

THE SECOND BOOK OF

THE KINGS

Commentary by **ROBERT JAMIESON**

CHAPTER 1

2 KINGS 1:1.

MOAB REBELS.

1. *Then Moab rebelled* — Subdued by David (2 Samuel 8:2), they had, in the partition of Israel and Judah, fallen to the share of the former kingdom. But they took advantage of the death of Ahab to shake off the yoke (see on 2 Kings 3:6). The casualty that befell Ahaziah [2 Kings 1:2] prevented his taking active measures for suppressing this revolt, which was accomplished as a providential judgment on the house of Ahab for all these crimes.

2 KINGS 1:2-8.

AHAZIAH'S JUDGMENT BY ELIJAH.

2-8. *Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber* — This lattice was either a *part* of the wooden parapet, or fence, which surrounds the flat roofs of houses, and over which the king was carelessly leaning when it gave way; or it might be an opening like a skylight in the roof itself, done over with lattice — work, which, being slender or rotten, the king stepped on and slipped through. This latter supposition is most

probably the true one, as Ahaziah did not fall either into the street or the court, but “in his upper chamber.”

inquire of Baalzebub — Anxious to learn whether he should recover from the effects of this severe fall, he sent to consult Baalzebub, that is, the god of flies, who was considered the patron deity of medicine. A temple to that idol was erected at Ekron, which was resorted to far and wide, though it afterwards led to the destruction of the place (^{<300>}Zechariah 9:5 Amos 1:8 ^{<400>}Zephaniah 2:4). “After visiting Ekron, ‘the god of flies’ is a name that gives me no surprise. The flies there swarmed, in fact so innumerable, that I could hardly get any food without these troublesome insects getting into it” [VAN DE VELDE].

3. *the angel of the Lord* — not *an* angel, but *the* angel, who carried on all communications between the invisible God and His chosen people [HENGSTENBERG]. This angel commissioned Elijah to meet the king’s messengers, to stop them peremptorily on the idolatrous errand, and convey by them to the king information of his approaching death. This consultation of an idol, being a breach of the fundamental law of the kingdom (^{<200>}Exodus 20:3 ^{<300>}Deuteronomy 5:7), was a daring and deliberate rejection of the national religion. The Lord, in making this announcement of his death, designed that he should see in that event a judgment for his idolatry.

4. *Thou shalt not come down from that bed* — On being taken up, he had probably been laid on the divan — a raised frame, about three feet broad, extended along the sides of a room, covered with cushions and mattresses — serving, in short, as a sofa by day and a bed by night, and ascended by steps.

Elijah departed — to his ordinary abode, which was then at Mount Carmel (^{<100>}2 Kings 2:25 ^{<1100>}1 Kings 18:42).

5. *the messengers turned back* — They did not know the stranger; but his authoritative tone, commanding attitude, and affecting message determined them at once to return.

8. *an hairy man* — This was the description not of his person, as in the case of Esau, but of his dress, which consisted either of unwrought sheep

or goatskins (³⁸¹⁵⁷Hebrews 11:37), or of camel's haircloth — the coarser manufacture of this material like our rough haircloth. The Dervishes and Bedouins are attired in this wild, uncouth manner, while their hair flows loose on the head, their shaggy cloak is thrown over their shoulders and tied in front on the breast, naked, except at the waist, round which is a skin girdle — a broad, rough leathern belt. Similar to this was the girdle of the prophets, as in keeping with their coarse garments and their stern, uncompromising office.

~~11019~~ 2 KINGS 1:9-16.

ELIJAH BRINGS FIRE FROM HEAVEN ON AHAZIAH'S MESSENGERS.

9. *Then the king sent unto him a captain of fifty* — Any appearance of cruelty that there is in the fate of the two captains and their men will be removed, on a full consideration of the circumstances. God being the King of Israel, Ahaziah was bound to govern the kingdom according to the divine law; to apprehend the Lord's prophet, for discharging a commanded duty, was that of an impious and notorious rebel. The captains abetted the king in his rebellion; and they exceeded their military duty by contemptuous insults.

man of God — In using this term, they either spoke derisively, believing him to be no true prophet; or, if they regarded him as a true prophet, the summons to him to surrender himself bound to the king was a still more flagrant insult; the language of the second captain being worse than that of the first.

10. *let fire come down* — rather, "fire shall come down." Not to avenge a personal insult of Elijah, but an insult upon God in the person of His prophet; and the punishment was inflicted, not by the prophet, but by the direct hand of God.

15, 16. *he arose, and went down with him* — a marvellous instance of faith and obedience. Though he well knew how obnoxious his presence was to the king, yet, on receiving God's command, he goes unhesitatingly,

and repeats, with his own lips, the unwelcome tidings conveyed by the messengers.

<1117> 2 KINGS 1:17,18.

AHAZIAH DIES, AND IS SUCCEDED BY JEHORAM.

17. *Jehoram* — The brother of Ahaziah (see on **<1118>** 2 Kings 3:1).

CHAPTER 2

2 KINGS 2:1-10.

ELIJAH DIVINES JORDAN.

1-7. *when the Lord would take up Elijah* — A revelation of this event had been made to the prophet; but, unknown to him, it had also been revealed to his disciples, and to Elisha in particular, who kept constantly beside him.

Gilgal — This Gilgal (Jiljil) was near Ebal and Gerizim; a school of the prophets was established there. At Beth-el there was also a school of the prophets, which Elijah had founded, notwithstanding that place was the headquarters of the calf-worship; and at Jericho there was another (2 Kings 2:4). In travelling to these places, which he had done through the impulse of the Spirit (2 Kings 2:2,4-6), Elijah wished to pay a farewell visit to these several institutions, which lay on his way to the place of ascension and, at the same time, from a feeling of humility and modesty, to be in solitude, where there would be no eye-witnesses of his glorification. All his efforts, however, to prevail on his attendant to remain behind, were fruitless. Elisha knew that the time was at hand, and at every place the sons of the prophets spoke to him of the approaching removal of his master. Their last stage was at the Jordan. They were followed at a distance by fifty scholars of the prophets, from Jericho, who were desirous, in honor of the great occasion, to witness the miraculous translation of the prophet. The revelation of this striking event to so many was a necessary part of the dispensation; for it was designed to be under the law, like that of Enoch in the patriarchal age, a visible proof of another state, and a type of the resurrection of Christ.

3. *take away thy master from thy head* — an allusion to the custom of scholars sitting at the feet of their master, the latter being over their heads (Acts 22:3).

8. *Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters*

— Like the rod of Moses, it had the divinely operating power of the Spirit.

9. *Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee* — trusting either that it would be in his power to bequeath it, or that God, at his entreaty, would grant it.

let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me — This request was not, as is commonly supposed, for the power of working miracles exceeding the magnitude and number of his master's, nor does it mean a higher endowment of the prophetic spirit; for Elisha was neither superior to, nor perhaps equally great with, his predecessor. But the phrase, “a double portion,” was applied to the first-born [⁴²¹⁷Deuteronomy 21:17], and therefore Elisha's request was, simply, to be heir to the prophetic office and gifts of his master.

10. *Thou hast asked a hard thing* — an extraordinary blessing which *I* cannot, and God only, can give. Nevertheless he, doubtless by the secret directions of the Spirit, proposed to Elisha a sign, the observation of which would keep him in the attitude of an anxious waiter, as well as suppliant for the favor.

~~4218~~ 2 KINGS 2:11-18.

HE IS TAKEN UP TO HEAVEN IN A CHARIOT OF FIRE.

11. *behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire* — some bright effulgence, which, in the eyes of the spectators, resembled those objects.

went up by a whirlwind — a tempest or storm wind accompanied with vivid flashes of fire, figuratively used for the divine judgments (²³⁰⁶Isaiah 29:6).

12. *Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father* — that is, spiritual father, as the pupils of the prophets are called their sons.

the chariot of Israel, and the horseman thereof — that is, that as earthly kingdoms are dependent for their defense and glory upon warlike preparations, there a single prophet had done more for the preservation and prosperity of Israel than all her chariots and horsemen.

took hold of his own clothes and rent them — in token of his grief for his loss.

13. *He took up also the mantle of Elijah* — The transference of this prophetic cloak was, to himself, a pledge of his being appointed successor, and it was an outward token to others of the spirit of Elijah resting upon him.

14-18. *smote the waters* — The waving of the mantle on the river, and the miraculous division of the waters consequent upon it, was an evidence that the Lord God of Elijah was with him, and as this miracle was witnessed by the scholars of the prophets from Jericho, they forthwith recognized the pre-eminence of Elisha, as now the prophet of Israel.

16-18. *fifty strong men, let them go, we pray thee, and seek thy master* — Though the young prophets from Jericho had seen Elijah's miraculous passage of the Jordan, they had not witnessed the ascension. They imagined that he might have been cast by the whirlwind on some mountain or valley; or, if he had actually been admitted into heaven, they expected that his body would still be remaining somewhere on earth. In compliance with their importunity, he gave them permission, but told them what the result would be.

~~119~~ 2 KINGS 2:19-25.

ELISHA HEALS THE WATERS.

20. *Bring me a new cruse, and put salt therein* — The noxious qualities of the water could not be corrected by the infusion of salt — for, supposing the salt was possessed of such a property, a whole spring could not be purified by a dishful for a day, much less in all future time. The pouring in of the salt was a symbolic act with which Elisha accompanied the word of the Lord, by which the spring was healed [KEIL].

23, 24. *there came forth little children out of the city* — that is, the idolatrous, or infidel young men of the place, who affecting to disbelieve the report of his master's translation, sarcastically urged him to follow in the glorious career.

bald head — an epithet of contempt in the East, applied to a person even with a bushy head of hair. The appalling judgment that befell them was God's interference to uphold his newly invested prophet.

CHAPTER 3

<111>2 KINGS 3:1-3.

JEHORAM'S EVIL REIGN OVER ISRAEL.

1, 2. *Jehoram the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat* — (compare <125>1 Kings 22:51). To reconcile the statements in the two passages, we must suppose that Ahaziah, having reigned during the seventeenth and the greater part of the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat, was succeeded by his brother Joram or Jehoram, in the end of that eighteenth year, or else that Ahaziah, having reigned two years in conjunction with his father, died at the end of that period when Jehoram ascended the throne. His policy was as hostile as that of his predecessors to the true religion; but he made some changes. Whatever was his motive for this alteration — whether dread of the many alarming judgments the patronage of idolatry had brought upon his father; or whether it was made as a small concession to the feelings of Jehoshaphat, his ally, he abolished idolatry in its gross form and restored the symbolic worship of God, which the kings of Israel, from the time of Jeroboam, had set up as a partition wall between their subjects and those of Judah.

<111>2 KINGS 3:4,5.

MESHA, KING OF MOAB, REBELS.

4-6. *Mesha king of Moab*, etc. — As his dominions embraced an extensive pasture country, he paid, as annual tribute, the wool of a hundred thousand lambs and a hundred thousand rams. It is still common in the East to pay custom and taxes in the fruits or natural produce of the land.

5. *king of Moab rebelled* — This is a repetition of ^{<1200>}2 Kings 1:1, in order to introduce an account of the confederate expedition for crushing this revolt, which had been allowed to continue unchecked during the short reign of Ahaziah.

^{<1200>}2 KINGS 3:6-24.

ELISHA PROMISES WATER AND VICTORY OVER MOAB.

6. *King Jehoram ... numbered Israel* — made a levy from his own subjects, and at the same time sought an alliance with Jehoshaphat, which, as on the former occasion with Ahab, was readily promised (^{<1204>}1 Kings 22:4).

8-12. *Which way shall we go up? And he answered, The way through the wilderness of Edom* — This was a long and circuitous route, by the southern bend of the Dead Sea. Jehoshaphat however preferred it, partly because the part of the Moabite territory at which they would arrive, was the most defenseless; and partly because he would thereby enlist, in the expedition, the forces of the king of Edom. But, in penetrating the deep, rocky valley of Ahsy, which forms the boundary between Edom and Moab, the confederate army was reduced, both man and beast, to the greatest extremities for want of water. They were disappointed by finding the wady of this valley, the brook Zered (^{<1213>}Deuteronomy 2:13-18) [ROBINSON], dry. Jehoram was in despair. But the pious mind of Jehoshaphat inquired for a prophet of the Lord; and, on being informed that Elisha was at hand, the three kings “went down to him”; that is, to his tent, which was either in the camp, or close by it. He had been directed thither by the Spirit of God for this special purpose. They went to him, not only as a mark of respect, but to supplicate for his assistance.

11. *which poured water on the hands of Elijah* — that is, was his servant — this being one of the common offices of a servant. The phrase is used here as synonymous with “a true and eminent prophet,” who will reveal God’s will to us.

13, 14. *What have I to do with thee?* etc. — Wishing to produce a deep spirit of humility and contrition, Elisha gave a stern repulse to the king of Israel, accompanied by a sarcastic sneer, in bidding him go and consult Baal and his soothsayers. But the distressed condition, especially the imploring language, of the royal suppliants, who acknowledged the hand of the Lord in this distress, drew from the prophet the solemn assurance, that solely out of respect to Jehoshaphat, the Lord's true servant, did he take any interest in Jehoram.

15. *bring me a minstrel* — The effect of music in soothing the mind is much regarded in the East; and it appears that the ancient prophets, before entering their work, commonly resorted to it, as a preparative, by praise and prayer, to their receiving the prophetic afflatus.

the hand of the Lord — a phrase significantly implying that the gift of prophecy was not a natural or inherent gift, but conferred by the power and grace of God.

16. *Make this valley full of ditches* — capable of holding water.

17. *Ye shall not see wind* — It is common in the East to speak of *seeing* wind, from the clouds of straw, dust, or sand, that are often whirled into the air, after a long drought.

20-24. *when the meat offering was offered* — that is, at the time of the morning sacrifice, accompanied, doubtless, with solemn prayers; and these led, it may be, by Elisha on this occasion, as on a similar one by Elijah (¹¹⁸³1 Kings 18:36).

behold, there came water by the way of Edom — Far from the Israelitish camp, in the eastern mountains of Edom, a great fall of rain, a kind of cloudburst, took place, by which the wady was at once filled, but they saw neither the wind nor the rains. The divine interposition was shown by introducing the laws of nature to the determined end in the predetermined way [KEIL]. It brought not only aid to the Israelitish army in their distress, by a plentiful supply of water, but destruction on the Moabites, who, perceiving the water, under the refulgent rays of the morning sun, red like blood, concluded the confederate kings had quarrelled and deluged the field with their mutual slaughter; so that, rushing to their camp in full

expectation of great spoil, they were met by the Israelites, who, prepared for battle, fought and pursued them. Their country was laid waste in the way, which has always been considered the greatest desolation in the East.

25. *Kir-haraseth* — (now Kerak) — Castle of Moab — then, probably, the only fortress in the land.

27. *took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering*, etc. — By this deed of horror, to which the allied army drove the king of Moab, a divine judgment came upon Israel; that is, the besiegers feared the anger of God, which they had incurred by giving occasion to the human sacrifice forbidden in the law (^{GENE}Leviticus 18:21 20:3), and hastily raised the siege.

CHAPTER 4

◀1115▶ 2 KINGS 4:1-7.

ELISHA AUGMENTS THE WIDOW'S OIL.

1. *there cried a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets* — They were allowed to marry as well as the priests and Levites. Her husband, not enjoying the lucrative profits of business, had nothing but a professional income, which, in that irreligious age, would be precarious and very scanty, so that he was not in a condition to provide for his family.

the creditor is come to take unto him my two sons to be bondmen — By the enactment of the law, a creditor was entitled to claim the person and children of the insolvent debtor, and compel them to serve him as bondmen till the year of jubilee should set them free.

2-4. *a pot* — or cruet of oil. This comprising her whole stock of domestic utensils, he directs her to borrow empty vessels not a few; then, secluding herself with her children, [the widow] was to pour oil from her cruse into the borrowed vessels, and, selling the oil, discharge the debt, and then maintain herself and family with the remainder.

6. *the oil stayed* — that is, ceased to multiply; the benevolent object for which the miracle had been wrought having been accomplished.

◀1116▶ 2 KINGS 4:8-17.

PROMISES A SON TO THE SHUNAMMITE.

8. *Elisha passed to Shunem* — now Sulam, in the plain of Esdraelon, at the southwestern base of Little Hermon. The prophet, in his journey, was often entertained here by one of its pious and opulent inhabitants.

10. *Let us make a little chamber* — not build, but prepare it. She meant a room in the *oleah*, the porch, or gateway (^{<1083>}2 Samuel 18:33 ^{<1179>}1 Kings 17:19), attached to the front of the house, leading into the court and inner apartments. The front of the house, excepting the door, is a dead wall, and hence this room is called a chamber in the wall. It is usually appropriated to the use of strangers, or lodgers for a night, and, from its seclusion, convenient for study or retirement.

13-16. *what is to be done for thee?* — Wishing to testify his gratitude for the hospitable attentions of this family, he announced to her the birth of a son “about this time next year.” The interest and importance of such an intelligence can only be estimated by considering that Oriental women, and Jewish in particular, connect ideas of disgrace with barrenness, and cherish a more ardent desire for children than women in any other part of the world (^{<1180>}Genesis 18:10-15).

~~<1218>~~ 2 KINGS 4:18-37.

RAISES HER DEAD SON.

19. *My head, my head!* — The cries of the boy, the part affected, and the season of the year, make it probable that he had been overtaken by a stroke of the sun. Pain, stupor, and inflammatory fever are the symptoms of the disease, which is often fatal.

22. *she called unto her husband* — Her heroic concealment of the death from her husband is not the least interesting feature of the story.

24. *Drive, and go forward* — It is usual for women to ride on asses, accompanied by a servant, who walks behind and drives the beast with his stick, goading the animal at the speed required by his mistress. The Shunammite had to ride a journey of five or six hours to the top of Carmel.

26-28. *And she answered, It is well* — Her answer was purposely brief and vague to Gehazi, for she reserved a full disclosure of her loss for the ear of the prophet himself. She had met Gehazi at the foot of the hill, and she stopped not in her ascent till she had disburdened her heavy-laden spirit at Elisha's feet. The violent paroxysm of grief into which she fell on

approaching him, appeared to Gehazi an act of disrespect to his master; he was preparing to remove her when the prophet's observant eye perceived that she was overwhelmed with some unknown cause of distress. How great is a mother's love! how wondrous are the works of Providence! The Shunammite had not sought a son from the prophet — her child was, in every respect, the free gift of God. Was she then allowed to rejoice in the possession for a little, only to be pierced with sorrow by seeing the corpse of the cherished boy? Perish, doubt and unbelief! This event happened that “the works of God should be made manifest” in this prophet, “and for the glory of God.”

29-31. *take my staff ... and lay ... upon the face of the child* — The staff was probably an official rod of a certain form and size. Necromancers used to send their staff with orders to the messengers to let it come in contact with nothing by the way that might dissipate or destroy the virtue imparted to it. Some have thought that Elisha himself entertained similar ideas, and was under an impression that the actual application of his staff would serve as well as the touch of his hand. But this is an imputation dishonorable to the character of the prophet. He wished to teach the Shunammite, who obviously placed too great dependence upon him, a memorable lesson to look to God. By sending his servant forward to lay his staff on the child, he raised [the Shunammite's] expectations, but, at the same time, taught her that his own help was unavailing — “there was neither voice, nor hearing.” The command, to salute no man by the way, showed the urgency of the mission, not simply as requiring the avoidance of the tedious and unnecessary greetings so common in the East (¹⁰⁰Luke 10:1), but the exercise of faith and prayer. The act of Gehazi was allowed to fail, in order to free the Shunammite, and the people of Israel at large, of the superstitious notion of supposing a miraculous virtue resided in any *person*, or in any *rod*, and to prove that it was only through earnest prayer and faith in the power of God and for His glory that this and every miracle was to be performed.

34. *lay upon the child*, etc. — (see ¹¹⁷²1 Kings 17:21 ⁴¹⁰Acts 20:10). Although this contact with a dead body would communicate ceremonial uncleanness, yet, in performing the great moral duties of piety and benevolence, positive laws were sometimes dispensed with, particularly by the prophets.

35. *the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes* — These were the first acts of restored respiration, and they are described as successive steps. Miracles were for the most part performed instantaneously; but sometimes, also, they were advanced progressively towards completion (^{<1184>}1 Kings 18:44,45 ^{<1182>}Mark 8:24,25).

~~<1183>~~ 2 KINGS 4:38-41.

PURIFIES DEADLY POTTAGE.

38. *there was a dearth in the land* — (see on ^{<1181>}2 Kings 8:1).

the sons of the prophets were sitting before him — When receiving instruction, the scholars sat under their masters. This refers to their being domiciled under the same roof (compare ^{<1181>}2 Kings 6:1).

Set on the great pot — As it is most likely that the Jewish would resemble the Egyptian “great pot,” it is seen by the monumental paintings to have been a large goblet, with two long legs, which stood over the fire on the floor. The seethed pottage consisted of meat cut into small pieces, mixed with rice or meal and vegetables.

39. *went out into the field to gather herbs* — Wild herbs are very extensively used by the people in the East, even by those who possess their own vegetable gardens. The fields are daily searched for mallow, asparagus, and other wild plants.

wild vine — literally, “the vine of the field,” supposed to be the *colocynth*, a cucumber, which, in its leaves, tendrils, and fruit, bears a strong resemblance to the wild vine. The “gourds,” or fruit, are of the color and size of an orange bitter to the taste, causing colic, and exciting the nerves, eaten freely they would occasion such a derangement of the stomach and bowels as to be followed by death. The meal which Elisha poured into the pot was a symbolic sign that the noxious quality of the herbs was removed.

lap full — The hyke, or large cloak, is thrown loosely over the left shoulder and fastened under the right arm, so as to form a lap or apron.

2 KINGS 4:42-44.

SATISFIES A HUNDRED MEN WITH TWENTY LOAVES.

43. *They shall eat, and shall leave thereof* — This was not a miracle of Elisha, but only a prediction of one by the word of the Lord. Thus it differed widely from those of Christ (^{<1157>}Matthew 15:37 ^{<1188>}Mark 8:8 ^{<1197>}Luke 9:17 ^{<1162>}John 6:12).

CHAPTER 5

2 KINGS 5:1-7.

NAAMAN'S LEPROSY.

1. Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master — highly esteemed for his military character and success. **and honorable** — rather, “very rich.”

but he was a leper — This leprosy, which, in Israel, would have excluded him from society, did not affect his free intercourse in the court of Syria.

2-5. a little maid — who had been captured in one of the many predatory incursions which were then made by the Syrians on the northern border of Israel (see ^{ORIG}1 Samuel 30:8 ^{DECI}2 Kings 13:21 ^{DECI}2 Kings 24:2). By this young Hebrew slave of his wife, Naaman's attention was directed to the prophet of Israel, as the person who would remove his leprosy. Naaman, on communicating the matter to his royal master, was immediately furnished with a letter to the king of Israel, and set out for Samaria, carrying with him, as an indispensable preliminary in the East, very costly presents.

5. ten talents of silver — about \$20,000 in silver, \$60,000 in gold.

ten changes of raiment — splendid dresses, for festive occasions — the honor being thought to consist not only in the beauty and fineness of the material, but on having a variety to put on one after another, in the same night.

7. when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes — According to an ancient practice among the Eastern people, the main object only was stated in the letter that was carried by the party concerned, while other circumstances were left to be explained at the interview. This explains Jehoram's burst of emotion — not horror at supposed blasphemy, but alarm and suspicion that this was merely made

an occasion for a quarrel. Such a prince as he was would not readily think of Elisha, or, perhaps, have heard of his miraculous deeds.

2 KINGS 5:8-15.

ELISHA SENDS HIM TO JORDAN, AND HE IS HEALED.

8-12. *when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, ... let him come now to me* — This was the grand and ultimate object to which, in the providence of God, the journey of Naaman was subservient. When the Syrian general, with his imposing retinue, arrived at the prophet's house, Elisha sent him a message to "go and wash in Jordan seven times." This apparently rude reception to a foreigner of so high dignity incensed Naaman to such a degree that he resolved to depart, scornfully boasting that the rivers of Damascus were better than all the waters of Israel.

11. *strike his hand over the place* — that is, wave it over the diseased parts of his body. It was anciently, and still continues to be, a very prevalent superstition in the East that the hand of a king, or person of great reputed sanctity, touching, or waved over a sore, will heal it.

12. *Abana and Pharpar* — the Barrady and one of its five tributaries — uncertain which. The waters of Damascus are still highly extolled by their inhabitants for their purity and coldness.

14. *Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan* — Persuaded by his calmer and more reflecting attendants to try a method so simple and easy, he followed their instructions, and was cured. The cure was performed on the basis of God's covenant with Israel, by which the land, and all pertaining to it, was blessed. Seven was the symbol of the covenant [KEIL].

~~1185~~ 2 KINGS 5:15-19.

ELISHA REFUSES NAAMAN'S GIFTS.

15, 16. *he returned to the man of God* — After the miraculous cure, Naaman returned to Elisha, to whom he acknowledged his full belief in the sole supremacy of the God of Israel and offered him a liberal reward. But to show that he was not actuated by the mercenary motives of the heathen priests and prophets, Elisha, though he accepted presents on other occasions (~~1140~~ 2 Kings 4:42), respectfully but firmly declined them on this, being desirous that the Syrians should see the piety of God's servants, and their superiority to all worldly and selfish motives in promoting the honor of God and the interests of true religion.

17. *two mules' burden of earth* — with which to make an altar (~~1171~~ Exodus 20:24) to the God of Israel. What his motive or his purpose was in this proposal — whether he thought that God could be acceptably worshipped only on his own soil; or whether he wished, when far away from the Jordan, to have the *earth* of Palestine to rub himself with, which the Orientals use as a substitute for water; or whether, by making such a request of Elisha, he thought the prophet's grant of it would impart some virtue; or whether, like the modern Jews and Mohammedans, he resolved to have a portion of this *holy earth* for his nightly pillow — it is not easy to say. It is not strange to find such notions in so newly a converted heathen.

18. *goeth into the house of Rimmon* — a Syrian deity; probably the sun, or the planetary system, of which a pomegranate (*Hebrew, Rimmon*) was the symbol.

leaneth on my hand — that is, meaning the service which Naaman rendered as the attendant of his sovereign. Elisha's prophetic commission not extending to any but the conversion of Israel from idolatry, he makes no remark, either approving or disapproving, on the declared course of Naaman, but simply gives the parting benediction (~~1189~~ 2 Kings 5:19).

2 KINGS 5:20-27.**GEHAZI, BY A LIE, OBTAINS A PRESENT, BUT IS SMITTEN WITH LEPROSY.**

20-25. *I will run after him, and take somewhat of him* — The respectful courtesy to Elisha, shown in the person of his servant, and the open-handed liberality of his gifts, attest the fullness of Naaman's gratitude; while the lie — the artful management in dismissing the bearers of the treasure, and the deceitful appearance before his master, as if he had not left the house — give a most unfavorable impression of Gehazi's character.

23. *in two bags* — People in the East, when travelling, have their money, in certain sums, put up in bags.

27. *leper as white as snow* — (See on ^{<BIB>}Leviticus 13:3). This heavy infliction was not too severe for the crime of Gehazi. For it was not the covetousness alone that was punished; but, at the same time, it was the ill use made of the prophet's name to gain an object prompted by a mean covetousness, and the attempt to conceal it by lying [KEIL].

CHAPTER 6

2 KINGS 6:1-7.

ELISHA CAUSES IRON TO SWIM.

1. *the place where we dwell with thee* — *Margin*, “sit before thee.” The one points to a common residence — the other to a common place of meeting. The tenor of the narrative shows the humble condition of Elisha’s pupils. The place was either Beth-el or Jericho, probably the latter. The ministry and miracles of Elisha brought great accessions to his schools.

2. *Let us go, we pray thee, unto Jordan* — whose wooded banks would furnish plenty of timber.

5. *it was borrowed* — literally, “begged.” The scholar’s distress arose from the consideration that it had been presented to him; and that, owing to his poverty, he could not procure another.

6. *cut down a stick, and cast it in thither* — Although this means was used, it had no natural adaptation to make the iron swim. Besides, the Jordan is at Jericho so deep and rapid that there were one thousand chances to one against the stick falling into the hole of the axe-head. All attempts to account for the recovery of the lost implement on such a theory must be rejected.

the iron did swim — only by the miraculous exertion of Elisha’s power.

2 KINGS 6:8-17.

DISCLOSES THE KING OF SYRIA’S COUNSEL.

8-12. *the king of Syria warred against Israel* — This seems to have been a sort of guerrilla warfare, carried on by predatory inroads on different parts of the country. Elisha apprised King Jehoram of the secret purpose

of the enemy; so, by adopting precautionary measures, he was always enabled to anticipate and defeat their attacks. The frequency of his disappointments having led the Syrian king to suspect some of his servants of carrying on a treacherous correspondence with the enemy, he was informed about Elisha, whose apprehension he forthwith determined to effect. This resolution was, of course, grounded on the belief that however great the knowledge of Elisha might be, if seized and kept a prisoner, he could no longer give information to the king of Israel.

13. *Dothan* — or, “Dothaim,” a little north of Samaria (see on ^{<0577>}Genesis 37:17).

15. *his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?* — When the Syrian detachment surrounded the place by night, for the apprehension of the prophet, his servant was paralyzed with fear. This was a new servant, who had only been with him since Gehazi’s dismissal and consequently had little or no experience of his master’s powers. His faith was easily shaken by so unexpected an alarm.

17. *Elisha prayed, and said, Lord, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see* — The invisible guard of angels that encompass and defend us (^{<184E>}Psalm 34:7). The opening of the eyes, which Elisha prayed for, were those of the Spirit, not of the body — the eye of faith sees the reality of the divine presence and protection where all is vacancy or darkness to the ordinary eye. The horses and chariots were symbols of the divine power (see on ^{<012D>}2 Kings 2:12); and their fiery nature denoted their supernatural origin; for fire, the most ethereal of earthly elements, is the most appropriate symbol of the Godhead [KEIL].

^{<1268>}2 KINGS 6:18-23.

HIS ARMY SMITTEN WITH BLINDNESS.

18. *Smite this people, I pray thee, with blindness* — not a total and material blindness, for then they could not have followed him, but a mental hallucination (see ^{<0191>}Genesis 19:11) so that they did not perceive or recognize him to be the object of their search.

19-23. *This is not the way, neither is this the city* — This statement is so far true that, as he had now left the place of his residence, they would not have got him by that road. But the ambiguity of his language was purposely framed to deceive them; and yet the deception must be viewed in the light of a stratagem, which has always been deemed lawful in war.

he led them to Samaria — When they were arrived in the midst of the capital, their eyes, at Elisha's request, were opened, and they then became aware of their defenseless condition, for Jehoram had received private premonition of their arrival. The king, so far from being allowed to slay the enemies who were thus unconsciously put in his power, was recommended to entertain them with liberal hospitality and then dismiss them to their own country. This was humane advice; it was contrary to the usage of war to put war captives to death in cold blood, even when taken by the point of the sword, much more those whom the miraculous power and providence of God had unexpectedly placed at his disposal. In such circumstances, kind and hospitable treatment was every way more becoming in itself, and would be productive of the best effects. It would redound to the credit of the true religion, which inspired such an excellent spirit into its professors; and it would not only prevent the future opposition of the Syrians but make them stand in awe of a people who, they had seen, were so remarkably protected by a prophet of the Lord. The latter clause of ^{<1163>}2 Kings 6:23 shows that these salutary effects were fully realized. A moral conquest had been gained over the Syrians.

~~<1163>~~ 2 KINGS 6:24-33.

BEN-HADAD BESIEGES SAMARIA.

24. *Ben-hadad ... besieged Samaria* — This was the predicted accomplishment of the result of Ahab's foolish and misplaced kindness (^{<1100>}1 Kings 20:42).

25. *an ass's head was sold for fourscore pieces of silver* — Though the ass was deemed unclean food, necessity might warrant their violation of a positive law when mothers, in their extremity, were found violating the

law of nature. The head was the worst part of the animal. Eighty pieces of silver, equal to \$50.

the fourth part of a cab — A cab was the smallest dry measure. The proportion here stated was nearly half a pint for \$3.

dove's dung — is thought by BOCHART to be a kind of pulse or pea, common in Judea, and still kept in the storehouses of Cairo and Damascus, and other places, for the use of it by pilgrim-caravans; by LINNAEGUS, and other botanists, it is said to be the root or white bulb of the plant *Ornithogalum umbellatum*, Star of Beth-lehem. The sacred historian does not say that the articles here named were regularly sold at the rates described, but only that instances were known of such high prices being given.

26. *as the king was passing* — to look at the defenses, or to give some necessary orders for manning the walls.

29. *we boiled my son, and did eat him* — (See on ⁶³⁵Deuteronomy 28:53).

30. *had sackcloth within upon his flesh* — The horrid recital of this domestic tragedy led the king soon after to rend his garment, in consequence of which it was discovered that he wore a penitential shirt of haircloth. It is more than doubtful, however, if he was truly humbled on account of his own and the nation's sins; otherwise he would not have vowed vengeance on the prophet's life. The true explanation seems to be, that Elisha having counselled him not to surrender, with the promise, on condition of deep humiliation, of being delivered, and he having assumed the signs of contrition without receiving the expected relief, regarded Elisha who had proved false and faithless as the cause of all the protracted distress.

32. *But Elisha sat in his house, and the elders sat with him* — The latter clause of ⁴¹⁶2 Kings 6:33, which contains the king's impatient exclamation, enables us to account for the impetuous order he issued for the beheading of Elisha. Though Jehoram was a wicked king and most of his courtiers would resemble their master, many had been won over, through the prophet's influence, to the true religion. A meeting, probably a prayer-meeting, of those was held in the house where he lodged, for he had none

of his own (¹¹⁸⁰1 Kings 19:20,21); and then he not only apprised of the king's design against himself, but disclosed to them the proof of a premeditated deliverance.

CHAPTER 7

2 KINGS 7:1-16.

ELISHA PROPHECIES INCREDIBLE PLENTY IN SAMARIA.

1. *Hear ye the word of the Lord* — This prediction, though uttered first to the assembled elders, was intimated to the king's messengers, who reported it to Jehoram (⁽¹¹⁷⁸⁾2 Kings 7:18).

To-morrow about this time shall a measure of fine flour be sold for a shekel, etc. — This may be estimated at a peck of fine flour for a dollar, and two pecks of barley at the same price.

in the gate of Samaria — Vegetables, cattle, all sorts of country produce, are still sold every morning at the gates of towns in the East.

2. *a lord on whose hand the king leaned* — When an Eastern king walks or stands abroad in the open air, he always supports himself on the arm of the *highest* courtier present.

if the Lord would make windows in heaven — The scoffing infidelity of this remark, which was a sneer against not the prophet only, but the God he served, was justly and signally punished (see ⁽¹¹⁷¹⁾2 Kings 7:20).

3. *there were four leprous men* — The account of the sudden raising of the siege and the unexpected supply given to the famishing inhabitants of Samaria, is introduced by a narrative of the visit and discovery, by these poor creatures, of the extraordinary flight of the Syrians.

leprous men at the entering in of the gate — living, perhaps, in some leazar house there (⁽⁸³⁰⁾Leviticus 13:4-6 ⁽⁸³⁵⁾Numbers 5:3).

5. *they rose up in the twilight* — that is, the evening twilight (⁽¹¹⁷¹⁾2 Kings 7:12).

the uttermost part of the camp of Syria — that is, the extremity nearest the city.

6, 7. *the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots* — This illusion of the sense of hearing, whereby the besiegers imagined the tramp of two armies from opposite quarters, was a great miracle which God wrought directly for the deliverance of His people.

8-11. *these lepers ... did eat and drink* — After they had appeased their hunger and secreted as many valuables as they could carry, their consciences smote them for concealing the discovery and they hastened to publish it in the city.

10. *horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they were* — The uniform arrangement of encampments in the East is to place the tents in the center, while the cattle are picketed all around, as an outer wall of defense; and hence the lepers describe the cattle as the first objects they saw.

12-15. *the king ... said unto his servants, I will now show you what the Syrians have done* — Similar stratagems have been so often resorted to in the ancient and modern wars of the East that there is no wonder Jehoram's suspicions were awakened. But the scouts, whom he despatched, soon found unmistakable signs of the panic that had struck the enemy and led to a most precipitate flight.

2 KINGS 7:17-20.

THE UNBELIEVING LORD TRODDEN TO DEATH.

17. *the king appointed the lord on whose hand he leaned,* — etc. The news spread like lightning through the city, and was followed, as was natural, by a popular rush to the Syrian camp. To keep order at the gate, the king ordered his minister to keep guard; but the impetuosity of the famishing people could not be resisted. The lord was trodden to death, and Elisha's prophecy in all respects accomplished.

CHAPTER 8

2 KINGS 8:1-6.

THE SHUNAMMITE'S LAND RESTORED.

1. *Then spake Elisha unto the woman* — rather “had spoken.” The repetition of Elisha’s direction to the Shunammite is merely given as an introduction to the following narrative; and it probably took place before the events recorded in the chapters 5 and 6.

the Lord hath called for a famine — All such calamities are chastisements inflicted by the hand of God; and this famine was to be of double duration to that one which happened in the time of Elijah (³¹⁵⁷James 5:17) — a just increase of severity, since the Israelites still continued obdurate and incorrigible under the ministry and miracles of Elisha (⁴⁸³²Leviticus 26:21,24,28).

2. *she ... sojourned in the land of the Philistines seven years* — Their territory was recommended to her from its contiguity to her usual residence; and now that this state had been so greatly reduced, there was less risk than formerly from the seductions of idolatry; and many of the Jews and Israelites were residing there. Besides, an emigration thither was less offensive to the king of Israel than going to sojourn in Judah.

3. *she went forth to cry unto the king for her house and for her land* — In consequence of her long-continued absence from the country, her possessions were occupied by her kindred, or had been confiscated by the crown. No statute in the law of Moses ordained that alienation. But the innovation seems to have been adopted in Israel.

4-6. *the king talked with Gehazi* — Ceremonial pollution being conveyed by contact alone, there was nothing to prevent a conference being held with this leper at a distance; and although he was excluded from the *town* of Samaria, this reported conversation may have taken place at the gate or in one of the royal gardens. The providence of God so ordained that King

Jehoram had been led to inquire, with great interest, into the miraculous deeds of Elisha, and that the prophet's servant was in the act of relating the marvellous incident of the restoration of the Shunammite's son when she made her appearance to prefer her request. The king was pleased to grant it; and a state officer was charged to afford her every facility in the recovery of her family possession out of the hands of the occupier.

2 KINGS 8:7-15.

HAZAEL KILLS HIS MASTER, AND SUCCEEDS HIM.

7, 8. *Elisha came to Damascus* — He was directed thither by the Spirit of God, in pursuance of the mission formerly given to his master in Horeb (^{<1195>}1 Kings 19:15), to anoint Hazael king of Syria. On the arrival of the prophet being known, Ben-hadad, who was sick, sent to inquire the issue of his disease, and, according to the practice of the heathens in consulting their soothsayers, ordered a liberal present in remuneration for the service.

9. *forty camels' burden* — The present, consisting of the rarest and most valuable produce of the land, would be liberal and magnificent. But it must not be supposed it was actually so large as to require forty camels to carry it. The Orientals are fond of display, and would, ostentatiously, lay upon forty beasts what might very easily have been borne by four.

Thy son Ben-hadad — so called from the established usage of designating the prophet "father." This was the same Syrian monarch who had formerly persecuted him (see ^{<1163>}2 Kings 6:13,14).

10. *Go, say ... Thou mayest certainly recover* — There was no contradiction in this message. This part was properly the answer to Ben-hadad's inquiry [^{<1189>}2 Kings 8:9]. The second part was intended for Hazael, who, like an artful and ambitious courtier, reported only as much of the prophet's statement as suited his own views (compare ^{<1184>}2 Kings 8:14).

11. *he settled his countenance stedfastly until he was ashamed* — that is, Hazael. The steadfast, penetrating look of the prophet seemed to have convinced Hazael that his secret designs were known. The deep emotions of Elisha were justified by the horrible atrocities which, too common in

ancient warfare, that successful usurper committed in Israel (^{<1218>}2 Kings 10:32 ^{<1218>}13:3,4,22).

15. *took a thick cloth*, etc. — a coverlet. In the East, this article of bedding is generally a thick quilt of wool or cotton, so that, with its great weight, when steeped in water, it would be a fit instrument for accomplishing the murderous purpose, without leaving any marks of violence. It has been supposed by many that Hazael purposely murdered the king. But it is common for Eastern people to sleep with their faces covered with a mosquito net; and, in some cases of fever, they dampen the bedclothes. Hazael, aware of those chilling remedies being usually resorted to, might have, with an honest intention, spread a refreshing cover over him. The rapid occurrence of the king's death and immediate burial were favorable to his instant elevation to the throne.

^{<1218>}2 KINGS 8:16-23.

JEHORAM'S WICKED REIGN.

16. *Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat ... began to reign* — (See on ^{<1218>}2 Kings 3:1). His father resigned the throne to him two years before his death.

18. *daughter of Ahab* — Athaliah, through whose influence Jehoram introduced the worship of Baal and many other evils into the kingdom of Judah (see ^{<1219>}2 Chronicles 21:2-20). This apostasy would have led to the total extinction of the royal family in that kingdom, had it not been for the divine promise to David (^{<1076>}2 Samuel 7:16). A national chastisement, however, was inflicted on Judah by the revolt of Edom, which, being hitherto governed by a tributary ruler (^{<1218>}2 Kings 3:9 ^{<1227>}1 Kings 22:47), erected the standard of independence (^{<1219>}2 Chronicles 21:9).

2 KINGS 8:24.

AHAZIAH SUCCEEDS HIM.

24. *Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead* — (See on ^{<121>}2 Chronicles 22:1).

CHAPTER 9

2 KINGS 9:1-23.

JEHU IS ANOINTED.

1. *Ramoth-gilead* — a city of great importance to the Hebrew people, east of Jordan, as a fortress of defense against the Syrians. Jehoram had regained it (¹¹⁹³2 Kings 8:29). But the Israelitish army was still encamped there, under the command of Jehu.

Elisha ... called one of the children of the prophets — This errand referred to the last commission given to Elijah in Horeb (¹¹⁹⁶1 Kings 19:16).

box of oil — (See ¹⁰⁰¹1 Samuel 10:1).

2. *carry him to an inner chamber* — both to ensure the safety of the messenger and to prevent all obstruction in the execution of the business.

3. *I have anointed thee king over Israel* — This was only a part of the message; the full announcement of which is given (¹¹⁹⁷2 Kings 9:7-10).

flee, and tarry not — for fear of being surprised and overtaken by the spies or servants of the court.

4-6. *So the young man ... went to Ramoth-gilead* — His ready undertaking of this delicate and hazardous mission was an eminent proof of his piety and obedience. The act of anointing being done through a commissioned prophet, was a divine intimation of his investiture with the sovereign power. But it was sometimes done long prior to the actual possession of the throne (¹⁰⁶³1 Samuel 16:13); and, in like manner, the commission had, in this instance, been given also a long time before to Elijah (¹¹⁹⁶1 Kings 19:16), who, for good reasons, left it in charge to Elisha; and he awaited God's time and command for executing it [POOLE].

10. *in the portion of Jezreel* — that is, that had formerly been the vineyard of Naboth.

11. *Is all well?* etc. — Jehu's attendants knew that the stranger belonged to the order of the prophets by his garb, gestures, and form of address; and soldiers such as they very readily concluded such persons to be crackbrained, not only from the sordid negligence of their personal appearance and their open contempt of the world, but from the religious pursuits in which their whole lives were spent, and the grotesque actions which they frequently performed (compare ^{<1094>}Jeremiah 29:26).

13. *they hasted, and took every man his garment* — the upper cloak which they spread on the ground, as a token of their homage to their distinguished commander (^{<1094>}Matthew 21:7).

top of the stairs — from the room where the prophet had privately anointed Jehu. That general returned to join his brother officers in the public apartment, who, immediately on learning his destined elevation, conducted him to the top of the stairs leading to the roof. This was the most conspicuous place of an Oriental structure that could be chosen, being at the very top of the gate building, and fully in view of the people and military in the open ground in front of the building [ΚΙΤΤΟ]. The popularity of Jehu with the army thus favored the designs of Providence in procuring his immediate and enthusiastic proclamation as king, and the top of the stairs was taken as a most convenient substitute for a throne.

14, 15. *Joram had kept Ramoth-gilead* — rather, “was keeping,” guarding, or besieging it, with the greater part of the military force of Israel. The king's wounds had compelled his retirement from the scene of action, and so the troops were left in command of Jehu.

16. *So Jehu rode in a chariot, and went to Jezreel* — Full of ambitious designs, he immediately proceeded to cross the Jordan to execute his commission on the house of Ahab.

17-24. *there stood a watchman on the tower of Jezreel* — The Hebrew palaces, besides being situated on hills had usually towers attached to them, not only for the pleasure of a fine prospect, but as posts of useful observation. The ancient watchtower of Jezreel must have commanded a view of the whole region eastward, nearly down to the Jordan. Beth-shan stands on a rising ground about six or seven miles below it, in a narrow part of the plain; and when Jehu and his retinue reached that point

between Gilboa and Beth-shan, they could be fully descried by the watchman on the tower. A report was made to Joram in his palace below. A messenger on horseback was quickly despatched down into the plain to meet the ambiguous host and to question the object of their approach. "Is it peace?" We may safely assume that this messenger would meet Jehu at the distance of three miles or more. On the report made of his being detained and turned into the rear of the still advancing troops, a second messenger was in like manner despatched, who would naturally meet Jehu at the distance of a mile or a mile and a half down on the plain. He also being turned into the rear, the watchman now distinctly perceived "the driving to be like the driving of Jehu, the son of Nimshi; for he driveth furiously." The alarmed monarch, awakened to a sense of his impending danger, quickly summoned his forces to meet the crisis. Accompanied by Ahaziah, king of Judah, the two sovereigns ascended their chariots to make a feeble resistance to the impetuous onset of Jehu, who quickly from the plain ascended the steep northern sides of the site on which Jezreel stood, and the conflicting parties met "in the portion of Naboth the Jezreelite," where Joram was quickly despatched by an arrow from the strong arm of Jehu. We were impressed with the obvious accuracy of the sacred historian; the *localities* and *distances* being such as seem naturally to be required by the incidents related, affording just time for the transactions to have occurred in the order in which they are recorded [HOWE].

25. *cast him in the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite*, etc. — according to the doom pronounced by divine authority on Ahab (^{<1218>}1 Kings 21:19), but which on his repentance was deferred to be executed on his son.

26. *the blood of Naboth, and the blood of his sons, saith the Lord* — Although their death is not expressly mentioned, it is plainly implied in the confiscation of his property (see ^{<1216>}1 Kings 21:16).

~~<1197>~~ 2 KINGS 9:27-35.

AHAZIAH IS SLAIN.

27. *Ahaziah* — was grandnephew to King Joram, and great-grandson to King Ahab.

Ibleam — near Megiddo, in the tribe of Issachar (~~<1671>~~ Joshua 17:11 ~~<1102>~~ Judges 1:27); and Gur was an adjoining hill.

30. *Jezebel painted her face* — literally, “her eyes,” according to a custom universal in the East among women, of staining the eyelids with a black powder made of pulverized antimony, or lead ore mixed with oil, and applied with a small brush on the border, so that by this dark ligament on the edge, the largeness as well as the luster of the eye itself was thought to be increased. Her object was, by her royal attire, not to captivate, but to overawe Jehu.

35. *found no more of her than the skull, and the palms of her hands*, etc. — The dog has a rooted aversion to prey on the human hands and feet.

~~<1188>~~ 2 KINGS 9:36,37.

JEZEBEL EATEN BY DOGS.

36. *This is the word of the Lord* — (See ~~<1223>~~ 1 Kings 21:23). Jehu’s statement, however, was not a literal but a paraphrased quotation of Elijah’s prophecy.

CHAPTER 10

2 KINGS 10:1-17.

JEHU CAUSES SEVENTY OF AHAB'S CHILDREN TO BE BEHEADED.

1-4. *Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria* — As it appears (²⁰¹³2 Kings 10:13), that grandsons are included it is probable that this number comprehended the whole posterity of Ahab. Their being all assembled in that capital might arise from their being left there on the king's departure for Ramoth-gilead, or from their taking refuge in some of the strongholds of that city on the news of Jehu's conspiracy. It may be inferred from the tenor of Jehu's letters that their first intention was to select the fittest of the royal family and set him up as king. Perhaps this challenge of Jehu was designed as a stroke of policy on his part to elicit their views, and to find out whether they were inclined to be pacific or hostile. The bold character of the man, and the rapid success of his conspiracy, terrified the civic authorities of Samaria and Jezreel into submission.

5. *he that was over the house* — the governor or chamberlain of the palace.

the bringers-up of the children — Anciently, and still also in many Eastern countries, the principal grandees were charged with the support and education of the royal princes. This involved a heavy expense which they were forced to bear, but for which they endeavored to find some compensation in the advantages of their connection with the court.

6. *take ye the heads of the men, your master's sons* — The barbarous practice of a successful usurper slaughtering all who may have claims to the throne, has been frequently exemplified in the ancient and modern histories of the East.

8. *Lay ye them in two heaps at the entering in of the gate*, etc. — The exhibition of the heads of enemies is always considered a glorious trophy. Sometimes a pile of heads is erected at the gate of the palace; and a head of

peculiarly striking appearance selected to grace the summit of the pyramid.

9-11. *said to all the people, Ye be righteous* — A great concourse was assembled to gaze on this novel and ghastly spectacle. The speech which Jehu addressed to the spectators was artfully framed to impress their minds with the idea that so wholesale a massacre was the result of the divine judgments denounced on the house of Ahab; and the effect of it was to prepare the public mind for hearing, without horror, of a similar revolting tragedy which was soon after perpetrated, namely, the extinction of all the influential friends and supporters of the dynasty of Ahab, including those of the royal house of Judah.

13, 14. *We are the brethren of Ahaziah* — that is, not full, but step-brothers, sons of Jehoram by various concubines. Ignorant of the revolution that had taken place, they were travelling to Samaria on a visit to their royal relatives of Israel, when they were seized and put to death, because of the apprehension that they might probably stimulate and strengthen the party that still remained faithful in their allegiance to Ahab's dynasty.

children of the queen — that is, of the queen mother, or regent, Jezebel.

15-18. *Jehonadab the son of Rechab* — (See ⁴¹²⁵1 Chronicles 2:55). A person who, from his piety and simple primitive manner of life (²⁸¹¹Jeremiah 35:1-19), was highly esteemed, and possessed great influence in the country. Jehu saw in a moment the advantage that his cause would gain from the friendship and countenance of this venerable man in the eyes of the people, and accordingly paid him the distinguished attention of inviting him to a seat in his chariot.

give me thine hand — not simply to aid him in getting up, but for a far more significant and important purpose — the giving, or rather joining hands, being the recognized mode of striking a league or covenant, as well as of testifying fealty to a new sovereign; accordingly, it is said, “he [Jehonadab] gave him [Jehu] his hand.”

2 KINGS 10:18-29.

HE DESTROYS THE WORSHIPPERS OF BAAL.

19. *call unto me all the prophets of Baal* — The votaries of Baal are here classified under the several titles of prophets, priests, and servants, or worshippers generally. They might be easily convened into one spacious temple, as their number had been greatly diminished both by the influential ministrations of Elijah and Elisha, and also from the late King Joram's neglect and discontinuance of the worship. Jehu's appointment of a solemn sacrifice in honor of Baal, and a summons to all his worshippers to join in its celebration, was a deep-laid plot, which he had resolved upon for their extinction, a measure in perfect harmony with the Mosaic law, and worthy of a constitutional king of Israel. It was done, however not from religious, but purely political motives, because he believed that the existence and interests of the Baalites were inseparably bound up with the dynasty of Ahab and because he hoped that by their extermination he would secure the attachment of the far larger and more influential party who worshipped God in Israel. Jehonadab's concurrence must have been given in the belief of his being actuated solely by the highest principles of piety and zeal.

22. *Bring forth vestments for all the worshippers of Baal* — The priests of Baal were clad, probably, in robes of white byssus while they were engaged in the functions of their office, and these were kept under the care of an officer in a particular wardrobe of Baal's temple. This treacherous massacre, and the means taken to accomplish it, are paralleled by the slaughter of the Janissaries and other terrible tragedies in the modern history of the East.

29. *Howbeit from the sins of Jeroboam ... Jehu departed not from after them* — Jehu had no intention of carrying his zeal for the Lord beyond a certain point, and as he considered it impolitic to encourage his subjects to travel to Jerusalem, he re-established the symbolic worship of the calves.

CHAPTER 11

2 KINGS 11:1-3.

JEHOASH SAVED FROM ATHALIAH'S MASSACRE.

1. *Athaliah* — (See on ^{<421>}2 Chronicles 22:2). She had possessed great influence over her son, who, by her counsels, had ruled in the spirit of the house of Ahab.

destroyed all the seed royal — all connected with the royal family who might have urged a claim to the throne, and who had escaped the murderous hands of Jehu (^{<420>}2 Chronicles 21:2-4 22:1 ^{<213>}2 Kings 10:13,14). This massacre she was incited to perpetrate — partly from a determination not to let David's family outlive hers; partly as a measure of self-defense to secure herself against the violence of Jehu, who was bent on destroying the whole of Ahab's posterity to which she belonged (^{<188>}2 Kings 8:18-26); but chiefly from personal ambition to rule, and a desire to establish the worship of Baal. Such was the sad fruit of the unequal alliance between the son of the pious Jehoshaphat and a daughter of the idolatrous and wicked house of Ahab.

2. *Jehosheba* — or Jehoshabeath (^{<421>}2 Chronicles 22:11).

daughter of King Joram — not by Athaliah, but by a secondary wife.

stole him from among the king's sons which were slain — either from among the corpses, he being considered dead, or out of the palace nursery.

hid him ... in the bedchamber — for the use of the priests, which was in some part of the temple (^{<213>}2 Kings 11:3), and of which Jehoiada and his wife had the sole charge. What is called, however, the bedchamber in the East is not the kind of apartment that we understand by the name, but a small closet, into which are flung during the day the mattresses and other bedding materials spread on the floors or divans of the sitting-rooms by day. Such a slumber-room was well suited to be a convenient place for the

recovery of his wounds, and a hiding-place for the royal infant and his nurse.

~~2106~~ 2 KINGS 11:4-12.

HE IS MADE KING.

4. *the seventh year* — namely, of the reign of Athaliah, and the rescue of Jehoash.

Jehoiada sent and fetched the rulers, etc. — He could scarcely have obtained such a general convocation except at the time, or on pretext, of a public and solemn festival. Having revealed to them the secret of the young king's preservation and entered into a covenant with them for the overthrow of the tyrant, he then arranged with them the plan and time of carrying their plot into execution (see on ~~4210~~ 2 Chronicles 22:10-23:21). The conduct of Jehoiada, who acted the leading and chief part in this conspiracy, admits of an easy and full justification; for, while Athaliah was a usurper, and belonged to a race destined by divine denunciation to destruction, even his own wife had a better and stronger claim to the throne; the sovereignty of Judah had been divinely appropriated to the family of David, and therefore the young prince on whom it was proposed to confer the crown, possessed an inherent right to it, of which a usurper could not deprive him. Moreover, Jehoiada was most probably the high priest, whose official duty it was to watch over the due execution of God's laws, and who in his present movement, was encouraged and aided by the countenance and support of the chief authorities, both civil and ecclesiastical, in the country. In addition to all these considerations, he seems to have been directed by an impulse of the Divine Spirit, through the counsels and exhortations of the prophets of the time.

2 KINGS 11:13-16.

ATHALIAH SLAIN.

13. *Athaliah heard the noise of the guard and of the people* — The profound secrecy with which the conspiracy had been conducted rendered the unusual acclamations of the vast assembled crowd the more startling and roused the suspicions of the tyrant.

she came ... into the temple of the Lord — that is, the courts, which she was permitted to enter by Jehoiada's directions [^{<2118>}2 Kings 11:8] in order that she might be secured.

14. *the king stood by a pillar* — or on a platform, erected for that purpose (see on ^{<4113>}2 Chronicles 6:13).

15. *without the ranges* — that is, fences, that the sacred place might not be stained with human blood.

2 KINGS 11:17-20.

JEHOIADA RESTORES GOD'S WORSHIP.

17, 18. *a covenant between the Lord and the king and the people* — The covenant with the Lord was a renewal of the national covenant with Israel (^{<1291>}Exodus 19:1-24:18; “to be unto him a people of inheritance,” ^{<1801>}Deuteronomy 4:6 ^{<1870>}27:9). The covenant between the king and the people was the consequence of this, and by it the king bound himself to rule according to the divine law, while the people engaged to submit, to give him allegiance as the Lord's anointed. The immediate fruit of this renewal of the covenant was the destruction of the temple and the slaughter of the priests of Baal (see ^{<1217>}2 Kings 10:27); the restoration of the pure worship of God in all its ancient integrity; and the establishment of the young king on the hereditary throne of Judah (^{<1219>}2 Kings 11:19).

CHAPTER 12

2 KINGS 12:1-18.

JEHOASH REIGNS WELL WHILE JEHOIADA LIVED.

2. *Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord* — so far as related to his outward actions and the policy of his government. But it is evident from the sequel of his history that the rectitude of his administration was owing more to the salutary influence of his preserver and tutor, Jehoiada, than to the honest and sincere dictates of his own mind.

3. *But the high places were not taken away* — The popular fondness for the private and disorderly rites performed in the groves and recesses of hills was so inveterate that even the most powerful monarchs had been unable to accomplish their suppression; no wonder that in the early reign of a young king, and after the gross irregularities that had been allowed during the maladministration of Athaliah, the difficulty of putting an end to the superstitions associated with “the high places” was greatly increased.

4. *Jehoash said to the priests*, etc. — There is here given an account of the measures which the young king took for repairing the temple by the levying of taxes:

1. “The money of every one that passeth the account,” namely, half a shekel, as “an offering to the Lord” (^{<211>}Exodus 30:13).
2. “The money that every man is set at,” that is, the redemption price of every one who had devoted himself or any thing belonging to him to the Lord, and the amount of which was estimated according to certain rules (^{<211>}Leviticus 27:1-8).
3. Free will or voluntary offerings made to the sanctuary. The first two were paid annually (see ^{<211>}2 Chronicles 24:5).

7-10. *Why repair ye not the breaches of the house?* — This mode of collection not proving so productive as was expected (the dilatoriness of the priests was the chief cause of the failure), a new arrangement was proposed. A chest was placed by the high priest at the entrance into the temple, into which the money given by the people for the repairs of the temple was to be put by the Levites who kept the door. The object of this chest was to make a separation between the money to be raised for the building from the other moneys destined for the general use of the priests, in the hope that the people would be more liberal in their contributions when it was known that their offerings would be devoted to the special purpose of making the necessary repairs. The duty of attending to this work was no longer to devolve on the priests, but to be undertaken by the king.

11, 12. *they gave the money, being told, into the hands of them that did the work* — The king sent his secretary along with an agent of the high priest to count the money in the chest from time to time (^{<DB11>}2 Chronicles 24:11), and deliver the amount to the overseers of the building, who paid the workmen and purchased all necessary materials. The custom of putting sums of certain amount in bags, which are labelled and sealed by a proper officer, is a common way of using the currency in Turkey and other Eastern countries.

13-16. *Howbeit there were not made ... bowls*, etc. — When the repairs of the temple had been completed, the surplus was appropriated to the purchase of the temple furniture. The integrity of the overseers of the work being undoubted, no account was exacted of the way in which they applied the money given to them, while other moneys levied at the temple were left to the disposal of the priests as the law directed (^{<DB10>}Leviticus 5:16 ^{<DB8>}Numbers 5:8).

17, 18. *Then Hazael ... fought against Gath* — (See on ^{<DB3>}2 Chronicles 24:23).

~~1219~~ 2 KINGS 12:19-21.

HE IS SLAIN.

20. *his servants arose ... and slew Joash in the house of Millo* — (See on ~~1005~~ 2 Chronicles 24:25).

CHAPTER 13

2 KINGS 13:1-7.

JEHOAHAZ'S WICKED REIGN OVER ISRAEL.

1-3. Jehoahaz ... reigned seventeen years — Under his government, which pursued the policy of his predecessors regarding the support of the calf-worship, Israel's apostasy from the true God became greater and more confirmed than in the time of his father Jehu. The national chastisement, when it came, was consequently the more severe and the instruments employed by the Lord in scourging the revolted nation were Hazael and his son and general Ben-hadad, in resisting whose successive invasions the Israelitish army was sadly reduced and weakened. In the extremity of his distress, Jehoahaz besought the Lord, and was heard, not on his own account (⁴⁹⁶⁸Psalm 66:18 ⁴¹⁰³Proverbs 1:28 ⁴¹⁵⁸15:8), but that of the ancient covenant with the patriarchs (⁴²³²2 Kings 13:23).

4. he saw the oppression of Israel — that is, commiserated the fallen condition of His chosen people. The divine honor and the interests of true religion required that deliverance should be granted them to check the triumph of the idolatrous enemy and put an end to their blasphemous taunts that God had forsaken Israel (⁴⁵²²Deuteronomy 32:27 ⁴⁵¹⁴Psalm 12:4).

5. a saviour — This refers neither to some patriotic defender nor some signal victory, but to the deliverance obtained for Israel by the two successors of Jehoahaz, namely, Joash, who regained all the cities which the Syrians had taken from his father (⁴²³⁵2 Kings 13:25); and Jeroboam, who restored the former boundaries of Israel (⁴²⁴⁵2 Kings 14:25).

6. there remained the grove — Asherah — the idol set up by Ahab (⁴¹⁶³1 Kings 16:33), which ought to have been demolished (⁴⁵¹⁵Deuteronomy 7:5).

7. made them like the dust in threshing — Threshing in the East is performed in the open air upon a level plot of ground, daubed over with a

covering to prevent, as much as possible, the earth, sand, or gravel from rising; a great quantity of them all, notwithstanding this precaution, must unavoidably be taken up with the grain; at the same time the straw is shattered to pieces. Hence it is a most significant figure, frequently employed by Orientals to describe a state of national suffering, little short of extermination (^{<2310>}Isaiah 21:10 ^{<3042>}Micah 4:12 ^{<2633>}Jeremiah 51:33). The figure originated in a barbarous war custom, which Hazael literally followed (Amos 1:3,4; compare ^{<10831>}2 Samuel 18:31 ^{<10007>}Judges 8:7).

^{<12138>}2 KINGS 13:8-25.

JOASH SUCCEEDS HIM.

8. *his might* — This is particularly noticed in order to show that the grievous oppression from foreign enemies, by which the Israelites were ground down, was not owing to the cowardice or imbecility of their king, but solely to the righteous and terrible judgment of God for their foul apostasy.

12, 13. *his might wherewith he fought against Amaziah* — (See on ^{<12438>}2 Kings 14:8-14). The usual summary of his life and reign occurs rather early, and is again repeated in the account given of the reign of the king of Judah (^{<12445>}2 Kings 14:15).

14-19. *Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died* — Every man's death is occasioned by some disease, and so was Elisha's. But in intimating it, there seems a contrast tacitly made between him and his prophetic predecessor, who did not die.

Joash the king of Israel came down unto him, and wept over his face — He visited him where he was lying ill of this mortal sickness, and expressed deep sorrow, not from the personal respect he bore for the prophet, but for the incalculable loss his death would occasion to the kingdom.

my father, my father! etc. — (See on ^{<11002>}2 Kings 2:12). These words seem to have been a complimentary phrase applied to one who was thought an eminent guardian and deliverer of his country. The particular application

of them to Elisha, who, by his counsels and prayer, had obtained many glorious victories for Israel, shows that the king possessed some measure of faith and trust, which, though weak, was accepted, and called forth the prophet's dying benediction.

15-18. *Take bow and arrows* — Hostilities were usually proclaimed by a herald, sometimes by a king or general making a public and formal discharge of an arrow into the enemy's country. Elisha directed Joash to do this, as a symbolical act, designed to intimate more fully and significantly the victories promised to the king of Israel over the Syrians. His laying his hands upon the king's hands was to represent the power imparted to the bow shot as coming from the Lord through the medium of the prophet. His shooting the first arrow eastward — to that part of his kingdom which the Syrians had taken and which was east of Samaria — was a declaration of war against them for the invasion. His shooting the other arrows into the ground was in token of the number of victories he was taken to gain; but his stopping at the third betrayed the weakness of his faith; for, as the discharged arrow signified a victory over the Syrians, it is evident that the more arrows he shot the more victories he would gain. As he stopped so soon, his conquests would be incomplete.

20, 21. *Elisha died* — He had enjoyed a happier life than Elijah, as he possessed a milder character, and bore a less hard commission. His rough garment was honored even at the court.

coming in of the year — that is, the spring, the usual season of beginning campaigns in ancient times. Predatory bands from Moab generally made incursions at that time on the lands of Israel. The bearers of a corpse, alarmed by the appearance of one of these bands, hastily deposited, as they passed that way, their load in Elisha's sepulcher, which might be easily done by removing the stone at the mouth of the cave. According to the Jewish and Eastern custom, his body, as well as that of the man who was miraculously restored, was not laid in a coffin, but only swathed; so that the bodies could be brought into contact, and the object of the miracle was to stimulate the king's and people of Israel's faith in the still unaccomplished predictions of Elisha respecting the war with the Syrians. Accordingly the historian forthwith records the historical fulfillment of the prediction (¹⁷¹²2 Kings 13:22-25), in the defeat of the enemy, in the

recovery of the cities that had been taken, and their restoration to the kingdom of Israel.

CHAPTER 14

2 KINGS 14:1-6.

AMAZIAH'S GOOD REIGN OVER JUDAH.

3-6. *He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, yet not like David his father* — The beginning of his reign was excellent, for he acted the part of a constitutional king, according to the law of God, yet not with perfect sincerity of heart (compare ^{<1241>}2 Chronicles 25:2). As in the case of his father Joash, the early promise was belied by the devious course he personally followed in later life (see ^{<1244>}2 Chronicles 20:14), as well as by the public irregularities he tolerated in the kingdom.

5. *as soon as the kingdom was confirmed in his hand* — It was an act of justice no less than of filial piety to avenge the murder of his father. But it is evident that the two assassins must have possessed considerable weight and influence, as the king was obliged to retain them in his service, and durst not, for fear of their friends and supporters, institute proceedings against them until his power had been fully consolidated.

6. *But the children of the murderers he slew not* — This moderation, inspired by the Mosaic law (^{<1245>}Deuteronomy 24:16), displays the good character of this prince; for the course thus pursued toward the families of the regicides was directly contrary to the prevailing customs of antiquity, according to which all connected with the criminals were doomed to unsparing destruction.

2 KINGS 14:7.

HE SMITES EDOM.

7. *He slew of Edom in the valley of salt ten thousand* — In the reign of Joram the Edomites had revolted (^{<1246>}2 Kings 8:20). But Amaziah,

determined to reduce them to their former subjection, formed a hostile expedition against them, in which he routed their army and made himself master of their capital.

the valley of salt — that part of the Ghor which comprises the salt and sandy plain to the south of the Dead Sea.

Selah — literally, “the rock”; generally thought to be Petra.

Joktheel — that is, “given” or “conquered by God.” See the history of this conquest more fully detailed (^{<2418>}2 Chronicles 25:6-16).

^{<2418>}2 KINGS 14:8-16.

JOASH DEFEATS HIM.

8. *Amaziah sent messengers to Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, king of Israel* — This bold and haughty challenge, which was most probably stimulated by a desire of satisfaction for the outrages perpetrated by the discharged auxiliaries of Israel (^{<4253>}2 Chronicles 25:13) on the towns that lay in their way home, as well as by revenge for the massacre of his ancestors by Jehu (^{<2391>}2 Kings 9:1-37) sprang, there is little doubt, from pride and self-confidence, inspired by his victory over the Edomites.

9. *Jehoash the king of Israel sent to Amaziah* — People in the East very often express their sentiments in a parabolic form, especially when they intend to convey unwelcome truths or a contemptuous sneer. This was the design of the admonitory fable related by Joash in his reply. The thistle, a low shrub, might be chosen to represent Amaziah, a petty prince; the cedar, the powerful sovereign of Israel, and the wild beast that trampled down the thistle the overwhelming army with which Israel could desolate Judah. But, perhaps, without making so minute an application, the parable may be explained generally, as describing in a striking manner the effects of pride and ambition, towering far beyond their natural sphere, and sure to fall with a sudden and ruinous crash. The moral of the fable is contained in ^{<2440>}2 Kings 14:10.

11-14. *But Amaziah would not hear* — The sarcastic tenor of this reply incited the king of Judah the more; for, being in a state of judicial blindness and infatuation (^{<4257>}2 Chronicles 25:20), he was immovably determined on war. But the superior energy of Joash surprised him ere he had completed his military preparations. Pouring a large army into the territory of Judah, he encountered Amaziah in a pitched battle, routed his army, and took him prisoner. Then having marched to Jerusalem (^{<1243>}2 Kings 14:13), he not only demolished part of the city walls, but plundered the treasures of the palace and temple. Taking hostages to prevent any further molestation from Judah, he terminated the war. Without leaving a garrison in Jerusalem, he returned to his capital with all convenient speed, his presence and all his forces being required to repel the troublesome incursions of the Syrians.

^{<1247>}2 KINGS 14:17-20.

HE IS SLAIN BY A CONSPIRACY.

19, 20. *they made a conspiracy against him in Jerusalem* — Amaziah's apostasy (^{<4257>}2 Chronicles 25:27) was followed by a general maladministration, especially the disastrous issue of the war with Israel. The ruinous condition of Jerusalem, the plunder of the temple, and the loss of their children who were taken as hostages [^{<1243>}2 Kings 14:13,14], lost him the respect and attachment not of the grandees only, but of his subjects generally, who were in rebellion. The king fled in terror to Lachish, a frontier town of the Philistines, where, however, he was traced and murdered. His friends had his corpse brought without any pomp or ceremony, in a chariot to Jerusalem, where he was interred among his royal ancestors.

2 KINGS 14:21,22.

AZARIAH SUCCEEDS HIM.

21. *all the people of Judah took Azariah* — or Uzziah (¹²⁵¹2 Kings 15:30 ¹²⁰¹2 Chronicles 26:1). The popular opposition had been personally directed against Amaziah as the author of their calamities, but it was not extended to his family or heir.

22. *He built Elath* — fortified that seaport. It had revolted with the rest of Edom, but was now recovered by Uzziah. His father, who did not complete the conquest of Edom, had left him that work to do.

2 KINGS 14:23-29.

JEROBOAM'S WICKED REIGN OVER ISRAEL.

23. *Jeroboam, the son of Joash king of Israel* — This was Jeroboam II who, on regaining the lost territory, raised the kingdom to great political power (¹²⁰⁵2 Kings 14:25), but adhered to the favorite religious policy of the Israelitish sovereigns (¹²⁴⁰2 Kings 14:24). While God granted him so great a measure of national prosperity and eminence, the reason is expressly stated (¹²⁴⁶2 Kings 14:26,27) to be that the purposes of the divine covenant forbade as yet the overthrow of the kingdom of the ten tribes (see ¹²³³2 Kings 13:23).

CHAPTER 15

2 KINGS 15:1-7.

AZARIAH'S REIGN OVER JUDAH.

1-7. *In the twenty and seventh year of Jeroboam* — It is thought that the throne of Judah continued vacant eleven or twelve years, between the death of Amaziah and the inauguration of his son Azariah. Being a child only four years old when his father was murdered, a regency was appointed during Azariah's minority.

began Azariah ... to reign — The character of his reign is described by the brief formula employed by the inspired historian, in recording the religious policy of the later kings. But his reign was a very active as well as eventful one, and is fully related (¹⁴⁰¹2 Chronicles 26:1-23). Elated by the possession of great power, and presumptuously arrogating to himself, as did the heathen kings, the functions both of the real and sacerdotal offices, he was punished with leprosy, which, as the offense was capital (¹⁴⁰²Numbers 8:7), was equivalent to death, for this disease excluded him from all society. While Jotham, his son, as his viceroy, administered the affairs of the kingdom — being about fifteen years of age (compare ¹⁴⁰³2 Kings 15:33) — he had to dwell in a place apart by himself (see on ¹⁴⁰⁴2 Kings 7:3). After a long reign he died, and was buried in the royal burying-field, though not in the royal cemetery of “the city of David” (¹⁴⁰⁵2 Chronicles 26:23).

2 KINGS 15:8-16.

ZECHARIAH'S REIGN OVER ISRAEL.

8-10. *In the thirty and eighth year of Azariah king of Judah did Zechariah the son of Jeroboam reign over Israel* — There was an interregnum from some unknown cause between the reign of Jeroboam and

the accession of his son, which lasted, according to some, for ten or twelve years, according to others, for twenty-two years, or more. This prince pursued the religious policy of the calf-worship, and his reign was short, being abruptly terminated by the hand of violence. In his fate was fulfilled the prophecy addressed to Jehu (^{<12187>}2 Kings 10:30; also ^{<3004>}Hosea 1:4), that his family would possess the throne of Israel for four generations; and accordingly Jehoahaz, Joash, Jehoram, and Zechariah were his successors — but there his dynasty terminated; and perhaps it was the public knowledge of this prediction that prompted the murderous design of Shallum.

13-17. *Shallum ... reigned a full month* — He was opposed and slain by Menahem, who, according to JOSEPHUS, was commander of the forces, which, on the report of the king's murder, were besieging Tirzah, a town twelve miles east of Samaria, and formerly a seat of the kings of Israel. Raising the siege, he marched directly against the usurper, slew him, and reigned in his stead.

16. *Menahem ... smote Tiphshah* — Thapsacus, on the Euphrates, the border city of Solomon's kingdom (^{<1024>}1 Kings 4:24). The inhabitants refusing to open their gates to him, Menahem took it by storm. Then having spoiled it, he committed the most barbarous excesses, without regard either to age or sex.

^{<12187>}2 KINGS 15:17-21.

MENAHEM'S REIGN.

17. *reigned ten years in Samaria* — His government was conducted on the religious policy of his predecessors.

19. *Pul the king of Assyria* — This is the first Assyrian king after Nimrod who is mentioned in biblical history. His name has been recently identified with that of Phalluka on the monuments of Nineveh, and that of Menahem discovered also.

came against the land — Elsewhere it is said “Ephraim [Israel] went to the Assyrian” [^{<2815>}Hosea 5:13]. The two statements may be reconciled

thus: “Pul, of his own motion, induced, perhaps, by the expedition of Menahem against Thapsacus, advanced against the kingdom of Israel; then Menahem sent him a thousand talents in order not only to divert him from his plans of conquest, but at the same time to purchase his friendship and aid for the establishment of his own precarious sovereignty. So Menahem did not properly invite the Assyrian into the land, but only changed the enemy when marching against the country, by this tribute, into a confederate for the security of his usurped dominion. This the prophet Hosea, less concerned about the historical fact than the disposition betrayed therein, might very well censure as a going of Ephraim to the Assyrians (^{<XIII>}Hosea 5:13 ^{<XIV>}7:1 ^{<XV>}8:9), and a covenant-making with Asshur” (^{<XVI>}2 Kings 12:1) [KEIL].

a thousand talents of silver — equal to \$2,000,000. This tribute, which Menahem raised by a tax on the grandees of Israel, bribed Pul to return to his own country (see on ^{<XVII>}1 Chronicles 5:26).

^{<XVIII>}2 KINGS 15:22-24.

PEKAHIAH'S REIGN.

23. *Pekahiah ... son of Menahem began to reign* — On comparing the date given with Azariah's reign, it seems that several months had intervened between the death of Menahem and the accession of Pekahiah, probably owing to a contest about the throne.

25. *with Argob and Arieah*, etc. — Many commentators view these as the captain's accomplices. But it is more probable that they were influential friends of the king, who were murdered along with him.

^{<XIX>}2 KINGS 15:27-31.

PEKAH'S REIGN.

29. *in the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglath-pileser* — This monarch, who succeeded Pul on the throne of Assyria, is the only one of

all the kings who does not give his genealogy, and is therefore supposed to have been an usurper. His annals have been discovered in the Nimroud mound, describing this expedition into Syria. The places taken are here mentioned as they occurred and were conquered in the progress of an invasion.

30. *Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy ... and slew him* — He did not, however, obtain possession of the kingdom till about nine or ten years after the perpetration of this crime [HALES].

in the twentieth year of Jotham — Jotham's reign lasted only sixteen years, but the meaning is that the reign of Hoshea began in the twentieth after the beginning of Jotham's reign. The sacred historian, having not yet introduced the name of Ahaz, reckoned the date by Jotham, whom he had already mentioned (see ^{<1218>}2 Chronicles 27:8).

^{<1218>}2 KINGS 15:32-38.

JOTHAM'S REIGN OVER JUDAH.

33. *Five and twenty years was he when he began to reign* — that is, alone — for he had ruled as his father's viceroy (^{<1218>}2 Kings 15:5).

35. *the higher gate of the house of the Lord* — not the temple itself, but one of its courts; probably that which led into the palace (^{<1231>}2 Chronicles 23:20).

37. *the Lord began to send against Judah Rezin the king of Syria*, etc. — This is the first intimation of the hostile feelings of the kings of Israel and Syria, to Judah, which led them to form an alliance and make joint preparations for war. [See on ^{<1218>}2 Chronicles 27:5.] However, war was not actually waged till the reign of Ahaz.

CHAPTER 16

2 KINGS 16:1-16.

AHAZ' WICKED REIGN OVER JUDAH.

1-4. *Ahaz ... did not that which was right in the sight of the Lord* — [See on ^{<481>}2 Chronicles 28:1.] The character of this king's reign, the voluptuousness and religious degeneracy of all classes of the people, are graphically portrayed in the writings of Isaiah, who prophesied at that period. The great increase of worldly wealth and luxury in the reigns of Azariah and Jotham had introduced a host of corruptions, which, during his reign, and by the influence of Ahaz, bore fruit in the idolatrous practices of every kind which prevailed in all parts of the kingdom (see ^{<482>}2 Chronicles 28:24).

3. *walked in the way of the kings of Israel* — This is descriptive of the early part of his reign, when, like the kings of Israel, he patronized the symbolic worship of God by images but he gradually went farther into gross idolatry (^{<482>}2 Chronicles 28:2).

made his son to pass through the fire — (^{<423>}2 Kings 23:10). The hands of the idol Moloch being red hot, the children were passed through between them, which was considered a form of lustration. There is reason to believe that, in certain circumstances, the children were burnt to death (^{<1967>}Psalm 106:37). This was strongly prohibited in the law (^{<1802>}Leviticus 18:21 ^{<1810>}20:2-5 ^{<1830>}Deuteronomy 18:10), although there is no evidence that it was practiced in Israel till the time of Ahaz.

5. *Then Rezin king of Syria and Pekah son of Remaliah king of Israel came up to Jerusalem* — Notwithstanding their great efforts and military preparations, they failed to take it and, being disappointed, raised the siege and returned home (compare ^{<2311>}Isaiah 7:1).

6. *Rezin ... recovered Elath* — which Azariah had got into his possession (^{<1442>}2 Kings 14:22).

the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there unto this day — The *Septuagint* version has “the Edomites,” which the most judicious commentators and travelers [ROBINSON] prefer.

7-9. *So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser* — In spite of the assurance given him by Isaiah by two signs, the one immediate, the other remote (^{<2174>}Isaiah 7:14 ^{<2100>}8:4), that the confederate kings would not prevail against him, Ahaz sought aid from the Assyrian monarch, to purchase which he sent the treasures of the palace and temple. Tiglath-pileser marched against Damascus, slew Rezin the king, and carried the people of Damascus into captivity to Kir, which is thought to have been the city Karine (now Kerend), in Media.

10-16. *And king Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser* — This was a visit of respect, and perhaps of gratitude. During his stay in that heathen city, Ahaz saw an altar with which he was greatly captivated. Forthwith a sketch of it was transmitted to Jerusalem, with orders to Urijah the priest to get one constructed according to the Damascus model, and let this new altar supersede the old one in the temple. Urijah, with culpable complaisance, acted according to his instructions (^{<2169>}2 Kings 16:16). The sin in this affair consisted in meddling with, and improving according to human taste and fancy, the altars of the temple, the patterns of which had been furnished by divine authority (^{<1250>}Exodus 25:40 ^{<1251>}26:30 ^{<1271>}27:1 ^{<1339>}1 Chronicles 28:19). Urijah was one of the witnesses taken by Isaiah to bear his prediction against Syria and Israel (^{<2381>}Isaiah 8:2).

^{<1267>}2 KINGS 16:17-19.

HE SPOILS THE TEMPLE.

17. *cut off the borders of the bases*, etc. — It is thought that he did this to use the elaborate sculpture in adorning his palace.

18. *the covert for the Sabbath* — the portico through which the priests entered the temple on the Sabbath.

the king's entry without — a private external entrance for the king into the temple. The change made by Ahaz consisted in removing both of these

into the temple from fear of the king of Assyria, that, in case of a siege, he might secure the entrance of the temple from him.

CHAPTER 17

2 KINGS 17:1-6.

HOSHEA'S WICKED REIGN.

1. *In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, began Hoshea ... to reign* — The statement in ^{<170>}2 Kings 15:30 may be reconciled with the present passage in the following manner: Hoshea conspired against Pekah in the twentieth year of the latter, which was the eighteenth of Jotham's reign. It was two years before Hoshea was acknowledged king of Israel, that is, in the fourth of Ahaz, and twentieth of Jotham. In the twelfth year of Ahaz his reign began to be tranquil and prosperous [CALMET].
2. *he did evil ... but not as the kings of Israel* — Unlike his predecessors from the time of Jeroboam, he neither established the rites of Baal, nor compelled the people to adhere to the symbolic worship of the calves. [See on ^{<400>}2 Chronicles 30:1.] In these respects, Hoshea acted as became a constitutional king of Israel. Yet, through the influence of the nineteen princes who had swayed the scepter before him (all of whom had been zealous patrons of idolatry, and many of whom had been also infamous for personal crimes), the whole nation had become so completely demoralized that the righteous judgment of an angry Providence impended over it.
3. *Against him came up Shalmaneser* — or Shalman (^{<2004>}Hosea 10:14), the same as the Sargon of Isaiah [^{<2300>}Isaiah 20:1]. Very recently the name of this Assyrian king has been traced on the Ninevite monuments, as concerned in an expedition against a king of Samaria, whose name, though mutilated, COLONEL RAWLINSON reads as Hoshea.
4. *found conspiracy in Hoshea* — After having paid tribute for several years, Hoshea, determined on throwing off the Assyrian yoke, withheld the stipulated tribute. Shalmaneser, incensed at this rebellion, proclaimed war against Israel. This was in the sixth year of Hoshea's reign.

he had sent messengers to So, king of Egypt — the Sabaco of the classic historians, a famous Ethiopian who, for fifty years, occupied the Egyptian throne, and through whose aid Hoshea hoped to resist the threatened attack of the Assyrian conqueror. But Shalmaneser, marching against [Hoshea], scoured the whole country of Israel, besieged the capital Samaria, and carried the principal inhabitants into captivity in his own land, having taken the king himself, and imprisoned him for life. This ancient policy of transplanting a conquered people into a foreign land, was founded on the idea that, among a mixed multitude, differing in language and religion, they would be kept in better subjection, and have less opportunity of combining together to recover their independence.

6. carried Israel away — that is, the remaining tribes (see on ¹²⁵⁹2 Kings 15:29).

and placed them, etc. — This passage GESENIUS renders thus, omitting the particle *by*, which is printed in italics to show it is not in the original: “and placed them in Halah, and on the Chabor, a river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.”

Halah — the same as Calah (¹⁰⁰¹Genesis 10:11,12), in the region of the Laycus or Zab river, about a day’s journey from the ruins of Nineveh.

Chabor — is a river, and it is remarkable that there is a river rising in the central highlands of Assyria which retains this name Khabour unchanged to the present day.

Gozan — (“pasture”) or Zozan, are the highlands of Assyria, which afford pasturage. The region in which the Chabor and the Zab rise, and through which they flow, is peculiarly of this character. The Nestorians repair to it with their numerous flocks, spending the summer on the banks or in the highlands of the Chabor or the Zab. Considering the high authority we possess for regarding Gozan and Zozan as one name, there can be no doubt that this is the Gozan referred to in this passage.

cities of the Medes — “villages,” according to the *Syriac* and *Vulgate* versions, or “mountains,” according to the *Septuagint*. The Medish inhabitants of Gozan, having revolted, had been destroyed by the kings of Assyria, and nothing was more natural than that they should wish to place

in it an industrious people, like the captive Israelites, while it was well suited to their pastoral life [GRANT, *Nestorians*].

2 KINGS 17:7-41.

SAMARIA TAKEN, AND ISRAEL FOR THEIR SINS CARRIED CAPTIVE.

7. *For so it was, that the children of Israel had sinned* — There is here given a very full and impressive vindication of the divine procedure in punishing His highly privileged, but rebellious and apostate, people. No wonder that amid so gross a perversion of the worship of the true God, and the national propensity to do reverence to idols, the divine patience was exhausted; and that the God whom they had forsaken permitted them to go into captivity, that they might learn the difference between His service and that of their despotic conquerors.

24-28. *the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon* — This was not Shalmaneser, but Esar-haddon (^{200B}Ezekiel 4:2). The places vacated by the captive Israelites he ordered to be occupied by several colonies of his own subjects from Babylon and other provinces.

from Cuthah — the Chaldee form of Cush or Susiana, now Khusistan.

Ava — supposed to be Ahivaz, situated on the river Karuns, which empties into the head of the Persian Gulf.

Hamath — on the Orontes.

Sepharvaim — Siphara, a city on the Euphrates above Babylon.

placed them in the cities of Samaria, etc. — It must not be supposed that the Israelites were universally removed to a man. A remnant was left, chiefly however of the poor and lower classes, with whom these foreign colonists mingled; so that the prevailing character of society about Samaria was heathen, not Israelite. For the Assyrian colonists became masters of the land; and, forming partial intermarriages with the remnant Jews, the inhabitants became a mongrel race, no longer a people of Ephraim (^{200F}Isaiah 7:6). These people, imperfectly instructed in the creed of the

Jews, acquired also a mongrel doctrine. Being too few to replenish the land, lions, by which the land had been infested (^{Q14E}Judges 14:5 ^{Q1731}Samuel 17:34 ^{Q1134}1 Kings 13:24 20:36 ^{Q148}Song of Solomon 4:8), multiplied and committed frequent ravages upon them. Recognizing in these attacks a judgment from the God of the land, whom they had not worshipped, they petitioned the Assyrian court to send them some Jewish priests who might instruct them in the right way of serving Him. The king, in compliance with their request, sent them one of the exiled priests of Israel (^{Q172}2 Kings 17:27), who established his headquarters at Beth-el, and taught them how they should fear the Lord. It is not said that he took a copy of the Pentateuch with him, out of which he might teach them. *Oral teaching* was much better fitted for the superstitious people than instruction out of a written book. He could teach them more effectually by word of mouth. Believing that he would adopt the best and simplest method for them, it is unlikely that he took the written law with him, and so gave origin to the Samaritan copy of the Pentateuch [DAVIDSON, *Criticism*]. Besides, it is evident from his being one of the exiled priests, and from his settlement at Beth-el, that he was not a Levite, but one of the calf-worshipping priests. Consequently his instructions would be neither sound nor efficient.

29. *Howbeit every nation made gods of their own* — These Assyrian colonists, however, though instructed in the worship, and acknowledging the being of the God of Israel, did not suppose Him to be the only God. Like other heathens, they combined His worship with that of their own gods; and as they formed a promiscuous society from different nations or provinces, a variety of idols was acknowledged among them.

30. *Succoth-benoth* — that is, the “tents” or “booths of the daughters,” similar to those in which the Babylonian damsels celebrated impure rites (^{Q118}Amos 2:8).

Nergal — The Jewish writers say this idol was in the form of a cock, and it is certain that a cock is often associated with a priest on the Assyrian monuments [LAYARD]. But modern critics, looking to the astrological character of Assyrian idolatry, generally consider Nergal as the planet Mars, the god of war. The name of this idol formed part of the appellation of two of the king of Babylon’s princes (^{Q148}Jeremiah 39:3).

Ashima — an idol under the form of an entirely bald he-goat.

31. *Nibhaz* — under that of a dog — that Egyptian form of animal-worship having prevailed in ancient Syria, as is evident from the image of a large dog at the mouth of the Nahr-el-Kelb, or Dog river.

Tartak — According to the rabbis, it was in the form of an ass, but others understand it as a planet of ill-omen, probably Saturn.

Adrammelech — supposed by some to be the same as Molech, and in Assyrian mythology to stand for the sun. It was worshipped in the form of a mule — others maintain in that of a peacock.

Anammelech — worshipped in the form of a hare; others say in that of a goat.

34. *Unto this day* — the time of the Babylonian exile, when this book was composed. Their religion was a strange medley or compound of the service of God and the service of idols. Such was the first settlement of the people, afterwards called Samaritans, who were sent from Assyria to colonize the land, when the kingdom of Israel, after having continued three hundred fifty-six years, was overthrown.

CHAPTER 18

2 KINGS 18:1-3.

HEZEKIAH'S GOOD REIGN.

1, 2. *Hezekiah ... began to reign. Twenty and five years old* — According to this statement (compare ^{<2K16>}2 Kings 16:2), he must have been born when his father Ahaz was no more than eleven years old. Paternity at an age so early is not unprecedented in the warm climates of the south, where the human frame is matured sooner than in our northern regions. But the case admits of solution in a different way. It was customary for the later kings of Israel to assume their son and heir into partnership in the government during their lives; and as Hezekiah began to reign in the third year of Hoshea (^{<2K18>}2 Kings 18:1), and Hoshea in the twelfth year of Ahaz (^{<2K17>}2 Kings 17:1), it is evident that Hezekiah began to reign in the fourteenth year of Ahaz his father, and so reigned two or three years before his father's death. So that, at the beginning of his reign in conjunction with his father, he might be only twenty-two or twenty-three, and Ahaz a few years older than the common calculation makes him. Or the case may be solved thus: As the ancient writers, in the computation of time, take notice of the year they mention, whether finished or newly begun, so Ahaz might be near twenty-one years old at the beginning of his reign, and near seventeen years older at his death; while, on the other hand, Hezekiah, when he began to reign, might be just entering into his twenty-fifth year, and so Ahaz would be near fourteen years old when his son Hezekiah was born — no uncommon age for a young man to become a father in southern latitudes [PATRICK].

~~2KIN~~ 2 KINGS 18:4-37.**HE DESTROYS IDOLATRY.**

4. *He removed the high places and brake the images*, etc. — The methods adopted by this good king for extirpating idolatry, and accomplishing a thorough reformation in religion, are fully detailed (~~4CH~~ 2 Chronicles 20:3 31:19). But they are indicated very briefly, and in a sort of passing allusion.

brake in pieces the brazen serpent — The preservation of this remarkable relic of antiquity (~~4NUM~~ Numbers 21:5-10) might, like the pot of manna and Aaron's rod, have remained an interesting and instructive monument of the divine goodness and mercy to the Israelites in the wilderness: and it must have required the exercise of no small courage and resolution to destroy it. But in the progress of degeneracy it had become an object of idolatrous worship and as the interests of true religion rendered its demolition necessary, Hezekiah, by taking this bold step, consulted both the glory of God and the good of his country.

unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it — It is not to be supposed that this superstitious reverence had been paid to it ever since the time of Moses, for such idolatry would not have been tolerated either by David or by Solomon in the early part of his reign, by Asa or Jehoshaphat had they been aware of such a folly. But the probability is, that the introduction of this superstition does not date earlier than the time when the family of Ahab, by their alliance with the throne of Judah, exercised a pernicious influence in paving the way for all kinds of idolatry. It is possible, however, as some think, that its origin may have arisen out of a misapprehension of Moses' language (~~4NUM~~ Numbers 21:8). Serpent-worship, how revolting soever it may appear, was an extensively diffused form of idolatry; and it would obtain an easier reception in Israel because many of the neighboring nations, such as the Egyptians and Phoenicians, adored idol gods in the form of serpents as the emblems of health and immortality.

5, 6. *He trusted in the Lord God of Israel* — without invoking the aid or purchasing the succor of foreign auxiliaries like Asa (^{~1158}1 Kings 15:18,19) and Ahaz (^{~1267}2 Kings 16:17 ^{~2311}Isaiah 7:1-25).

so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah — Of course David and Solomon are excepted, they having had the sovereignty of the whole country. In the petty kingdom of Judah, Josiah alone had a similar testimony borne to him (^{~1235}2 Kings 23:25). But even he was surpassed by Hezekiah, who set about a national reformation at the beginning of his reign, which Josiah did not. The pious character and the excellent course of Hezekiah was prompted, among other secondary influences, by a sense of the calamities his father's wicked career had brought on the country, as well as by the counsels of Isaiah.

7, 8. *he rebelled against the king of Assyria* — that is, the yearly tribute his father had stipulated to pay, he, with imprudent haste, withdrew. Pursuing the policy of a truly theocratic sovereign, he was, through the divine blessing which rested on his government, raised to a position of great public and national strength. Shalmaneser had withdrawn from Palestine, being engaged perhaps in a war with Tyre, or probably he was dead. Assuming, consequently, that full independent sovereignty which God had settled on the house of David, he both shook off the Assyrian yoke, and, by an energetic movement against the Philistines, recovered from that people the territory which they had taken from his father Ahaz (^{~1288}2 Chronicles 28:18).

13. *Sennacherib* — the son and successor of Shalmaneser.

all the fenced cities of Judah — not absolutely all of them; for, besides the capital, some strong fortresses held out against the invader (^{~1287}2 Kings 18:17 ^{~1298}2 Kings 19:8). The following account of Sennacherib's invasion of Judah and the remarkable destruction of his army, is repeated almost verbatim in ^{~1431}2 Chronicles 32:1-33 and ^{~2361}Isaiah 36:1-37:38. The expedition seems to have been directed against Egypt, the conquest of which was long a leading object of ambition with the Assyrian monarchs. But the invasion of Judah necessarily preceded, that country being the key to Egypt, the highway through which the conquerors from Upper Asia had to pass. Judah had also at this time formed a league of mutual defense with Egypt (^{~1284}2 Kings 18:24). Moreover, it was now laid completely

open by the transplantation of Israel to Assyria. Overrunning Palestine, Sennacherib laid siege to the fortress of Lachish, which lay seven Roman miles from Eleutheropolis, and therefore southwest of Jerusalem on the way to Egypt [ROBINSON]. Among the interesting illustrations of sacred history furnished by the recent Assyrian excavations, is a series of bas-reliefs, representing the siege of a town, which the inscription on the sculpture shows to be Lachish, and the figure of a king, whose name is given, on the same inscription, as Sennacherib. The legend, sculptured over the head of the king, runs thus: “Sennacherib, the mighty king, king of the country of Assyria, sitting on the throne of judgment before the city of Lachish [Lakhisha], I give permission for its slaughter” [*Nineveh and Babylon*]. This minute confirmation of the truth of the Bible narrative is given not only by the name Lachish, which is contained in the inscription, but from the physiognomy of the captives brought before the king, which is unmistakably Jewish.

14-16. *Hezekiah ... sent to Lachish, saying, ... that which thou puttest on me will I bear* — Disappointed in his expectations of aid from Egypt, and feeling himself unable to resist so mighty a conqueror who was menacing Jerusalem itself, Hezekiah made his submission. The payment of three hundred talents of silver, and thirty talents of gold — about \$1,500,000 — brought a temporary respite; but, in raising the imposed tribute, he was obliged not only to drain all the treasures of the palace and the temple, but even to strip the doors and pillars of the sacred edifice of the gold that adorned them.

~~<D&T>~~ 2 KINGS 18:17.

SENNACHERIB BESIEGES JERUSALEM.

17. *king of Assyria sent Tartan* — general (^{<200T>}Isaiah 20:1).

Rab-saris — chief of the eunuchs.

Rab-shakeh — chief cupbearer. These were the great officers employed in delivering Sennacherib’s insulting message to Hezekiah. On the walls of the palace of Sennacherib, at Khorsabad, certain figures have been

identified with the officers of that sovereign mentioned in Scripture. In particular, the figures, Rab-shakeh, Rab-saris, and Tartan, appear as full-length portraits of the persons holding those offices in the reign of Sennacherib. Probably they represent the very individuals sent on this embassy.

with a great host to Jerusalem — Engaged in a campaign of three years in Egypt, Sennacherib was forced by the king of Ethiopia to retreat, and discharging his rage against Jerusalem, he sent an immense army to summon it to surrender. (See on ^{<483>}2 Chronicles 32:30).

the conduit of the upper pool — the conduit which went from the reservoir of the Upper Gihon (Birket et Mamilla) to the lower pool, the Birket es Sultan.

the highway of the fuller's field — the public road which passed by that district, which had been assigned them for carrying on their business without the city, on account of the unpleasant smell [KEIL].

18. *when they had called to the king* — Hezekiah did not make a personal appearance, but commissioned his three principal ministers to meet the Assyrian deputies at a conference outside the city walls.

Eliakim — lately promoted to be master of the royal household (^{<2221>}Isaiah 22:20).

Shebna — removed for his pride and presumption (^{<2215>}Isaiah 22:15) from that office, though still royal secretary.

Joah ... the recorder — that is, the keeper of the chronicles, an important office in Eastern countries.

19. *Rab-shakeh said* — The insolent tone he assumed appears surprising. But this boasting (^{<1289>}2 Kings 18:19-25), both as to matter and manner, his highly colored picture of his master's powers and resources, and the impossibility of Hezekiah making any effective resistance, heightened by all the arguments and figures which an Oriental imagination could suggest, has been paralleled in all, except the blasphemy, by other messages of defiance sent on similar occasions in the history of the East.

27. *that they may eat*, etc. — This was designed to show the dreadful extremities to which, in the threatened siege, the people of Jerusalem would be reduced.

CHAPTER 19

~~12916~~ 2 KINGS 19:1-5.

HEZEKIAH IN DEEP AFFLICTION.

1-3. *when king Hezekiah heard it, he rent his clothes* — The rending of his clothes was a mode of expressing horror at the daring blasphemy — the assumption of sackcloth a sign of his mental distress — his entrance into the temple to pray the refuge of a pious man in affliction — and the forwarding an account of the Assyrian’s speech to Isaiah was to obtain the prophet’s counsel and comfort. The expression in which the message was conveyed described, by a strong figure, the desperate condition of the kingdom, together with their own inability to help themselves; and it intimated also a hope, that the blasphemous defiance of Jehovah’s power by the impious Assyrian might lead to some direct interposition for the vindication of His honor and supremacy to all heathen gods.

4. *the living God* — “The living God” is a most significant expression taken in connection with the senseless deities that Rab-shakeh boasted were unable to resist his master’s victorious arms.

~~12916~~ 2 KINGS 19:6,7.

COMFORTED BY ISAIAH.

6. *Isaiah said ... Be not afraid* — The prophet’s answer was most cheering, as it held out the prospect of a speedy deliverance from the invader. The blast, the rumor, the fall by the sword, contained a brief prediction that was soon fulfilled in all the three particulars — namely, the alarm that hastened his retreat, the destruction that overtook his army, and the violent death that suddenly ended his career.

~~2~~ KINGS 19:8-13.**SENNACHERIB SENDS A BLASPHEMOUS LETTER TO HEZEKIAH.****8. *So Rab-shakeh ... found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah***

— Whether Lachish had fallen or not, is not said. But Sennacherib had transferred his battering-rams against the apparently neighboring fortress of Libnah (~~610~~ Joshua 10:29; compare ~~610~~ Joshua 10:31 ~~650~~ 15:42), where the chief-cup-bearer reported the execution of his mission.

9-13. *when he heard say of Tirhakah ..., Behold, he is come out to fight against thee,* etc. — This was the “rumor” to which Isaiah referred [~~2~~ Kings 19:7]. Tirhakah reigned in Upper Egypt, while So (or Sabaco) ruled in Lower Egypt. He was a powerful monarch, another Sesostris, and both he and Sabaco have left many monuments of their greatness. The name and figure of Tirhakah receiving war captives, are still seen in the Egyptian temple of Medinet Abou. This was the expected succor which was sneered at by Rab-shakeh as “a bruised reed” (~~2~~ Kings 18:21). Rage against Hezekiah for allying himself with Egypt, or the hope of being better able to meet this attack from the south, induced him, after hearing the rumor of Tirhakah’s advance, to send a menacing letter to Hezekiah, in order that he might force the king of Judah to an immediate surrender of his capital. This letter, couched in the same vaunting and imperious style as the speech of Rab-shakeh, exceeded it in blasphemy, and contained a larger enumeration of conquered places, with the view of terrifying Hezekiah and showing him the utter hopelessness of all attempts at resistance.

~~2~~ KINGS 19:14-34.**HEZEKIAH’S PRAYER.**

14-19. *Hezekiah received the letter ... and went up into the house of the Lord* — Hezekiah, after reading it, hastened into the temple, spread it in the childlike confidence of faith before the Lord, as containing taunts

deeply affecting the divine honor, and implored deliverance from this proud defier of God and man. The devout spirit of this prayer, the recognition of the Divine Being in the plenitude of His majesty — so strikingly contrasted with the fancy of the Assyrians as to His merely local power; his acknowledgment of the conquests obtained over other lands; and of the destruction of their wooden idols which, according to the Assyrian practice, were committed to the flames — because their tutelary deities were no gods; and the object for which he supplicated the divine interposition — that all the kingdoms of the earth might know that the Lord was the only God — this was an attitude worthy to be assumed by a pious theocratic king of the chosen people.

20. *Then Isaiah ... sent* — A revelation having been made to Isaiah, the prophet announced to the king that his prayer was heard. The prophetic message consisted of three different portions: — *First*, Sennacherib is apostrophized (⁽¹²⁶⁹⁾2 Kings 19:21-28) in a highly poetical strain, admirably descriptive of the turgid vanity, haughty pretensions, and presumptuous impiety of the Assyrian despot. *Secondly*, Hezekiah is addressed (⁽¹²⁶⁹⁾2 Kings 19:29-31), and a sign is given him of the promised deliverance — namely, that for two years the presence of the enemy would interrupt the peaceful pursuits of husbandry, but in the third year the people would be in circumstances to till their fields and vineyards and reap the fruits as formerly. *Thirdly*, the issue of Sennacherib's invasion is announced (⁽¹²⁶⁹⁾2 Kings 19:32-34).

33. *shall not come into this city* — nor approach near enough to shoot an arrow, not even from the most powerful engine which throws missiles to the greatest distance, nor shall he occupy any part of the ground before the city by a fence, a mantelet, or covering for men employed in a siege, nor cast (raise) a bank (mound) of earth, overtopping the city walls, whence he may see and command the interior of the city. None of these, which were the principal modes of attack followed in ancient military art, should Sennacherib be permitted to adopt. Though the army under Rab-shakeh marched towards Jerusalem and encamped at a little distance with a view to blockade it, they delayed laying siege to it, probably waiting till the king, having taken Lachish and Libnah, should bring up his detachment, that with all the combined forces of Assyria they might invest the capital. So determined was this invader to conquer Judah and the neighboring

countries (²³¹⁰Isaiah 10:7), that nothing but a divine interposition could have saved Jerusalem. It might be supposed that the powerful monarch who overran Palestine and carried away the tribes of Israel, would leave memorials of his deeds on sculptured slabs, or votive bulls. A long and minute account of this expedition is contained in the Annals of Sennacherib, a translation of which has recently been made into English, and, in his remarks upon it, COLONEL RAWLINSON says the Assyrian version confirms the most important features of the Scripture account. The Jewish and Assyrian narratives of the campaign are, indeed, on the whole, strikingly illustrative of each other [*Outlines of Assyrian History*].

~~1205~~ 2 KINGS 19:35,36.

AN ANGEL DESTROYS THE ASSYRIANS.

35. *in the morning ... they were all dead corpses* — It was the miraculous interposition of the Almighty that defended Jerusalem. As to the secondary agent employed in the destruction of the Assyrian army, it is most probable that it was effected by a hot south wind, the simoon, such as to this day often envelops and destroys whole caravans. This conjecture is supported by ¹²⁰⁵2 Kings 19:7, and ²⁵⁰¹Jeremiah 51:1. The destruction was during the night; the officers and soldiers, being in full security, were negligent; their discipline was relaxed; the camp guards were not alert, or perhaps they themselves were the first taken off, and those who slept, *not wrapped up*, imbibed the poison plentifully. If this had been an evening of dissolute mirth (no uncommon thing in a camp), their joy (perhaps for a victory), or “the first night of their attacking the city,” says JOSEPHUS, became, by its effects, one means of their destruction [*CALMET, Fragments*].

36. *So Sennacherib king of Assyria ... went and returned* — the same way as he came (¹²⁰⁵2 Kings 19:33). The route is described (²³¹⁰Isaiah 10:28-32). The early chariot track near Beyrouth is on the rocky edge of Lebanon, which is skirted by the ancient Lycus (Nahr-el Kelb). On the perpendicular face of the limestone rock, at different heights, are seen slabs with Assyrian inscriptions, which having been deciphered, are found to

contain the name of Sennacherib. Thus, by the preservation of these tablets, the wrath of the Assyrian invaders is made to praise the Lord.

dwelt at Nineveh — This statement implies a considerable period of time, and his Annals carry on his history at least five years after his disastrous campaign at Jerusalem. No record of his catastrophe can be found, as the Assyrian practice was to record victories alone. The sculptures give only the sunny side of the picture.

~~DESE~~ 2 KINGS 19:37.

SENNACHERIB SLAIN.

37. *as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch* — Assaræ, or Asshur, the head of the Assyrian Pantheon, represented not as a vulture-headed figure (that is now ascertained to be a priest), but as a winged figure in a circle, which was the guardian deity of Assyria. The king is represented on the monuments standing or kneeling beneath this figure, his hand raised in sign of prayer or adoration.

his sons smote him with the sword — Sennacherib's temper, exasperated probably by his reverses, displayed itself in the most savage cruelty and intolerable tyranny over his subjects and slaves, till at length he was assassinated by his two sons, whom, it is said, he intended to sacrifice to pacify the gods and dispose them to grant him a return of prosperity. The parricides taking flight into Armenia, a third son, Esar-haddon, ascended the throne.

CHAPTER 20

2 KINGS 20:1-7.

HEZEKIAH'S LIFE LENGTHENED.

1. *In those days was Hezekiah sick* — As his reign lasted twenty-nine years (^{<1200>}2 Kings 18:2), and his kingdom was invaded in the fourteenth (^{<1203>}2 Kings 18:13), it is evident that this sudden and severe illness must have occurred in the very year of the Syrian invasion. Between the threatened attack and the actual appearance of the enemy, this incident in Hezekiah's history must have taken place. But according to the usage of the sacred historian, the story of Sennacherib is completed before entering on what was personal to the king of Judah (see also ^{<1204>}Isaiah 37:36-38:1).

Set thine house in order — Isaiah, being of the blood royal, might have access to the king's private house. But since the prophet was commissioned to make this announcement, the message must be considered as referring to matters of higher importance than the settlement of the king's domestic and private affairs. It must have related chiefly to the state of his kingdom, he having not as yet any son (compare ^{<1206>}2 Kings 20:6 with ^{<1201>}2 Kings 21:1).

for thou shall die, and not live — The disease was of a malignant character and would be mortal in its effects, unless the healing power of God should miraculously interpose.

2. *he turned his face to the wall* — not like Ahab (^{<1204>}1 Kings 21:4), in fretful discontent, but in order to secure a better opportunity for prayer.

3. *remember now how I have walked before thee*, etc. — The course of Hezekiah's thoughts was evidently directed to the promise made to David and his successors on the throne (^{<1025>}1 Kings 8:25). He had kept the conditions as faithfully as human infirmity admitted; and as he had been all along free from any of those great crimes by which, through the judgment of God, human life was often suddenly cut short, his great grief might arise

partly from the love of life, partly from the obscurity of the Mosaic dispensation, where life and immortality had not been fully brought to light, and partly from his plans for the reformation of his kingdom being frustrated by his death. He pleaded the fulfillment of the promise.

4. *afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court* — of the royal castle.

5. *Thus saith ... the God of David thy father* — An immediate answer was given to his prayer, containing an assurance that the Lord was mindful of His promise to David and would accomplish it in Hezekiah's experience, both by the prolongation of his life, and his deliverance from the Assyrians.

on the third day — The perfect recovery from a dangerous sickness, within so short a time, shows the miraculous character of the cure (see his thanksgiving song, ^{<230>}Isaiah 38:9). The disease cannot be ascertained; but the text gives no hint that the plague was raging then in Jerusalem; and although Arab physicians apply a cataplasm of figs to plague-boils, they also do so in other cases, as figs are considered useful in ripening and soothing inflammatory ulcers.

~~<208>~~ 2 KINGS 20:8-20.

THE SUN GOES TEN DEGREES BACKWARD.

8-11. *Hezekiah said unto Isaiah, What will be the sign that the Lord shall heal me* — His recovery in the course of nature was so unlooked for, that the king asked for some token to justify his reliance on the truth of the prophet's communication; and the sign he specified was granted to him. The shadow of the sun went back upon the dial of Ahaz the ten degrees it had gone down. Various conjectures have been formed as to this dial. The word in the original is "degrees," or "steps," and hence many commentators have supposed that it was a stair, so artfully contrived, that the shadows on the steps indicated the hours and course of the sun. But it is more probable that it was a proper instrument, and, from the Hebrews having no term to designate it, that it was one of the foreign novelties imported from Babylon by Ahaz. It seems to have been of such

magnitude, and so placed in the court, that Isaiah could point to it, and the king see it, from his chamber. The retrogression of the sun's shadow on the dial was miraculously accomplished by the omnipotent power of God; but the phenomenon was temporary, local, confined to the notice, and intended for the satisfaction, only of Hezekiah and his court.

12-19. *Berodach-baladan* — (^{<2301>}Isaiah 39:1), the first king of Babylon mentioned in sacred history; formerly its rulers were viceroys of the Assyrian monarchs. This individual threw off the yoke, and asserting his independence, made with varying success, a long and obstinate resistance [RAWLINSON, *Outlines*]. The message of congratulation to Hezekiah, was, in all likelihood, accompanied with proposals for a defensive alliance against their common Assyrian enemy. The king of Judah, flattered with this honor, showed the ambassadors all his treasures, his armory and warlike stores; and his motive for this was evidently that the Babylonian deputies might be the more induced to prize his friendship.

13, 14. *the silver, and the gold* — He paid so much tribute to Sennacherib as exhausted his treasury (compare ^{<12816>}2 Kings 18:16). But, after the destruction of Sennacherib, presents were brought him from various quarters, out of respect to a king who, by his faith and prayer, saved his country; and besides, it is by no means improbable that from the corpses in the Assyrian camp, all the gold and silver he had paid might be recovered. The vain display, however, was offensive to his divine liege lord, who sent Isaiah to reprove him. The answer he gave the prophet shows how he was elated by the compliment of their visit; but it was wrong, as presenting a bait for the cupidity of these rapacious foreigners, who, at no distant period, would return and pillage his country, and transfer all the possessions he ostentatiously displayed to Babylon, as well as his posterity to be court attendants in that country — (see on ^{<1423>}2 Chronicles 32:31).

19. *Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken* — indicating a humble and pious resignation to the divine will. The concluding part of his reply was uttered after a pause and was probably an ejaculation to himself, expressing his thankfulness, that, though great afflictions should befall his descendants, the execution of the divine judgment was to be suspended during his own lifetime.

20. *pool and a conduit* — (See on ~~1420~~ 2 Chronicles 32:30).

CHAPTER 21

<21> 2 KINGS 21:1-18.

MANASSEH'S WICKED REIGN, AND GREAT IDOLATRY.

1-3. *Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign* — He must have been born three years after his father's recovery; and his minority, spent under the influence of guardians who were hostile to the religious principles and reforming policy of his father, may account in part for the anti-theocratic principles of his reign. The work of religious reformation which Hezekiah had zealously carried on was but partially accomplished. There was little appearance of its influence on the heart and manners of the people at large. On the contrary, the true fear of God had vanished from the mass of the people; corruption and vice increased, and were openly practiced (<2300> Isaiah 28:7, etc.) by the degenerate leaders, who, having got the young prince Manasseh into their power, directed his education, trained him up in their views, and seduced him into the open patronage of idolatry. Hence, when he became sovereign, he introduced the worship of idols, the restoration of high places, and the erection of altars or pillars to Baal, and the placing, in the temple of God itself, a graven image of Asherah, the sacred or symbolic tree, which represented "all the host of heaven." This was not idolatry, but pure star-worship, of Chaldaic and Assyrian origin [KEIL]. The sun, as among the Persians, had chariots and horses consecrated to it (<1231> 2 Kings 23:11); and incense was offered to the stars on the housetops (<1230> 2 Kings 23:12 <1431> 2 Chronicles 33:5 <2193> Jeremiah 19:13 <3101> Zephaniah 1:5), and in the temple area with the face turned toward the sunrise (<2181> Ezekiel 8:16).

5. *the two courts of the house of the Lord* — the court of the priests, and the large court of the people.

6. *made his son pass through the fire* — (See on <2163> 2 Kings 16:3).

observed times — from an observation of the clouds.

used enchantments — jugglery and spells.

dealt with familiar spirits — *Septuagint*, “ventriloquists,” who pretended to ask counsel of a familiar spirit and gave the response received from him to others.

and wizards — wise or knowing ones, who pretended to reveal secrets, to recover things lost and hidden treasure, and to interpret dreams. A great influx of these impostors had, at various times, poured from Chaldea into the land of Israel to pursue their gainful occupations, especially during the reigns of the latter kings; and Manasseh was not only their liberal patron, but zealous to appear himself an adept in the arts. He raised them to be an influential class at his court, as they were in that of Assyria and Babylon, where nothing was done till they had ascertained the lucky hour and were promised a happy issue.

7. *And he set a graven image* — The placing of the Asherah within the precincts of the temple, which was dedicated to the worship of the true God, is dwelt upon as the most aggravated outrage of the royal idolater.

8. *Neither will I make the feet of Israel move ... out of the land which I gave their fathers* — alluding to the promise (⁴⁰⁰2 Samuel 7:10).

only if they will observe, etc. — This condition was expressed from the first plantation of Israel in Canaan. But that people not only did not keep it, but through the pernicious influence of Manasseh, were seduced into greater excesses of idolatrous corruption than even the original Canaanites.

10-17. *And the Lord spake by his servants the prophets* — These were Hosea, Joel, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Isaiah. Their counsels, admonitions, and prophetic warnings, were put on record in the national chronicles (⁴⁶⁸2 Chronicles 33:18) and now form part of the sacred canon.

12. *whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle* — a strong metaphorical form of announcing an extraordinary and appalling event (see ⁹⁹¹1 Samuel 3:11 ²⁴⁹Jeremiah 19:3; also ³⁰⁶Habakkuk 1:5).

13. *the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab* — Captives doomed to destruction were sometimes grouped together and marked off by means of a measuring-line and plummet (⁴⁰⁰2 Samuel 8:2

^{<3411>}Isaiah 34:11 ^{<3007>}Amos 7:7); so that the line of Samaria means the line drawn for the destruction of Samaria; the plummet of the house of Ahab, for exterminating his apostate family; and the import of the threatening declaration here is that Judah would be utterly destroyed, as Samaria and the dynasty of Ahab had been.

I will wipe Jerusalem, etc. — The same doom is denounced more strongly in a figure unmistakably significant.

14. *I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance* — The people of Judah, who of all the chosen people alone remained. The consequence of the Lord's forsaking them would be their fall into the power of their enemies.

16. *Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood* — Not content with the patronage and the practice of idolatrous abomination, he was a cruel persecutor of all who did not conform. The land was deluged with the blood of good men; among whom it is traditionally said Isaiah suffered a horrid death, by being sawn asunder (see on ^{<3813>}Hebrews 11:37).

^{<1218>}2 KINGS 21:19-26.

AMON'S WICKED REIGN.

19-24. *Amon was twenty and two years old when he began to reign* — This prince continued the idolatrous policy of his father; and, after an inglorious reign of two years, he was massacred by some of his own domestics. The people slew the regicide conspirators and placed his son Josiah on the throne.

CHAPTER 22

<1216> 2 KINGS 22:1,2.

JOSIAH'S GOOD REIGN.

1, 2. *Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign* — Happier than his grandfather Manasseh, he seems to have fallen during his minority under the care of better guardians, who trained him in the principles and practice of piety; and so strongly had his young affections been enlisted on the side of true and undefiled religion, that he continued to adhere all his life, with undeviating perseverance, to the cause of God and righteousness.

<1218> 2 KINGS 22:3-7.

HE PROVIDES FOR THE REPAIR OF THE TEMPLE.

3, 4. *in the eighteenth year of king Josiah* — Previous to this period, he had commenced the work of national reformation. The preliminary steps had been already taken; not only the builders were employed, but money had been brought by all the people and received by the Levites at the door, and various other preparations had been made. But the course of this narrative turns on one interesting incident which happened in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, and hence that date is specified. In fact the whole land was thoroughly purified from every object and all traces of idolatry. The king now addressed himself to the repair and embellishment of the temple and gave directions to Hilkiah the high priest to take a general survey, in order to ascertain what was necessary to be done (see on <1608> 2 Chronicles 34:8-15).

~~22:8~~ 2 KINGS 22:8-15.

HILKIAH FINDS THE BOOK OF THE LAW.

8-11. *Hilkiah said ... I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord*, etc. — that is, the law of Moses, the Pentateuch. It was the temple copy which, had been laid (^{<6312>}Deuteronomy 31:25,26) beside the ark in the most holy place. During the ungodly reigns of Manasseh and Amon — or perhaps under Ahaz, when the temple itself had been profaned by idols, and the ark also (^{<4819>}2 Chronicles 35:3) removed from its site; it was somehow lost, and was now found again during the repair of the temple [KEIL]. Delivered by Hilkiah the discoverer to Shaphan the scribe (^{<1218>}2 Kings 22:8), it was by the latter shown and read to the king. It is thought, with great probability, that the passage read to the king, and by which the royal mind was so greatly excited, was a portion of Deuteronomy, the twenty-eighth, twenty-ninth, and thirtieth chapters, in which is recorded a renewal of the national covenant, and an enumeration of the terrible threats and curses denounced against all who violated the law, whether prince or people. The impressions of grief and terror which the reading produced on the mind of Josiah have seemed to many unaccountable. But, as it is certain from the extensive and familiar knowledge displayed by the prophets, that there were numbers of other copies in popular circulation, the king must have known its sacred contents in some degree. But he might have been a stranger to the passage read him, or the reading of it might, in the peculiar circumstances, have found a way to his heart in a manner that he never felt before. His strong faith in the divine word, and his painful consciousness that the woeful and long-continued apostasies of the nation had exposed them to the infliction of the judgments denounced, must have come with overwhelming force on the heart of so pious a prince.

12-15. *the king commanded ... Go, inquire of the Lord for me*, etc. — The agitated feelings of the king prompted him to ask immediate counsel how to avert those curses under which his kingdom lay; and forthwith a deputation of his principal officers was sent to one endowed with the prophetic spirit.

Ahikam — a friend of Jeremiah (²⁰²⁴Jeremiah 26:24).

14. Achbor — or Abdon (¹⁸⁰⁷2 Chronicles 34:20), a man of influence at court (²⁰²²Jeremiah 26:22). The occasion was urgent, and therefore they were sent — not to Zephaniah (³¹⁰¹Zephaniah 1:1), who was perhaps young — nor to Jeremiah, who was probably absent at his house in Anathoth, but to one who was at hand and known for her prophetic gifts — to Huldah, who was probably at this time a widow. Her husband Shallum was grandson of one Harhas, “keeper of the wardrobe.” If this means the priestly wardrobe, [Harhas] must have been a Levite. But it probably refers to the royal wardrobe.

she dwelt ... in the college — rather, “in *the Misnah*,” taking the original word as a proper name, not a school or college, but a particular suburb of Jerusalem. She was held in such veneration that Jewish writers say she and Jehoiada the priest were the only persons not of the house of David (³⁸¹⁵2 Chronicles 24:15,16) who were ever buried in Jerusalem.

15-20. she said unto them, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel, Tell the man that sent you to me — On being consulted, she delivered an oracular response in which judgment was blended with mercy; for it announced the impending calamities that at no distant period were to overtake the city and its inhabitants. But at the same time the king was consoled with an assurance that this season of punishment and sorrow should not be during his lifetime, on account of the faith, penitence, and pious zeal for the divine glory and worship which, in his public capacity and with his royal influence, he had displayed.

CHAPTER 23

~~1231E~~ 2 KINGS 23:1-3.

JOSIAH CAUSES THE LAW TO BE READ.

1-3. *the king sent, and they gathered unto him all the elders* — This pious and patriotic king, not content with the promise of his own security, felt, after Huldah's response, an increased desire to avert the threatened calamities from his kingdom and people. Knowing the richness of the divine clemency and grace to the penitent, he convened the elders of the people, and placing himself at their head, accompanied by the collective body of the inhabitants, went in solemn procession to the temple, where ordered the book of the law to be read to the assembled audience, and covenanted, with the unanimous concurrence of his subjects, to adhere steadfastly to all the commandments of the Lord. It was an occasion of solemn interest, closely connected with a great national crisis, and the beautiful example of piety in the highest quarter would exert a salutary influence over all classes of the people in animating their devotions and encouraging their return to the faith of their fathers.

2. *he read in their ears* — that is, “caused to be read.”

3. *all the people stood to the covenant* — that is, they agreed to the proposals made; they assented to what was required of them.

~~1231E~~ 2 KINGS 23:4-28.

HE DESTROYS IDOLATRY.

4. *the king commanded Hilkiah*, etc. — that is, the high priest and other priests, for there was not a variety of official gradations in the temple.

all the vessels, etc. — the whole apparatus of idol-worship.

burned them without Jerusalem — The law required them to be consigned to the flames (^{<8125>}Deuteronomy 7:25).

in the fields of Kidron — most probably that part of the valley of Kidron, where lies Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives. It is a level, spacious basin, abounding at present with plantations [ROBINSON]. The brook winds along the east and south of the city, the channel of which is throughout a large portion of the year almost or wholly dry, except after heavy rains, when it suddenly swells and overflows. There were emptied all the impurities of the temple (^{<4295>}2 Chronicles 29:15,16) and the city. His reforming predecessors had ordered the mutilated relics of idolatry to be thrown into that receptacle of filth (^{<1153>}1 Kings 15:13 ^{<4456>}2 Chronicles 15:16 ^{<814>}30:14); but Josiah, while he imitated their piety, far outstripped them in zeal; for he caused the ashes of the burnt wood and the fragments of the broken metal to be collected and conveyed to Beth-el, in order thenceforth to associate ideas of horror and aversion with that place, as odious for the worst pollutions.

5. put down the idolatrous priests — *Hebrew, chemarim*, “scorched,” that is, Guebres, or fire-worshippers, distinguished by a girdle (^{<3234>}Ezekiel 23:14-17) or belt of wool and camel’s hair, twisted round the body twice and tied with four knots, which had a symbolic meaning, and made it a supposed defense against evil.

them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, etc. — or Baal-shemesh, for Baal was sometimes considered the sun. This form of false worship was not by images, but pure star-worship, borrowed from the old Assyrians.

and — rather, “even to all the host of heaven.”

6. brought out the grove — that is, Asherah, the mystic tree, placed by Manasseh in the temple [^{<1215>}2 Kings 21:5 ^{<4315>}2 Chronicles 33:5], removed by him after his conversion [^{<4315>}2 Chronicles 33:15], but replaced in the sanctuary by his wicked son Amon [^{<1211>}2 Kings 21:20,21]. Josiah had it taken to Kidron, burnt the wood, ground the metal about it to powder, and strewed the ashes “on the graves of the children of the people.” The poor were buried in a common on part of the valley of Kidron. But reference is

here made to the graves “of those that had sacrificed” (⁴⁶⁰2 Chronicles 34:4).

7. *brake down the houses of the sodomites* — not solid houses, but tents, called elsewhere [⁴⁷³2 Kings 17:30] *Succoth-benoth*, “the booths of the young women,” who were devoted to the service of Asherah, for which they made embroidered hangings, and in which they gave themselves to unbridled revelry and lust. Or the hangings might be for Asherah itself, as it is a popular superstition in the East to hang pieces of cloth on trees.

8, 9. *he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places*, etc. — Many of the Levitical order, finding in the reigns of Manasseh and Amon the temple-worship abolished and the tithes and other offerings alienated, had been betrayed into the folly of officiating on high places, and presenting such sacrifices as were brought to them. These irregularities, even though the object of that worship was the true God, were prohibited in the law (⁴⁶¹Deuteronomy 12:11). Those who had been guilty of this sin, Josiah brought to Jerusalem. Regarding them as defiled, he debarred them from the service of the temple, but gave them an allowance out of the temple revenues, like the lame and disabled members of the priesthood (⁴⁶²Leviticus 21:21,22).

from Geba to Beer-sheba — the most northern and the most southern places in Judah — meaning all parts of the kingdom.

the high places ... which were in the entering in of the gate of Joshua — The governor’s house and gate were on the left of the city gate, and close by the entrance of that civic mansion house were public altars, dedicated, it might be, to the true God, but contrary to His own ordinance of worship (²⁵¹⁸Isaiah 57:8).

10. *Topheth* — so called from *Toph* — a “drum.” It is the prevailing opinion among Jewish writers that the cries of the terrified children made to pass through the fire in that place of idolatrous horror were drowned by the sound of that instrument.

11. *took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun* — Among the people who anciently worshipped the sun, horses were usually dedicated to that divinity, from the supposed idea that the sun

himself was drawn in a chariot by horses. In some cases these horses were sacrificed; but more commonly they were employed either in the sacred processions to carry the images of the sun, or for the worshippers to ride in every morning to welcome his rise. It seems that the idolatrous kings, Ahaz, Manasseh, and Amon, or their great officers, proceeded on these horses early on each day from the east gate of the temple to salute and worship the sun at his appearing above the horizon.

12. *the altars that were on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz* — Altars were reared on the flat roofs of houses, where the worshippers of “the host of heaven” burnt incense (^{<300B>}Zephaniah 1:5 ^{<240E>}Jeremiah 19:13). Ahaz had reared altars for this purpose on the *oleah*, or upper chamber of his palace, and Manasseh on some portion of the roof of the temple. Josiah demolished both of these structures.

13, 14. *the high places ... which Solomon ... had builded* — (See on ^{<11K1>}1 Kings 11:5).

the right hand of the mount of corruption — The Mount of Olives is a hilly range on the east of Jerusalem. This range has three summits, of which the central one is the Mount of Corruption, so called from the idol temples built there, and of course the hill on the right hand denotes the southernmost peak. Josiah is said not to have destroyed, but only defiled, “the high places on the hill of corruption.” It is most probable that Hezekiah had long before demolished the idolatrous temples erected there by Solomon but, as the superstitious people continued to regard the spot as consecrated ground, Josiah defiled it.

14. *filled their places with the bones of men* — Every monument of idolatry in his dominion he in like manner destroyed, and the places where they stood he defiled by strewing them with dead men’s bones. The presence of a dead carcass rendered both persons and places unclean in the eyes both of Jews and heathens.

15-20. *Moreover the altar that was at Beth-el*, etc. — Not satisfied with the removal of every vestige of idolatry from his own dominion, this zealous iconoclast made a tour of inspection through the cities of Samaria and all the territory formerly occupied by the ten tribes, destroying the altars and temples of the high places, consigning the Asherim to the

flames, putting to death the priests of the high places, and showing his horror at idolatry by ransacking the sepulchers of idolatrous priests, and strewing the burnt ashes of their bones upon the altars before he demolished them.

16. *according to the word of the Lord which the man of God proclaimed*

— In carrying on these proceedings, Josiah was prompted by his own intense hatred of idolatry. But it is remarkable that this act was predicted three hundred twenty-six years before his birth, and his name also was expressly mentioned, as well as the very place where it should be done (^{411B}1 Kings 13:2). This is one of the most most remarkable prophecies in the Bible.

17. *What title is that that I see?* — The king's attention probably, had been arrested by a tombstone more conspicuous than the rest around it, bearing on an inscription the name of him that lay beneath; and this prompted his curiosity to make the inquiry.

the men of the city — not the Assyrian colonists — for they could know nothing about the ancient transactions of the place — but some of the old people who had been allowed to remain, and perhaps the tomb itself might not then have been discoverable, through the effects of time and neglect, had not some “Old Mortality” garnished the sepulcher of the righteous.

21-23. *the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the passover unto the Lord your God,* etc. — It was observed with great solemnity and was attended not only by his own subjects, but by the remnant people from Israel (see on ^{448B}2 Chronicles 35:1-19). Many of the Israelites who were at Jerusalem might have *heard of*, if they did *not hear*, the law read by Josiah. It is probable that they might even have procured a copy of the law, stimulated as they were to the better observance of Jehovah's worship by the unusual and solemn transactions at Jerusalem.

26. *Notwithstanding, the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his wrath,* — etc. The national reformation which Josiah carried on was acquiesced in by the people from submission to the royal will; but they entertained a secret and strong hankering after the suppressed idolatries. Though outwardly purified, their hearts were not right towards God, as appears from many passages of the prophetic writings; their thorough

reform was hopeless; and God, who saw no sign of genuine repentance, allowed His decree (^{<1271D>}2 Kings 21:12-15) for the subversion of the kingdom to take fatal effect.

29. *In his days Pharaoh-nechoh* — (See ^{<4651>}2 Chronicles 35:20-27).

CHAPTER 24

2 KINGS 24:1-7.

JEHOIAKIM PROCURES HIS OWN RUIN.

1, 2. *Nebuchadnezzar* — the son of Nabopolassar, the founder of the Chaldee monarchy. This invasion took place in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's, and the first of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (^{<2411>}Jeremiah 25:1; compare ^{<2412>}Jeremiah 46:2). The young king of Assyria being probably detained at home on account of his father's demise, despatched, along with the Chaldean troops on his border, an army composed of the tributary nations that were contiguous to Judea, to chastise Jehoiakim's revolt from his yoke. But this hostile band was only an instrument in executing the divine judgment (^{<2413>}2 Kings 24:2) denounced by the prophets against Judah for the sins of the people; and hence, though marching by the orders of the Assyrian monarch, they are described as sent by the Lord (^{<2414>}2 Kings 24:3).

4. *the Lord would not pardon* — (see on ^{<2415>}2 Kings 23:26; ^{<2416>}Jeremiah 15:1).

6. *Jehoiakim slept with his fathers* — This phraseology can mean nothing more than that he died; for he was not buried with his royal ancestors; and whether he fell in battle, or his body was subjected to posthumous insults, he was, according to the prediction (^{<2417>}Jeremiah 22:19), not honored with the rites of sepulture (^{<2418>}Jeremiah 36:30).

Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead — The very brief reign of this prince, which lasted only three months, during which he was a humble vassal of the Assyrians, is scarcely deserving to be taken into account, and therefore is in no way contradictory to the prophetic menace denounced against his father (^{<2419>}Jeremiah 36:30).

7. *the king of Egypt* — that is, Pharaoh-nechoh.

~~1208~~ 2 KINGS 24:8,9.

JEHOIACHIN SUCCEEDS HIM.

8. *Jehoiachin* — that is, “God-appointed,” contracted into *Jeconiah* and *Coniah* (~~2021~~ Jeremiah 22:24).

eighteen years old when he began to reign — At the age of eight his father took him into partnership in the government (~~1869~~ 2 Chronicles 36:9). He began to reign alone at eighteen.

9. *he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord* — Untaught by experience, and deaf to the prophetic warnings, he pursued the evil courses which had brought so many disasters upon the royal family as well as the people of Judah. This bad character is figuratively but strongly depicted (~~3045~~ Ezekiel 19:5-7).

~~1210~~ 2 KINGS 24:10-16.

JERUSALEM TAKEN.

10-13. *At that time* — within three months after his accession to the throne. It was the spring of the year (~~1869~~ 2 Chronicles 36:10); so early did he indicate a feeling hostile to the interests of his Assyrian liege lord, by forming a league with Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar sent his generals to besiege Jerusalem, as Jeremiah had foretold (~~3028~~ Jeremiah 22:18 24:30), and soon after he followed in person. Convinced of the hopelessness of making any effectual resistance, Jehoiachin, going to the camp of the besiegers, surrendered (~~1210~~ 2 Kings 24:12), in the expectation, probably, of being allowed to retain his throne as a vassal of the Assyrian empire. But Nebuchadnezzar’s clemency towards the kings of Judah was now exhausted, so that Jehoiachin was sent as a captive to Babylon, according to Jeremiah’s prediction (~~2021~~ Jeremiah 22:24), accompanied by the queen mother (the same who had held that dignity under Jehoahaz) (~~1231~~ 2 Kings 23:31), his generals, and officers. This happened in the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign, computing from the time when he was associated with his father in the government. Those that were left consisted chiefly of

the poorer sort of people and the unskilled workmen. The palace and the temple were ransacked. The smaller golden vessels had been taken on the first capture of Jerusalem and placed by Nebuchadnezzar in the temple of his god as tokens of victory. They were used by Belshazzar at his impious feast [^{278D}Daniel 5:2], for the purpose of rewarding his army with these trophies, among which were probably the golden candlesticks, the ark, etc. (compare ^{480D}2 Chronicles 36:7 ^{270D}Daniel 1:2). Now the gold plating was torn off all the larger temple furniture.

13-16. *as the Lord had said* — (compare ^{421D}2 Kings 20:17 ^{230D}Isaiah 39:6 ^{415B}Jeremiah 15:13 17:3). The elite of the nation for rank, usefulness, and moral worth, all who might be useful in Babylon or dangerous in Palestine, were carried off to Babylon, to the number of ten thousand (^{424D}2 Kings 24:14). These are specified (^{421D}2 Kings 24:15,16), warriors, seven thousand; craftsmen and smiths, one thousand; king's wives, officers, and princes, also priests and prophets (^{381D}Jeremiah 29:1 ^{400D}Ezekiel 1:1), two thousand; equal to ten thousand captives in all.

^{424D}2 KINGS 24:17-20.

ZEDEKIAH'S EVIL REIGN.

17-19. *the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, his father's brother, king in his stead* — Adhering to his former policy of maintaining a show of monarchy, Nebuchadnezzar appointed the third and youngest son of Josiah (^{418D}1 Chronicles 3:15), full brother of Jehoahaz, and uncle of the captive Jehoiachin. But, according to the custom of conquerors, who changed the names of the great men they took captives in war, in token of their supremacy, he gave him the new name of

Zedekiah — that is, "The righteous of God." This being a purely Hebrew name, it seems that he allowed the puppet king to choose his own name, which was confirmed. His heart towards God was the same as that of Jehoiakim, impenitent and heedless of God's word.

20. *through the anger of the Lord ... he cast them out from his presence*

— that is, in the course of God's righteous providence, his policy as king would prove ruinous to his country.

Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon — instigated by ambassadors from the neighboring states who came to congratulate him on his ascension to the throne (compare ^{247B}Jeremiah 17:3, with ^{248B}Jeremiah 28:1), and at the same time get him to join them in a common league to throw off the Assyrian yoke. Though warned by Jeremiah against this step, the infatuated and perjured (^{257B}Ezekiel 17:13) Zedekiah persisted in his revolt.

CHAPTER 25

2 KINGS 25:1-3.

JERUSALEM AGAIN BESIEGED.

1. *Nebuchadnezzar ... came ... against Jerusalem* — Incensed by the revolt of Zedekiah, the Assyrian despot determined to put an end to the perfidious and inconstant monarchy of Judea. This chapter narrates his third and last invasion, which he conducted in person at the head of an immense army, levied out of all the tributary nations under his sway. Having overrun the northern parts of the country and taken almost all the fenced cities (²⁶⁰⁰Jeremiah 34:7), he marched direct to Jerusalem to invest it. The date of the beginning as well as the end of the siege is here carefully marked (compare ²⁶⁰⁰Ezekiel 24:1 ²⁶⁰⁰Jeremiah 39:1 ²⁶⁰⁰52:4-6); from which it appears, that, with a brief interruption caused by Nebuchadnezzar's marching to oppose the Egyptians who were coming to its relief but who retreated without fighting, the siege lasted a year and a half. So long a resistance was owing, not to the superior skill and valor of the Jewish soldiers, but to the strength of the city fortifications, on which the king too confidently relied (compare ²⁶⁰⁰Jeremiah 21:1-14 ²⁶⁰⁰37:1-38:28).

pitched against it, and ... built forts — rather, perhaps, drew lines of circumvallation, with a ditch to prevent any going out of the city. On this rampart were erected his military engines for throwing missiles into the city.

3. *on the ninth day of the fourth month the famine prevailed* — In consequence of the close and protracted blockade, the inhabitants were reduced to dreadful extremities; and under the maddening influence of hunger, the most inhuman atrocities were perpetrated (²⁶⁰⁰Lamentations 2:20,22 ²⁶⁰⁰4:9,10 ²⁶⁰⁰Ezekiel 5:10). This was a fulfillment of the prophetic denunciations threatened on the apostasy of the chosen people (²⁶⁰⁰Leviticus 26:29 ²⁶⁰⁰Deuteronomy 28:53-57 ²⁶⁰⁰Jeremiah 15:2 ²⁶⁰⁰27:13 ²⁶⁰⁰Ezekiel 4:16).

2 KINGS 25:4-30.**ZEDEKIAH TAKEN.**

4. *the city was broken up* — that is, a breach was effected, as we are elsewhere informed, in a part of the wall belonging to the lower city (^{<4615>}2 Chronicles 32:5 ^{<4634>}33:14).

the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between two walls, which is by the king's garden — The king's garden was (^{<4615>}Nehemiah 3:15) at the pool of Siloam, that is, at the mouth of the Tyroaeligon. A trace of the outermost of these walls appears to be still extant in the rude pathway which crosses the mouth of the Tyropaeligon, on a mound hard by the old mulberry tree, which marks the traditional spot of Isaiah's martyrdom [ROBINSON]. It is probable that the besiegers had overlooked this pass.

the king went ... toward the plain — that is, the Ghor, or valley of Jordan, estimated at five hours' distance from Jerusalem. The plain near Jericho is about eleven or twelve miles broad.

6, 7. *they took the king, and brought him ... to Riblah* — Nebuchadnezzar, having gone from the siege to oppose the auxiliary forces of Pharaoh-hophra, left his generals to carry on the blockade, he himself not returning to the scene of action, but taking up his station at Riblah in the land of Hamath (^{<4233>}2 Kings 23:33).

they gave judgment upon him — They, that is, the council (^{<2613>}Jeremiah 39:3,13 ^{<2701>}Daniel 6:7,8,12), regarding him as a seditious and rebellious vassal, condemned him for violating his oath and neglecting the announcement of the divine will as made known to him by Jeremiah (compare ^{<2615>}Jeremiah 32:5 ^{<2612>}34:2 ^{<2617>}38:17). His sons and the nobles who had joined in his flight were slain before his eyes (^{<2616>}Jeremiah 39:6 ^{<2620>}52:10). In conformity with Eastern ideas, which consider a blind man incapable of ruling, his eyes were put out, and being put in chains, he was carried to perpetual imprisonment in Babylon (^{<2611>}Jeremiah 52:11), which, though he came to it, as Ezekiel had foretold, he did not see (^{<2615>}Jeremiah 32:5 ^{<2623>}Ezekiel 12:13 ^{<2671>}17:16).

8-18. *on the seventh day of the month ... came Nebuzar-adan* — (compare ^{262D}Jeremiah 52:12). In attempting to reconcile these two passages, it must be supposed either that, though he had set out on the seventh, he did not arrive in Jerusalem till the tenth, or that he did not put his orders in execution till that day. His office as captain of the guard (^{153A}Genesis 37:36 39:1) called him to execute the awards of justice on criminals; and hence, although not engaged in the siege of Jerusalem (^{263C}Jeremiah 39:13), Nebuzar-adan was despatched to rase the city, to plunder the temple, to lay both in ruins, demolish the fortifications, and transport the inhabitants to Babylon. The most eminent of these were taken to the king at Riblah (^{127V}2 Kings 25:27) and executed, as instigators and abettors of the rebellion, or otherwise obnoxious to the Assyrian government. In their number were Seraiah, the high priest, grandfather of Ezra (^{150E}Ezra 7:1), his sagan or deputy, a priest of the second order (^{261D}Jeremiah 21:2 ^{262F}29:25,29 ^{263B}37:3).

18. *the three keepers of the door* — not mere porters, but officers of high trust among the Levites (^{122W}2 Kings 22:4 ^{199B}1 Chronicles 9:26).

19. *five men of them that were in the king's presence* — that is, who belonged to the royal retinue. It is probable that there were five at first, and that other two were found afterwards (^{262S}Jeremiah 52:25).

22-26. *Nebuchadnezzar ... Gedaliah ... ruler* — The people permitted to remain were, besides the king's daughters, a few court attendants and others (^{240T}Jeremiah 40:7) too insignificant to be removed, only the peasantry who could till the land and dress the vineyards. Gedaliah was Jeremiah's friend (^{203A}Jeremiah 26:24), and having, by the prophet's counsel, probably fled from the city as abandoned of God, he surrendered himself to the conqueror (^{260J}Jeremiah 38:2,17), and being promoted to the government of Judea, fixed his provincial court at Mizpeh. He was well qualified to surmount the difficulties of ruling at such a crisis. Many of the fugitive Jews, as well as the soldiers of Zedekiah who had accompanied the king in his flight to the plains of Jericho, left their retreats (^{240I}Jeremiah 40:11,12) and flocked around the governor; who having counselled them to submit, promised them on complying with this condition, security on oath that they would retain their possessions and enjoy the produce of their land (^{240B}Jeremiah 40:9).

25. *Ishmael ... of the seed royal, came, and ten men with him, and smote Gedaliah* — He had found refuge with Baalis, king of the Ammonites, and he returned with a bad design, being either instigated by envy of a governor not descended from the house of David, or bribed by Baalis to murder Gedaliah. The generous governor, though apprised of his intentions, refused to credit the report, much less to sanction the proposal made by an attached friend to cut off Ishmael. The consequence was, that he was murdered by this same Ishmael, when entertaining him in his own house (²⁴¹¹Jeremiah 41:1).

26. *and all the people ... came to Egypt* — In spite of Jeremiah's dissuasions (²⁴¹²Jeremiah 43:7,8) they settled in various cities of that country (²⁴¹³Jeremiah 44:1).

27. *seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin* — corresponding with the year of Nebuchadnezzar's death, and his son Evil-merodach's ascension to the throne.

Evil-merodach ... did lift up the head of Jehoiachin ... and spake kindly — gave him liberty upon parole. This kindly feeling is said to have originated in a familiar acquaintance formed in prison, in which Evil-merodach had lain till his father's death, on account of some malversation while acting as regent during Nebuchadnezzar's seven years' illness (²⁰⁶³Daniel 4:32,33). But doubtless the improvement in Zedekiah's condition is to be traced to the overruling providence and grace of Him who still cherished purposes of love to the house of David (¹⁰⁷⁴2 Samuel 7:14,15).

29. *Jehoiachin ... did eat ... continually before him* — According to an ancient usage in Eastern courts, had a seat at the royal table on great days, and had a stated provision granted him for the maintenance of his exiled court.