his knees, facing the prospect so long desired. The rest of the party ad-

vanced, and “suddenly,” says Dr. Clarke, “the sight burst upon us all. Who shall describe it? The effect produced was that of total silence throughout the whole company. Many of the party, by an immediate impulse, took off their hats, as if entering a church, without being sensible of so doing. The Greeks and Catholics shed torrents of tears; and presently beginning to cross themselves with unfeigned devotion, asked if they might be permitted to take off the covering from their feet, and proceed barefooted to the Holy Sepulchre. We had not been prepared for the grandeur of the spectacle which the city alone exhibited. Instead of a wretched and ruined town, by some described as the desolated remnant of Jerusalem, we beheld, as it were, a flourishing and stately metropolis; presenting a magnificent assemblage of domes, towers, palaces, churches, and monasteries; all of which, glittering in the sun’s rays, shone with inconceivable splendour*.”

* Ib. vol. ii. 522—524.

Subsequent observation convinced Dr. Clarke, that there is *no other* point of view from which Jerusalem is seen to so much advantage. In the celebrated prospect from the Mount of Olives, whence the compassionate Saviour beheld the city, and wept over the fatal blindness of its inhabitants, the buildings seem to lie too low, and have too much the character of what is called a bird's eye view. May we not, therefore, suppose that the words of the Psalmist, in our text, refer particularly to that striking prospect described by Dr. Clarke: *Beautiful for situation is Mount Zion, on the sides of THE NORTH.*

XX.

WOMEN ENGAGED IN COMMERCE.

She maketh fine linen and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.

PROV. xxxi. 24.

IN ancient times the Egyptian women were much engaged in commerce; which appeared so extraordinary to Herodotus, that he thought the fact worthy of being recorded. The custom is no longer general among the females of Egypt; but Maillet informs us that it is still retained by the Arabs of that country who inhabit the mountains. Their women are accustomed to deal in buying and selling things woven of gold and silver thread, of silk or cotton: also linen cloth, whether made in the country or imported; while the men trade in wheat, barley, rice, and other productions of the earth. The

same custom probably was general in Judæa; as we see that the author of the book of Proverbs, among the other occupations of his *virtuous woman*, supposes her to be thus employed.

XXI.

SIGNALS USED IN TRAVELLING.

Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people.

ISAIAH, lxii. 10.

It has been thought, by some commentators, that this passage relates to the future establishment of the Church of Christ; but others are of opinion, that it more immediately refers to the consequences of the edict of Cyrus, and contains a prophetic description of the return of the Jews from the Babylonish captivity.

Go through the gates, seems to allude to the custom still prevalent in the East, for travellers to assemble without the walls of the city, and form, for their mutual safety and convenience, what is called a *caravan*,

before they venture to expose themselves to the dangers of the Desert. Many preparations are necessary, before the difficulties of such a journey can be encountered with prudence; and as, in the East, customs are transmitted, with but little alteration, from age to age, the arrangements of those large caravans which now pass annually through the Desert, on pilgrimage to Mecca, may serve to illustrate several passages of Scripture which refer to the travels of the Israelites. We must, however, in the first place, take notice of some difficulties, occasioned by the nature of the country round Babylon.

In Egypt, banks or causeways leading from one city to another are thrown up, in order to facilitate communication, which would otherwise be interrupted by the overflowing of the Nile. A similar expedient must have been necessary in the neighbourhood of the Euphrates, on which Babylon was situated. The words of the Psalmist, *By the rivers of Babylon there we sate down: we hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof*, convey the idea of a marshy country. We learn also from history, that when the heats

of summer had melted the snow on the mountains of Armenia, such an influx of water poured into the channel of the Euphrates, that it overflowed its banks; and Babylon would have been annually liable to inundation, had not the inhabitants guarded against the danger, by works of prodigious labour and expense*. Strictly speaking, there was only one river at Babylon, the Euphrates; but our text probably refers to the canals, which conveyed the surperfluous waters into an immense reservoir or lake, which, though covering an extent of more than sixty square miles, was the work of human industry. The phrase, *cast up the highway*, is translated by bishop Lowth, *cast up the causeway*. It probably refers to the embanked, or elevated roads, which were rendered necessary by the peculiarity of the country. After its predicted desolation had taken place, the art and industry of man no longer confining the river within its prescribed bounds, the neighbouring territory, once so pleasant and fertile, degenerated into a morass †.

* Rollin, ii. 21.

† Ib. 176.

So much for the rivers, the willows, and causeways of Babylon: let us now inquire how the Jews were to be directed in their march across the vast desert interposed between the city of their captivity and their native land. Irwin, speaking of his journey through the deserts on the eastern side of the Nile, from Upper Egypt to Cairo, describes the route as lying over level and stony ground, where the foot of the camel leaves no impression. Through this tract they derived great assistance from *heaps of stones*, which the Arabs had piled up at unequal distances, for their own direction through the Desert. Is it not reasonable to suppose, that such an expedient might be of important service to the Jews, in facilitating their return to their own country? And that the next clause in our text should be rendered, not *gather out the stones*, but *throw ye up heaps of stones*, that you may be directed in your march across the pathless Desert.

Pitts, who accompanied the large caravan from Mecca to Grand Cairo, describes the first day of the journey as a period of much confusion; but, when every one had taken

his place, he retained it in an orderly and peaceable manner, till they arrived at Cairo. The arrangement of this vast multitude of men and beasts was curious, and worthy of attention. The whole body composed *the caravan*: this was divided into several *cottors*, or companies, consisting, probably, of several thousand camels; and they moved, one cottor after another, like distinct troops. At the head of each cottor was some person of consequence, who was carried in a kind of litter: near him went a sumpter camel, which carried his treasure. These camels, and some others belonging to the caravan, had bells; some about their necks, others about their legs; the sound of which might be heard at a great distance. The servants, who have the care of the camels, travel on foot, and sing all the night long: their voices, and the cheerful music of the bells, make the camels more brisk and lively, and also serve to beguile the tediousness of the way. Perhaps the prophet had this custom in view, when he describes *the redeemed of the Lord as returning and coming to Zion, with songs and*

*everlasting joy upon their heads**; and such might be the practice of the Israelites, in those journeys which they were required to make, three times in a year, to Jerusalem.

The caravans travel principally *by night*; and it is from this circumstance that the last clause of our text receives the happiest illustration.

In order to direct their march during the hours of darkness, they make use of little iron grates, which are carried on the tops of long poles: in these they burn a resinous wood, which affords a clear blaze. Each cottor, or division of the caravan, has one of these poles or standards: some have ten or twelve lights on their tops; and they are of different figures, some oval, others triangular, or like the letters N or M; so that each pilgrim may distinguish the standard of the cottor to which he belongs. The poles are carried in front of the cottors, and set up in the place where the caravan is to halt, at some distance from each other. They are also carried during the day, not lighted;

* Isaiah, li. 11.

but, by their figures and number, the pilgrims are directed as soldiers are by their colours. Each cottor thus knowing its own place of rendezvous, they avoid that confusion which must, without some such contrivance, inevitably take place among so vast a multitude.

The great heat of the day rendering the night most desirable for travelling, they pitch their tents early in the morning, and divide the time between sleep and refreshment, till about four in the afternoon. Then the trumpet sounds, giving general notice to take down the tents and load the camels, in readiness to proceed on the journey. It takes about two hours of preparation before they are all in their places, and ready to move forward. The lapse of three thousand years has made no alteration in the signal for decamping: the caravan of Mecca now moves on the blowing of a trumpet. We find, in the tenth chapter of Numbers, that the Israelites, under Moses, did the same.

Shall we not then conclude, that to *lift up a standard for the people*, may be satisfactorily explained by the practice just de-

scribed? And is it not probable, that the standards of the twelve tribes * were moveable beacons, like those of the pilgrims of Mecca? If it is objected, that the march of the Israelites was miraculously directed by *the pillar of fire*, we must admit that each tribe, like the cottors of the Mecca caravan, would still need its own appropriate ensign as a rallying point. The pilgrims, who travel at their ease, carrying with them all the conveniences they require, find these poles or beacons sufficient to prevent confusion, even during the day: we may therefore suppose that they might answer the same purpose to the Israelites.

Some have imagined that the standards of the tribes were banners, on which different figures were delineated: as, *a child* on that of Reuben; *an ox* on that of Ephraim; *a lion* on that of Judah, &c. But these devices must have been useless in night travelling; and, considering the proneness to idolatry which the Israelites had already manifested, it does not seem probable that such

* Numbers, ii.

decorations would have been permitted. Bishop Patrick and others have conjectured, that *the names* of the Patriarchs were embroidered on the ensigns of their respective tribes, or that they were distinguished by particular colours; but the great resemblance between the customs of the Jews and Arabians, seems rather to strengthen the supposition of their making use of the same kind of signals.

XXII.

ANCIENT METHODS OF SEALING.

And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side; and the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.

EZEK. ix. 3, 4.

And I saw another angel ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God: and he cried with a loud voice to the four angels, to whom it was given to hurt the earth and the sea, saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.

REV. vii. 2, 3.

THE mode of sealing now practised by the inhabitants of Egypt and the Arabs of the Desert, seems to point out a connexion be-

tween the vision of Ezekiel and that of John. The Apostle saw an angel with *the seal of the living God*: the prophet beheld a man with an inkhorn by his side. We are not told how the ink was to be applied, nor what kind of mark was to be made by the seal; but, on comparing the two visions, and learning that *ink*, not wax, is now used for sealing writings in the East, we may suppose that the person who carried the inkhorn also bore a seal, wherewith he might make the required impression. The Arabs make the impression of their name with a seal, generally of cornelian, which they wear on the finger, and *blacken* when they have occasion to make use of it.

The position of the inkhorn, mentioned by Ezekiel, appears singular; but it accords with the practice of the modern Persians. Those among them who are writers by profession, carry their inkhorn in their girdle, or suspended to the side. This proof of the unchanging character of Eastern customs strengthens the supposition, that sealing with ink was practised in the time of

Ezekiel, though not expressly mentioned in this place.

Him hath God the Father sealed.

JOHN vi. 27.

This passage has been variously understood. It is not at first sight apparent, that it refers to that offering of himself as a propitiation for sin, so frequently alluded to in the New Testament, and to which our Lord seems to refer in the same discourse, when he says: *The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world**. The connexion between this and the twenty-seventh verse is not, however, obvious; but the following account may throw some light upon it.

Harmer informs us that it was customary, among nations contiguous to Judæa, to set a seal upon the victim deemed proper for sa-

* John, vi. 51.

crifice. Herodotus thus describes the method practised by the Egyptians, of selecting white bulls for sacrifices to their god Apis. “ If they find even one black hair on him, “ they deem him unclean. That they may “ know this with certainty, the priest ap- “ pointed for this purpose examines the “ whole animal, both standing up and lying “ down: afterwards he draws out his tongue, “ to see, by certain signs, whether it be “ clean; and, lastly, looks on the hairs of his “ tail, to see whether they be all in their “ natural state. If, after this search, the “ animal is found *without blemish*, he (the “ priest) signifies it by binding a label to his “ horns; then applying wax, SEALS *it with* “ *his ring*, and the beast is led away. To “ sacrifice one not thus sealed, is punished “ with death; and these are the rites of this “ sacrifice. The beast thus sealed is brought “ to the altar: afterwards the head is cut “ off, brought to the market, and sold to the “ Greeks; but, if it be not the market-day, “ they throw the head into the river, with “ this execration;—that, if there be any evil “ hanging over them, or over the land of

“Egypt, it may be poured out upon that
“head.”

The Jews could not be unacquainted with the rites and ceremonies of Egyptian worship; and it does not appear improbable, that similar precautions might be taken by them in the choice of victims. We know that they were strictly enjoined to have their sacrifices *without blemish**. Such was Jesus Christ, whom *God the Father* SEALED: *i. e.* pointed him out, and accepted him as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind. *Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*†! exclaimed John the Baptist, who had seen the Spirit descending from heaven, and remaining upon him. This was the appointed token, *the seal*, by which he was to know the Divine Person, whose advent he was commissioned to proclaim. *And I saw*, continues he, *and bare record that this is the Son of God*‡. The shadowy types of the Mosaic dispensation were now no longer needed, being fulfilled in Him, to

* Ex. xii. 5; Lev. ix. 3; Deut. xvii. 1; Ezek. xlvi. 23.

† John, i. 29.

‡ Ib. 34.

whom that law, as well as *all the prophets, had given witness**; but so prone is the human mind to rest in the outward form of religion, that it seems to have been needful for the Apostles to employ great variety of argument and illustration, in order to convince their countrymen that these types were only *figures for the time then present*, that could not make him that did the service perfect†. The epistle to the Hebrews, in particular, abounds with images and allusions derived from the Jewish ritual, and adduced, by the Apostle, to prove the superior value and efficacy of that spiritual dispensation by which the ceremonial law was superseded. *For if*, says he, in a comparison very applicable to our present subject, *for if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your consciences from dead works to serve the living God‡.*

* Acts, x. 43.

† Heb. ix. 9.

‡ Ib. ix. 13, 14.

The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.

2 TIM. ii. 19.

In this passage, the Apostle uses the word *seal*, as if it were equivalent to *inscription*; immediately quoting two mottoes or sentences, as if they were engraven on a seal. Dr. Adam Clarke informs us, that he has seen multitudes of Arabic and Persian seals; but never observed one with any kind of figure or image upon it. The inscription generally consists of the name and titles of the owner, which are engraved with great care and accuracy. It is probable that the seals of the Jews, whose scruples, with regard to the use of images, are well known, also consisted of inscriptions; and the two selected by the Apostle in our text merit the distinction, as truths which cannot be controverted. The resurrection of Jesus was the foundation of the Gospel that Paul

preached; but he was not satisfied with the bare admission or acknowledgment of the fact. The motto on the first side of the Gospel seal reminds the believer, that outward profession cannot impose on Him who beholds the secret thoughts of the heart. *The Lord knoweth them that are his.* From the second inscription he learns that, if he ventures to enrol himself as a follower of Christ, he must relinquish all sinful practices. Birth and education in a Christian country or community, entitles no one to receive this seal: those only bear the impression, whose hearts are sincere, and whose lives are pious.

XXIII.

THE FLY OF ETHIOPIA.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. And they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all bushes.

ISAIAH, vii. 18. 19.

PERHAPS some future traveller may make us acquainted with the bee of Assyria: we are indebted to Bruce for a particular description of the Ethiopian fly, which is justly regarded with terror in the countries subject to its visitations.

In the Chaldee and Arabic versions, it is said that this insect is called by a name which has the same general meaning as the

English word *fly*. The Ethiopic translation calls it Tsaltsalya, the name by which this particular species of fly is now known in Abyssinia, where Bruce became acquainted with it: he informs us that it has not yet been described by any naturalist. It is very little larger than a bee, but of thicker proportions. Its wings are broader than those of a bee, and placed separately, like the wings of a fly: they resemble pure gauze, without colour or spot. Its head is large, and the whole body covered with brown hair or down. Though much resembling the bee, it has no sting: its motion is also more rapid and sudden, like that of the English gad-fly.

As soon as these insects make their appearance, and their buzzing is heard, all the cattle forsake their food, and run wildly about the plains, till they die, worn out with fear, fatigue, and hunger. There is no means of escaping this dreadful scourge, but by leaving the black earth, and hastening to the sands of Atbara, where they remain during the rainy season, undisturbed by their cruel enemy.

Notwithstanding the great size and strength of the camel, and the thickness of his skin, which is defended by strong hair, he cannot endure the punctures made by the pointed proboscis of this insect, and is compelled to seek refuge in the sands of Atbara; or his body, head, and legs, break out into large bosses, which swell, break, and putrefy, causing certain death. The elephant and rhinoceros require such vast quantities of food and water, that they cannot, like the camel, remove to dry and desert places: they are therefore obliged to roll themselves in the mud, which, when it becomes dry, coats them over like armour, and enables them to withstand the assaults of this formidable little creature.

The inhabitants of the sea-coast of Melinda, down to cape Gardéfau, to Saba, and the south coast of the Red Sea, are also obliged to quit their places of abode in the beginning of the rainy season, and remove to the next sand, in order to prevent their stock of cattle from being destroyed. This is not a partial emigration: the inhabitants of all the countries from the mountains of

Abyssinia northward, to the confluence of the Nile and Astaboras, are once a year compelled to abandon their dwellings, and seek an asylum among the sands of Beja. There is no alternative, even though bands of armed men were in the way, as was actually the case when Bruce visited that country.

May not this relation throw some light on a remarkable circumstance attending one of the plagues inflicted on Pharoah and his people? *And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end that thou mayst know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth. And I will put a division between my people and thy people; to-morrow shall this sign be.*

I do not know that we have any where an account of Egypt being subject to the visitations of the Tsaltsalya; but on this occasion a species of fly appears to have been specially sent, and Bruce's account shows that the habits of the Ethiopian fly peculiarly fitted it to become the instrument of punishment, as well as the means of making a striking

distinction between the Israelites and the Egyptians. It is well known that the land of Goshen, the abode of the Israelites, was a land of pasture, not subject to the inundations of the Nile. The country overflowed by the annual rising of the waters, was the black earth of the valley of Egypt, and to that district the flies were confined; not one being found in the pasture ground inhabited by the Israelites.

Isaiah, in the text, says, the fly shall be in the *desolate valleys, the rocks and bushes*. We may, therefore, suppose it would be found in the sands, cutting off from the cattle their usual retreat to the Desert, by taking possession of places where this terrible insect is generally unknown. But we must recollect that this was a particular dispensation of Providence, and not a repeal of the general restriction imposed on the ravages of the fly: it was an exception, for a particular purpose and a limited time*. He who is, as he declared to Pharoah, *the Lord in the midst of the earth*, can ren-

* Bruce, in Calmet. Frag. LVI.

der the order which he has established in nature subservient to his purposes; or, if he so pleases, he can, by suspending that order, afford a sensible proof, that, from the greatest to the meanest of his works, *all* is still subject to his power.

Thus has an intelligent traveller shown us the true signification of a word which has been differently translated, and occasioned much embarrassment to commentators. Scott passes it over slightly. "Probably," says he, "Egypt abounded with troublesome and noisome swarms of flies; and Assyria might be remarkable for bees," &c. But how interesting is the precision which the observations of Bruce give to the language of Scripture. Who could suppose that an insect is now existing in Ethiopia, capable by its habits of illustrating the facts recorded in the history of Moses? and how many passages of Scripture may appear difficult or inexplicable, solely on account of our own want of information respecting them!

XXIV.

EASTERN MODE OF PROCURING REDRESS
OF INJURIES.

Behold my servant whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased; I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall show judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. And in his name shall the Gentiles trust.

MATT. xii. 18—21.

THE spiritual government of Him *whose kingdom is not of this world*, is, in Scripture, frequently illustrated by figures borrowed from the customs of Eastern sovereigns. Perhaps the *smoking flax*, mentioned in the text, might be intended by Isaiah, (from whose prophecy it is quoted by the Evangelist,) to convey an allusion to

a practice still subsisting, and which is thus described.

“ There lies no appeal beyond the Grand
“ Vizier, except to the person of the Grand
“ Seignior, of which this is the manner. At
“ certain hours of the day the gates of the
“ Seraglio are set open for the admittance
“ of citizens, &c. Then persons who wish
“ to complain of any grievous injury they
“ have suffered, and which the injustice or
“ connivance of the Vizier has refused to
“ redress, enter the outward court in haste,
“ and, putting pots of fire on their heads,
“ run swiftly forward ; nor dare the greatest
“ officer presume to stop them, till they ar-
“ rive in the presence of the Grand Seignior,
“ whose justice they implore to redress their
“ wrongs*.” This custom is also mentioned,
though somewhat differently, by Peyssonnel,
in his remarks on Baron du Tott, p. 45.
“ Those who are aggrieved stand before
“ the gate of the Seraglio : each carries on
“ his head a kind of match or wick, lighted,
“ and smoking, which is considered as the

* Hill's Travels, p. 9.

“allegorical emblem of the fire that consumes his soul.” Our countryman Sandys notices the same practice: “They will in troops attend the coming forth of the emperor, and by burning straw on their heads, provoke his regard*.”

May not our text, then, be considered as admitting the following explanation. Numerous suitors shall wait on my servant, as with smoking flax on their heads, in token of secret grief—not one of these shall go away without redress—*He who is touched with the feeling of their infirmities † has promised, that those who come to him, he will in no wise cast out ‡. He will render them victorious over their spiritual enemies; and to as many as receive him, he will give power to become the sons of God §. He shall not strive, nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets; because his kingdom is within ||, and his authority is*

* Sandys' Travels, p. 62.—See Calmet, Frag. B. No. 302.

† Heb. iv. 15.

‡ John, vi. 37.

§ Ib. i. 12.

|| Luke, xvii. 21.

silently established, *casting down imaginations, and every thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God; and bringing even the thoughts into obedience**. There is much in the unruly passions and erring judgments of men, which opposes the progress of his dominion; but prophecy assures us that it will finally prevail: *He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law†*.

We must, doubtless, observe and lament the moral evil still existing in our own hearts, in the conduct of others, and in the laws and the character of nations; but let us look forward with hope to a better state of things. If we are really Christians, we shall be solicitous to do *our part* towards lessening this mass of evil, by correcting and subduing its influence over ourselves; and, by example, advice, and assistance, contributing all in our power towards the improvement of others. We shall engage in this work heartily, as *knowing that our labour is not in vain‡*.

* 2 Cor. x. 5.

† Isa. xlii. 4.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 58.

Even a slight acquaintance with history may convince us that we have no reason to say, *The former days were better than these**; but, on the contrary, that a progressive advancement in knowledge and virtue is taking place in the world.

May we thankfully rejoice in this auspicious course of Providence, regarding it as the existing accomplishment of ancient prophecy, which will continue to be carried forward; so that, *of the increase of the government and peaceful spirit of our Divine Master there shall be no end†*; but *the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea‡*.

Behold the measure of the promise fill'd;
 See Salem built, the labour of a God!
 Bright as a sun the sacred city shines;
 All kingdoms and all princes of the earth
 Flock to that light; the glory of all lands
 Flows into her; unbounded is her joy,
 And endless her increase. Thy rams are there,
 Nabaioth, and the flocks of Kedar there;
 The looms of Ormus, and the mines of Ind,
 And Saba's spicy groves, pay tribute there.

* Eccl. vii. 10.

† Isa. ix. 7.

‡ Ib. xi. 9.

Praise is in all her gates; upon her walls,
And in her streets, and in her spacious courts,
Is heard salvation. Eastern Java there
Kneels with the native of the furthest west;
And Ethiopia spreads abroad the hand,
And worships. Her report has travell'd forth,
Into all lands. From every clime they come
To see thy beauty and to share thy joy,
O Sion! an assembly such as Earth
Saw never, such as Heaven stoops down to see*."

* Cowper's Task, b. vi.

THE END.



