

TALES FROM THE TALMUD

MONTAGUE

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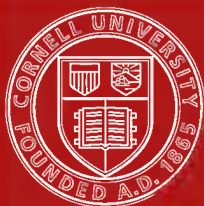
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Tales from The Talmud

Tales from The Talmud

BY

E. R. MONTAGUE

SECOND EDITION

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DEDICATED
TO
MY WIFE.

“Through women alone come blessings to a house.”
—THE TALMUD.

P R E F A C E.

THE great majority of these stories come straight from the Talmud, and may be found in English translations of that work, particularly in Mr Rodkinson's translation in the Oriental Room of the British Museum. A very few have been added from the Targums, the Pirke Rabbi Eliezer, and a few other works which were more or less contemporaneous with the Talmud, and evidently drew their tales from the same source. Some of the interpretations which have been put upon the legendary part of the Talmud are briefly referred to in Part I., but no pretence is made in this book either of giving a critical analysis of

the Talmud or of dealing with any religious or historical question. The volume is mainly confined to a collection of tales which, sometimes quaint, sometimes marvellous, often of great intrinsic beauty, and always illustrative of the inner lives and feelings of the Jewish people two thousand years ago, constitute in some respects one of the most interesting parts of the Talmud, and may perhaps be thought to be not unworthy of being made known for their own sakes.

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PART I.

INTRODUCTORY.

HISTORY, SCOPE, AND SPECIMENS OF THE TALMUD.

WHEN, with the progress of civilisation, the nations of Europe no longer regarded the collection and public burning of all discoverable copies of the Talmud as an act of piety, the book itself, outside the narrow circles of the ghettos, not unnaturally fell into disregard. For the historian or antiquarian who studied it for the sake of any light it might cast on the events of the earliest centuries of the era, the Talmud might still retain some kind of interest; but the feeling for the book, even among such students as these, is well expressed by Milman in his 'History

of the Jews,' who, after plunging into its pages in search of historical facts, can only describe it, in spite of his generally sympathetic attitude, as a "monument of human industry, human intelligence, and human folly." It remained for such men as Deutsch and Grünbaum in modern days to raise the Talmud to a new place of honour,—little dreamed of by its authors, and as little by its fiercest enemies or most passionate devotees in the Middle Ages,—a place in the world of literature.

The days are perhaps gone by when, as Deutsch tells us, Talmud was taken to be the name of some ancient Rabbi; but as some people may still ask, "What is the Talmud?" it may be worth while, before attempting to describe any of the wonderful things to be found in this wonderful book, to give a very brief account of how and by whom it came to be written.

The Israelites, like other nations, possessed from the earliest times a set of customs which gradually became a "common law," or body of unwritten legal

principles for deciding disputes. Tradition said that this unwritten law was given to Moses on Mount Sinai in addition to the Ten Commandments, was taught by Moses to Joshua, and so passed down by word of mouth through the Elders and the Prophets to the men of the Great Assembly or "Scribes," who flourished about the time of the Second Temple and later. Numerous decisions were given upon these laws; and as the religious, civil, and criminal law all had the same divine origin, all these decisions or judgments, the reasons for the judgments, and the names of the judges, were treasured up with zealous care. By the time of the Second Temple this "law" had grown to such enormous dimensions as to tax even the memory of the ancients, and at least two attempts are known to have been made to reduce it to some kind of code. It was Rabbi Yehudah who, in 190 A.D., succeeded in reducing all the "law" into writing, dividing it very roughly under six heads. The late persecution by Hadrian,

who, after the final desperate revolt under Bar Cochba, had forbidden the teaching of the Law, made such a course as Yehudah's absolutely necessary if any national ideal was to be preserved; for the people could not but know that the momentary gleam of Roman favour which they seem to have enjoyed during the last years of the second century might at any moment be dispelled. This collection constitutes the "Mishna," being one half of the Talmud, the other half being the "Gemara," the interpretation of, and comments upon, the Mishna. The Gemara was completed and incorporated in the Talmud at Jerusalem about 400 A.D., while in the rival school at Babylon a larger Gemara was completed and incorporated about 500 A.D.

The Talmud, then, consists of the law and commentaries, usually together described as the "Law"; and the ordinary modern reader, opening the book for the first time, might fairly expect to find some dry list of obligatory ceremonies, or a legal code more or less resembling the Code of

Justinian, interesting only on account of its antiquity. Nothing less like a European code of laws can well be imagined.

The first requisite for an appreciation of the Talmud is that the student should cast off all the habits of thought in which he has grown up, and listen as a child, surprised at nothing, smiling at nothing, explaining away nothing. He must expect to find no order of time; little, if any, order of subject; religion, history, geography, demonology, law, ethics, medicine, wit, poetry, rules of polite behaviour,—all the learning of the ancient world blended in bewildering confusion. As in so many ancient writings, he will find things which a modern regards as of the utmost importance set down beside things which seem to him utterly trivial; the noblest precepts of morality, or rules which show an almost morbid delicacy of feeling, side by side with the minutest directions for the carrying out of some ceremony or daily practice. How to eat, dress, rend the clothes in sign of mourn-

ing, undress, bathe; how to regulate the most trifling actions of life from birth to death,—all are provided for. Here the student will come upon legends as weird, as fantastic, or as gorgeously coloured as any tale in the ‘Arabian Nights’; here he will find himself following out intricate and often conflicting opinions as to whether it would constitute “work” for a man to use a wooden leg or wear a false tooth on the Sabbath, or lost in mazes of logic in the course of some elaborate argument as to whether or no some act (in a combination of circumstances which might never occur once to one man in all history) would be an infringement of one of the laws in Deuteronomy. Should he chance to open at the laws against usury (founded on Deut. xxiii. 19), he will read page after page of direction as to what constitutes usury, and learn even that the lender should avoid greeting one who has borrowed (unless such has been his daily habit), lest his greeting should humiliate the borrower by reminding him of the ob-

ligation, and so constitute interest on the loan.¹ Should he again chance to open at the "Ethics of the Fathers," he will be alternately pleased at the quaint homely sayings, and astonished at the insight shown by these ancient Rabbis. He will read: "Do not seek to appease thy friend in the hour of his passion; and do not seek to console him in the hour when his dead is laid out before him; and do not interrogate him in the hour of his vow; and strive not to see him in the hour of

¹ How, it will be at once asked, is this hatred of usury to be reconciled with the notorious usury in the Middle Ages on the part of Jews, who may be presumed to have been acquainted with, and owned allegiance to, the Talmudic laws? And the answer is supplied in the Talmud itself. Some of the Rabbis had forbidden lending at interest to any one, explaining that Deut. xxiii. 20—"Unto a foreigner thou mayest lend upon usury (but not unto a brother)"—should be translated, "Unto a foreigner thou mayest *give* interest"—*i.e.*, if a loan be required from a foreigner and cannot be obtained without interest; but afterwards they also allowed an Israelite, "for the need of his livelihood," to *lend at interest* to a non-Israelite; hence when money-lending was the only means of livelihood allowed to the Jew, he felt he could thus earn his livelihood among non-Israelites without breaking his own law.

his disgrace." Again : " Pass not judgment upon thy neighbour till thou hast put thyself in his place." " Repent one day before thy death " (*i.e.*, every day). " Do not allow thyself to be easily angered ; thy fellow's honour must be as dear to thee as thine own." Elsewhere he will learn that the adornment of wisdom is modesty, and the adornment of noble performance is secrecy ; that it is better to pass through a fiery furnace, better even to bear a false accusation in silence, than to put a man to shame in public ; that the righteous of all nations will have a share in the world to come, but that the scoffer, liar, hypocrite, and slanderer are among those who will never enter Paradise. He will be taught the dignity of labour, the sanctity of family life, the need for charity in judging others ; he will be warned, if he be a judge, never to accept a present from any one, and not to be biassed, not only in favour of the rich against the poor, but (through any distorted sense of justice) in favour of the poor against the rich.

Most astonishing, perhaps, of all are the explanations deduced from various passages in the Scriptures, which have been set together with an amazing ingenuity. Thus Adam was composed of the dust of all the world, for Ps. cxxxix. 16 says God saw man's unformed substance; and elsewhere we are told God sees all the world, therefore, it is argued, Adam must be composed of all the world. Adam, again, had two faces, and at first reached up to heaven, but was afterwards pressed down (Deut. iv. 32: "God created man upon the earth, and from the one end of heaven unto the other"; and Ps. cxxxix. 5, "Thou hast laid thine hand upon me"). Moses "*cried* unto the Lord" (Exod. viii. 12) means that he was obliged to pray in his loudest voice, because the frogs made such a noise.

Occasionally a stray gleam of poetry or a striking metaphor ("poverty becomes Israel as a red-leather trapping becomes a white horse") will surprise the reader in the midst of the driest discussions, but

more often the finest Old Testament poetry is buried in dust and ashes of verbal controversy. Every passage in the Psalms has some latent meaning only to be discovered by labour. "The valley of the shadow of death" refers to the shadow of a tree cast by moonlight: demons lurk in such shadows, and might kill any one who incautiously slept there. "Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly" refers to the teeth of Og, king of Bashan,¹ which grew till they were tangled among the rocks. In the middle of the verses of Is. xlix. 14, 15, "But Zion said, Jehovah hath forsaken me, and the Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child?" the Rabbis interpose a kind of sum intended to bring home to the mind the numbers of the stars; and in their zeal to say even more than Isaiah, point out that all these stars too were

¹ Full details are given in a rabbinical work known as the 'Pirke Rabbi Eliezer.' One famous Rabbi Eliezer, who was an important contributor to the Talmud, lived in the first and second centuries A.D., but modern criticism denies him the authorship of the book in question.

made for Israel's benefit, as an additional proof that Zion will not be forgotten.

Similar in spirit is the reproof of a Rabbi to an atheist who mocked at God, "who counteth the number of the stars." "I can count the stars," said the atheist; whereupon the Rabbi fills a sieve with sand and asks him to count the grains. "Keep the sieve still and I will count," he says. "But the stars in heaven do not keep still for you to count them," answers the Rabbi. He then goes on to say, "You do not even know the number of your teeth without counting them; how wonderful, therefore, to know the number of the stars *without counting.*" Isaiah is constantly quoted in proof of some rabbinical doctrine. Chap. lxvi. 1 ("The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool") proves that the heaven was made before the earth, because a throne is naturally made before a footstool. Chap. l. 3 ("I clothe the heavens with blackness") is a proof that the sky has been darker ever since the destruction of the Temple.

It is hardly surprising that in their search for hidden meanings the Rabbis should have discovered an almost inexhaustible mine of allegory in the Song of Solomon. To take an example from chap. vii. 11, "Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see whether the vine hath budded, and its blossom be open, and the pomegranates be in flower; there will I give thee my love." The "vineyard" represents the synagogues: "grapes" and "pomegranates" stand for Mishna and Gemara. "There I will give thee my love" means, "There I will show thee (in the synagogue schools) children who revere Thee by studying the Law." Or again, "honey and milk are under thy tongue" (iv. 11) means, "words of wisdom are in thy mouth"; viii. 13 refers to scholars studying in the garden; while feeding "among the lilies" should by a proper reading be "among the learned men." Yet there were evidently people in the days when the Talmud was being com-

piled who found in such verses as chap. ii. 10, "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; the fig-tree ripeneth her green figs, and the vines are in blossom. They give forth their fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away," only a pastoral or love song containing an unsurpassed description of the joy of spring and the wonder and beauty of the unfolding buds; for we are warned against turning the verses into a song, and the Law (which term it must be remembered includes the whole of sacred and profane knowledge) is represented as saying to God that people are turning her into a fiddle on which frivolous people play, and such persons are even included among those who will have no share in the world to come.

Medical prescriptions are given us without number; occasionally even cosmetics

are recommended, the Rabbi quaintly telling us that he had the recipe from his mother. Most of the prescriptions bear a strong resemblance to the medicines recommended in the Middle Ages. On the whole, they are perhaps a little less repulsive. They consist largely in charms, and in doing things at stated intervals. For the bite of a dog an elaborate cure is provided which requires a year for its completion, and includes the writing of a charm on the skin of a male hyæna. Fish is recommended as good for indigestion, but bad for weak eyes. Here is a cure for ague: Wait at a cross-road till you see an ant carrying a load; put the ant and its load into a brass tube, seal it up, and say, "O ant, my load be upon thee, and thy load be upon me." One of the remedies for syncope is less pleasant: Shave the patient's head, place him in water up to his neck, cut up a black hen lengthwise and apply the pieces to the scalp. One more: For a certain obscure disease of the brain pour three hundred bowls of a

particular concoction over the patient's head, and having thus softened the skull, remove the bones with a surgeon's knife, whereupon the insect which is the cause of the disease will be discovered. The insect must be removed with a pair of tongs, but first the operator must be careful to put myrtle leaves under its feet, as otherwise on being seized it will bury its nails in the membrane of the brain.

Concerning the rules of polite behaviour, we are taught that we should not suck our fingers at table, or bite food and put it back in the dish; nor should we yawn in company, or spit before our neighbours "even in the bath-room." A cup of wine should be taken in two draughts: to drink it all down at once is gluttonous; to sip it three or four times is affected. Frequently these rules of etiquette are illustrated by little stories. We should never give anything to the son or servant of our host without his permission. Once, in a year of famine, a man invited three guests home, and was just able to offer them one egg each. As

each took his egg he saw the host's son standing before him looking longingly at the food, so that each felt constrained to give up his egg to the small boy. A few moments later the host, returning to the room, found his son with one in his mouth and one in each hand. In his indignation he struck him an unlucky blow which resulted in instant death. The boy's mother, who was seated on the roof, seeing what had happened, fell down and perished, and the father, horrified at this double calamity, committed suicide. Thus three deaths resulted from the acts of the guests.

Another longer story is told us which illustrates the difference between false politeness and truly good breeding. We should always do as the master of the house asks us, unless it be something forbidden by the Law. Once some guests came to a Rabbi's house, and were offered the usual hospitality. At first they swore by the Law they would eat nothing, but afterwards, being pressed, they made a

good meal. At the end of their visit, when they rose to go, their host fell upon them and gave them each forty lashes. When they reported the way they had been treated, great resentment was excited. "Who will go and tell this man of our indignation?" said the Rabbis. At length one of their number declared that he would go and investigate. Calling at the Rabbi's house, he stated that he was in need of hospitality. At once he was welcomed, and his host not only gave him food and shelter, but sat up with him till late at night studying the Law. In the morning he asked for a bath. "Do as you please," replied his host. "Now I shall be beaten," he thought; but his host still received him with an agreeable face, and on his return gave him breakfast. "Who will accompany me on the way?" he asked. "I, myself," was the answer, and his host started from the house with him. The visitor was now beginning to grow more and more uncomfortable. What shall I tell the Rabbis on my return, he

thought. At last, boldly bringing matters to a head, he turned to his host and said: "Rabbi, tell me why it is you have received me in this way, yet treated my predecessors as you did?" "You are my master," he replied; "you are a great sage, and of course your manners are refined: the others who came to me disregarded their vow, first swearing by the Law that they would not eat, and then eating. I have always heard that one who swears falsely by the Law should be punished with forty stripes, and that is why I acted as I did." "And I wish," replied the guest, "that you had given each forty for himself and forty more for the people who sent me here to investigate."

On another occasion a Rabbi, seeing his host put a piece of bread under a dish to tilt it up, ate the bread. "Had you no other bread," his host asked, "that you must eat that piece?" "I thought you could burn yourself with lukewarm water," was the reply (*i.e.*, take a slight hint), "but now I see that you cannot even burn

yourself with boiling water." It might be thought hardly consistent with modern politeness to notice the manners of one's host, but the Rabbis were universal instructors, and we are constantly told to be grateful for anything we may be taught, and never resent correction.

We should not wipe the dish with bread and lay the bread on the table, for to do so might "disturb the mind of our neighbour." We should not eat at table before our elders, or ask for food before it is offered us. After emptying our cup (in the case of cold drinks we are allowed four draughts instead of two) we should not set it down empty upon the table, but hold it in our hand till removed. In giving an invitation to dinner we should not say, "Come and dine with me *as I did with you*," as though we wished to make a return (in Jerusalem this injunction was unnecessary, as we are told it was there the established custom for people to invite each other in turn); and evidence of still finer feeling is the rule that we

should not offer either hospitality or a present which we know cannot be accepted. Speaking generally, we should not rejoice among mourners, grieve among those who are rejoicing, or assume different manners from the friends or people among whom we happen to be. We are taught exactly how to proceed in taking a bath. Among other points, in undressing we should take off the left shoe first, but in dressing should put on the right shoe first. We are warned against the following habits among many others: that of constantly taking medicine, of having teeth extracted needlessly, of taking long strides, of teasing a snake, and of making fun of a Persian. Hints are likewise given us upon phrenology; and we learn that a thin beard is a sign of shrewdness, a thick beard denotes stupidity, while he who has a parted beard will be ruled by no man.

Such innumerable discussions and the legends—some of which will be related in the following pages—form but a fringe of the Talmud. The main portion consists

of "law" in the narrower and more technical sense. Here we are at times on more familiar ground, many of the laws bearing a resemblance to rules of English law. We have rules of evidence (admissible and inadmissible evidence), examples almost equivalent to leading cases quoted, the measure of damages in certain cases set out; we hear about the payment of money (or its equivalent) into court; the responsibility for damage done by domestic animals known to have become vicious; and we find a distinction drawn between the liability of gratuitous bailees and of bailees for reward. But all these laws are in reality nothing but interpretations of the Scriptures. For instance, after discussing the liability of the master for damage done by a goring ox, we pass by a natural transition to his liability for damage caused by his negligence in allowing his premises to fall into a dangerous condition through want of repair. Suppose he leaves a dangerous ladder leaning against his house which causes injury to some one who uses it, his liability

depends not on abstract legal principles, but is founded upon divine legislation, being inferred from Deut. xxii. 8 and the law as to making safe the roof of a house. As usual, the law, in all kinds of almost impossible combinations of circumstances, is discussed. The following is one out of examples without number : A cake is being baked upon A's fire ; a dog runs in, snatches away the cake in his mouth and escapes, and droppings of hot coal from the cake set fire to B's barn. Who is answerable for the damage, the owner of the dog or the owner of the fire ? For page after page we follow out the ingenious arguments : some contend that the dog's mouth which held the cake from which the cinders dropped is the property of the owner of the dog ; hence by a fiction the fire must be said to have originated in the property of the owner of the dog, and he alone is answerable. Others say no ; the owner of the (house with the) fire is liable, because he allowed the fire to spread from his property. Others agree with the

second conclusion, but base it upon the ground that the owner of the fire was guilty of negligence in allowing the dog to enter. This at once allows of an objection in his favour, for the dog may have burrowed under the floor, in which case he cannot be held guilty of negligence in allowing the dog to enter. Others compare the fire with an arrow, and say that as when an arrow alights somewhere and causes damage, the one who fired it is liable; so when the embers of the fire alight somewhere and cause damage, the owner of the fire whence the embers started is liable. Others suggest that the owner of the dog and the owner of the fire should each pay half the damage; but the conclusion appears to be that the owner of the fire is liable, though the point is by no means clear.

Interesting human touches are sometimes found in these discussions. May a dealer give children nuts when they come into his shop to induce them to buy from him again? Some authorities were inclined to

say no, on the ground that it was taking an unfair advantage over his fellow tradesman, and depriving him of his livelihood (after the analogy of the law that one man might not deprive a neighbour of his means of livelihood by opening a store of the same character as his neighbour's store in the same alley); but others held that it was only advertisement and fair competition, for if one dealer offered children nuts, might not his rival offer plums?

Different damages are awarded for different kinds of assault. The man who strikes another with his knee is liable to pay him three selas¹; for striking with his foot he must pay five selas; for striking with his fist, thirteen; and lastly, the man who blows in another's ear is liable to pay one sela on account of the disgrace inflicted. This appears to be only a rough-working scale, for we are told that damages should include compensation for injury, pain, expense of healing, loss of time, and disgrace,

¹ Sela, a small coin, probably about the value of 3s. 6d., but of greater purchasing power.

and the last item varies according to the time and circumstances and position of the insulted person. Time is allowed for payment only in the case of damages for insult or disgrace, and we are also told that the only real compensation for an insult is to ask forgiveness.

Sometimes the civil law of the Romans conflicts with the Jewish law. In such cases, of course, the former is not to be respected at the expense of the latter, though where there is no conflict the Roman law is to be obeyed. A notable instance of a conflict is that the Law required the testimony of two witnesses to enable a plaintiff to recover a debt, whereas according to Roman law one was sufficient. Therefore one witness called upon by the Roman court to give evidence was not allowed by the Rabbis to speak what he knew, for if his unsupported evidence secured a verdict he would be indirectly committing a breach of the Law.

Many classes of persons are not allowed to appear as witnesses at all. These in-

clude near relatives (the degree of nearness necessary to disqualify is carefully worked out), intimate friends (including the groomsman), pronounced enemies (a witness who has not been on speaking terms with one of the parties for three days is regarded as an "enemy," and disqualified), habitual gamblers (because they "are not concerned with the welfare of the world"), notoriously wicked people, and some other classes. Women may give evidence in civil but not in criminal cases. The result of a decision is to be announced; but if there should be a minority of judges who disagree, these may not give a separate dissenting judgment. All these rules are supported on texts, the last depending on Levit. xix. 16 ("Thou shalt not go up and down as a talebearer among thy people") and Prov. xi. 13 ("He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets").

The disqualification of interested persons as witnesses is one of many excellent rules by which the Rabbis sought to promote purity of justice. It has been mentioned

that a judge should receive no present from any man: all things were to be avoided which might unconsciously warp his judgment, such as a personal introduction to one of the parties. He was not allowed to hear the case of one side in the absence of the other (founded on Deut. i. 16, 17): both litigants were to plead at equal length, and be treated in all respects alike; both might be asked to be seated, but not one only. The judge was to be deliberate in giving his decision, and avoid haste or anger. One case is recorded of a judge who refused to sit when a hot wind was blowing, because he knew it would make him irritable and impair his judicial calmness. Mediation might be advised before a case had been heard, or even afterwards, if the judge had not yet come to a decision; but if the judge had once decided in his mind how the law ought to be applied, he was no longer allowed to advise mediation. So if one of the parties happened to be a powerful influential person, and the other a poor man, the judge might in the first

instance refuse to act as judge between the parties ; but having once heard the evidence and come to a conclusion, he was no longer allowed to withhold his decision. The rule has already been mentioned that a judge was forbidden through any perverse sense of justice to try to wrest the law in favour of the poor against the rich. It was also recommended that a judge should not be too old, lest his judgment might be enfeebled ; or too young, lest he might be hasty ; and that he should be a married man with children, that his heart might be filled with sympathy. The following is a quaint example of the care taken to prevent any conflict between duty and inclination. We are told that in the periodic settlements of the Jewish Calendar a high priest was not allowed to take any part in the discussion with regard to introducing a leap year, the reason given being that on the Day of Atonement (which falls about mid-autumn) he is required to dip five times under cold water, and by introducing a leap year (which in the

Hebrew Calendar is a whole month and not merely a day longer than other years) he would be making that Day of Atonement a month later, when running water is so much colder, and consequently his interest would be against adding the leap year. It may be well imagined that few things were overlooked by a foresight which could provide against such temptations as this. We may notice, among the many excellent qualifications for a judge, a knowledge of witchcraft was required, which, though it may seem rather a grotesque qualification to-day, was obviously indispensable in ancient times.

Turning to criminal law, we find still more elaborate precautions taken to prevent the possibility of an unjust sentence. In civil cases the smallest court consisted of three judges, but in criminal cases, of twenty-three. A bare majority sufficed to acquit the prisoner, but a majority of two to one was required to convict. A judge who had decided to convict was allowed to change his mind and acquit,

but a judge who had decided to acquit might not change his mind; and finally, to prevent bias, the defence of the prisoner was to be heard before his accusation. As usual, these rules were all extracted out of Scriptural texts. Here is a typical instance. The twenty-three judges sat in a semicircle, and if one wished to leave he must see that his place was taken. Whence do we deduce this? Of all places in the world, from the Song of Solomon: "Thy body is like a field of wheat fenced about with lilies." The field of wheat, from which all derive benefit, represents the twenty-three judges, who confer benefits on all, and whom all desire to see and hear; and as a field of wheat is so precious that we may not even break through a fence of lilies to injure it, so however easy it may seem to depart, no member of the twenty-three is allowed to leave without his place being taken. In these words a witness was warned before giving evidence: "Perhaps your testimony is based only on a supposition, or on hearsay, or that of another

witness, or you had it from a trustworthy man; or perhaps you are not aware that finally we will investigate the matter by examination. . . . In civil cases one may repay the money damage and he is atoned; but in criminal cases the blood of the person executed, and of his descendants to the end of all generations, clings to the one who caused his execution. So do we read in the case of Cain, who slew his brother: 'The voice of the bloods [in the Hebrew Scripture the plural form is used] of thy brother are crying to me from the ground.' It does not read 'blood' but 'bloods,' which means his blood and the blood of his descendants.¹ . . . Man was created singly to teach that he who destroys one soul of a human being the Scripture considers him as if he should destroy a whole world, and him who saves one soul in Israel the Scripture considers him as if he should save a whole world. . . ." A special in-

¹ The Targum Onkelos, referring to Cain's murder, speaks of the voice of the blood of generations which were to come from Cain complaining before God.

stance is given of the care which a witness is required to take. If he sees A and B run into a ruin, and entering a moment later finds B just dead and A standing over him with a blood-stained sword, he may not say he saw A kill B. It has already been mentioned that two witnesses were required. In the case of blasphemy (for which the punishment was death by stoning) the proceedings were conducted pseudonymously. The witness declared "so and so was said of Jose," the word "Jose" standing for the Sacred Name, which also had four letters. No blasphemy had been committed unless the name of God had actually been mentioned. When all had left the court except the witnesses, the eldest witness was asked to state exactly what the accused had really said, and "the judges then arise and rend their garments, and they are not to be mended." The other witnesses merely say, "I heard the same."

Finally, let us suppose that the evidence proved overwhelming and the prisoner was

condemned to death. The procession left the court, but at the gate of the court there remained a man with a flag just in sight of a horseman. If at the last moment any one appeared at the court and stated that he had something to say in defence of the prisoner, the flag was raised as a sign to the horseman, who galloped forward to stop the procession and bring the criminal back. Even the criminal himself might plead some new defence, and if he had something serious to say, be brought back four or five times. Before him there marched a herald proclaiming his crime, his punishment, the names of his witnesses, and calling for any one to come forward who might have anything to say in defence. A characteristic question is raised: Suppose the prisoner declares, "I have something to say in defence" and suddenly becomes dumb. Is he to be executed? The point remains undecided. Before execution, in accordance with Prov. xxxi. 6 ("Give strong drink unto him that is ready to perish,

and wine unto the bitter in soul”), he is given wine with a grain of frankincense to stupefy him. This wine was prepared by the ladies of Jerusalem as a pious act. The judges themselves were not allowed to taste wine on the day of execution. At the last moment the prisoner is asked to confess, or at least say (as Achan said to Joshua), “My death shall atone for my sins.”

The various modes of execution are described in detail—stoning, strangling, beheading, &c. The most detestable of all, we are told, is to be beheaded with a butcher’s hatchet. From Job xxxviii. 15 (“From the wicked their light is withholden, and the high arm is broken”) we gather that a man who is accustomed to raise his hand threateningly may have it cut off; and the name is recorded of a judge who used to act upon this inference. From the rule, “Love thy neighbour as thyself,” we deduce that people are to be decently clad at execution, for none would like such a disgrace as to be publicly stripped first!

After the loss of independence in Roman times the courts which condemned to death no longer sat, but the belief lingered that appropriate punishments were sent—*e.g.*, that a man who deserved death by stoning would fall from a house.

Besides the civil and criminal law, whole volumes are taken up with purely ecclesiastical law, developments of Scriptural injunctions, such as the law against usury, the law of the Sabbath already referred to, and the law of all the other festivals.

But even the purely legal portions of the Talmud are constantly broken by the remarkable digressions which give the work such a unique character, and make the bewildered student ask whether he is being laughed at by some mocking voice which is parodying the noble narrative, or whether beneath these seeming absurdities there lies some great esoteric doctrine.

In these digressions the Rabbis sometimes show an almost Aristotelian love of analysing, classifying, and pigeon-holing.

There are four kinds of pupils: quick to learn and quick to forget, slow to learn and slow to forget, quick to learn and slow to forget, and slow to learn and quick to forget. Elsewhere four kinds of pupils are compared with a funnel, which lets water run straight through; a sponge, which mops up good and bad liquid, and retains all alike; a sieve, which sifts the good from the bad; and a strainer, which strains the lees and passes the good wine. So there are four kinds of views held by men concerning property. One says, "That which belongs to me shall continue to be mine, and thou shalt keep thine own"; he is a neutral character. (Some, however, maintain that he is a wicked man, because he means "none shall benefit from me, and I want no favours from any one,"—which is a churlish attitude.) The second says, "Mine is thine and thine is mine"; he is an ignorant man. The third says, "Mine is thine and thine is thine"; he is magnanimous. While the fourth, who says, "Thine is mine and mine is mine," is a

wicked man. Again, there are four kinds of sons, and so forth.

Other things are measured by sevens. For example, there are seven kinds of hypocrites. In the curious enumeration we may notice (1) the hypocrite who walks on tiptoe so that he strikes his feet against the stones, in order to show his meekness and attract attention; (2) the hypocrite who shows himself walking with his eyes shut (in order not to look upon women), and strikes his head against a wall; and (3) the hypocrite who says, "What is my duty and I will do it" (meaning thereby that he has done every good thing, and is asking what there is left for him to do). Hypocrites constantly come in for denunciation, as also do slanderers; and with characteristic insight the Rabbis warn against indiscriminate praise, which, by raising a prejudice against the person praised, may be an indirect means of slander.

Other things, again, are measured by tens. For instance, there were ten plagues on the

Egyptians, ten temptations of Abraham, ten crimes in the Wilderness. Or, again, we read that ten measures of learning came down on earth, of which nine went to Israel and one to the rest of the world; ten measures of riches, of which nine went to Rome and one to the rest of the world; ten of witchcraft, of which nine went to Egypt, and so on; and in particular we may notice nine measures of sleep to servants, and nine of talk to women. Other things, again, go by sixties (either one of the many traces of Babylonian influence,¹ or because the number sixty is used, like the Latin *sexcenti*, to express vaguely a large number). Ethiopia is sixty times as large as Egypt, the earth sixty times as large as Ethiopia, Eden sixty times as large as the world, and Gehenna sixty times as large as Eden. Or, again, manna is sixty times sweeter than honey, death sixty times stronger than sleep, and prophecy sixty times stronger than dreams.

¹ Sixty was the unit of the Babylonian mathematical system.

Sometimes a passage begins with injunctions and ends in reflections, occasionally even in platitudes. At five years of age a child should study the Scriptures, at ten the Mishna, at thirteen should fulfil the commandments, at fifteen should study Gemara as well as Mishna, at eighteen should marry, at twenty earn a livelihood (his father was expected to support him for two years after marriage), at thirty he reaches his full strength, at forty his full understanding, at fifty he is entitled to give counsel, at sixty he arrives at old age, at seventy has a hoary head, at eighty he has proved himself to possess special strength (a reference to the Psalm), at ninety he bends beneath the weight of his years, and at a hundred is as good as dead and forgotten by the world.

Yet the classifications can hardly be called scientific, many points being left obscure: as children on every possible occasion love to "make up a list," so in the childhood of the civilised world these

grave Rabbis, with quaint naïveté, loved to make up lists.

Some misfortunes see and are seen—*e.g.*, a robber or a wild beast; some are seen but do not see—*e.g.*, an arrow or spear; some see, but are not seen—*e.g.*, an evil spirit; while some neither see nor are seen—*e.g.*, a stomach trouble. Thus, again, sleep, work, walking, hot water, bleeding, are among the things which are good in moderation and bad in excess. Such observations as these could be multiplied indefinitely. Many of them are found in the Gemara (*i.e.*, the later part of the Talmud—the completion, or explanation and comment), and appear as corollaries to the most magnificent moral precepts. The most fantastic resemblances are eagerly seized upon. Sarah died at 127, and Esther ruled over 127 provinces; or some number is found to correspond with the number of bones in the human body. Proverbs, maxims, little sentences which “Rabbi So-and-so used to say,” are stored up with loving care.

Nothing is too trivial for careful consideration. The lion is the king of wild beasts, the eagle the king of birds, and the ox the king of domestic animals. Nor is exact information ever wanting upon any matter, human or divine. If we wish to learn the names of the individuals who will never enter Heaven, they are given us. They include three kings—Jeroboam, Ahab, and Manasseh; and four commoners—Balaam, Doeg, Ahitophel, and Gehazi. Some of the particular crimes of Manasseh will be told later; but it may be thought a little hard that Balaam, who blessed Israel instead of cursing, and Gehazi, who had such punishment in this world, should be included. If we wish to know how often the hair should be cut, we learn that a king's should be cut every day, a high priest's once a-week, while a commoner should have his hair cut once every thirty days. The reasons are given, and the name is preserved of a famous barber who could cut hair as well as the barbers who used to cut the hair of the high priests

in more ancient days. We may in like manner find discussions on the relative advantages of different trades, and the relative merits of glass vessels and earthenware vessels. Natural philosophy is not neglected. The whole sky revolves round the world, carrying with it the sun, so that a basket placed where sky and earth meet will be carried round by the revolving heavens, and placed in the same spot at the end of twenty-four hours (as actually occurred on one occasion, related elsewhere). Again, the theory of some Gentile sage that the sun moves back at night under the earth is favourably commented upon; and as evidence in support of it, the fact is noticed that the springs are warmer by night. In reading such theories one must constantly regret that the travels of Herodotus did not take him a little farther from home, and result in so unique a record as he could have given of his chats with the Rabbis of the day and his impressions of the people.

Some of the fables contain obvious

maxims. A man complains to a Rabbi of his wife's ugliness; the Rabbi prays for her to become beautiful, and she is transformed. But a little later the husband comes again and complains of her vanity, whereupon the Rabbi prays for her to be as she was before, and his prayer is granted. So a man complains to the Rabbi that his wife's rich relations worry him; the Rabbi prays for them to become poor, and they lose their money. But a little later the man returns and complains that his wife's relations are making him support them, whereupon the Rabbi prays that they may be rich again, and his prayer is granted.

The extraordinary tenderness we are always taught to show towards other people's feelings has already been mentioned. It is a theme to which the Rabbis are constantly returning. The man who causes his neighbour to blush in public will have no share in the world to come. "Better not have given at all than as you did, putting the recipient to shame," is the re-

proof of a Rabbi to one who had given charity in public; while charity given in secret makes the giver "greater than Moses." It is not only in giving charity but in all the relations of life that this extreme delicacy is to be observed. No one is ever to be humiliated; and to such a length is this principle carried, that the benefactor is almost expected to appear ashamed to meet the one on whom he has conferred the favour. We have seen that a creditor must even avoid the presence of his debtor. Once a wicked contractor and a great and good man were being buried on the same day. In the tumult the coffins became changed, and the wicked contractor was buried with honour while the good man's grave was neglected. A disciple of the good man saw what had happened and protested, but he was disregarded. His master's spirit, however, appeared to him in a dream, and said to him, "Once I saw a scholar disgraced and did not protest; once the wicked contractor prepared a feast for the governor, and the governor

not coming, gave it to the poor." Hence the change of coffins. Charity properly conferred is one of the highest of virtues. But if the poor man receives, he also gives : if the one gains material comfort, the other gains the opportunity of doing a good deed and being helped to Heaven. One curious story is told of charity,—not helping to Heaven, but delivering from death in a very literal sense. A Rabbi saw a man go down in a ship, and shortly afterwards appeared before the court to testify that his wife was a widow, and free to marry again. Suddenly the dead man himself appeared in the court (such miracles in ancient days aroused interest, and even surprise, but never incredulity). "What!" exclaimed the Rabbi, "did you not go down with the ship?" "Yes," said the man. "And who saved you?" "The waves. As I was sinking I seemed to hear them say to each other, 'This man has done deeds of charity all his life,' and they cast me ashore."

There is a story of one man who, directly he heard of any one in need of charity,

would give away everything he possessed, till at length collectors for charitable purposes felt it their duty to avoid him. One day this man set out to buy something for his daughter on the occasion of her wedding. On the way he met some men who were collecting contributions to form a wedding portion for orphans. The collectors seeing him, and knowing he would try to ruin himself through generosity, ran away; but he overtook them, and, learning the purpose for which they were collecting, insisted on their accepting all he possessed except one small coin. With this coin he purchased a few grains of wheat as a wedding-present for his own daughter, and returning home, put them into the store-house. In the morning these few grains had filled the whole store-house, and were forcing their way out through the cracks of the doors. "Come and see," cried his daughter to her betrothed, who, looking upon the miracle, declared that the poor should share the gift equally with themselves.

A third story may be given, which may not be without its lesson even for modern benefactors of the poor. A poor man came before a Rabbi asking for relief. "Have you read the Scriptures?" asked the Rabbi. "No." "Have you studied Mishna, or anything else?" "No." "Then why should I feed you?" "Even so," said the poor man, "give me food even as you might cast food to your dog or your raven." The Rabbi fed him, but afterwards began to regret his charity and wonder whether he had done a good action, till one of his pupils suggested that perhaps this poor man was a scholar who had denied his study because he would not gain any worldly advantage through acts of piety. Inquiry proved that this theory was correct. "Henceforth," said the Rabbi, "my barns shall be open to every one, without any distinction." A still finer example of the true spirit of charity has been selected by Mr Rodkinson in the Preface to his translation of the Talmud. "Mar Ugba used to support a poor man by sending

him on the eve of each Day of Atonement 400 zuz. When the Rabbi's son took the money on one occasion, he heard the poor man's wife say, 'Which wine shall I put on the table? which perfume shall I sprinkle around the room?' The son, on hearing these remarks, returned with the money to his father, and told him of what he had heard. Said Mar Ugba: 'Was the poor man raised so daintily that he requires such luxuries? Go back to him and give him double the sum.'"

It was this same Mar Ugba who used to put money under a poor man's door. One day the poor man concealed himself in order to learn who was his benefactor, and on discovering it was Mar Ugba, went after him to thank him. Mar Ugba, however, ran away to avoid causing him shame; faster went his pursuer, faster and faster fled Mar Ugba, till at length he only just saved himself from tumbling into a seething oven.

Nor do the Rabbis fail to preach charity

in the broader sense of the word. "Pass not judgment upon thy neighbour till thou hast put thyself in his place" has been quoted. On two or three occasions a Rabbi, having put himself into a dubious situation, asks his pupil to explain his master's actions. The pupil gives an explanation which puts an innocent interpretation upon the Rabbi's conduct rather than the obvious and scandalous interpretation. "You are right," says the Rabbi, "and as you have judged me charitably, so may God judge you with charity." Yet there are constant warnings against doing things which, though innocent in themselves, may be misinterpreted. After reading such ideals of human conduct, we feel a little shock of surprise at reading of the altogether supra-human morality practised by Job. When he says (Job xxxi. 1), "I made a covenant with mine eyes; how then should I look upon a maid?" he means, If I look at a maiden to-day and admire her, to-morrow she may marry some one else, and then I

shall have committed the sin of admiring a married woman. Though the *giving* of charity is among the highest virtues, no man is to make his studies an excuse for *living* upon charity. No work is degrading, or any disqualification for the highest honours. "Combine knowledge of a trade with the study of the Law;" "Rather flay a carcase in the market than apply for charity;" "The man who has not taught his son a trade has taught him to be a robber," are among the teachings of the Talmud.

It is impossible to relate here the teachings regarding geography, astronomy, natural history, ethnology, and every other branch of human or superhuman knowledge contained in this wonderful book; but this brief introduction cannot be concluded without some reference to the position of women. The modern European who holds that a high ideal of womanhood is one of the surest tests of civilisation, and that a nation which knows no respect for its women can know neither self-respect

nor any true nobility, forgetful of the main source of his own code of ethics and morality, often lavishes a wealth of ignorance and prejudice upon the supposed degraded position assigned to women in Rabbinic literature. The reader who opens the Talmud merely for the purpose of confirming previously formed theories may easily find in such a mass of material statements which, separated from their context, appear to support any view he has formed (in reading contradictory statements it must be remembered that there is not one author of the Talmud, but a vast number, and each tries to reconcile the opinions of those who have gone before him): he may quote from Rabbi Eliezer, a disappointed, embittered man (see Jewish Encyclopædia), who had perhaps never known a noble woman, that instructing a woman in the Law is equal to teaching blasphemy; or from Rabbi Jose that a man should refrain from too much talk with women, and that this applies to his own wife, or he will forsake the study of

the Law and ultimately inherit Gehenna. Should his zeal make him more dishonest, he may quote, as a supposed proof of the contempt in which women were held, that he who follows his wife's advice goes to Gehenna, and omit the following words, which show that this refers to Ahab and Jezebel and wives who persuade their husbands to worship idols. It is difficult to suppose that any reader who studies the Talmud with a view to forming his conclusions from the statements in it, rather than with a view to making the statements fit his theories, can help being impressed by the high place of honour given to innumerable women. That it is women who are held up to admiration rather than womanhood is merely characteristic of a work which seldom deals for long with abstract conceptions, but rapidly falls back upon particular instances, or at least upon types. We are told many times of the honour a man should pay to his wife, — that he should love her as himself, but honour

her more than himself; that through women alone blessings come to a house; that in applications for charity, where relief cannot be granted to all, men should cheerfully relinquish their claims to women; that women are more sensitive than men, and men should beware of unkindness to them, "for God counts their tears," and many other passages to the same effect, including the quaint proverb, which we find quoted with approval and gravely considered in all its bearings by the Rabbis as if some deep moral maxim, "If thy wife be little, bend down and whisper in her ear," or as some translate it, "bend down to listen to her advice." Like other maxims, they are in nearly every case founded upon divine authority curiously extracted from Scriptural texts. Whence may we deduce that the altar sheds tears when a man divorces his first wife? From Mal. ii. 13 ("Judah hath married the daughter of a strange god; . . . ye cover the altar of the Lord with tears"); again from Ezek. xxiv. 16, 18 ("I take away

from thee the desire of thine eyes at a stroke; . . . so I spake unto the people in the morning, and at even my wife died") we learn that if a wife dies before her husband, it is as if the Temple were destroyed in his days; from Job xvi. 6 it is inferred that the world is dark for him whose wife dies, and the next verse proves that his steps are shortened and his advice useless; while Isa. liv. 6 proves that all can be exchanged but the wife of one's youth. Monogamy was the universal rule.¹ The father who marries his daughter to an old man, and the father who keeps his daughter at home all her youth to do the housework, are alike guilty of a crime: none is so poor as the latter, says one Rabbi.

At the same time, it must be admitted that there is no trace in the Talmud of that attitude towards women taught by medieval European chivalry. The intense sanity of the Rabbis knows nothing of

¹ See for proof Abraham's 'Jewish Life in the Middle Ages,' chap. vii.

glorious follies or extravagant romanticism. There is no "revolt against the tyranny of facts"; the Rabbi who thanks God "who has not made him a woman" recognises that since the days of Eve the lot of woman has been less enviable than that of man. Such an idea as that of a Rabbi setting out to find and rescue a captive princess, risking his life for a woman's whim, proclaiming her the most beautiful on earth and challenging all who denied it to fight him, is not only grotesque but untrue. Let him hear of some definite captive, and he will sell his possessions, set out on foot to buy her release, bring her back, showing her as much honour and respect as any knight-errant,—*and return to study*. The perfect woman is a help and not a hindrance to the study of the Law. A woman who would lead men to neglect the Law is to be shunned. It is with a woman of this kind that a man should avoid too much gossip, even if she be his own wife, "lest he forsake the study of the Law." Even avoid paying too many

visits to the husband of such a woman, adds a Rabbi, in the usual anxiety to set "fences" round the Law.

The husband of a beautiful woman has his days doubled. The husband of a bad wife may take comfort too, for a bad wife, a bad digestion, and a life of constant worry from creditors are among the misfortunes which save from Gehenna (the sufferer enduring Gehenna in this world). The shrew also was clearly not unknown. There is one amusing story told of the indignation of a wife who, after carefully nursing her husband through a chronic illness, suddenly discovered that his complaint was self-inflicted with a view to piety (almost the only example of asceticism being held up to admiration). Reproaching him with having wasted other people's money as well as his own, she declared she would no longer live with him. Going to a neighbouring house, she still kept a watch upon him, and one day her daughter came and told her that he had come into possession of a large sum of

money, whereupon she appears to have returned to him.

The social freedom enjoyed by women must have been great, and contrasts favourably with the freedom allowed to women in Athens when Attic civilisation was at its height. We hear of them paying calls and receiving visitors, and, moreover, constantly putting in their word when the Law is being discussed, and sometimes explaining obscure points. Yet women, like men, are not allowed to be idle. Baking, washing, and cooking are among the duties of a wife; but if she bring her husband slaves she is exempt from certain duties. Three slaves exempt her from all duties, and four allow her to lounge in an armchair; but in any case she must at least do work in wool, for absolute idleness leads to insanity, says one Rabbi, to infidelity says another.

The story of the most famous of all the Talmudic Rabbis well illustrates this attitude towards women, as well as the Rabbis' almost Chinese love of learning. The

daughter of a wealthy landowner fell in love with her father's shepherd boy, and consented to be betrothed to him on condition that he would—not achieve some exploit, but—study the Law. The marriage took place; but her father drove her husband away, and refused to help his daughter unless she would leave him. So poor did they become that on one occasion she sold her hair to enable him to continue his study, and their only furniture was a straw bed. One day a poor man called to beg some straw for his sick wife, and the shepherd and future Rabbi gave him half the straw bed, remarking to his wife, with the cheerfulness which never forsook him, “You see there are some poorer than we.” (Fortunately the poor man was the prophet Elijah—who still walks the earth—come to test him. Such things happened in those days!) At length, at his wife's request, he left her for twelve years to continue his studies, and returned at the end of that time a famous man with twelve thousand followers. Before he crossed the threshold

of his house he heard an altercation, and another woman pouring scorn upon his wife, and her husband who had left her for twelve years to study. "And I could gladly endure his staying away another twelve years to study," he heard his wife answer, whereupon he at once left her for another twelve years, returning at the end of that time yet more famous, and with twenty-four thousand followers. As a poorly clad woman came forward to embrace him, some of his followers would have pushed her away, but he stopped them, saying, "What am I, and what are we? The thanks are due to this noble woman." A reconciliation with his father-in-law brings the story to its expected close; but there may be some who will learn with a little glow of pleasure that in after years, when his wife was inclined to find relaxation in some harmless vanities after all her trials, her husband was both great enough to understand and human enough to indulge them. Her name appears unexpectedly in the Talmud in one of the discussions

upon putting people to shame : all vulgar ostentation was particularly abhorred, and this particular Rabbi's wife did not escape criticism for wearing somewhat too elaborate gold ornaments, which "put people to shame." But her husband bade them let her alone, saying, "She has undergone much privation for the sake of my study."

The Talmud teaches neither asceticism nor pessimism. The duty of obeying the Law is a gift and privilege, and to be accepted with joy. Cheerfulness, we are in fact told, is one of the forty-eight qualifications for the study of the Law ; the rest include reverence, meekness, and moderation in business, in intercourse with the world, in pleasure, in sleep, in conversation, and in laughter. The divine presence, we are elsewhere told in a comment on Ecclesiastes, comes neither through sadness, nor laziness, nor levity, but by rejoicing in a good deed. Eat and drink as you desire ; be cheerful under difficulties ; be agreeable in society ; practise some useful trade ; pray in a spirit of joy,—thus we

are taught again and again by precept and example. Optimism is always the prevailing note. If now and again in some bitter moment a Rabbi is tempted to say, like Solomon, "Vanity of vanities," or ask a poor human skull, "Where be your gibes?" (the famous churchyard scene in "Hamlet" is strikingly recalled in one of the adventures recorded as having befallen Alexander of Macedon) he is only thinking of the vanity of this life as compared with the next. If now and then he speaks of the world as a caravanserai, he is thinking not of the passing of "Sultan after Sultan with his pomp," but of the joyful end of the journey which all will reach; and so contrary to the general tendency of Rabbinic writing is Ecclesiastes, that "What profit hath man of all his labour under the sun?" is interpreted not as the cry of one who has seen the *lacrimæ rerum*, but as meaning, "There is profit for it all *beyond* the sun."

If some have misinterpreted the Talmud through prejudice, others have done the

work an equally ill service by robbing it of its unique individuality, and drawing a veil over everything which may appear at first sight grotesque or startling. They belong to the class of persons who write metrical versions of the Psalms and expurgated editions of Shakespeare. One example will suffice. An atheist, in an argument with a Rabbi, once said, "Your God is a thief, for according to your own Scriptures He took a rib from Adam during his sleep." The Rabbi's daughter asked leave to answer for her father. "Would you call a man a thief," she asked, "who took away your silver pitcher and replaced a golden one?" "I wish such a thief would come every night," is the answer; whereupon the Rabbi's daughter replies, "So it was when God took Adam's rib and gave him Eve instead." Now up to this point we have what would be described as a "pretty" story, and here the story is usually made to end; but in the Talmud there follows a touch of quaint realism which would never be found in a modern

story. "But why did God take away the rib only when Adam was asleep?" the atheist goes on to ask. For answer the Rabbi's daughter takes a piece of raw meat and places it upon hot ashes to be cooked, and when finally prepared, offers it to the atheist to eat. He shrinks from it, and declares that it looks repulsive. "Even so," says the Rabbi's daughter, "would Eve have appeared repulsive to Adam had he seen the process by which she was made."

The legends of which this volume is mainly composed form, as has been stated, but a tiny portion of the Talmud, through which they are scattered in the most unlikely places. To one who opens the Talmud for the first time they recall, in their irrelevance to the context, the popular tenor song in the pre-Wagner opera. It may be some obscure point of civil law which is illustrated by something once done by Moses or David, and then all at once follows some wonderful story told in the simplest way, as though it were the most

natural thing in the world. "Well can we understand," says Deutsch in his essay on the Talmud, "the distress of mind in a medieval divine, or even in a modern savant, who, bent upon following the most subtle windings of some scientific debate in the Talmudical pages, — geometrical, botanical, financial, or otherwise — as it revolves round the Sabbath journey, the raising of seeds, the computation of tithes and taxes, — feels as it were the ground suddenly give way. The loud voices grow thin, the doors and walls of the school-room vanish before his eyes, and in their place uprises Rome the Great, the *Urbs et Orbis*, and her million-voiced life. Or the blooming vineyards around that other City of Hills, Jerusalem the Golden herself, are seen, and white-clad virgins move dreamily among them . . . *à propos* of some utterly inappropriate legal point."

Yet it has been suggested that a certain system underlies their arrangement. Interwoven throughout the whole fabric of the work, and ever reappearing like some rare

pattern, it has been thought that the Rabbis intended them to arrest the attention of the student when it was on the point of flagging among the driest of the interminable discussions,—just as Demosthenes would on an occasion condescend to tell a fable about a man and his donkey to arrest the attention of his listeners when they were growing weary of his appeals to resist the growing power of the Macedonians. “How do we deduce such and such a rule? From the conduct of some one on such and such an occasion.” We can fancy the droning of the Rabbi’s voice on a drowsy afternoon—when we are suddenly aroused to full consciousness by some tale of wonderful adventure with Elijah returned to earth, or with the king of the demons, a veiled reference to which we have passed a hundred times in the Psalms, or Book of Job, without understanding. In one section we are discussing the law relating to the sale of land; question after question is raised, and each bypath that comes into view is followed

out to its conclusion, till we forget which is the side-issue and which the main theme. Tedious it can hardly be called, with its quaint illustrations and examples drawn from daily life; but it is undoubtedly becoming monotonous and of little profit. All at once we read how some one came to the cave where Abraham was buried, and found his servant Eliezer sitting outside on guard. "What is Abraham doing?" he asked. "He is sleeping within; his head rests in Sarah's lap, and she is watching his face." The stranger asked to enter, whereupon Eliezer went in and waked Abraham, who sent out a message that he might enter, whereupon he went in and saw Abraham and Sarah face to face. Wandering forth again, the stranger found the burial-place of Adam. When he would have gone within, a heavenly voice said, "His form you may see, but not his face." Looking inside, he saw the form of Adam, whose heels resembled each the circumference of the sun. Returning home, he declared that every living woman compared with

Sarah was as an ape compared with a man, and Sarah compared with Eve was as an ape compared with a man, and lastly Eve compared with Adam was as an ape compared with a man.

The theory that these stories are invented to hold the attention of students and never intended to be taken seriously, is merely one of the innumerable theories which modern readers of the Talmud love to invent in order to explain in some plausible way the seeming incongruities in the work.

Whether such explanations are well or ill founded every reader must judge for himself. Sometimes they appear illuminative, at other times more fantastic than the thing explained; but at least persons who explain cannot, like those who suppress, be charged with dishonesty. Another set of exponents find in every curious law or legend a veiled proclamation against Zoroastrianism. The blessing of God, who created good and evil, light and darkness, is a denial of Ahriman and the Principle of Evil; the law forbidding the kindling

of a light on the Sabbath is not a development of the law prohibiting labour on the Sabbath, but is intended to distinguish the Israelites from their neighbours, who kept the sacred fire burning continually; and the story of Abraham at first worshipping the sun is a proof of the folly of fire-worship.

Others, more plausibly, find evidence of scientific knowledge, more particularly of sanitary laws, in all kinds of stories. To take an example of a supposed hidden sanitary law, we learn that the Angel of Death, after he has slain his victim, washes his sword in water, and as we do not know in which particular pitcher he may have dipped the sword, all the water in the late sick man's room should be thrown away. Some, who seek to honour the Rabbis by showing how up-to-date they were, will delight to find in this story an advanced knowledge of the laws of health. There is something superficially attractive about the theory (though it is somewhat weakened when we find fifty similar stories

which could not possibly be explained as sanitary laws); but is it not at least as probable that the ancient Rabbis believed that the angel literally washed his sword (and afterwards danced before the funeral procession on its return) as that they preserved for so many centuries among their own people and pupils a special knowledge of medical science, and employed such elaborate and unnecessary devices as to invent fables for teaching it? In one of the books of the Talmud a conversation is recorded between two Rabbis on board a ship. One awakes and finds the other terrified at a great light he has seen across the sea. This is how he comforts him: "Don't be alarmed; you have probably only seen the Leviathan's eye." Here, perhaps, is a better key to so many Talmudic stories. To the grown children of ancient times the world was still full of wonder and mystery. They were not surprised to hear of beasts which talked, of travellers who had stood where sky and earth meet, of a fish which could wipe

out a town with a blow of its tail; still less to hear that the Angel of Death wiped his blood-stained sword.

Perhaps this blending of the sublime with things which the modern cannot but regard as ridiculous is not more apparent in the Talmud than in the Egyptian Book of the Dead, or the precepts of Zoroaster, or some other ancient writings even of European races. The modern reader who is filled with enthusiasm for the sublime elements not unnaturally tries to explain away the seemingly ridiculous, even if he be reduced to saying that his favourite author must now be parodying some rival school of philosophy. No doubt many apparently meaningless things in the Talmud would be made clear by a little more knowledge of allusions whose meaning has been lost, or even by a little imagination of the conditions of life prevailing at the time they were written: others may fairly be taken to be veiled political allusions,—as when a Rabbi talks of the fate of Edom, meaning his pupils to understand Rome,

or Nebuchadnezzar when he means some Roman Emperor. Still more may be explained as myth, or as allegory, which comes as naturally to the Eastern mind as an aid in explaining the most serious matters as metaphor to the European. But after making all allowance for such interpretations, there remains a large residue which reads so oddly to modern ears that nearly every modern commentator, after exhausting his own theories, talks of the "sea of nonsense," "the wilderness of twaddle," or accuses the writers of the Talmud of deliberate ridiculous trifling. Perhaps the truth is rather that, in addition to their readiness to believe wonderful stories, all the ancients had a different sense of proportion, a different way of looking at things, of explaining things which a modern would take for granted, of taking for granted things which a modern would reject as absurd, of being convinced and seeking to convince others by the most fantastic analogies; and from this tendency there arises in their works a certain quaint-

ness, and in the reader's mind an expectation of finding the most modern thought or ideal followed by the most trivial truism or the wildest deduction. Perhaps, too, it is this very sense of being in touch with people who move somehow on a different though not necessarily lower plane of thought which gives a peculiar charm to so many ancient writings. Whatever interpretation should be put upon these tales, they are a part of the Law, the embodiment of all wisdom, whose study is equivalent to all the virtues.

“Turn it and turn it again, for everything can be found therein. Study it, grow old and gray with it, and never depart from it; for there is no better guide for a moral life than the Law.”

PART II.

EARLY BIBLICAL LEGENDS.

CREATION TO EXODUS.

To go to the beginning, we hear that this world was made out of the ashes of many previous worlds, but this world was the best of them all. The light we possess was given, according to Genesis, on the fourth day, but according to the Talmud there was another light before this, by which men could see from one end of the earth to the other; but seeing that mankind was not good enough to possess such a light, God took it away, and keeps it in Heaven for the righteous in the world to come. A supposed reference to this light is found in Job xxxviii. 15, "And from the wicked their light is withholden." Some add that

this light was shown to Moses on Sinai, and even that it was created for his sake.

The angels, we learn, were from the first hostile to man: two companies were successively destroyed for advising against his creation. Even after his creation they remained passively (and occasionally actively) hostile, only aiding him under compulsion; and it was only in spite of their most vehement opposition, and after many marvellous adventures, that Moses was granted the possession of the Law on Mount Sinai.

Leaving the stories of the creation, we come to Adam and his life in Eden. "Why was only one man created?" some one asks. One answer is, "To prevent people from saying there is more than one God." Another answer is, that if there had been two men created people would have all claimed to be descended from the better of the two, and have looked down upon their neighbours. "If quarrels and bloodshed arise now, how much more if men had been descended from different original parents?" He was made of the

dust of all the earth, and, according to one account, was black, white, and red. Other accounts say he had two faces, and some that he had a tail (in which account some people will perhaps try to find an anticipation of Darwin).

At first, when he saw the sun setting, he lamented, and thought the world was returning to chaos, and death was at hand; but when day returned, he perceived that day and night were in the order of Nature. In the same way, when he first saw the days being shortened he was terrified, till returning spring convinced him that this too was in the order of Nature, and all his fears vanished. The land brought forth without cultivation; trees and flowers and living creatures were all about him: he gave them all names, and for a time lived in happy contemplation of the beautiful world. But at last these things began to weary him; like Alastor, he longed for human sympathy, for a companion with whom he could share his thoughts, and then at length a human wife was given

him. But associated with Eve in rabbinic legends there is another figure, of whom more will be told later, for it is here that we begin to come across stories of the beautiful demon Lilith. Some say she was Adam's first wife, as suggested by Gen. i. 27, which differs from Gen. ii. 18. Of "male and female" in the former, the female was Lilith, whereas Eve was created later. But others say that Adam only lived with Lilith after leaving Paradise. She is the mother of innumerable demons, and some of the legends concerning her are told in Part IV. Wicked, beautiful, terrible, she is for ever lying in wait to kill the descendants of her hated rival Eve. The Talmud itself says little of Lilith, though we hear that during the 130 years following the expulsion from Eden, Adam lived with a demon and became the father of demons. Of the beauty of Eve we hear much: the marriage ceremony took place beneath a "chupah," or covering, made of precious stones (see Ezek. xxviii. 13, "Thou wast in Eden the

garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering"); and the Talmud tells us that as God Himself provided a wife for Adam, so no one should think it derogatory to give a wife to one beneath him.

Of the fall of Adam and Eve many interesting accounts are given. According to the Talmud, the serpent was jealous when he saw Adam reclining in Paradise, fed by the angels with meat and wine, and planned to kill Adam, and then marry Eve and be king of the world. Unfortunately, Adam had exaggerated to Eve, and told her that they were not only forbidden to eat of the tree of knowledge but even to touch it, lest they should die. When Eve repeated this to the serpent, who was tempting her to eat the fruit, the serpent immediately went up to the tree (or pushed Eve against the tree) and shook it till the fruit fell, thus proving that as the tree could be touched without any ill result, so its fruit might be eaten without harm coming. The story is further supplemented in the work of Rabbi Eliezer: in this

account the wicked angel Sammael determined to make use of the serpent to further his ends, because it was the most intelligent of all the beasts. In form it resembled a camel, and Sammael mounted on its back and rode into Eden. He tempted Eve first, because he knew that a woman could be more easily influenced than a man. "God has only forbidden you to eat out of jealousy," he said; "for on the day you eat you too will be able to make and destroy worlds, to kill and to bring to life." Having approached the tree (which bade him depart), he turned to Eve and told her to do likewise. Having approached it, Eve saw the Angel of Death standing near, and said to herself, "Perhaps now I am going to die, and God will give Adam another wife: I will give Adam of the fruit, and then if we die, we shall die together, but if we live, shall live together." Adam ate, and "his eyes were opened." The punishments were: for Sammael, to be cast from Heaven; for Adam and Eve, each nine penalties throughout

life, and death at the end; and for the serpent, to lose his legs and become the meanest of beasts, and shed his skin at intervals with great pain. It is said that a cry is uttered when the serpent sheds its skin which passes from one end of the earth to the other, but it is inaudible to human ears: a similar cry is uttered when a branch is cut from a fruit-bearing tree, and when a man divorces his wife. According to a passage in the Talmud, such a cry used to be made when the soul left the body, but owing to the prayers of the Rabbis, such a cry is now no longer uttered by the departing soul.

Eve is compared with a wife whose husband, on leaving home, has placed her in charge of everything, saying, "Do not touch this one barrel." She opens the one barrel, and is bitten by a scorpion. But for the cursing of the serpent, we are told, and the enmity thus established between it and mankind, it would have been the most useful of domestic animals—a servant and camel in one.

With these accounts it is interesting to compare the story given in the Book of Adam and Eve, which, though written probably after the completion of the Talmud, and, moreover, not a rabbinical work at all, is quite Oriental in its imagery and its naïveté, and contains many allusions to things mentioned in the Talmud. Here we read that it was Satan hidden inside the serpent who persuaded Eve to disobey. The serpent had alone of all the animals refused to make friends with Adam, and Satan found it a ready instrument to assist him. After the Fall, Adam was not allowed to dwell south of the garden, lest the north wind, bringing him the scent of the delicious trees of Eden, should afford him consolation; nor was he allowed to dwell on the north, for on the north side was "a sea of water, clear and pure to the taste like unto nothing else; so that through the clearness thereof one may look into the depths of the earth. And when a man washes himself in it, he becomes clean of the cleanness thereof and

white of its whiteness, even if he were black ;”¹ and dwelling on the north side, Adam and Eve might have bathed in the water and been cleansed from their sins. On the east they could not dwell, for Eden itself is placed on the eastern border of the world, “beyond which, toward the rising sun, one finds nothing but water that encompasses the whole world and reaches to the borders of Heaven.”¹ (This belief, shared by the ancient Greeks, of the ocean surrounding the world, is also to be found in the Talmud.) Therefore Adam and Eve were placed on the west of Eden. One day, passing by the western gate of Eden, by which Satan had entered while they had been yet within, Adam and Eve saw the serpent sorrowfully licking dust and wriggling on the ground, being now degraded from the most exalted to the meanest of beasts. When it saw them it rose on its tail, its eyes full of fury, and flung itself at Eve. Adam having no weapon handy, caught it by the tail, whereupon

¹ Malan's translation.

it turned round and reproached Adam bitterly as being the cause of its sorrows, and in the struggle overthrew Adam as well as Eve, and would have crushed them, but that an angel dragged it away and rescued them. Then, for a punishment, a new curse was pronounced upon it; already it had been deprived of its legs, and now its speech was also taken from it.

All the stories establish some connection between the serpent and wicked angel. One poetic legend represents Satan as the once radiant angel of light who had despised man and been punished by loss of his brightness. Determined on revenge, he entered Eden and tried to assume again his own glorious form, but could only gather round him enough brightness to make the shimmering skin of a serpent, in which guise he approached Eve. The Slavonic Book of Enoch of the second or third century A.D. also contains a similar story of Satan having planned a rival kingdom in Heaven, being flung forth, and afterwards, in revenge, tempting Eve.

After leaving Eden, Adam was provided with clothes made from the serpent's skin, was set to till the earth by day, and given a fire to protect him by night. In penance he fasted 130 years, and then begat Seth.

Not only is the story of Cain much amplified, but we get a totally new account of his death. After the murder of Abel, Cain worked out his curse for many years as a fugitive and a wanderer. God had set a mark on his forehead that beasts should not hurt him, and any man who killed him should be cursed sevenfold. The later generations seem to have known him by sight, and to have heard his crime and his curse, regarding him with mingled pity and horror, much as people of the Middle Ages regarded the Wandering Jew. Now it happened that when Lamech was old, his sight grew dim, and whenever he went out with his bow and arrows he would take his little boy with him to look for game, and tell him where to shoot. One day the boy cried, "Look, father! there goes a beast!" Lamech

shot his arrow, and the boy ran to see what he had killed. But soon he returned, crying, "Oh, father, you have killed Cain." Lamech brought his hands together with a cry, and not seeing that the boy had run between them, killed his own son too.

The curious account in Gen. vi. 2 of the "sons of God" marrying the "daughters of men" receives many explanations from different Rabbis, some of whose opinions are collected in the work of Rabbi Eliezer. Some say they were the angels cast from Heaven with Sammael, who married the wicked daughters of Cain, their fiery forms (Ps. civ. 4) being changed to bodies resembling those of men. From the union came the giants (Num. xiii. 33), and these were the people of whom we read in the Talmud who mocked at Noah, declaring their height would save them from the flood, or the soles of their feet would keep the water from rising. (They did not think that the rising waters would be heated to boiling-point everywhere, except just round the Ark!)

The Book of Enoch gives a detailed account of a body of angels descending upon earth and taking wives, and teaching them sorcery. They begat giants 300 cubits high, who taught useful arts such as the making of implements and dyes, but also taught sorcery, ate flesh, and filled the land with bloodshed and violence. They would have destroyed the whole human race, if they had not at length turned their arms against each other. This last account is at variance with the story as given in the Book of Adam and Eve, which merely represents the sons of God as being the children of Seth, who had hitherto lived apart, but now intermarried with the wicked daughters of Cain.

Passing to the Flood, we get a full account of Noah and his times; and also learn that there had been a partial flood before, which people refused to accept as a warning, although one-third of the whole human race had been destroyed. Then for seven days the course of the sun was re-

versed, but still people paid no heed. In vain Noah warned the people that the flood was coming. "A flood of what?" they asked scoffingly. If a flood of fire, they possessed an animal which could extinguish flames; if a flood of water, they would pave the earth with iron to prevent it from rising. Why was the Flood delayed seven days? Various reasons are suggested. Some say it was to allow seven days' mourning for Methusaleh, who had just died; others suggest that for seven days the wicked were allowed a sight of the future world, just to learn what they were losing, for there was a strong opinion entertained by many Rabbis that the generation of the Flood had no share in the future world, and they founded their belief on Gen. vii. 23, "And they were destroyed from the earth," which was thought to signify absolute destruction both in this world and in the next. Why, again, were so many superfluous animals destroyed? Had they sinned? Yes, they had committed the most deadly sins; but in any case, since

they had been created only for the benefit of man, there was no reason why they should survive man. As one who has prepared a feast for his son's wedding, when his son dies, in bitterness destroys the dainties which now only serve to remind him of his grief, so God destroyed the great majority of the animals, no longer needed.

But as for the animals saved in the Ark, it may well be believed that Noah's resources were taxed to the utmost in learning how to deal with them. Shem is reported as speaking of the trouble and anxiety his father was put to in feeding them. Some wanted to be fed by day, and some by night. The chameleon at first would eat nothing; Noah tried it with various foods without success, till one day, when offering it a piece of pomegranate, a worm fell out, which the chameleon immediately swallowed. Thereafter Noah fed it on the worms from rotten apples. Feeding the lion again, as may be supposed, was no easy matter. Fortunately,

however, the lion lay ill with fever, and was unable to take any nourishment,—“the fever fed it.” Only the Aurshina (phoenix) slept quietly in a corner. When Noah asked whether it did not require any food, it replied, “I saw you were busy, and would not trouble you.” Noah thereupon blessed it, that it should never die. The immortal phoenix was well known to the ancient Rabbis. Other writers give quite a different reason for its eternal life. When Eve had tasted the forbidden tree and given Adam its fruit, she gave some to all the creatures, and all tasted except the phoenix, which refused, and rebuked Eve for her sin, whereupon it was ordained that it should be exempt from death.

The Ark was three storeys high. In the topmost storey dwelt Noah and his family; the window was lined with diamonds and pearls, whose light was like the light of midday. One Rabbi tells us the men were confined to one side of the ark, the women to the other. Noah himself was not really a good man,—at least,

not good by comparison with some of the men who came after him,—but only relatively good in his generation. The waters of the Flood did not reach to Palestine, but the inhabitants of Palestine did not escape: they were suffocated by steam, for the water of the Flood was boiling water.

It is here that Og first appears, one of the minor characters in the Bible, of whom so much is told in the Talmud. When Noah wished to save a specimen of the unicorn he found it impossible to get one into the Ark, for a unicorn only one day old is as high as Mount Tabor. Finally he attached one to the outside of the Ark by throwing a rope round its horn, whereupon Og jumped on its back, and was so saved from drowning. Thus Og was an antediluvian. The Targum Jonathan tells us he jumped on the Ark itself, and Noah fed him. He was preserved not for his righteousness, but that people might see that even wicked giants who rebelled had perished, Og being the only survivor and living proof. Yet another account says he

jumped on the steps of the Ark, promising Noah to be the servant of his descendants, and Noah was persuaded to bore a hole in the Ark and feed him. He is referred to in Gen. xiv. 13: "There came one that had escaped and told Abraham." This one was Og. He seems to have had more than one conversation with Abraham. On one occasion Abraham reproved him: in terror he dropped a tooth, out of which Abraham made an ivory bedstead. Abraham himself can have been no mean rival of Og, since we are told elsewhere that he had the strength and took the food of seventy-four men.

Another curious account represents Abraham's servant Eliezer as being no other than Og, who had become a servant of King Nimrod, and had been given by that king to Abraham as a present. As a reward for faithfully discharging his duties when sent with Isaac to find a wife, Abraham gave him his liberty, and God had ultimately given him the kingdom of Bashan as his reward in this world, since,

being a wicked man, he was not destined for any reward in the world to come. We hear of Og's fate in Deut. iii., how he opposed Moses on his march into Canaan and was defeated; but the biblical account gives little idea of the greatness of the victory. Moses selected him for personal combat. Taking a sword of a length equal to his own stature, Moses, who was himself ten ells high, leapt his own height into the air, and, striking upward to the full length of his reach, wounded Og's ankle. Og fell, and Moses met with no further resistance. These Talmudic heroes, however, never gain their victories, like the Homeric heroes, through physical courage, supplemented by the aid of a divine shield and spear. The divine aid comes in the shape of a spiritual symbol, or the victory is given by the help of the weakest of created things, lest man grow presumptuous. Thus when Og takes a rock, the size of the whole camp of the Israelites, intending to throw it and crush them out of existence, the grasshoppers eat

it away till it falls over his shoulders in broken fragments. Further, his teeth grow till they become tangled in the rocks, as before told (see p. 10 and Ps. iii. 7), thus materially helping Moses to gain the victory. Years later, a gravedigger, seeing a gazelle, gave chase to it for a long distance, running all the time along a hollow bone embedded in the earth: he subsequently learnt that this bone was part of Og's thigh. The interpreter who reconciled these stories with the statement that Og's bed was only nine cubits long (Deut. iii. 11) must have possessed even more than the usual ingenuity.

This tendency to amplify everything to the glory of God is very strong throughout the Talmud. Samson's strength, Esther's beauty, the disasters which overtook the Egyptians in the Red Sea, are all magnified in the same way.

The great sea monsters of Gen. i. 21 were, of course, the male and female Leviathan. One of them was afterwards killed because the world could not have supported two

such monsters and their young. When Leviathan drinks it takes seventy years for the sea to recover its fulness; when he is hungry he breathes a gas which makes the sea boil. There are other sea monsters, too, of which we shall read later. One is 400 parsas (1600 miles) long, and destined for Leviathan's mouth; from the pupil of the eye of another 300 casks of oil can be extracted. Then there is the land monster Behemoth, who eats every day the grass on a hundred hills; but in days to come he, as well as Leviathan, will be killed, and will make a meal for all the righteous in the world, who will sit under a tent made of his skin. The female Leviathan has already been slain and salted for the same purpose. "Why, then, has not the partner of Behemoth been salted?" asks one Rabbi. Straight comes the answer: "Because salted fish is savoury, but salted meat is indigestible."

To return to the generations that followed the Flood. At first there was one universal language, which would have continued but

for the confusion of tongues brought upon men after the building of the Tower of Babel. The purpose for which the Tower of Babel was built is not quite clear. Some say the people who built it merely wanted to live there in order to have a place of refuge in case of another flood; others suggest that, like the Titans, they wanted to make war on Heaven; and others, that they wished to set up idols on the tower. However, the languages were confounded, and their purpose was frustrated. Each man who spoke to his neighbour found himself answered in an unintelligible tongue, till at length all drew swords on each other, and fought till half the race of men was destroyed and the rest scattered. Henceforth there were seventy different languages.

These generations fell into sins almost as great as those of the generations which preceded the Flood. There is some doubt as to what laws were binding upon them; certainly they were forbidden to commit idolatry and murder. Some say seven laws

were binding upon all the sons of Noah, while an extra three (making the Ten Commandments) were specially imposed afterwards upon the Israelites. Which were these extra three? One Rabbi suggests that two of them were keeping the Sabbath and honouring parents. He also says the law as to establishing judges in every city was solely for the Israelites; others find more than seven laws which were binding on the sons of Noah, and among them include one curious law which seems to suggest that a practice said to exist to-day in parts of Abyssinia was not unknown to the ancients—namely, a law against cutting flesh from a living animal. (This practice is spoken of elsewhere with peculiar abhorrence.)

In reading about wicked people in the Talmud, we may almost always be sure that the crudest and grossest form of idolatry was one of their leading sins, and Noah's early descendants were no exceptions. It remained for Abraham to restore the worship of one God.

At Abraham's birth the magicians saw a star swallow four other stars, and warned King Nimrod that Abraham ought to be slain. Abraham's father substituted another child, and Abraham was hidden in a cave. At sixteen years old he saw the sun, and at first worshipped it, but when it set he knew that a greater Power must have created the sun. Going home, he saw his father's house full of idols; taking a club, he broke them all, and put the club in the hands of the tallest. He had previously asked his mother to prepare a dainty meal as a sacrifice for the idols, and when his father came home and asked who had broken his gods, Abraham pointed to the tallest, and said, "There is the culprit; he destroyed them all, because he was so angry at the greedy way in which they devoured their sacrifices." "How can a senseless man-made idol do such things?" his father asked angrily, leading to the inevitable retort from the youthful Abraham, "How, then, can you worship them, father?" Brought before Nimrod, he used the same

and other arguments. "Then worship me," said Nimrod. "Can you bid the sun stand?" he asked. Thrown into a fiery furnace, the heat of which consumed twenty men, he remained unhurt, the angel making the flames like the odour of roses. The ultimate fate of Nimrod, the great hunter, was to be treacherously shot by his rival hunter, Esau, who then took from him the famous coat given by God to Adam, preserved through the generations to Noah, and handed down by Noah after the Flood.

Finally, Abraham migrated with his family to the land of Canaan, and Lot left him and dwelt in Sodom.

The wickedness of the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah gave ample scope to the deductive and imaginative faculties of the Rabbis. It is curious to note that the crimes of the inhabitants are based upon a kind of perverse logic. The idea of anarchy is so alien to the Jewish commentators, that even violence and murder are only the outcome of perverse principles. So in Sodom if a man wounded another,

and the wounded man brought him who had caused the injury before a judge, the judge, instead of ordering compensation for the wound, would order the injured person to pay a fee for having been bled. Abraham's servant Eliezer once neatly turned the tables upon the judge. Being wounded, he brought the man who had injured him before the court, and was promptly ordered by the judge to pay a fee for having been bled, whereupon he drew a sharp stone from his pocket, and, flinging it at the judge's face, said, "Now I have bled you; hand over my fee to the man who bled me." The men of Sodom likewise anticipated Procrustes by keeping a bed on which strangers were requested to sleep. If too tall to fit the bed, their legs were lopped off; if too short, they were drawn out. Eliezer evaded this trap by declaring he had made a vow never to sleep in a bed since his mother died. It was only necessary to produce a reason for anything in ancient days in order to carry any point:

logic was a blind force against which none ever attempted to struggle; and since it was right that all men should observe their vows, and Eliezer was a man who had made a vow, the citizens of Sodom could find no reason for putting this stranger in a bed and murdering him when he did not fit.

Another law in the city of Sodom—surely the maddest law ever framed—was that any one who invited a guest to a wedding-feast should forfeit his clothes. One day Eliezer walked in to a wedding-feast uninvited, and sat at the end of a long table. “Who invited you here?” asked one of the company, to whom Eliezer at once replied, “You did.” Fearful of being obliged to forfeit his clothes, the questioner fled from the room, and the other guests, fearing that they in turn would be accused, likewise fled, leaving Eliezer to finish the banquet.

On one occasion a stranger arrived with a camel and rich merchandise, and asked for lodgings. “Come to my house as a

guest," said one of the wicked citizens, "and no payment shall be charged you." The stranger accepted the proffered hospitality, but in the morning his valuable goods had disappeared. On asking his host what had become of them, he was told he had evidently had a dream, which his host proceeded to expound. "It is no dream," said the indignant merchant; "I brought such and such goods with me, and you have stolen them: come before the judge." The judge heard the merchant's story, and then said: "You have evidently had a dream, the meaning of which your host has interpreted for you. Pay him his fee for interpreting, and be gone."

When a citizen laid in a store of bricks, every one of his fellow-citizens would take one away. One brick being of no appreciable value, no single citizen had committed any offence against him, yet in the result he was ruined. If a stranger used a bridge to cross a river he was required to pay a toll of four coins, but if to save expense he

preferred to wade through the water, he found himself confronted with a law which required him to pay eight coins.

But perhaps the most characteristic crime of the men of Sodom is found in the way they treated poor strangers. The stranger having entered the city, all the citizens gave him money, but refused to sell him food or allow him to leave. When he died of starvation, the citizens each identified the money they had given him, and took it away. One girl in the city caught in the act of feeding a poor man was smeared over with honey and tied to a tree to be stung to death. It was this last act of cruelty which finally brought about the destruction of the cities of the Plain.

Many examples are given of Abraham's piety, displayed particularly in the virtues of hospitality and modesty. So great was his hatred of idolatry that it affected his very camels, which refused to enter a house till the idols had been removed. A reference to this may be found in Gen. xxiv. 31, "I have prepared the house and room for

the camels." The preparation refers to the removal of the idols before the sagacious beasts could be induced to enter. His hospitality went so far that he not only kept food and drink always ready for strangers, but sat at his door keeping watch for them, thereby showing himself better than Job, who merely had four doors to his house to save the poor the trouble of walking round, but himself sat within the house.

One day Abraham had sent out Eliezer to look for guests, but Eliezer returned without any one, whereupon Abraham had himself gone out to look. It was while he was looking out at his door on this occasion that the "three men" (Gen. xviii. 2) visited his tent. They were really the three angels — Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. Their first words were to inquire for Sarah and Ishmael. They knew quite well that Sarah was within the tent, but they formally inquired for her in order to do her honour in her husband's eyes; hence we may learn that when we call upon a friend

we should always inquire for his wife's health. Being angels, they did not really take food in the tent, but only appeared to do so for the sake of politeness. On leaving Abraham, Gabriel passed on to destroy Sodom, and Michael (Gen. xix. 1) to save Lot.

Malicious gossip did not leave Abraham and Sarah alone after the birth of Isaac. People sneeringly declared the old couple had bought a child at the market, and were pretending it was their own. All doubts were, however, set at rest when, at a great feast in presence of the assembled guests, Isaac's face was miraculously changed into an exact miniature reproduction of Abraham's. Up till the time of Abraham there had been no outward signs of age, so that the moment a man had grown to his full stature it was impossible to say whether he might be twenty or a hundred. As Isaac grew up, his exact resemblance to his father caused them to be often mistaken for each other. Therefore God granted Abraham a beard,

and thenceforth it became possible to distinguish them. It may be here noticed that just as no one grew old before Abraham, so no one suffered sickness (*i.e.*, death came suddenly) before Jacob, and no one recovered from illness before the days of Elisha.

Sarah was one of the four most beautiful women in the world, the other three being Rahab, Abigail, and Esther; yet it seems that Abraham had never even noticed her beauty till the occasion of his visit to Egypt, for he then said, "*Now* I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon" (Gen. xii. 11), from which we may infer that he had not known it before. Sarah is always regarded with the highest veneration. With her are associated the wives of Isaac and Jacob, so that the prayer, "May you be like Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah," has for centuries been the accustomed blessing pronounced by fathers upon their daughters.

Some of the Rabbis have contended that in addition to the relatives of Abraham

whose names are given in the Bible, there must have been a daughter of Abraham, for "God blessed him in all things" (Gen. xxiv. 1). One Rabbi has even professed to give her name; but others contend that his blessing was to have no daughter, and in explanation of this curious blessing, a saying of a Rabbi in another part of the Talmud may be here inserted. He is talking of the troubles of the father of a girl-child. She may meet with various misfortunes in her youth; but suppose she reach womanhood in safety, she may never marry; or, escaping spinsterhood, she may marry, but have no children; or finally, escaping all other evils, in old age *she may become a witch*. Hence a daughter is said to be a false treasure.¹ Whether or no he had a daughter, Abraham at all events had another family of seventeen children by Keturah. For them he built

¹ Exactly the same sentiment, omitting only the danger of her becoming a witch, is expressed in the work of Ben Sirach, written about 200 B.C., of which the original manuscript has lately been discovered in fragmentary condition.

an iron city, whose walls were so high as to shut out the rays of the sun ; for light, Abraham gave them a bowl of precious stones, which supplied light equal to daylight. Stories of precious stones whose brilliancy is as great as the sun occur more than once in the Talmud : it will be remembered that such a stone took the place of a window in Noah's Ark. Ahasuerus, again, had a precious stone at his feast which illumined the banquet-hall like midday. Another wonderful jewel, which Abraham wore around his neck, had the property of curing the disease of any one who looked upon it. Abraham's servant Eliezer was one of the privileged persons whom the earth leaped to meet. We gather from Gen. xxiv. 42 (" And I came this day ") that he accomplished his journey with Isaac in one day. Therefore the earth must have leapt to meet him.

Constant efforts are made to honour Isaac and Jacob at the expense of Ishmael and Esau. Thus we learn that Ishmael had to be sent away because he one day

aimed an arrow at Isaac, and tried to kill him; we are also told that he developed a tendency to idol-worship. It is pleasant to read that Abraham did not forget him, but many years later went into the desert to pay him a visit. Ishmael was out hunting, but a cross-looking woman came to the door, and, saying Ishmael was not at home, sent Abraham away without offering him hospitality. "Tell Ishmael," said Abraham, "that an old man from the land of his father says the peg in his tent door is a bad one, and should be taken out." Some years later Abraham called a second time, but he seems always to have timed his visits unfortunately, for Ishmael was again out hunting. This time, however, a pleasant-looking woman came to the tent door and said, "Ishmael is out; but come in, old man, and bathe your feet, and take some goat's milk." "Tell Ishmael," said Abraham, "that the same old man from the land of his father has been to visit him, that the peg in his tent door is a good one, and he should take great care of it."

But it is Esau who is odious to the Rabbis above all other Old Testament characters. Lest we should be tempted to sympathise with him when he first appears in the Bible for being treacherously deprived of his blessing, we are told that it was he who first of all deceived his old blind father by killing forbidden animals, and bringing Isaac their flesh to eat. Isaac's dimness of vision was due to his having looked too frequently at such a wicked man, and Leah's "tender eyes" were brought about by having wept and prayed continually that it might not be her destiny to marry the wicked Esau. We have already heard how he treacherously murdered Nimrod through jealousy; in like manner he sent men to waylay Jacob on his way to Laban and kill him, but the cautious Jacob discovered the ambush, and bribed the men to let him go; while from a second ambush laid by Esau he was delivered by the angel sent to wrestle with him, in order to delay his journey (Gen. xxxii. 24). When Jacob

came to die, Esau tried to prevent him from being buried in the family cave of Machpelah, though in reality Esau had sold his own share in the cave, taking money and flocks in exchange. The document which proved this transaction had been left in Egypt, and Naphtali the swift-footed (Gen. xlix. 21) was sent in haste to procure it. During his absence, however, a deaf-and-dumb grandson of Jacob inquired the cause of the unseemly wrangle over Jacob's body, and when the cause had been explained to him in dumb show, he was moved to such an outburst of righteous indignation that he raised his club and dealt Esau a terrific blow on the head, which killed him and ended the dispute. Such was the force of the blow that Esau's eyes fell out at Jacob's feet, whereupon Jacob opened his own eyes and smiled (hence Ps. lviii. 10, "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance").

Both Isaac and Jacob were buried on the same day, thus fulfilling their mother's prophecy that she would be

bereaved of them "both in one day" (Gen. xxvii. 45).

Perhaps the most curious, however, of all the stories about Esau is the true explanation of his conduct when he met his brother returning from Laban (Gen. xxxii. and xxxiii.) It was no generous impulse, or sudden stirring of old memories, that made Esau run to meet his brother and fall on his neck and weep. When he kissed Jacob, what he really meant to do was *to bite him*.¹ It was not enough to kill him with an arrow, but he would drink his blood. But Jacob's neck was miraculously made as hard as ivory, and Esau was foiled. (Whence do we learn this? Again from the Song of Solomon, vii. 4: "Thy neck is like the tower of David, builded for an armoury.") Then indeed he wept and gnashed his teeth

¹ The Hebrew words for "to bite" and "to kiss" are closely similar. It must be remembered that the old Hebrew was written without vowels, so that very often a word could have two or three meanings (just as if we found in English the word "rmnd," which might be "remind" or "remand").

with rage (as told in Ps. cxii. 10: "The wicked shall see it, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth"). If such changes are not very chivalrous, they at least refute the accusation sometimes brought against the Rabbis of seeing nothing to merit dislike or censure in the treachery of the shrewd calculating Jacob, as contrasted with the generosity of the hot-tempered impulsive Esau. It may be here mentioned, too, that Amalek was a kinsman of Esau, and Haman, who so nearly exterminated the Israelites, was a direct descendant of Esau; moreover, historians and readers will learn with interest that it was a grandson of Esau who led Æneas and the Trojan army to the conquest of Latium, thus identifying Esau with Rome. The Talmud constantly refers to the Romans as children of Edom and Esau, and it has been suggested that some of the denunciations of Esau are really intended for veiled references to reigning Roman emperors. The Rabbis may have found a parallel between the contests of

Esau and Jacob and those of Rome and Israel, or they may have found significance in the resemblance between the Hebrew consonants of "Rome" and "Edom."

It will be remembered that when Jacob was on his way to Laban he lay down to sleep on the "stones" of the place (Gen. xxviii. 11). The ordinary reader may not have noticed that, when he awoke, he took "the stone" that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar, while no further mention is made of the other stones. Here, however, was a point to be elucidated, and the explanation is a simple one: during the night the stones quarrelled as to which should have the honour of supporting his head, and to settle their differences they were all united into one stone.

Passing to the next great event in the history of the Israelites, we come to the sojourn in Egypt. During early days, before persecution began, we have only a few glimpses of them. We hear that

Jacob prayed for illness (as a warning of approaching death) in order to make a will, for, as before mentioned, people had hitherto never known illness, but had merely sneezed and suddenly dropped dead. We hear that Joseph wept on Benjamin's "necks" (Gen. xlv. 14—the plural form is used in the Hebrew), because he foresaw the destruction of the two temples which would take place in the land of Benjamin. We also learn that, in the vain hope of fascinating Joseph, Potiphar's wife changed her dress twice a-day.¹ When she threatened him, he invariably replied with an apt quotation. "I will imprison thee," she said. "The Lord looseneth the prisoners." "I

¹ People who would smile at the quaintness of these ancient embellishments of the story may compare it with the no less quaint embellishments of a modern commentator, Père Berruyer, who recast the 'Histoire du Peuple de Dieu' in the form of a fashionable novel. "Joseph combined with a regularity of features and a brilliant complexion an air of the noblest dignity, all which contributed to render him one of the most amiable men in Egypt. . . . She declares her passion and pressed him to answer her. . . . Joseph at first only replied by his cold embarrassments."—Disraeli's *Curiosities of Literature*.

will put out thine eyes." "He causeth the blind to see." "I will bend thee." "The Lord raiseth up those who are bowed down." Thus her threats proved as ineffectual as her changes of dress.

But it is round the persecutions of later days, and the final delivery from Egypt, that legends cluster thickly.

Many attempts were made to save male children from the cruel law of the Pharaoh, who ordered them to be drowned; but most of such attempts failed. Egyptian women were sent with babies of their own into Jewish houses, and told to pinch their own children to make them cry; whereupon the concealed Jewish children would also cry, and be dragged forth to the river. Moses himself, after his escape from the river, nearly met his death two or three years later. One day, while Pharaoh was playing with him in the palace, the child Moses took off Pharaoh's crown and put it on his own head. The courtiers and magicians at once saw the obvious warning, that Moses would grow up to destroy

the kingdom. Pharaoh saw in it only a childish trick, but nevertheless determined to put the question to a characteristic test. A dish of hot coal and a dish of gold were accordingly set before the child : if he chose the former, he should be let go free ; but if the latter, he should be killed. Moses, attracted by the glitter, was about to pick up a handful of gold, but the angel Gabriel quickly pushed aside his hand to the other tray, and the child, picking up a live coal, put it to his mouth and burnt his tongue ; and that is why Moses was ever afterwards "slow of speech" (Exod. iv. 10).

Moses slew the Egyptian (Exod. ii. 12) by mentioning a holy name, after asking the advice of the angels. When he fled from Egypt in consequence, he joined the army of the king of Ethiopia, who was engaged in a war with a rebellious general who had proved unfaithful to his trust and usurped the kingdom during the king's absence on a foreign war. The war continued for many years, and Moses so won the regard of the army by his valour and wisdom

that, on the king's death, he was appointed king in his place, and in a great battle succeeded in regaining the capital and expelling the rebellious general, destroying the greater part of his army. (The general himself, however, escaped, and taking refuge in Egypt, became one of Pharaoh's magicians, who subsequently opposed Moses.) For many years Moses remained king: he subdued the Assyrians abroad and promoted justice at home; and it was only through the intrigues of the late king's widow, who tried to rouse prejudice against Moses as a foreigner, that he at length abandoned his sovereignty and passed on to Midian, where he married the daughter of Jethro.

The ten plagues, the triumph of Moses, and the Exodus from Egypt, have been a theme on which the Israelites have ever since loved to dwell with an enthusiasm surpassing that felt for all other national deliveries. Symbolic ceremonies annually recall the great event,—the eating of unleavened bread brings to memory the

haste with which they left Egypt, taking their dough "before it was leavened" (Exod. xii. 34); bitter herbs signify the bitter days of bondage; and even the poorest head of a household forgets for one evening his modern task-masters as he leans against a pillow through his meal to signify the ease and freedom he now enjoys through that glorious delivery, and recalls the "fifty" plagues (page 122) which overwhelmed the Egyptians at sea.

To prevent the Israelites from leaving Egypt, Pharaoh had thrown Joseph's bones into the Red Sea, knowing they had promised to take Joseph's bones with them when they left; but when Moses put forth his rod, the bones and coffin rose to the surface and were taken up. It should be mentioned that this rod of Moses, with which he afterwards smote the rock (Exod. xvii. 5), was no ordinary rod. In the beginning God had given Adam a wonderful staff; this staff had been taken from him when he left Eden, but another was given him on

which was engraved a certain word, and he who understands this word understands all things, even the thoughts of the rains. It was this staff which had come into the hands of Moses, having been handed down by Adam to Enoch, Enoch to Noah, and so on to Jacob and Joseph, then left in Pharaoh's palace, and finally found by Jethro and planted in his garden, where Moses saw and plucked it.

The Exodus was not effected without one preliminary disaster. The tribe of Ephraim had tried to escape before the appointed time, and had been massacred by the Canaanites and Philistines. Only ten men escaped; the bones of the others lay where they fell till Ezekiel came and looked upon them, when they rose to their feet, "an exceeding great army," as told by the prophet (Ezek. xxxvii.) The weird vision of Ezekiel and the valley of dead bones seems to have fascinated many of the Rabbis whose names appear in the Talmud. Whose bones were they, and what became of them, they ask. That

they were the bones of the Ephraimites explains whose bones they were; but what became of them? Did they become dead bones again, or did they live? Ezekiel is silent, and appears to regard the whole vision as a parable (xxxvii. 11), but the more common opinion is that they lived, married, and died natural deaths. To clinch the argument with a piece of convincing evidence, a Rabbi on one occasion suddenly produces the phylacteries worn by his grandfather, who had inherited them from one of these very Ephraimites.

From theorising on the fate of the dead bones, it needed but a small step to find a traveller who had actually seen them. Such a traveller in due course appeared, with a story of gigantic forms lying weird and still in an enchanted desert. He was a Rabbi who had been led to the spot where they lay by an Arab. The Arab knew, by smelling a clod of earth, whither the road was leading him, and he was never deceived. One

day he found the road leading to where lay the dead Ephraimites; following it, he brought him to a spot where they lay extended "like drunken men, asleep, with their faces upward." Their bodies were quite fresh, and were lying in all postures. One had his knee raised: the Arab rode under it with his spear on high, but could not reach it. Yet no fear inspired the Rabbi, who proceeded to cut off part of one of their garments, in order to decide a point at issue between the schools of Hillel and Shammai as to how the garment (worn for ritual purposes) should be knotted. Returning to his beast, he found that it could not move from the spot. "You must have taken something from them," the Arab said; "for no one who takes anything is able to move until it has been restored." Accordingly the Rabbi was obliged to restore the garment to its owner and return without it. When he returned from his travels his story created no surprise. People who went long journeys must expect to meet with such adventures;

it was known that the Ephraimites lay somewhere in the desert, and that flesh had already been miraculously placed upon their bones, so what more natural than that a traveller should come across them and find the flesh still preserved? The only comment with which he appears to have been greeted was that he always had been a fool, and had now lived up to his character; for what need was there to try to remove the "tsitsith," when he might just as well have counted the threads and knots, and so set at rest the conflicts of the rival schools?

This vision of the Ephraimites was not the only adventure which befell this same Rabbi: he saw other strange things on his travels. But that is another story, and will be told later.

To return to Pharaoh. The pursuit of the Israelites was represented to him as a political necessity, for the governors said to him, "If it shall be reported that our slaves have gone free, how much more will all our vassal states be ready to rebel?"

Great was the consternation of the Israelites when they saw the sea before them and the enemy behind. Some tribes would have returned, others would have fought. It needed all the tact and influence of Moses to keep them together and guide them to safety. When at last destruction came upon their enemies, it came not lightly. Confusion reigned among the Egyptians even before the waters closed over them. On land "the finger of God" (Exod. viii. 19) was against them, but at sea "the hand" of the Lord was against them (Exod. xv. 6). Now the hand has five fingers, hence it is deduced that as there were ten plagues on land, there must have been fifty plagues at sea. One curious point is noticed concerning the destruction of the Egyptians. We are told that the "host" of Pharaoh was drowned, but never that Pharaoh himself was drowned; on the contrary, he reappears again in the last place where we might have expected to find him—namely, at Nineveh.

We may here pass for a moment to the story of Jonah. It may be wondered why the people of Nineveh were so ready to listen to the itinerant preacher who called on them to repent. The explanation is that their king was no other than our old friend Pharaoh of Egypt, who pursued the Israelites. When he saw his chariots and army destroyed he was afraid to go home, but went away to Nineveh, and was ultimately made king of the city. When Jonah appeared the people were at first inclined to laugh at him, but their king knew better. "I know this man's people," he said, "and remember how Moses treated me when I despised him. Let us repent in time." And so Nineveh was saved.

The destruction of the Egyptians was complete. When the angels would have rejoiced at their overthrow, God is represented as reproving them for rejoicing when so many creatures were being destroyed. Still there remained sceptics, who declared that the Egyptians were following by another route, and, to convince them, the

bodies of the Egyptians were cast up on land.

With the Exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai, the nation entered upon a new period of its existence.

PART III.

LATER BIBLICAL LEGENDS.

EXODUS TO BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY.

MARVELLOUS were the things which befell Moses on the mountain. More than once he was on the point of destruction, and only saved by direct divine interposition. The old enemies of man, the angels, disputed with him for the possession of the Ten Commandments, and would have consumed him with fire; but he took hold of God's throne and answered them fearlessly. Of what use the Commandments to them, he asked, undismayed by the twelve hundred darts of fire which shot from one angel's mouth at each word. Had they parents, that they need be told to honour them? Did they work six days a-week,

that they need be told to rest on the seventh? Had they served Pharaoh? and so forth. At length, overcome by Moses' arguments, they gave in and befriended him, each teaching him something, even the Angel of Death. While he remained on the mountain, Moses was taught, in addition to the Ten Commandments, all the unwritten law, on which were afterwards based the innumerable bye-laws, or, in more Talmudic metaphor, round which were afterwards established the innumerable fences, the discussion of which forms so large a part of the Talmud. When the Commandments were given, God's voice was heard all over the world. Jethro heard it, and the nations trembled in their temples.

Moses is, of course, the greatest of all the figures in Jewish legend; but that Aaron may not be overshadowed by the mere accident of being contemporaneous, the Talmud gives us a long account of his virtues, in respect of some of which he is even greater than Moses. He shines above

all else as a peacemaker. When he met a wicked man he would salute him, and then the wicked man would say to himself, "If now I commit this new sin, how shall I dare again to look Aaron in the face, and receive his friendly greeting." Sometimes Aaron's zeal even led him into small deceptions. When two men quarrelled, he would go to the one and say, "Your neighbour is tearing his clothes in grief, saying, 'How dare I meet him again, knowing I am in the wrong;'" he would then go to the other party to the quarrel and say the same thing, and consequently the two opponents would meet each other with softened feelings, and become reconciled. Moses, in giving judgment, would sternly rebuke the one who was in the wrong; but when Aaron was judge, though he was quite as just as Moses, he was never harsh towards the unsuccessful litigant. Aaron was also specially influential in making up quarrels between husbands and wives, in consequence of which many children were named after him. And thus we read that

“All Israel wept for Aaron”—*i.e.*, including the women; but for Moses “the children of Israel wept”—*i.e.*, only the men (Num. xx. 29.; Deut. xxxiv. 8).

How is the conduct of the pious Aaron in the matter of the Golden Calf to be explained? It is not to be supposed that he really instigated the people to create the idol. He asked for earrings, thinking the women would refuse to part with their ornaments—and he was right; but when the men could not prevail upon their wives to give up their earrings, they took their own earrings out of their ears—for in those days the men wore earrings, after the manner of the Egyptians and Arabians—and cast these into the furnace, and thus Aaron’s scheme was frustrated. When the calf was made Sammael entered into it, and loved to deceive the people, so that many, who would not otherwise have worshipped, were deceived by this apparent miracle. It is recorded how, when Moses came down from Sinai and saw the Golden Calf, he broke the tables of the Law into

fragments. Some say he did so in order to prevent the people from committing so great a sin after having received the Law, but others say he broke them at God's command. Another tradition is recorded that the holy letters engraved on the stone supported the tablets, and supported Moses too, but when they came near and saw the people worshipping the idol, they flew away from the tablets, and the tablets then fell, being deprived of support, and were broken.

With all his indignation and occasional harshness, Moses never forgot the law against putting people to shame in public, and carried it so far that his exhortation to the people to "remember what Amalek did" (Deut. xxv. 17) is really only a delicate way of reminding them of their own sins without causing them to blush. A curious simile is given for this pseudonymous exhortation. It is likened to the case of a king who has a garden and puts a dog in charge: a friend of the king comes to steal something, and is bitten, whereupon

the king will not put him to shame by asking why he came, but says, "See how the dog has torn your clothes : he did not know that you were a friend" ; whereby the man, who knows he came as a thief and not as a friend, is made to understand without being openly shamed.

Among other services rendered by Moses, we must note that it was he who first fixed regular hours for meals. Before his time people picked up their food as they wanted it, like fowls, but now fixed hours were set aside for eating.

Of the wanderings in the wilderness we have only an occasional glimpse. We learn that manna was sixty times better to eat than honey, and tasted to every one like the food he best liked ; and again, that the reason why Moses was weeping when a Midianitish woman was brought into the camp (Num. xxv. 6) was because he, too, had married the daughter of Jethro, a stranger ; and having forgotten that rule or inference of the Law which justified him in his case, was unable to answer when

people declared he had set the example. It was in the wilderness, too, that the terrific conflict between Moses and the gigantic Og, king of Bashan, took place, as already recorded.

When Moses came to die, no angel could slay so holy a man. The wicked Zammael offered to kill him, but retired abashed when he came and looked upon him, so that at last God Himself took him.

From the death of Moses to the rise of David legends are few and scarce. With Joshua and the first conquests in the promised land a kind of high tide is reached, after which comes a long ebb. The conquering tribes of Israel seem to have resembled little islands in a sea of native populations. Sometimes one or more would be for a time submerged, till some deliverer would arise and a new outburst of national life follow. Gradually the nation was growing stronger, but how far through slaughter of the natives, how far through subjection or expulsion, or how far through absorption, can be only matters of conjecture. Such a period, made

up of constant small fighting to maintain a position, without any great permanent national victories or calamities, would not be likely to stir people's imagination, or give rise to many legends. One is worth recording in the early days of Joshua's invasion, which once more shows the zeal of the Rabbis to prove that every wicked man had incidentally added idol-worship to his offences, and to find an opportunity for denouncing the sin and folly of such worship.

When the thirty-six men were slain before Ai (Josh. vii. 11), and it was told Joshua that some one had stolen and dissembled, Joshua asked God the name of the man ; but God reminded him of Levit. xix. 16, and bade him draw lots. When the lot finally fell on Achan, Achan said, "Do you accuse me on account of a lot? If I were to draw lots between you and Eleazar, the wisest men in your generation, the lot would fall against one of you." Joshua begged him not to discredit the drawing of lots, as the promised land was

to be divided by lots. Finally Achan confessed. He had been tempted by an idol possessing magic powers, a tongue of gold, and a costly mantle. His sin had caused the death of the thirty-six men (though some maintain that only one man had been slain, who through his learning was equal to thirty-six men, or one half of a full Sanhedrin). Achan is always taken as the type of a repentant sinner. Was it not imprudent of Joshua to bow before the angel who had appeared to him at Jericho, one asks?—might not the figure have been a demon? No! for tradition tells us that even demons do not pronounce the name of God in vain.

We may now take a long step forward to David. While he was a shepherd boy the language of all created things had been revealed to him (as it was afterwards revealed to his son Solomon), even the language of the elements: it was after hearing this music of the spheres that David wrote his psalms. Yet some of the psalms have the most remarkable explanations. When

David prays to be "delivered from the lion's mouth, for Thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorn," he is referring to an adventure which befell him as a boy, when, seeing a unicorn asleep, he took it for a high hill, and climbed up. Suddenly the animal arose, and David touched the sky. He prayed for release, and a lion appeared, whereupon the unicorn lowered its head to earth, and David jumped off.

Another story is told of David in which the family of Goliath figure. One day, seeing a ram, David shot an arrow at it. (The ram, however, was really Zammael in one of his many disguises.) The arrow missed its mark, and David was led in pursuit across the border of the Philistines, where Ishbi (2 Sam. xxi. 16), the brother of Goliath, dwelt, who, recognising David, bound and gagged him, and placed him under an olive press, so that David was only saved from an ignominious death through the earth being made soft under him (hence Ps. xviii. 36, "My feet have not slipped").

Meantime Abishai, the friend of David, seeing spots of blood in the water in which he was washing, was seized with a presentiment that some evil was about to befall his king and friend. (Another version has it that the warning was conveyed by the fluttering of a troubled dove overhead.) Hastening to the palace, he found David gone, none knew whither. A law, mentioned in the Talmud, forbids a subject to ride the same beast that bears the king, and Abishai stood hesitating between his desire to seize the king's mule and dash off to David's assistance and his respect for the Law. So great was the emergency that the Rabbis advised him that he might use the king's mule to save the king, and in a moment he was in pursuit, heading for the most likely point of danger, the land of the Philistines. On the way he saw Goliath's mother spinning: as he passed, she threw her spindle to kill him; then, seeing she had missed her aim, she pretended that she had dropped the spindle and called to him to return it to her, where-

upon he threw it back and killed her. After this not very glorious victory he hurried on till he found Ishbi, and David his prisoner. "Now there will be two against me," Ishbi thought; so, taking out David from the olive-press, he flung him into the air, and placed a spear in the ground to transfix him as he fell. But Abishai quickly mentioned a holy name, and David remained fixed in the sky between heaven and earth. (Here a Rabbi characteristically breaks the thread of the narrative to ask why David himself could not mention the name, and receives the not very convincing answer that a prisoner has no power to set himself free.) Then ensued a dialogue between David and his rescuer, and we learn a new tale within a tale of how God had for certain sins of David given him a choice of having no children or being delivered to his enemies, and how he had chosen the latter punishment, and was thus expiating his crime. But Abishai breaks in upon the narrative hotly, and bids David reverse his choice: better, he

says, that the king of Israel should have no children, nay, better that he should have the meanest of children ("rather let your grandson sell wax"), than suffer such a misfortune. David is convinced, but begs Abishai to pray with him that the choice may be reversed. Then Abishai mentions another holy name, and picks up—or rather picks down—David from his humiliating position, and they fly together. Ishbi, who had remained a passive spectator of this strange dialogue, at once starts in pursuit, and the race is run as far as the borders of Palestine. There the two friends take courage, and remembering that two cubs can sometimes kill one big lion, they stand at bay. The victory, however, is an inglorious one, though readers of the Talmud will now no longer expect to hear the clash of arms and story of heroic or romantic deeds such as we read towards the end of the second book of Samuel. As Ishbi advances, Abishai tells him that his mother is dead; whereupon Ishbi's knees tremble, and his

strength deserts him. Then David and Abishai fall upon him and slay him; but so narrow was David's escape that the Israelites determine never again to let him be exposed to like risks, and will not allow him to go out with them any more to battle, that he "quench not the lamp of Israel." Such is the story woven out of 2 Sam. xxi. 15-18.

There is another curious story of David's wars in which Joab figures. We read in 1 Kings xi. 15, "David was in Edom, and Joab the captain of the host . . . had cut off every male in Edom." It seems that the Israelites had been ordered to kill man, woman, and child, and blot out "the remembrance of Edom." Now the Hebrew for remembrance is "zaychare," but Joab's master had pronounced it "zachar," which means male. Accordingly Joab thought he had obeyed the command. When David explained the mistake to him, he was so enraged that he tried to find out his old master and kill him. Hence, we are told,

we may learn that it is sometimes better to have a good pronunciation than to be a good expounder.

Those who slept in the king's palace might have heard each midnight strange music coming from the king's bedchamber. It was his harp (the same which, according to quite another set of legends, was later carried away by Jeremiah, and after many vicissitudes found an ultimate resting-place in Tara's Halls) playing of its own accord, to rouse the king to *study the Law*.

Through constant study David had acquired great power in the spiritual world. There is a mysterious significance in his mentioning the name of his son Absalom eight times in his lament (2 Sam. xviii. 33). Absalom's soul had gone down to the seventh Gehenna; each mention of his name raised him one degree, and the eighth time his father pronounced his name he was placed in heaven.

We learn from Ps. xxxix. 4, "Lord, make me know mine end," &c., that David asked God to tell him the day of his

death. He was told it should be on a Sabbath. He asked whether it might be a day later, and was told "No," for Solomon's reign was appointed to begin on that day, and might not be overlapped. Then he asked might it not be on the preceding day, and was told "No," for his one extra day of study was worth all the thousand sacrifices Solomon would offer up. Having learnt that his death was ordained for a Sabbath, David spent the whole of each Sabbath in studying, without a moment's cessation, for he knew that the Angel of Death could not touch a man engaged in the study of the Law. When his day came to die, the Angel, finding him studying, made a noise in a tree, and David, studying all the while, obtained a ladder and mounted the tree to find out the cause of the noise. Suddenly the steps gave way, and David, stopping to put them right, for one moment forgot to study. The instant of forgetfulness was fatal: the Angel saw it, and took him.

It was only after David's death that his crime against Uriah was finally forgiven. When the Temple was built, and Solomon wished to set the Ark in its place, the gates held fast and prevented its entry. Solomon stood a long time in prayer till the gates opened, and then he knew that his father was completely forgiven.

Of Solomon, far the most interesting story is that of his prolonged struggle with the chief of demons, as told in Part IV. It was a sinister day when he married the daughter of Pharaoh, for the angel Gabriel on that day planted a reed in the sea, round which there formed a bank, on which was afterwards built the city of Rome. Pharaoh's daughter brought with her to Jerusalem one thousand different musical instruments, each of which was used in the worship of a different idol. We are not to suppose that the great king Solomon himself ever really worshipped idols. "His heart was turned after them" by his wives, but he did not

worship them. His fault was that he did not protest enough against the worship of idols, or prevent his wives from worshipping. He even intended to set up a high place (1 Kings xi. 7), but did not carry out his intention. In the Temple he planted golden trees, which produced all kinds of fruit according to the seasons, and dropped them when shaken by the wind. They all withered when idolaters thrust themselves into the Temple. Among other wonders, Solomon possessed a house of glass. It was in this house that he received the Queen of Sheba. The effect was such that she thought Solomon was sitting in the midst of water, through which she must wade in order to approach him.

Some idea of the magnificence of Solomon's table may be gathered from 1 Kings iv. 22, 23: "Thirty measures of fine flour, and threescore measures of meal; ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and a hundred sheep, beside harts, and gazelles, and roebucks,

and fatted fowl;" but the Talmud further tells us that each of Solomon's thousand wives prepared this meal every day, in the hope that the king would dine with her. Like his father David, Solomon understood the language of all creation, but his knowledge brought him some bitter hours in his old age. "We are more beautiful," said one lily to another as the king passed. "None of his wives love him as we love," said the nightingale. "He doesn't teach his sons," said the wise stork. Sadly the king returned to his palace, and, falling asleep, had a vision in which he saw his people scattered and the Temple destroyed. It was then that he exclaimed, "Vanity of vanities!"

With the break-up of the kingdom, on the death of Solomon, there follows a period of depression, during which legends again become rare. Occasionally appalling disasters such as the destruction of the Temple, or brilliant victories such as the destruction of Sennacherib's army (if it may be called a victory), call forth fresh

legends, just as similar events in European history call forth romantic ballads.

There is, however, during the period covered by the Book of Kings, one figure which stands out quite uniquely,—that of Elijah. We are told in 2 Kings ii. that he was taken up to heaven alive. It might be supposed that if such a type of fiery zeal, proud aloofness, and spiritual grandeur ever revisited the earth, it would be at great national crises, to call down vengeance on the wicked. But his spirit is now changed. He appears as an old man, ready to help any one who is in trouble; to children who have lost their way; sometimes merely as a welcome guest, who comes unexpectedly, but answers no questions whence or whither. The Talmud contains innumerable stories of people who have met him, talked with him, and walked along the road with him. The sporting of dogs heralds his approach to a city. People who recognise him always make the most of their opportunity, and ask him the most important question they can think

of, whether about their own salvation or about some disputed point of "Law." The answers are often ambiguous. "Who in this crowd will have a share in the world to come?" one asks; and Elijah points out a jailor, who has preserved a captive Jewish maiden from violence, and has informed the Rabbis of plots hatched against the Israelites, that they may pray for deliverance. Another time he points out two brother workmen, who have always tried to cheer the down-hearted and make peace between quarrellers. One is mentioned who had been in the habit of receiving "frequent" visits from Elijah, till one day he built a gate to his courtyard, thereby making it difficult for the poor to gain admission, after which Elijah ceased to visit him.

Sometimes Elijah would pay a passing visit at a house of learning during a discussion. At one house he used to come almost as a matter of course. One day, on his arriving late, the presiding Rabbi asked the cause of his delay, and he re-

plied he had to wake Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in succession, wash their hands, wait for them to finish their prayers and return to sleep. "Why do they not all rise at once?" the Rabbi asked, expressing no more astonishment than if one of the ordinary pupils had told him he had been delayed by a street accident. "Because if they all prayed together their united prayers would bring the Messiah before the appointed time," is the answer. Asked whether there were men then living equally powerful in prayer, Elijah said "Yes," and incautiously gave the names of a Rabbi and his sons. A fast was proclaimed, and these pious men were summoned to pray; but before they could accomplish their purpose convulsions of nature interrupted them.

Once a Rabbi was deputed to carry a casket of precious stones as a present to one of the Cæsars. On the way he stayed at an inn, where the stones were stolen and dust substituted. When he arrived at Rome and opened his basket, it was not unnaturally supposed that he intended to

offer an insult to the Emperor, and he was seized and about to be executed. At the critical moment Elijah appeared in the dress of a courtier, and suggested the dust might be the dust of Abraham, and bring victory in war (an allusion to Isa. xli. 2, with which verse the Roman emperor was of course well acquainted). The explanation proved satisfactory, for, being carried to battle, it helped the Roman soldiers to quell an insurrection, and the Rabbi was sent home with many signs of favour.

This belief that Elijah may appear at any moment has exercised a powerful influence over Jews through all ages. In dark days of persecution, who knew but that he might be standing in the midst of every jeering or murderous crowd? Who knew but that the old man who had just begged alms might not be the prophet come to test them, as he had tested Akiva when he begged half his straw mattress (p. 58), and perhaps to repay their charity tenfold? The custom still survives in many households of putting

aside a glass of wine on Passover Eve, and opening the door in case Elijah should be passing by; and while the father sings how Rabbi Eliezer, and Rabbi Joshua, and Rabbi Elazar, and Rabbi Akiba, and Rabbi Tarphon on one occasion sat up conversing all night about the Exodus from Egypt, till their disciples came to tell them it was daylight, and time to say the morning prayer, the children look from time to time towards the door with wondering eyes, hoping that this year "Elyohu" will come in and share their meal, and sing with them the old well-known songs.

Beside Elijah, who plays so prominent a part in Talmudic legends, and is associated with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Elisha plays but a small part. A curious comment is passed on his visit to the woman of Shunem, recorded in 2 Kings iv. 9. We learn from the story that women have a keener perception of the character of their guests than men, for she knew he was a holy man. How did she discover it? Because no fly crossed the table. (The associa-

tion of flies with evil is quite Talmudic: one Rabbi studied the Law as an antidote to flies.) From the statement that Elisha "was sick of a sickness whereof he died," we may learn that he must have had a previous illness whereof he did not die. It has already been mentioned that before his time no one ever recovered from a sickness. It is pleasing to read the cause of his sickness: it was sent him as a punishment for his cruelty in calling for the bears to eat up the little children who had called after him, mocking his bald head.

In the account of the destruction of Sennacherib we find many of the characteristic qualities of these Talmudic tales,—the exactitude of detail, the extravagant amplification of strength and numbers, the victory of the small and weak by divine aid without any clash of titanic forces, the apparent utter irrelevance of one fact to another, and the amazing extraction of hidden meanings from various parts of the Bible.

Sennacherib's army was composed of

45,000 princes, each of whom brought his concubines in golden carriages, 80,000 valiant men in coats of mail, 60,000 runners and sword-bearers, and the rest cavalry. The exact size of the camp is given us as so many thousand measures "less one"; and the question is argued, and remains undecided, whether "less one" means "less one thousand," "less one hundred," or literally, "less one."

Sennacherib himself hastened his march to Jerusalem so as to arrive in time for the day mentioned to him by the astrologers as propitious for making the assault. We gather from Isa. viii. 7 and 8 ("The Lord bringeth . . . the king of Assyria, and all his glory: . . . he shall overflow and pass through; he shall reach even to the neck") that the first part of his army swam the Jordan, the second part walked on foot neck-deep (the water having been so much diminished by the crossing of the first division), and the last part crossed in the dust, and was obliged to fetch drinking-water from a distance. By means of forced marches

Sennacherib arrived on the evening of the appointed day, and, raising a mound, climbed to the top and overlooked Jerusalem. But the sight of the city, instead of arousing cupidity, only called forth indignation, that he, the mighty king who had captured such cities in the north, should have hurried himself to such an extent in order to capture Jerusalem. In answer to the soldiers, who were eager to make the assault at once, he said that he was too tired; serious affairs could wait for to-morrow. But for all except very few no to-morrow came: princes, mailed warriors, and swordsmen, to the number of 185,000, lay dead, smitten in the night. Some further maintain that this 185,000 constituted merely the princes of the army (2 Chron. xxxii. 21), so gigantic was Sennacherib's host, and that countless other unrecorded warriors were slain or dispersed; but this was not the prevailing opinion. All except ten are generally supposed to have been slain, while others infer that nine, or even less, escaped.

However many actually escaped, we know that Sennacherib was among them; and here comes the extraordinary sequel to the battle, all founded upon Isa. vii. 20—a sequel full of those wild dream-like inconsequences and grotesque blendings of common things and miraculous which give so great a fascination to the reading of the Talmudic legends. When Sennacherib's army had been destroyed, an angel appeared to him in the form of an old man and said, "What will you say to the kings whose sons you brought with you, and who are dead?" "I was thinking of that myself," Sennacherib replied, "and the thought makes me tremble; what do you advise?" "Disguise yourself," replied the angel. "How shall I effect a disguise?" asked the king. "Bring me a scissors and I will cut your beard." Sennacherib is directed to a certain house, where he finds four angels grinding date kernels. On asking for a scissors, he is told he must first grind one kernel. The scissors are then given him, but meanwhile

it has grown dark, and he is told to get a light : a wind blows the light against his face, and the flame singes his beard and hair, whereupon he has both hair and beard clipped close. Leaving the house, he finds a plank in the road, and the conviction immediately comes to him that this must be a plank of Noah's Ark. We are not told how he came by this conviction, nor does he appear at all surprised at the fact, but he immediately cries, "Behold the Great God who saved Noah; if I return home and prosper, I will sacrifice my two sons to him." But the sons overheard this vow, and that is why they slew him, as told in 2 Kings xix. 37.

The respite of Judah was not of long duration. Weak kings and wicked kings followed each other, but the worst of all, according to the Talmud, was Manasseh. He is taken as the person referred to in Num. xxv. 30 that doth aught with a high hand. Not content with neglecting the study of the Law, he actually ridiculed it. "Had Moses nothing better to say than

that 'Lotan's sister was Timna' [Gen. xxxvi. 22], or that 'Reuben went in the days of the wheat harvest and found mandrakes in the field'?" he would ask scoffingly. His punishment is to have no share in the future world, and the apparent trivialities which he ridiculed are of course shown to be profoundly significant.

King Jehoiakim, though not deprived of his share in the future world, suffered a curious posthumous indignity. A man wandering near Jerusalem one day found a skull; he buried it, but it came again to the surface; he buried it a second time, with the same result. His curiosity then became aroused, and examining it more closely, he found written on it, "This and something else." Remembering some words from Jeremiah, he came to the conclusion that it must be the skull of Jehoiakim, and therefore deserving of more respectful treatment. Accordingly he took it home, wrapped it in silk, and put it in a bag. Unfortunately, however, he omitted to tell his wife whose skull it was that he had

brought home, and she, seeing the reverence with which it was treated, came to the conclusion that it must be the skull of his first wife, and in a fit of jealousy heated an oven and burnt the skull to ashes. We may notice that Jeremiah, in speaking of the reign of Jehoiakim, begins the 26th chapter of his prophecies with the words "In the beginning." These words, occurring nowhere else in connection with the kings, but only in the beginning of Genesis, show us that through the sins of Jehoiakim God was inclined to reduce the world to chaos, but relented because the people were better than their king.

The destruction of Sennacherib was not to be repeated when Nebuchadnezzar advanced against Jerusalem. This new invasion came about through a private quarrel between two citizens in Jerusalem. A citizen having invited his enemy to a feast, publicly expelled and disgraced him, whereupon the man who had been expelled, in order to revenge himself, went

to Nebuchadnezzar and told him that a rebellion was brewing. "Send a sacrifice," he continued, "and you will see that it will be refused." Nebuchadnezzar sent an animal to be sacrificed in the Temple, but on the way to Jerusalem it was mutilated (and so made unfit for sacrifice) by the informer. The priests of the Temple were now put in a difficulty, for they could not make a bad precedent and sacrifice a defective animal, even for the sake of peace (for which many things may be done); nor could they kill their betrayer, or the belief would arise that mutilation was a capital offence. They were therefore obliged to refuse the sacrifice, and Nebuchadnezzar's suspicions were confirmed. It thus came about that the destruction of the first Temple was due to disobedience to the law against putting people to shame in public.

When Nebuchadnezzar sent his army against Jerusalem, he gave Nebuzaradan, his captain of the guard, 300 mules laden with saws made for cutting iron, in order to cut down the gate of Jerusalem. All

but one were broken against the iron gate (see Ps. lxxiv. 5, 6), and Nebuzaradan was about to desist and raise the siege when a heavenly voice was heard urging him to a fresh effort, and with the last saw he cut down the gate and entered the city. Killing all whom he met, he made his way to the Temple, which he burnt to the ground. (We are told that the Temple would have flown away, but was prevented.) Proud of his victory, Nebuzaradan began to utter boasting words, but the heavenly voice was again heard, saying, "You slew a slain nation, and a burnt Temple have you burned." Presently he noticed blood boiling up from the earth, and inquired what such a prodigy meant. At first the Israelites tried to put him off with excuses, but finally told him the truth—that it was the blood of a prophet who had foretold the destruction of the city, and had been murdered. Nebuzaradan tried to propitiate the dead prophet by slaying the Rabbis, but the blood still boiled: then he slew the little

school children, then a priest, and finally 94,000 men, but still the blood boiled. Then he approached and said, "I have slain the noblest people, do you want me to kill all?" and the blood ceased. Nebuzaradan then repented of having slain so many men, and become a proselyte.

PART IV.

DEMONOLOGY.

TALES OF DEMONS, ANGELS, MIRACLES,
MAGIC, AND ADVENTURE.

ENOUGH is found in the Talmud about demons alone to fill volumes, and those who studied the habits of these enemies of men must have spent quite a large portion of their lives in learning how to protect themselves against their attacks. From infancy demons surround us "like a trench round a garden." The wearing out of the Rabbi's clothes is due to the rubbing of demons; bruised legs come from their kicks. We are warned against talking to a friend we meet at night, lest he should turn out to be a demon, or drinking water in which a demon may have

been standing. There is nothing in the least degree ghostly about them: the fear they inspire is a purely physical fear of the mischief they may do us, and we are on the watch for them, much as we might be on the watch for pickpockets in a crowd. To find the origin of their hostility to man we must go back to early days. It will be remembered that at some period of his life Adam lived with Lilith as his wife. No more picturesque figure than Lilith can be found in legend; yet here for once the rich storehouse of the Talmud fails us, for the Talmud itself contains only a few references to her, the most striking stories about her having been put into writing in post-Talmudic times. The Talmud once refers to her as a woman with long hair. It is this conception of her—the woman with long hair—that has most haunted the minds of men. One story tells us that one day when Adam was first feeling the longing for a human companion, he caught sight of the beautiful Lilith and begged for her to be given

him as a wife; but Lilith, scorning an earth-made husband, flew away and left him. Adam still pressed his request, till at length three angels were sent to bring her back. By the Red Sea they found her, and threatened that if she would not return a hundred of her children should die each day. In reply, she tells them of her power over the human children who will some day cover the earth: male children she can destroy till the eighth day after their birth, and over female children her power lasts twenty days. Then the angels extract a promise from her to spare children who shall wear certain charms round their necks, and they let her remain; but one hundred of her children die each day. Lilith's children are beautiful, soulless creatures, higher than man in that they live through vast ages and can fly round the world and up to heaven, yet infinitely lower in that when they die they are destroyed for ever. Therefore Lilith hates Eve's children, and is ever trying to kill them, even though she cannot destroy their

souls. When a child laughs in its sleep, Lilith is laughing and playing with it, and will take it unless the child be sharply awakened and Lilith bidden "Go, cursed Lilith, for thy abode is not here." To this day in Eastern Europe, and among the poor emigrants who arrive in London, the infant is surrounded by charms to protect it from Lilith. Should the mother be absent and forget to hang the charms, she may return to find the child dead. There will be no outward mark of violence, but a close search will sometimes show one long golden hair which Lilith has pulled from her head and tied tightly round the child's throat.

From the Talmud we learn that for 130 years after his expulsion from Eden Adam begat devils of various kinds, while other accounts tell us that Eve also bore devils during the same time. Some stories even represent Eve as living with Zammael after he had tempted her to eat of the forbidden tree. Such stories are supposed to have been brought back from Babylon after the

captivity, and to be founded on the Zoroastrian legend of Yima, who was obliged, while in the power of the serpent, to marry a devil, while his wife likewise married a devil, from which unions sprang apes, bears, and black men.

Besides the demons who owe their descent to these misalliances of the first parents, there were others who were to have gone into human bodies, when, at the very moment they were about to be embodied, the Sabbath intervened. They lurk in dark or evil places, particularly in old ruins, ever ready to do mischief if they find a traveller alone. Darkness is their natural ally, and the solitary traveller most likely to be injured. Therefore, if in danger, we should sleep with a light, and if alone, we should talk in a loud voice as though we had a friend near us, or rap the lid of our drinking-vessel to deceive them into the belief that our companion is stirring, for these demons are the most guileless of creatures. We are also taught many incantations and other means to out-

wit them, as well as ways of detecting their presence. If we strew cinders on our bed, in the morning we may trace the marks of claws which have pressed them : what are these marks but the pressure of demons' feet ? Three hundred different species of male evil demon exist. In three things they resemble angels—namely, in that they know the future (by eavesdropping at heaven's curtains), that they possess wings, and that they can fly from end to end of the earth. In three things they resemble man,—they eat, propagate their species, and die.

Of all the stories about demons which we read in the Talmud, the most interesting is associated with the name of King Solomon. No one—not even David—ever had so great a power over the spiritual world as Solomon, who has acquired in the Talmudic legends such reputation for a knowledge of magic as Vergil acquired in the legends of the Middle Ages, and with as little apparent reason. The struggles between Solomon, armed with

the ring and chain on which is engraved the Holy Name, and Ashmedai, prince of demons, are none of the titanic struggles between the powers of good and evil which the European reader might expect. Chained to his place and tortured by Solomon, Ashmedai is as little like the sublime unconquerable Prometheus of Greek tragedy as Zammael, who crept into Paradise to deceive Eve, is like the proudly defiant Satan of 'Paradise Lost,' who,

"above the rest,
In shape and gesture proudly eminent,
Stood like a tower."

In the Talmudic legends there is none of the temper of revolt against authority, nor is there any trace of that conflict between two noble and irreconcilable ideals which is usually regarded as the basis of all true tragedy. The European conception of hero or devil who will yield to no power, look in the face of gods and men and ask no quarter, conquering Fate herself by sheer human courage, is utterly unknown. The

close intimacy and constant struggle from infancy against demons has bred a kind of homely familiarity, and want of dramatic dignity, in the conflicts with them. The contests are contests of wits, in which the conquered accepts his beating and waits his turn, while the conqueror may remain on terms of almost bantering good-humour with his opponent. So, again, Talmudic humour is never the Teutonic "tint of good-humour and robust mirth in the middle of fearful things," but a whimsical, sometimes fantastic, humour that laughs now at its enemy's discomfiture, now at its own suffering.

To return to the story of Solomon and Ashmedai. We learn that in order to build the Temple without using any defiling iron tool, Solomon determined to obtain the Shamir, a worm about the size of a barley-corn, which could split open rocks and file through the hardest material. Collecting his 300 inferior demons, he tortured them to learn where Shamir could be found. They told him, however, that only Ash-

medai, prince of demons, knew the secret; so Solomon sent Benoiiah, armed with the magic ring and chain, to entrap Ashmedai and bring him a prisoner. Every day Ashmedai went up to heaven to listen to the divine discourse on the Law, in order to turn the lesson to his own advantage. One day, on coming down, Ashmedai found that his private well of clear water had been drained off, and in place of it he found a new well filled with wine. At first he was suspicious, but when his thirst overcame his fears he drank deeply, and soon fell asleep. Then Benoiiah emerged from hiding, put the chain round him, and led him away in triumph. On his enforced journey Ashmedai uprooted trees and knocked down houses, till a widow called to him, "Spare my house." Bending aside to grant her prayer, he broke one of his bones (Solomon was thinking of this incident when he said, "A soft tongue breaketh the bone"—Prov. xxv. 15). Presently he saw a blind man, and guided him, because, as he explained later, it was a meritorious

deed to help a good man; he saw a drunkard, and guided him, because he was a wicked man, and would be punished in the next world, and so needed all the help he could find in this world; he saw a wedding-party, and wept, because the bridegroom would soon die, and the bride wait thirteen years for her husband's brother; he saw a man ordering boots to last seven years, and laughed, because the man might not live seven days; he saw a juggler, and laughed again, because he did not know, though a juggler, that he was standing over a treasure. Brought to Jerusalem, Solomon kept him without food for three days, while Benoiiah went from one to the other carrying messages (sometimes false ones), and reporting to Solomon what Ashmedai said and did. Finally taken before Solomon, he said, "You have conquered all the world; why do you want to conquer me? When you are dead, you will only have four cubits of earth." Solomon asked for Shamir, and was referred to the Prince of the Sea. The Prince

of the Sea had entrusted it to a moor-hen, who used it for splitting mountains, and making new valleys for her brood. Every night the hen returned Shamir to the Prince of the Sea, according to her oath, which she would not break. Benoiiah, however, again devised a plan. He covered the hen's brood with a huge transparent crystal, which allowed the mother to see, but not to approach, her young. The hen brought out Shamir, which was at once taken by Benoiiah, whereupon the hen strangled herself. The building of the Temple could now proceed. Every day Solomon would visit Ashmedai and talk to him, for he was not above learning from every one. "How are you any greater or more clever than I?" he asked one day when the Temple was finished. "Take off my chain and ring and I will show you," answered the demon. Solomon removed the chain, whereupon Ashmedai promptly swallowed him, spat him out 400 miles distant (some say brushed him 400 miles with his wing), took his form, and sat

on his throne (hence Eccl. i. 3 and xii. 2, 10, "*This* was my portion," meaning he had only his staff left when he found himself 400 miles away from Jerusalem). For a time all went well, but soon the Rabbis and courtiers began to notice that something was strange about the king's behaviour. Taking the queen into their confidence, they asked if she had noticed anything unusual, and going into further particulars, asked if she had noticed the king's feet,—for they knew that though a demon could assume any form, he could never change his feet, which remained either hoofs or claws. The queen said he now always wore stockings, and the inferior queens told the same tale, which further increased the suspicion of the people about the palace. About this time rumours began to arrive of a wandering beggar who went about declaring to every one that he was King Solomon, and who was supposed to be mad. "If he always tells the same tale," said the Rabbis, "perhaps he is not mad." They sent for him secretly,

and gave him the magic chain and ring. The beggar then appeared before the supposed king. There was no seizing of bows and clash of spear upon shield, but Solomon showed the magic symbols, and Ashmedai, recognising a higher power, gave a cry and vanished, and Solomon resumed his throne. But for ever after he lived in fear of Ashmedai, and that is why he kept "three-score mighty men" to guard his bed (Song of Songs iii. 7).

The exact position occupied by Ashmedai is obscure. In spite of the minute particulars we are given about the character, habits, and tastes of demons, we get nothing like a scientific classification. Though described as the chief or prince of demons, Ashmedai does not appear to be identical with Zammael or Satan. Milton makes him one of the rebellious angels, while some modern writers have tried to identify him with Ahriman. It is generally agreed that the belief in powers of evil was brought back from Babylon, and was of Zoroastrian origin. The Rabbis of the Talmud never

altogether accept such doctrines as an essential part of the "Law." Some seem to regard the demon stories as literally true; others as not of binding authority, but useful to embellish or help to impress more important doctrines. This toleration with which they regard the belief in demons may be illustrated by the quaint decision that for a man to blow out a candle on the Sabbath in order to save expense is a sin (being "work" on the day of rest), but to blow out a candle because he is afraid of a robber *or an evil spirit* is not a sin. So, again, we are given the three following oddly assorted reasons for avoiding old ruins: (1) because we may provoke a suspicion of having made an assignation; (2) because the ruins may fall; (3) because they may contain an evil spirit. The beautiful, golden-haired, cloven-hoofed Lilith herself loves to lurk in old ruins and entice the incautious traveller to his destruction. She is attended by 478 legions of demons, all ready to do a mischief. (The Hebrew

letters which form the name of Lilith also stand for the number 478.)

Though the common type of demon is as a rule more mischievous than dangerous, there are bands of destroying angels far more to be dreaded. Myriads of them used to roam abroad, slaying right and left. One day the leader of them met a certain famous Rabbi, and said, "I would injure you, but that I was warned to preserve you on account of your knowledge of the Law." "If I be so favourably regarded," said the Rabbi, "I banish you altogether." He begged for a release from banishment, and was allowed to roam forth two nights a-week, but later, again meeting the same Rabbi, he was banished altogether; but still he and his band injure travellers in lonely places. One night in the year is still to-day regarded by some people as particularly dangerous: on that night all evil spirits are abroad, and the man who is doomed for death within the year is liable to see his shadow moving before

him without a head. And just as on one night in the year evil spirits have full power, so on one night (Passover Eve) only good spirits are abroad, and children may go to bed without fear.

Of all the wicked angels, the one most to be dreaded is the Angel of Death. The Talmud tells innumerable stories concerning him. Sometimes he is identified with Zamael or Satan; another time we are told that Satan, Evil Thoughts, and the Angel of Death are different names for one and the same thing; but this unusual attempt at resolving his personality into a mere personification of attributes was certainly not the popular notion of the angel. He leaps, sword in hand, before the women who return in procession from funerals; therefore we should avoid meeting them, lest the sword strike us. Should we meet such a procession, we should leap aside and escape behind some river or wall, or at least, if this cannot be done, turn aside our face and utter the charm, "And the Lord said unto Satan, the Lord rebuke

thee." Sometimes he hides his sword in empty synagogues, but never in a synagogue containing children or ten men (the full complement necessary for a complete service); therefore in times of plague we should beware of entering a synagogue alone. So, in times of plague, we should avoid the middle of the road, for then the angel rages through the centre, slaying right and left; on the other hand, during times of peace and good health we should avoid the byways, for then the angel is lurking in hiding. When the village dogs howl, we may know that the Angel of Death is abroad. It is well known that the angel cannot touch any one while engaged in studying the Law. Many stories are told of the angel being obliged to make noises to divert his victim's attention from the Law, because he could slay him. The device which he employed (p. 140) to entrap David was repeated with variations against many other learned men. Once he came to a victim's door in the guise of a mendicant (the study of the

Law must always be interrupted in the cause of charity). When the master appeared the angel said to him, "You had mercy on a poor man,—why will you not have mercy on me? I am the Angel of Death." The appeal was not in vain; the master ceased to study the Law, and died. Moses, it will be remembered, overcame the Angel of Death by his mere presence, and was taken from earth by God Himself. Aaron and Miriam are reported to have likewise conquered him.

One there was who foiled the Angel of Death by a trick. The story is told by Longfellow in "The Spanish Jew's Tale." Briefly, it is that when the time came for Rabbi Ben Levi to die, as a reward for his piety God bade the Angel of Death do all that he might ask. Told by the angel of the boon, Ben Levi's request was that he might, before he died, be allowed to look upon his future abode in Paradise. The angel bade him follow. "Give me thy sword for safety," he said. The angel complied, and together they

reached the walls of Paradise. The angel lifted him upon the wall, whereupon he at once leaped into Paradise, and swore by the Holy Name that he would not return. The angel still held him by the coat, but himself had no power to enter after him. Then came the angels before God, telling what this man had done, and how he had entered Paradise by force. As it was found that he had never in his life broken his oath, he was allowed to keep this last oath also, and return no more. When he would have kept the angel's sword too, he was bidden give it back; but first he extracted from the angel a promise that in future, when he slew, no man should see his sword, for beforetime he had slain openly, "even the infant in the mother's lap." Thus men are now spared from seeing the sword, but the belief yet lingers that the "Malach" (angel) himself may sometimes be seen by watchers in the room; and among the superstitious, wrestling with him has acquired a very literal meaning, so that a

sick man, not learned enough to wrestle for himself, may nevertheless be helped to overcome the angel by the prayers and study of a learned man employed to sit at the bedside.¹

Closely akin to the Angel of Death, if not identical with him, is Satan. He descends and tempts, rises and accuses, and comes down and takes the soul. There are many stories of him too in the Talmud. He appeared to Abraham when the latter was on the way to sacrifice Isaac. After vainly tempting him, he finally told Abraham that the lamb would be sacrificed, and not Isaac; to which Abraham replied, "The punishment of a liar is not to be believed, even when he speaks the truth." He also appeared to David once in the form of a ram, at which David shot an arrow, when he was led into the land of the Philistines and

¹ Readers of 'Children of the Ghetto' will remember how Moses Ansell was summoned at all hours of the day and night to wrestle with the angel, and when the angel had retired worsted, was dismissed with a mouthful of rum and a shilling.

captured by Goliath's brother, and once again in the form of a bird, at which David shot an arrow which penetrated a beehive within which Bath Sheba was washing. When the "Law" was given to Moses the fact was carefully concealed from Satan, lest he should sneer when the people worshipped the Golden Calf, this act of idolatry being foreseen in heaven: for though man has freewill, yet the course he will choose is known beforehand. "I have power over all the nations except Israel," he is represented by Rabbi Eliezer as saying to God. "And over Israel too, on the Day of Atonement, if they have committed sin, but not otherwise," he is told. Therefore on the Day of Atonement the sins of Israel are cast upon the scape-goat, that the Holy Word may not be vain.¹ There is a legend, too, that on the day following the Day of Atonement Satan goes to heaven and says, "All

¹ This is how the ancient Rabbi explains the curious ceremony which has excited much discussion, being sometimes explained as a relic of primitive devil-worship.

these people who were pretending to repent yesterday are going about their business as usual to-day"; wherefore on this day too people should spend an extra time in prayer.

Among the conquests in the spirit world should be counted the victory over the Spirit of Idolatry, which was caught by the Israelites in the days of Nehemiah after much fasting and prayer. They tore the hair from his mane, and his shrieks could be heard four hundred parsas' distance. Then said the captors, "What can we do? If he cries so loud, God will pity him." They threw him into a leaden pot to muffle his voice (see Zech. v. 8), and so slew him, and since that time there has been no idolatry.

Nevertheless the Talmud is full of warnings against being entrapped into idolatry. No opportunity is ever omitted of drawing some moral against the sin and folly of such worship. Nearly every wicked man has incidentally added idol-worship to his crimes. As usual, fences are set up round

the Law, and no Israelite is allowed to do anything which might by any conceivable stretch of imagination be interpreted by others as an act of idol-worship. Even a dip in a public bath containing an ornamental statue at the end might be interpreted as an act of bowing to the figure, and is therefore forbidden, except under circumstances which would preclude such an inference, and which are minutely analysed by one Rabbi. For the same reason we may not bow down to drink water when an idol stands at the head of the spring, nor may we even pick up money scattered on the ground in front of an idol, unless we can do so without appearing to bow down. Frequent allusions to idolatrous neighbours, and whole cities of idolaters, trying to induce Israelites to copy their worship, would seem to suggest that these rules were not so far-fetched as might at first sight be imagined.

On one occasion an Israelite and pagan woman were travelling together, when they passed a small wayside temple. The

woman went in to worship the idol. When she came out her companion declared his intention of going in to worship. "Are you not an Israelite?" she asked. He replied that was nothing to her, and went in. The mode of worship of the idol whose temple they had passed, though intensely interesting historically and psychologically to a student of the evolution of religious worship, unfortunately cannot here be particularised.¹ It is enough to say that the Israelite intended by his act to insult and show his scorn for the idol; but the old priest in attendance declared he knew just what the god liked, and had worshipped better than any one before him; and the Rabbis afterwards decided that, in spite of his intention, he had in fact committed an act of idolatry. One heathen woman is held up to our admiration who wished to worship this idol, by way of returning thanks on her recovery from an illness, but when the

¹ The story can be found in the Talmud, about the middle of Sanhedrin.

nature of the ceremony was explained to her, declared she would rather endure her illness over again than perform such a degrading rite.

There is a similar story of an Israelite who threw a stone at an idol to express his contempt, but was afterwards horrified to learn that he had unconsciously performed the very act by which this idol was worshipped.

A curious question is raised in connection with idols which shows that faith-healing was as effective in ancient as in modern days. "How is it," asks one, "that though we know idols have no power, yet there are so many well-authenticated cases of lame and sick people being cured after a visit to them?" The Rabbi's answer is a not very convincing parable: There was once an upright citizen with whom people deposited their goods without a witness. One suspicious citizen, however, always brought a witness when he wished to deposit any article. Once he failed to bring a witness. "Now

let us punish him for his suspicions by keeping the deposit," the wife of the upright man suggested; but the husband replied, "Shall we lose our good name because he has behaved improperly?" So when it is appointed that a man shall suffer a disease so long, and be cured on an appointed day, shall God refuse to allow that man to be cured because at that very moment he happens to be visiting a heathen temple?

The fear that any created figure might be worshipped, necessarily put a check upon all developments of art; yet this check is perhaps not without compensation, for the desire to express ideal or abstract conceptions of the mind through some imperfect material medium found another channel, and in place of a few broken fragments of perfectly chiselled marble we have such imperishable works as the Books of Job and Isaiah, and the writings attributed to David and Solomon. To take one example: if some Jewish Phidias, under influence of one of the great national

deliveries, had wrought a war-horse and rider on a frieze of the Temple, it is difficult to believe we should have possessed a work of art nobler in conception, or modelled with a grander simplicity, than the description of the war-horse in Job xxxix.

It must not be supposed that all the invisible powers hovering round are hostile. Some are indifferent, while others are actually helpful. Some appear to preside over the elements, such as the Prince of the Sea, or the Prince of Hail. Then there is the mysterious angel Metatron, and there are the Great Angels, who appear at times to people mentioned in the Old Testament, as when Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael appear to Abraham. "On my right hand, Michael; on my left, Gabriel; before me, Ariel; behind me, Raphael; and above me the Divine Presence," is a charm potent to ward off evil. We hear most of Gabriel. He, alone among angels, is acquainted with the whole of the seventy languages of the ancient world; therefore when we pray, our prayers should be in

Hebrew, for if we pray in the vernacular Aramaic tongue, which Gabriel alone understands, unless he happen to hear, our prayer will remain unanswered. He has three names, which signify, respectively, that he argues before Heaven for Israel's sake; that he restrains Israel's sin; and that if his defence avail not, no other angel will attempt Israel's defence. It was Gabriel who cooled the flames for Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, cast into the furnace by Nebuchadnezzar. The Prince of Hail had offered to cool the flames in the last case, but Gabriel urged that it would be a greater miracle if he, a Prince of Fire, were allowed to put out the flames. We are also told that he cooled the flames for Abraham when he was cast into the furnace by Nimrod, but elsewhere in the Talmud we read that God Himself cooled them.

No angels ever take human food, though sometimes they give the appearance of eating. Being made of air or fire, their food is equally subtle, consisting of the smell of fire and fumes of water. The

angels are humble and modest in each other's company, and when asked to sing praises, say, "You begin first; you are greater than I." Many were destroyed for opposing the creation of man; others are created only to sing praises, and are at once destroyed. Round the head of one Rabbi, when he studied the Law, was grouped such a number of fiery angels that every fowl of the air which flew overhead was burnt.

Sometimes angels are put to a homely use, for apart from the wonderful ways in which various cabbalists (p. 281) have used them, there is a tradition that if the mistress of the household may have accidentally failed to salt the meat sufficiently before cooking it (as required according to strict ritual), if she leave a piece of salt by the side, the angel will finish it for her.

Every Israelite on the eve of the Sabbath (which begins from sunset on Friday night) is accompanied home by a good and a bad angel on either side. If he find the table laid, the candles duly lighted, and his

wife and children dressed in their best to welcome the Sabbath, the good angel says, "May all your Sabbaths be like this," and the bad angel has to say "Amen." Otherwise the bad angel says the words, and the good angel is forced to say "Amen." This idea of welcoming the Sabbath is very strong in the Talmud. The duty of obeying the Law is a gift and privilege, and is accepted with a rejoicing which has nothing akin to the joy of the ascetic in self-mortification. The "yoke of the Law" never becomes a burden till it begins to be cast off. The evening meal above alluded to which ushers in the Sabbath is in particular a joyous family gathering, at which even material pleasures, such as special table delicacies, appear spiritualised symbols of the joyful ceremony. At its conclusion the head of the household reads, in honour of his wife, "A virtuous woman who can find? For her price is far above rubies," from Proverbs xxxi.

As may be readily supposed among people so closely in touch with the spirit-

ual world, miracles are constantly effected for the benefit of good men and women in moments of trouble. It is recorded in the Talmud how a Rabbi, travelling along a road, came suddenly face to face with four hungry lions. At the critical moment two legs of meat fell from heaven: one satisfied the lions, and the other the Rabbi kept for himself, the College of Rabbis having decided that it could not be the leg of a forbidden animal, as no unclean thing fell from heaven.

More often miracles occur to save people from being put to shame in public. One Rabbi was so poor that he seldom had even bread to eat; nevertheless every week his wife made a brave show of lighting a fire and pretending to cook the dinner for the coming Sabbath. One day a spiteful neighbour came in, and, finding no one in the room, opened the oven to see whether there was anything being cooked. To her amazement she found the oven full, and called out, "Bring a bread-shovel, or the bread will be burnt." "I have gone for it," re-

plied the Rabbi's wife; and so in truth she had, although she had left the oven empty, for she was accustomed to miracles happening. Miracles were indeed of constant occurrence at this house. One day her daughter accidentally mixed oil and vinegar and put them in the Sabbath lamp. The Sabbath having begun, she could not put out the lamp and refill it, but nevertheless the lamp burnt till the Sabbath's conclusion. Another day a certain woman called at the house and complained that the beams which she had bought for her own house were too short: the Rabbi's wife prayed, and they were lengthened. Yet again a neighbour called to complain of her goats, which had done some damage. "If they have done so, may wolves eat them," said the Rabbi's wife; "if not, may they impale bears on their horns,"—and the goats duly returned home with bears impaled on their horns. How could such a poor woman afford to keep goats? we ask, and the explanation is at once forthcoming. A neighbour acci-

dentally left some fowls on her premises, and the Rabbi's wife was too honest to eat the eggs which they had laid there. The eggs accordingly were hatched, and ultimately the Rabbi's wife sold the chickens and bought the goats. We are left with an impression that it is somewhat egotistic, or even boorish, constantly to record miracles which have happened to us, unless indeed we repeat them to illustrate some argument. We are told, for instance, that Isaiah saw all the same wonders as Ezekiel, but said little about them, because he was like a townsman who often saw the king, and was not surprised, but Ezekiel was like a countryman who saw the king for the first time.

Other times the object of the miracle was to decide some vexed point of the Law, and then of course it was worth recording. Once a Rabbi called for miracles to prove that his view was correct. Various miracles more and more striking occurred without convincing his opponents, and apparently without causing them the least

surprise, for they merely replied that miracles proved nothing. "Let the walls of the college fall if my view be right," he said at length, and the walls began to fall over. "Why should ye walls interfere if scholars discuss?" said his opponent, and the walls ceased to totter. In honour of the Rabbi who invoked them they remained leaning, but in honour of his opponent they would not fall, and in this position, we read, they remain unto this day.

From miracles there is but a short step to magic and witchcraft. The man who asks for a miracle, may be granted the divine aid in response to his prayer; but the man who practises magic, wields power over unseen forces, and sets them in motion to do his bidding, willingly or unwillingly. Strict laws existed against the practice of any form of magic, but it seems nevertheless to have been very common. Anything that strikes us as unusual or suspicious may be part of some magic charm. If we see two women sitting on opposite

sides of the road, we should avoid them, for they are evidently practising witchcraft. One Rabbi had said that eatables left in the road might be removed by the next traveller, but a later contributor to the Talmud says that this was true before the practice of witchcraft had become so common, but now eatables left in the road would probably have been left there for a purpose, and we should beware of them. Egypt was always famous for its witchcraft in Talmudic as well as Biblical ages, and is constantly referred to as the home of the Black Art. It will be remembered that when ten measures of various good and evil things came upon earth, of the ten measures of witchcraft nine went to Egypt, and one to the rest of the world. Sometimes questions would arise for serious debate as to whether some display had been an exhibition of magic, or merely a conjurer's trick which dazzled the eyes. One Rabbi comes before the College with a story of how he has seen a man, riding upon a camel, cut off the camel's head

and then ring a bell, whereupon the camel has stopped. Is this magic? The sorely puzzled College at length decides that it is merely a conjurer's trick.

On the narrow border-line between magicians and miracle-workers come the rain-makers. That they were on the right side of the line is clear from the answer of one Rabbi, when an appeal was addressed to him to make rain, that he could not make rain, but could pray for rain. Still, the gift of successfully praying for rain was peculiar to certain individuals, and sometimes even ran in families. In times of drought, rain-makers were sought out in much the same way as "water-finders" are still sought out in country districts of England. Some most curious, and at the same time characteristic, stories are recorded of the way in which the prayers for rain were conducted. We read that among the Israelites settled in Babylon, when rain was needed, the good men used to say, "Let us combine and pray, and perhaps we shall find favour";

but in Palestine, when rain was needed, some pious man would ask for a sack to buy grain, then go away and pray secretly (as in Ps. cxxx. 1, "Out of the depths have I cried"), and when the rain came would return and say, "It is now unnecessary to go to market, as after this rain we shall be able to get grain anywhere." Here we find evidence of the superior modesty of the Israelite of Palestine, and also of the growing rivalry between the schools of Palestine and Babylon.

There is one story of a rain-maker who drew a circle round him in the sand, and vowed he would not leave it till the rain fell. A few drops of rain immediately descended. "This is only to release me from my vow," he declared. It was not the kind of rain which the country needed, and he prayed again, till at length the parched earth was relieved by a steady downpour of gentle rain. Such methods did not find favour among the colleges of Rabbis, but what was to be done with such a man when Heaven granted all his

prayers? He was like a petulant child wont to say, "Father, bathe me in hot water; father, bathe me in cold water; give me nuts, almonds, apricots, pomegranates," and still be forgiven and indulged each time.

A grandson of the last-mentioned Rabbi had inherited his power of making rain. On one occasion some young Rabbis, going to seek him and ask for his intercession, found him in a field engaged in weeding. To their friendly greeting he gave no answer, but merely arose and accompanied them. On the way they noticed many things: first, that he carried his coat upon one shoulder, and, instead of using it as a pad for his wooden implement, placed the implement upon the other; next, that he carried his shoes till he came to water, and then put them on his feet in order to cross; then, that whenever he came to a thorny path he raised his garments and allowed his bare flesh to be torn; next, that when they reached the city his wife appeared to

meet him dressed in her best; on reaching the house, that the guests entered last; on sitting down to table, that they were offered nothing to eat; and lastly, that the elder son was offered one loaf and the younger two. Presently they heard him whisper to his wife the cause of the visit, and add, "Let us go to the attic and pray, and if the rain should be granted, it will not appear to be due to us." Husband and wife then went to the attic, which appears to have been visible from the guests' room, and prayed quietly, each in a different corner, and at length the rain-cloud appeared in the direction of the wife's corner. Then they returned to the guests, and the husband at length asked the reason of their visit. "We have come to ask you to pray for rain," they said. "But now there is no need," he replied, "for the rain has come." They told him that this answer was useless, for they saw through his device; then, on their begging him to explain the various things they had noticed dur-

ing the day, he gave them the following answers: "I did not return your greeting because I had hired myself out as a labourer, and might not waste my employer's time by returning greetings. The garment which I placed on my shoulder I had borrowed to wear, not to use out as a pad. Along the road I could see where I was stepping, but not in the water. I drew up my garments along the thorny path because the wounds in flesh will heal, but not the tears in a garment. My wife met me at the city dressed in her best, that I might feel no temptation to look upon any other woman. I entered the house first because I knew nothing about you. I offered you nothing to eat because I knew you would refuse when you saw there was not enough for all, and I did not wish to receive your thanks when you would have received nothing. I gave but one loaf to the elder boy because he had been home all day, and had probably helped himself to food, but the younger had been all day

at school, and was probably hungry. The rain-cloud appeared in the direction of my wife's corner, rather than of mine, because my wife, being always at home, is able to give food to the poor, whereas I only give them coins to purchase their own food."

The art of making imps, or speaking-heads, so well known in both Christian and Jewish medieval legends, is often mentioned in the Talmud. One Rabbi made a man and sent him to a friend, who questioned him but received no answer. "Better return to earth, whence you were taken," said the friend; "I see you were made by one of my colleagues." There are two forms of inquiring of the dead: one is, keeping and consulting a dead man's head; the other is, calling up the dead. The dead who are thus called come up feet foremost, but on Sabbaths they cannot be called up. Here we have one of the proofs (see p. 255) that the Sabbath is not a day arbitrarily chosen as the seventh by man, but is the real Sabbath of God.

Sometimes the dead are restored to life, and continue to live out their natural lives in the body. One year two Rabbis were celebrating together the annual feast which recalls the deliverance from Haman. One took too much wine, and in a state of intoxication killed the other. Coming to his senses, he immediately prayed for him to be restored, and the friend returned to life. Next year the Rabbi who had effected the miracle again asked his friend to celebrate the feast with him, but the friend refused, pleading that there might not always be a miracle.

With so narrow a line between the living and dead, it was easy for the spirits of the departed to return with messages. The soul of a dead man, summoned back and questioned about death, declared that in dying there was no more pain than in removing a hair from milk; yet every soul, if ordered back to life, would pray to be allowed to remain disembodied, only through the fear of death.

The souls of the returned dead were

quite as real as the living. They were no "pale heads" or gibbering phantoms, such as the early Greeks believed in, moving together "like a cluster of squealing bats in a cavern."¹ Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are constantly represented as being informed of things which take place in the world. The calling up of Samuel by Saul as told in the Old Testament, and the question "Why hast thou disquieted me?" might at first sight be thought to suggest that the writer would represent him as resting far removed from earthly cares, but the Talmud gives another interpretation. When the witch says, "I see divine forms [the plural is used in the Hebrew] coming up" (1 Sam. xxviii. 13), she refers to Moses, whom Samuel asked to accompany him because he was "disquieted." Why was he disquieted? Because he feared it was the Day of Judgment; and if such a righteous man feared judgment, how much more should less righteous men fear it?

¹ Some Rabbis, however, are said to have believed in the existence of a kind of "shade" as well as a soul.

But it is not only matters of great importance which are told, nor leaders of the nation who are informed; daily gossip is still carried on. The Law should not be discussed in the presence of a dead man, lest his soul hovering near should be vexed at being unable to join in the discussion. Once a man who had given away some money in charity was so persecuted on that account by his wife that he ran away and spent the night in the burial-ground. There he heard two dead girls talking together. "Let us wander about the world," said one, "and listen behind veil to God's decrees for the year." "I cannot, for I am buried under a covering of reeds," said her companion; "but you go." Presently the first returned, and told how it was decreed that corn sown in the first rain should be that year beaten down by hail. Profiting by what he had heard, the listener sowed that year in the second rain and saved his crops. Next year he went to the same grave and heard the same preliminary conversation. "And what did you hear?"

asked the first spirit when her companion returned. "That what is planted in the second rain shall be destroyed by fire." Again the listener profited by what he had heard; but his wife's curiosity being aroused, she extracted the story of his listenings in the burial-ground, and shortly afterwards, in a quarrel with the mother of one of the dead girls, revealed the secret, offering to show her where her daughter lay buried under reeds. Next time the listener went to the graves the second girl replied, when her companion bade her go forth as usual, "Let me be at peace. These things which have passed between us have been heard by the living." The story contains one of the many illustrations of a good deed of charity leading indirectly to a benefit falling upon the benefactor. The wife here described is a not uncommon type in the Talmud. The husband frequently does nothing but study the Law (though to be truly meritorious he should also practise a trade), and the wife is a hard-working woman who manages all the business affairs; kind of

heart but sharp of tongue, she resents seeing the results of her household economies squandered in pious deeds, and has no hesitation in telling her husband what she thinks of him.

If such adventures happened at home in an ordinary burial-ground, what might not happen to travellers who went to the end of the world,—the wonderful ancient world, in which people had but to go far enough in order to find countries and people the like of which had never been imagined in the wildest fancies of dreamland?

If to-day we can read with pleasure the adventures told in the 'Arabian Nights,' knowing them to be tales, we may fancy the glow of wonder and excitement with which men and women of two thousand years ago listened to such adventures as are recorded in the Talmud, believing them to be true.¹ The wonder

¹ Even those who contend that such stories have an allegorical meaning may nevertheless admit that the majority of uninitiated listeners accepted them literally. It

of the ancient world, perhaps last felt by

“stout Cortes, when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific,”

had not yet been destroyed by men who learned to sail round it.

The weird story of the Rabbi who found the enchanted desert where the dead Ephraimites were lying has been already told (p. 119); but this was not the only adventure which befell that same Rabbi. Another time his Arab guide showed him Mount Sinai surrounded by standing serpents which resembled white asses. Yet another time the same Arab took him to the spot where the children of Korah were swallowed up. From two crevices in the earth smoke was issuing: the Rabbi put some damp wool on the end

must be remembered, too, that travellers' tales which are incredible to modern people were not necessarily incredible to the ancients. Many centuries later people undoubtedly believed the stories about Prester John's kingdom (see Baring Gould's 'Myths of the Middle Ages'); and facts of natural history, hardly less wonderful than the stories of Talmudic monsters, are incidentally mentioned as being well known in such books as 'The Complete Angler,' which no one would ever suggest to contain esoteric doctrines.

of a spear, pushed it into the crevice, and drew it out singed. "Stoop and listen," said the Arab; whereupon the Rabbi bent down and heard the words, "Moses and the Law are true, and we are liars." "Every thirtieth day of the month," said the Arab, "they are turned over in Gehenna like a piece of meat, and they utter these words."

The more common stories are concerned with beasts, fishes, and vegetables of monstrous size. One Rabbi tells how he saw an alligator as large as a town of sixty houses. A snake swallowed it, and a raven swallowed the snake and then sat upon a tree. "Think how strong that tree must have been," he adds; and his fellow-traveller remarks that if he had not been there he could not have believed it.

Another traveller, on board ship, saw a diamond floating in the sea encircled by a snake. A diver attempted to take possession of the diamond, but the snake opened its mouth and threatened to

swallow the ship. Then came a raven which bit off the snake's head ; but another snake appeared and placed the diamond upon the dead snake's body, whereupon the dead snake returned to life. But another raven appeared, and again bit off the snake's head, and threw the diamond upon the ship. The sailors placed the diamond upon some salted birds, whereupon the birds at once came to life and flew away with the diamond. (Magic properties were frequently attributed to diamonds.)

A somewhat similar story is that of a traveller who saw a basket floating in the sea set with diamonds and pearls. A diver tried to reach it, but the basket made a threatening gesture, and nearly broke his leg. He then sank the basket with a bag of sand, whereupon a voice from heaven said, "What business have you with this basket, which belongs to the wife of a Rabbi, who will deposit in it the purple for the righteous in the world to come?"

The sea-serpent, too, was discovered by these early travellers. One who saw it out at sea says it raised its head, its eyes were like moons, and rivers poured from its nostrils. His story is corroborated by another traveller, who distinguished horns on its head and engraved upon them the words: "I am of the small creatures of the sea, and measure four hundred parsas [1600 miles], and am going into Leviathan's mouth."

Yet another traveller cut up a leg of meat to prepare his dinner, put it on the grass, and went away to gather wood for roasting it. On his return, the leg had resumed the same shape as before it was cut. It was afterwards explained to him that the grass on which he had laid it was of a peculiar kind, which had the quality of combining things previously separated.

Among the stories common to all nations is that of the man or woman who sleeps for many years and wakes among strange faces. In the Talmud we find a Jewish

Rip Van Winkle who sleeps for seventy years, and on waking to find that no one knows him, prays for death.

A more wonderful story is that of the Rabbi who put down the basket which he was carrying while he went a short distance to say his prayers, and on his return found the basket gone. He fancied at first that thieves might have removed it, until his guide explained to him that it was not thieves, but the revolving wheel of heaven which had caught up his basket and was carrying it round the sky. "Return to-morrow at the same hour," added the guide, "and you will find it." And truly enough at that same hour next day the basket reappeared, and the Rabbi took it out of the window of the sky. He had in fact been standing on the extreme edge of the earth, which was scraped by the sky as it continually revolved, carrying the stars with it.¹

¹ There is a somewhat similar idea of the relative positions of heaven and earth in the 'Christian Topography' of Cosmas, the Egyptian monk of the sixth century who wrote

Another time this Rabbi saw a flock of geese whose feathers fell out owing to their fatness, while a whole river of fat flowed beneath them. He also surpassed all other travellers with regard to the wonderful fish which he saw, for on one occasion his boat was driven for three days and nights between the fins of a fish which was travelling in an opposite direction; and to help us further to realise the length of that fish, he adds that we are not to suppose he was not travelling quickly all that time, for his boat had the speed of an arrow.

Here we must leave the miraculous element in the Talmud, and conclude with a few legends of later historical events and stories about well-known Rabbis.

a book intended to refute certain heretical notions of the day. He describes heaven as a vault, whose extremities are glued to the ends of the earth, which is flat and oblong. (There is now an English translation of this work by J. W. M'Crindle.)

PART V.

OTHER TALES.

ESTHER, GREEK INFLUENCES, POST-BIBLICAL
LEGENDS, STORIES OF SOME FAMOUS RABBIS.

WITH the fall of the First Temple there opened for the Israelites an entirely new epoch in their history.

The Jew of Roman times must have dated modern history from the capture of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in much the same sense as the European of to-day dates modern history from the fall of Constantinople. The Babylonian conquest was not merely the most important of series of events, but was a turning-point in history. The old order of politics had passed away for ever. Deprived for a time of any national outlet for their activity, they

had turned to the long-neglected study of the Law; then on their return to Jerusalem new nations were rising into power, new ideals were being formed, and new questions began to be discussed; but above all, they had found themselves in contact with new civilisations, and those who desired to preserve their own peculiar individuality already began to dread that the influences which surrounded them would in the end absorb them.

To prevent this absorption, many rules were introduced by Ezra and Nehemiah, all tending to create a complete barrier between the Judæans and their neighbours. Rabbinical interpretation of the Law, too, had the effect (whether or no such was its intention) of making social intercourse almost impossible with persons who did not observe the same dietary laws, kept idols, and spent money and carried burdens on the Sabbath; and with little social intercourse there was little temptation either to intermarriage or apostacy.

Henceforth among the many sects which

arise, both in ancient Palestine and modern Europe, among Hellenists, Essenes and Nationalists, Sadducees and Pharisees, or (in modern days) Assimilationists and Zionists, there can be traced, in spite of some cross divisions, two distinct ideals, usually in conflict, which may be summed up respectively as "let us preserve the religion" and "let us preserve the race." The adherents of the one ideal, desiring to borrow all that appears best in the culture of the surrounding nations, would cast off all peculiarities of manner and custom, reserving only their right to private opinions on religious matters; the adherents of the other, rejoicing in being a "peculiar" people, unique in history and achievement, and claiming the same right as all other races to a special temperament reflected in special laws, customs, and literature, would preserve a racial as distinct from a religious individuality. While some of the former are strict Rabbinites, others have from time to time rejected Rabbinic authority, either, like the Karaites, returning to the

Bible, which, like all other reformers, they claim to have been perverted by its interpreters, or else in later days substituting for a ceremonialism which appeals neither to their reason nor sentiment those outward symbols of devotion met with in Europe. The latter, primarily Nationalists, though themselves often opposed to Rabbinism on quite different grounds, have usually regarded such an attitude as a species of religious snobbery, or at least the refuge of people who, through long aping of alien customs, have lost the capacity to understand the mysticism of the East, which, disdaining refuge in colour and form and outward solemnity, finds its highest religious expression in spiritual rather than sensuous ecstasy. Even some of those who do not accept the Rabbinic interpretation of the Law may still claim that the picturesque ceremonies which to one enlightened generation have become cramping superstitions, to a still later generation, looking back with a truer perspective, may become a proud heritage, endeared by ridicule and consecrated by persecution ;

nor have they failed to point out the striking coincidence that, whenever the Jew has appeared on the point of assimilating with his neighbours, an Antiochus or a Ferdinand and Isabella or a Dreyfus case has arisen to cast him back on himself and produce the inevitable reaction. Each party has doubtless produced its enthusiasts as well as its hypocrites. The Talmud, with its inimitable analysis, has described the hypocrite of the "orthodox" religious school (see p. 37); the hypocrites of the rival schools yet remain to be described. On rare occasions the two parties have combined, not so much to attain a common end, as that each may attain its own end through the aid of the other. Such a combination took place under the Hasmonæans, when the religious party, finding its religious worship in danger, joined with the national party to cast off the foreign yoke. Such a combination again probably took place in the great Bar Cochba rebellion, such little evidence as exists pointing to the national party having conversely made use of the religious enthusiasm inspired by Bar

Cochba to establish a new native dynasty ; and such a combination now took place on the return from Babylon, when Nehemiah restored at the same time the fences of the Temple and the fences of the Law.

It is certain that the generation which returned from Babylon regarded the teaching of the prophets in a very different spirit from that of their grandparents. A close contact with the Babylonians had cured the admiration for the neighbours "which were clothed with blue, governors and rulers, all of them desirable young men, horsemen riding upon horses," described by Ezekiel. The indifference and apathy of the days of Jeremiah had given place to a fanatical zeal, and the great event of the Babylonian captivity—namely, the narrow escape of the captives from massacre at the hands of Haman—rapidly assumed proportions which made it second only to the delivery from Egypt.

Esther is, of course, the heroine of the story, and Haman the villain. There is no subtlety in the character-drawing: in the

true Talmudic style the former has every possible virtue, and the latter commits every possible wickedness.

Ahasuerus was king of the whole world. There have only been two other such kings, namely, Ahab and Nebuchadnezzar. Darius made a claim to be king of the world, but he was only boasting (as shown by Daniel vi. 1), for he only ruled 120 provinces, whereas he should have ruled 127 provinces (Esther i. 1; corresponding with the years of Sarah's age!) to be king of the whole world. (Elsewhere we hear of ten kings holding universal dominion, beginning with Nimrod.)

The beginning of the whole story was a feast given by Ahasuerus on the Sabbath. Instead of beginning the feast with praise and study of the Law, the king and his friends were amusing themselves with idle talk. The conversation turned upon the beauty of the women of different nations. Some praised the Persian woman, others the Medes. Then the king spoke. "I have a wife who is neither Mede nor

Persian, but a Chaldæan, and fairer than either." So Vashti was summoned to show herself. Now Vashti was proud; she was a grand-daughter of Nebuchadnezzar, and knew that the king must be drunken to have sent her such a message. Instead of obeying, she sent back a scornful answer: "My father could pledge a thousand guests; you are already drunk." It was not really an outraged pride, however, far less a sense of modesty, which kept back Queen Vashti: it was an affliction which had suddenly come upon her. The nature of the affliction is not quite certain; some say deformity, others leprosy, others a tail, while yet others say a little face grew out of her own proper face. The reason for the affliction was that she had made her Jewish handmaidens work on the Sabbath. What punishment should she receive? the king asked the Rabbis; but they were afraid of finding themselves in the same dilemma as the courtiers whom we read of in Herodotus who saved Cræsus' life, when his conqueror's son, in a moment of pas-

sion, ordered him to be slain. If they gave judgment against her, they must condemn her to death, or they would be condoning her disobedience; but if she perished, next day the king might regret her absence and put to death her executioners. Therefore they pleaded that, being in captivity, they were unable to give judgment concerning a capital offence, and the king sought other advice.

Now Esther and Mordecai come upon the scene. Esther was one of the four most beautiful women who have ever lived, the others being Sarah, Rahab, and Abigail. She was like the myrtle-tree, neither tall nor short, and her complexion was like gold. A homely touch represents Mordecai as loitering about the steps of the palace to give her news of her own people, but another account says he provided her with meat killed and prepared according to the Jewish law. It is a much disputed question whether Mordecai belonged to the tribe of Judah or Benjamin. At all events, he was a member

of the great Sanhedrim, one qualification for which was a knowledge of all the seventy languages of the ancient world, and it was this knowledge which enabled him to discover the plot against the king's life, and give warning to Ahasuerus.

The king was not easily persuaded to give the order for the massacre. Some of the charges brought against the people by Haman have a curiously modern sound. "Their laws are different from those of all other people," he said; "they do not intermarry with us, or keep the king's laws. They always have a Sabbath or some festival. If a fly falls into their wine they throw away the fly and drink the wine, but if the king touches their wine they throw the wine away." (An allusion to one of the fences against idolatry. If a non-Jew touched a glass of wine, it was assumed he was about to make a libation to his gods, and the wine had therefore been used for an idolatrous purpose.) He further said, "Do not be afraid that their God will avenge the murder of His people,

for they no longer keep His commandments. Haman, as stated already, was a descendant of Agag the Amalekite; it was therefore only in the fitness of things that Mordecai should be a descendant of Saul. Haman was also an astrologer, and had fixed by astrology the day which was to be propitious for the expected massacre of the Israelites. Of his forty sons, ten were secretaries to the king.

The reason why Esther asked the king to a feast in her apartment was, that though she knew he was fickle, she thought that in his own apartment, among his courtiers, he would be less likely to rescind his decree for the massacre. When she appeared before him she was supported by three angels, who lent her grace.

At last when Haman, being sent for by the king, discovered that it was Mordecai who was to be honoured, his mortification knew no bounds. "Give him only fields and vineyards as a reward," he said. "He shall have that too," said the king. "Then it is enough to give him a village, and the

tolls of a river." "He shall have that too." Then Haman refused to go to Mordecai, but sent his son. Mordecai refused to see him, saying, "Send your father"; and finally, as though Haman's end were not bad enough, we get one last touch. His daughter, looking from her balcony at the figure on the noble horse, thought she was looking at her father, but when she found it was Mordecai who was being thus honoured, she threw herself from the balcony and perished.

The anniversary of the delivery is still celebrated by the giving of presents and merry-making. Still to-day in many countries cakes known as "Haman's ears" are distributed freely; a fast, too, is observed in memory of Esther's fast (Esther iv. 16); and the mention of Haman's name, even in the religious services, is the signal for an outburst of abhorrence and triumph.¹

Of the many years which elapsed between

¹ It cannot be said that Esther herself has really become one of the national heroines in the sense in which Sarah or Rebecca or Miriam are heroines. This attitude towards

Nehemiah and the Maccabees, history and tradition alike give but scanty details. The half-closed pages of history are always the most fascinating, and we are left to wonder at many possibilities. What trader first saw Rome? Did some colonist, perhaps some near ancestor of the Maccabees (though surviving records give no hint), passing to Tyre and Spain join Hannibal's army of many tongues and witness the battle of Cannæ? What feelings were inspired by the fall of the great "Philistine" city of Carthage?

The one individual who sufficiently impressed the popular imagination to attract to himself a group of legends was not even a Judæan, but one who sought by every means to identify himself with the race dreaded above all others by the Rabbis—namely, Alexander of Macedon. It is worthy of a passing comment that the

her may be illustrated by the case of an extremely orthodox old lady known to the writer, who persistently refused to fast on Esther's fast from a conviction that Esther was *not quite respectable*. True, the Rabbis praised her, but, being men, they would be easily taken in by her.

three greatest conquerors whom Europe has produced—Alexander, Cæsar, and Napoleon—have all been regarded by the Jews with peculiar veneration. The story is well known how, on his way to Jerusalem, Alexander was met by a deputation of priests and Levites, who induced him to withdraw his army. According to the Talmud, the Samaritans, who always appear as the evil genius of the nation, had persuaded Alexander to have the Temple destroyed. On the news reaching Jerusalem, the High Priest put on his priestly garments, and, accompanied by the Levites and all the leading citizens, left the city to meet Alexander. It was evening-time when the news had arrived, and all the deputation carried torches. They marched all night, and, as the sun rose, came suddenly face to face with the Greek army. On seeing the High Priest, Alexander descended from his chariot and bowed to the earth, and on being asked by his retinue why he paid such reverence to this simple old man, replied that he had seen his

image before him whenever he had gained a victory. "Who are all these people with him?" he asked his attendants. "They are rebel Jews," said the Samaritans. Turning to them, Alexander asked why they had come. The High Priest replied, "Every day in the Temple we pray for you and for your empire, and shall that Temple be destroyed on account of the slander of idolaters?" Alexander asked who were these idolatrous slanderers, and the Samaritans at his side were pointed out. "Do with them as you will; I deliver them up to you," he said; whereupon the wicked Samaritans were tied to their horses' tails and dragged as far as their temple on Mount Gerizim. This temple had been built soon after, and as a rival to, the Second Temple at Jerusalem, when the returned exiles had refused to acknowledge the Samaritans as true Israelites. By whispering slanderous stories to Alexander the Samaritans had hoped to bring about the destruction of the hated Temple at Jerusalem, but with a poetic justice

which recalls the fate of Haman, they now saw their own temple destroyed and the ground on which it had stood ploughed up.¹

Nor was this final overthrow of the Samaritans the only victory gained by the aid of Alexander. Before the Macedonian king there appeared certain African tribes claiming the land of Canaan, and basing their claim upon the Scriptures themselves (Num. xxxiv. 2). The champion of the Judæans who appears to answer them is one of the humblest citizens, hitherto always looked upon as a fool. "If they beat me in argument," he pleads, "they will only have beaten a fool, while if I beat them, it will be the Law itself which will have conquered." He gains permission to reply, and refers to Gen. ix. 25 ("Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren"). "Now, even granting that your ancestors originally possessed the land," he says, "to whom

¹ There is slight historical confusion here, as the event occurred some two centuries later, in the reign of Hyrcanus. None of the ancients ever troubled much about chronology.

should a slave's estate belong but to his master?" Called upon to reply, the Africans ask for three days to think of an answer. Alexander accordingly halts for three days to see whether any satisfactory answer will be given, but at the end of three days, finding no satisfactory answer, the Africans fly, leaving their fields and vineyards to the Judæans.

Next there appear before Alexander envoys from Egypt asking for the return of the gold and silver which they had lent to the Israelites when they left Egypt (Exod. xii.) The same champion appears on behalf of the Judæans, and replies from Exod. xii. 40 ("We served you for four hundred and thirty years, therefore give us wages first, and then we will consider your claim"). Again the envoys ask for three days to consider an answer; again Alexander waits three days, and again finding no satisfactory answer, the envoys fly, leaving the Judæans their fields and vineyards.

Lastly there appear some descendants of

Ishmael claiming an equal share of Abraham's inheritance with the Israelites. The same champion referred them to Gen. xxv. 5, 6 ("Abraham gave all that he had unto Isaac. But unto the sons of the concubines which Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts"), with same result.

In contrast with these slight stories, all tending to magnify the Israelites at the expense of their neighbours, is another weird and striking legend associated with Alexander. Wishing to explore Central Africa, he is told he cannot go beyond a certain point, for "mountains of darkness" bar the way. Pressing to be told the best means of travelling in those regions, he is advised to take Libyan asses, which can see in the dark, and a long cord. The long cord he is to tie securely on this side of the dark mountains and unwind it as he goes, so that if the worst comes he may, like Theseus, find his way back to safety by following the cord. He does as he is advised, and at length arrives beyond the dark mountains in a country inhabited

only by women. Wishing to subdue their country like all others, he is confronted by the women, with the dilemma that, if victorious, he will only have conquered women, and if defeated, he will suffer an indelible disgrace. Accordingly he makes peace with the inhabitants, and asks them to supply him with food. The women set before him a golden table, and place upon it golden loaves of bread. He asks for bread which he can eat, and the women reply, "If you only want ordinary bread, why did you take this long journey?" So impressed was Alexander with this answer that he departed, but he left behind him an inscription: "I, Alexander of Macedon, was a fool till I came to Africa and learned wisdom from women." On his way back, he sat down one day to take his meal by the side of a small river, and in the running water he washed and cleaned the fish he was going to eat; but when he tasted the fish which had been dipped in the stream, the flavour of it was so wonderful that he said, "This small river can flow

from nowhere but from Paradise." Following the stream upwards, he reached the gates of Eden, where he was refused admission. "I am Alexander of Macedon; and if I may not enter," he pleaded, "at least give me some memento of my visit here." Thereupon he was handed a skull, and on weighing it in a scale he found that it outweighed everything which he could place on the other side. But one of the wise men with him told him to put a little earth in the other scale, which, to Alexander's surprise, outweighed the skull. "The reason," said the wise man, "is to be found in the eye of the skull, for the eye of man is never satisfied until at last it is covered with a little earth."

This vein of pessimism, however, occurs but rarely in the Talmud. "This too is for the best," was the favourite saying of one of the most venerated of all the Rabbis who figure in the Talmud, not in any spirit of meek resignation, but in the spirit of incurable optimism. With optimism came cheerfulness, which was regarded as one

of the leading virtues, and an absence of asceticism. After the destruction of the Second Temple some people refused to take meat or wine, since meat and wine could no longer be used in the holy sacrifices. A leading Rabbi addressed them and said, "You should abstain, then, from bread also, for there used to be a meal offering in the Temple." "We will live on fruit," they answered. "But fruit was offered too," said the Rabbi, "and there was even a libation of water; therefore you must abstain from everything." Seeing whither their own principles, logically applied, would carry them, they were silent, and the Rabbi again addressed them, saying, "Listen to me, my children. It would be wrong not to mourn at all for the evil decree which has been executed, but we must not mourn too much, or decree a prohibition which the congregation could not endure."

The visit of Alexander to Jerusalem is interesting as the first outward sign of contact between Greek and Jewish civ-

ilizations. Soon afterwards began that struggle between the two nations which was destined to outlast so many ages, and influence the ideals and aims, the intellectual, moral, and artistic development of every country in Europe. If the Rabbis had only mildly protested against Zoroastrianism, a true instinct warned them to make no compromise with Hellenism. They felt intuitively the truth elaborated so many centuries later by such men as Heine, Renan, Matthew Arnold, and a host of followers, that Hebraism and Hellenism were mutually destructive, that they stood at opposite poles of culture, and neither could hope to absorb the other without being itself destroyed. "Rabbi, Rabbi, having studied the whole of the Law, may I now study the wisdom of the Greeks?" asks a pupil. "You are told to meditate upon the Law by day and by night," is the answer. "When you can find a time which is neither day nor night, during that time you may study the wisdom of the Greeks." The

man who teaches his son Greek is classed with the man who rears swine. This particular aversion for Hellenism is clearly inspired by something more than general national exclusiveness: she was to the mind of the Rabbis the rival who would entice, intoxicate, and destroy all who followed her.

It would be outside the scope of a volume of tales from the Talmud to refer to the Hellenists and Nationalists, or to Philo and those who thought it possible to combine the two civilizations, or to the fearful massacres of Greeks and Jews which constantly occurred in cities of mixed Greek and Jewish population; but there is one well-known mysterious story in the Talmud itself which it has been suggested may possibly express in allegory the Rabbis' dread of Greek influences. The story is of four Rabbis who entered Paradise alive. One saw and died; one saw and went mad; one saw and destroyed the young plants; only one saw and came out unharmed. The one who saw and destroyed the young

plants, Elisha ben Abuyah, was wise in all Hebrew lore, and had then turned to the "wisdom of the Greeks." His mouth was full of Greek songs, and instead of a book of the Law, he carried about with him volumes of profane literature. After destroying the young plants in Paradise, old instincts revive; he realizes that he is not a Greek at heart, and longs to return to the life which he has cast off. But now that he would return, like Tannhäuser, he finds himself a moral outcast, and seeing no hope of heaven, returns to drown all higher longings in the intoxication of Greek song. (What a unique chance thrown away, a later commentator has parenthetically remarked. Here was a man able to serve God without hope of reward!) Still his favourite pupil keeps up his friendship with him. One Sabbath he is walking beside his horse, discussing the Law, as Elisha rides along the way. Presently Elisha bids him return, as he has already accompanied him a Sabbath day's journey. "Do you return too" (from your apostacy), urges

his pupil. He induces Elisha to enter the synagogue schools and listen to the children at their lessons. In the first the children are reading Isa. xlvi. 22, "There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked," in which Elisha finds an allusion to himself. So they enter thirteen different schools, and in each one a verse is being discussed which bears some personal application to Elisha. Presently they enter one where the psalm is being read, "To the wicked God says, What dost thou with my Law?" but the child stammers, so that the Hebrew words for "to the wicked," &c., sound like "to Elisha," &c. Another day Elisha asks his old pupil the meaning of the verse (Job xxviii. 17), "Gold and glass cannot equal it" (wisdom). "It means," says the pupil, "that the words of the Law are difficult to buy as gold; easy to break as glass." "Not so Akiba used to explain it," answers Elisha, but "even as gold and glass, though broken, may be mended, so one who has studied the Law, though he err, may

always be mended." "Mend thyself then," his pupil once more urges him; and then Elisha tells him how once on the great Day of Atonement, passing a synagogue while the people were praying within, he heard a voice proclaim that this day all men were forgiven, save only Elisha ben Abuyah, who, having known God, had yet betrayed Him. When Elisha died, it was declared in heaven that he should not enter Paradise on account of his sin, nor yet Gehenna on account of his study of the Law. "Better have gone to Gehenna and borne his punishment first, and then gone to heaven," said his pupil when this decree was known; "I wish I could die, that he might go to judgment." When the pupil died, smoke was seen ascending from Elisha's grave. "A pretty deed," said one of his fellows, "to consign our teacher to the flames! Can none save him? If I take him by the hand to enter Paradise, who shall stay us? Would I might die!" And so it was that when he too came to die the smoke ceased to

ascend from Elisha's grave, human love having gained for Elisha that which his own unaided repentance could never have obtained. Years afterwards a daughter of Elisha applied to a Rabbi for charity. "Whose daughter art thou?" he asked. "The daughter of Elisha ben Abuyah." "What! are there still descendants of the wicked one?" he asked, quoting Job xviii. 19, "He shall have neither son nor son's son." "Remember his learning and not his deeds," she answered; whereupon a fire came down from heaven and burned the Rabbi's stool as a punishment for his cruel words.

Such is the famous story of Elisha and of the four Rabbis who entered Paradise, of which so many interpretations have been given. Some say they got there by incantation; some explain that they only seemed to themselves to be in Paradise through their great knowledge of the Law. Others seek interpretation in the meanings of four words for which the four Hebrew consonants of Paradise may be made to

stand as initials, or in the names of the four Rabbis. There are also different versions of the story, but all agree in the main outlines—the cutting of the plants by one, his repentance, punishment, and ultimate forgiveness. Perhaps if the story be not taken literally, the simplest explanation is the one already mentioned—namely, that it is an allegory directed against Hellenism, and that the young plants represent the rooted principles of Judaism torn up by over-indulgence in Greek ideals. The same metaphor is used elsewhere, where we learn that a man whose knowledge is greater than his good deeds is like a tree whose roots are small but whose branches are large, so that a very little wind is needed to overturn it. Yet it is difficult to suppose that if this be the allegory which the Rabbis really meant to teach, people would not have discovered it earlier. The Rabbi who saw Paradise and returned safe was the famous Akiba. The Song of Solomon i. 4 refers to him in Paradise (“Draw me; we will run

after thee"), while from another passage we learn that, though in danger, he was saved by divine interposition (*i.e.*, perhaps that, unlike Elisha, he was saved by his knowledge of the Law from being dazzled by the splendour of Greek life and thought).

Another curious story is told which has some resemblance to a Greek myth, but has also characteristic differences. There was once a shepherd boy who had such beautiful hair that all day long he did nothing but gaze at his reflection in the stream. One day a timid sheep came to drink close beside him, and roughening the surface of the water, marred the beautiful reflection at which the shepherd had been gazing. In rage the boy lifted his staff and struck the sheep, which, ignorant of its crime, looked reproachfully at him and crept away. Conscious of the cruelty to which his beauty had led him, and feeling the vanity of beauty of form compared with beauty of spirit, this Jewish Narcissus went to the Rabbi and asked to have his head

shaved, and afterwards to become a Nazarite (Num. vi. 18); and though the practice of accepting Nazarites was discouraged as tending to asceticism, yet in this case the sacrifice was accepted.

If this story may lack much of the delicate imagination and poetic glamour of the Greek myth, it at least contains other elements which could never have entered the mind of an ancient Greek. To the Rabbis the good was always the beautiful, not the beautiful the good. They never lost the sense of the sacredness of life in the sense of the beauty of life.

After the Maccabæan dynasty we come to Herod. The rule of Herod's family in Palestine bears some points of resemblance to the rule of Alexander and the Macedonians in Greece. Herod the Idumæan, try as he might to identify himself with the national interests, was always regarded as half a foreigner. The Idumæans, conquered by Hyrcanus, the ablest and most brilliant of the Maccabæan dynasty, who for a time seemed to have restored Judæa to the posi-

tion occupied in the days of Solomon, had accepted Judaism, and been incorporated with the inhabitants of Palestine; but their claims to be identified with the Judæans were no more admitted than were the claims of the Samaritans. Though Herod had contrived to make himself king, and put down all opposition with ruthless severity, the sullen hatred with which he continued to be regarded is reflected in many a tale of the Talmud.

We are told that one day Herod, while a servant of the Maccabæans, heard a voice declare that on that day any servant who rebelled should succeed. Thereupon he slew all his superiors with the exception of one young girl of the Maccabæan family, whom he intended to marry; but she, going on to the roof of the house, proclaimed aloud, "If any one claim descent from the Maccabæans he is a slave, for all are slain except only me, who now die also," saying which she leaped from the roof of the house and met her death. Herod is said to have preserved her body for seven years in

honey, in order to make people believe she was still alive.

Having made himself king, Herod's next desire was to take vengeance on his opponents. Many years before, he had been summoned to Jerusalem to answer for a breach of the Law committed by him as a local governor in ordering certain persons to be put to death without a proper trial. Instead of appearing as a man under an accusation, he had arrived dressed in purple, accompanied by a bodyguard, and bearing a letter from the Roman governor of Syria warning the judges not to inflict a penalty. At first they were overawed, but their president reminded them of their duties, and infused enough courage into them to procure an impartial trial. Seeing the turn events were taking, Herod procured an adjournment, and left Jerusalem secretly at night. His revenge was deferred, but never forgotten, and when he came into power he put to death all the judges except one. This is how the Talmud recounts the story of the slaughter :—

Having become king, Herod remembered (Deut. xvii. 15), "Thou mayest not put a foreigner over thee, which is not thy brother." Who so likely to enforce the command as the Rabbis? he thought. Thereupon he slew them all except one, whom he needed to advise him, and him he blinded. One day Herod came before this blind Rabbi pretending to be a stranger, and asked his advice. As usual, the dramatic possibilities in the picture of the fierce warrior king secretly visiting the blind frail old Rabbi to beg his help are lost sight of in the strange arguments upon texts, the verbal warfare which delighted all the ancients. "Curse me the wicked King Herod for his sins," he asked; but the Rabbi answered from Eccles. x. 20, "Curse not the king." "That only refers to a good king," said Herod, "not to a wicked one." "But I fear him," answered the Rabbi. "Dismiss your fear, for we are alone," urged Herod. In reply the blind Rabbi quoted Eccles. x. 20, "For a bird in the air can carry the sound." Then Herod

dissembled no more. "I am Herod," he said, "and if I had known how careful and circumspect the Rabbis were, I would not have slain them. Now advise me how I should act to make reparation." He was told that he had blinded the eye of the world—*i.e.*, had killed Rabbis, who were the eyes or leaders of the people,—and therefore the best act of reparation would be to busy himself with repairing the eye of the world—*i.e.*, the Temple. Herod replied that he feared such an action might give offence at Rome. He was advised to proceed in this way: to send a servant to Rome to ask permission, and meanwhile start building at once. The servant was to take one year in reaching Rome, to stay one year in Rome, and take one year on his return journey, by which time he would find the Temple finished. When the servant returned, the answer he brought back was that if the old Temple had not been pulled down, Herod should leave it as it was; if it had been pulled down, he should leave it pulled down; if

it had been pulled down and rebuilt, then the message went on that the slave who acted first and then asked permission was a bad slave; that it was true Herod was a ruler, but the Romans knew he was not a descendant of kings, for their records showed merely that "Herod the slave made himself king." However, no interference was offered, and the newly built Temple was allowed to stand. The material of which it was built was white and dark-green or grey marble, laid in tiers alternately projecting and receding, so that in the distance the effect was like the billows of a stormy sea in the sunshine. Herod had intended to overlay the marble with gold, but the new Rabbis persuaded him that it was finer as it stood. Though the Talmudic writers refuse to allow Herod any credit for his work, yet they put no stint to their enthusiasm over its magnificence, and one declares that "He who has not seen Herod's Temple has seen nothing fine in his life."

A curious account of the origin of Roman

influence in the country is given. The Romans are represented as vainly fighting with the Greeks (probably the Græco-Syrian kingdom is meant) till at length they formed an alliance with Judæa. Then said the Romans to the Greeks, "Let us settle our difference by negotiation." The negotiation took the following form: The Romans propounded the question, "Which is superior, a pearl or a precious stone?" The answer was, "A precious stone." "A precious stone or a Book of the Law?" "A Book of the Law." "Then submit," said the Romans, "for the Book of the Law is now on our side," and the Greeks, beaten in these strange "negotiations," yielded. For twenty-six years the Romans kept the terms of their alliance with the Judæans, whereby it had been provided that when the Romans appointed generals to fight the Greeks the Judæans should appoint their own civil governors, and when the Romans appointed civil governors the Judæans should appoint the generals. After twenty-six years the Romans broke their compact

and began to oppress their former allies, till at length the Judæans broke into rebellion against them. Vespasian would have been satisfied if the people would have given him a bow and arrow in sign of submission, but they refused. "As we killed the two who came before you, so shall it be with you," they declared (referring to the capture of the Roman general Metilius, followed by the great victory over Cestius, which had filled the whole country with the hope of throwing off the Roman dominion). There was, however, among other factions within the walls, a peace party, who conveyed news of the discussions within the city to Vespasian by tying reports round arrows which they shot from the walls. The leader of this party was a Rabbi, who, when he found himself unable to persuade the majority to adopt his views, feigned death, and was taken by his confederates out of Jerusalem in a coffin, and brought to Vespasian. Winning his good graces by a prophecy that he should become king (Isa. x. 34), as well as by

referring to his previous attitude, he asked and obtained permission to go to Jamnia in peace, and there instruct pupils. Here he witnessed the destruction of the city and Temple, sitting, as Eli had sat (1 Sam. iv. 13), "Upon his seat by the wayside watching."

The fall of the Second Temple was pre-saged by all the wondrous signs in the sky and on earth which precede such calamities in the legends of all nations. One weird portent is related, the rumour of which may well have taken the courage from the boldest defenders of the city wall. It is said that one day a heavy gate swung open by itself, and, as the priests entered the Temple, a sound as of the beating of wings was heard, and a murmur as of a great host of voices saying, "Let us go hence."

A picturesque touch illumines the fall of the Temple. When there was no hope of saving it, the young priests went on the roof (Isa. xxii. 1), carrying the keys of the Temple, and threw them in the air, saying,

“We were no faithful treasurers, and restore the keys entrusted to us.” Some add that something like a hand appeared and grasped them, whereupon the priests leaped into the flames. A somewhat similar story is told of the fall of the First Temple.

The sin which had caused the destruction of the First Temple was that of putting a man to shame in public; the sin which caused the Second Temple to be destroyed was the sin of *causeless enmity*, a curious fault constantly denounced. Many passages in the Bible refer to the destruction of the Holy City,—among others, Zech. xi., which refers to the wailing of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and his twelve sons; the mighty oaks of Bashan (xi. 2) mean Moses, Aaron, and Miriam; the forest means the Holy of Holies; wasted is the glory refers to the work of David and Solomon; the pride of Jordan means Elijah and Elisha.

After the destruction of the city, as Titus was going home a great storm arose. “The God of the Israelites is only powerful at sea,” he cried; “at sea he destroyed

Pharaoh." "Come on land, thou wicked man," said a voice, "and fight with the smallest living creature." When he landed a tiny insect flew up his nostril into his brain, and by its movements caused him ceaseless torture. One day, as he passed a smith's forge, the creature stopped its movements on hearing the blows of the hammer. Titus thought he had found a cure, and summoned a smith to hammer before him night and day. When the smith he employed was a Roman he paid him handsomely, but when the smith happened to be a Judæan he paid him nothing, for, he said, it was enough reward to the smith to watch his sufferings. At the end of thirty days, however, the creature became accustomed to the sound of the hammer, and the torture began again. After his death his brain was opened, and the creature was found to have grown to the size of a pigeon.

The stories in the Talmud which are concerned with later years—with Herod, the Romans, and more particularly with

the years following the destruction of the Second Temple and preceding the publication of the Talmud—gradually lose their legendary character, and either merge into history or else tend to become personal anecdotes. Yet they retain many of the characteristics of the earlier legends, including the love of repeating arguments. Turnus Rufus, the cruel Roman governor who administered Palestine 133 to 135 A.D., seems to have been as well acquainted with the Hebrew Scriptures as were all other characters who figure in the Talmud, for one day he quoted to a Rabbi Levit. xxv. 55, "For unto me the children of Israel are servants," to prove that the Judæans were servants, and he gave the following parable: A king once being angry with his servant, put him in prison and forbade any one to supply him with food; but a stranger, taking pity on him, broke the king's command and fed him. Was the king pleased or angry at such disobedience? Seeing the drift of the question, the Rabbi replied with another parable, first quoting Deut. xiv. 1,

“Ye are the children of the Lord your God,” to prove that the Judæans were children: A king was once angry with his son, and ordered him to be kept without food; but a stranger, taking pity on him, gave him food and saved him from starvation. Was the king pleased or angry at this breach of his command? Turnus Rufus answered: “You people are both servants and children,—children when you obey God, servants when you disobey. It is clear that now you are in the position of servants, because through your disobedience you are scattered, and your Temple has been destroyed, therefore Leviticus xxv. 55 applies, and he who favours you acts impiously.” The Rabbi, however, refutes the argument by quoting Isa. lviii. 10, “And if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall thy light rise in darkness, and thine obscurity be as the noonday.”

Another day Turnus Rufus asked, “If God loves the poor, why does he not feed them?” “To save the rich from Gehenna,”

is the answer. If the poor man owed thanks for his food to the rich man, the rich man owed greater thanks to the poor man for helping him to heaven by allowing him to do the good deed of charity.

It is curious to notice how foreign emperors and rulers are usually represented as being almost as well versed in the Hebrew Scriptures as the Judæans themselves; and though they have had no proper training in respect of the deductions and inferences to be drawn from various verses, are always ready to meet the Rabbis on their own ground, and in one or two instances even get the better of the argument. Imperious queens or haughty Roman emperors eagerly discuss minute questions arising out of the "Law." Governors of Judæa, such as Turnus Rufus, pause in the midst of their most terrible persecutions to argue upon some subtle point with a Rabbi, quite prepared to let him go free or have him flayed alive according as he may answer or fail to answer some conundrum, and show how

the Law should be applied. Alexander never found himself too busy to wait and listen to rival interpretations of Genesis. Even Cleopatra — proud, passionate, imperial Cleopatra herself—is represented as entering into these arguments.¹ “Give me my robe, put on my crown; I have *immortal longings* in me,” Shakespeare makes her say in the magnificent scene with Iras; yet, according to the Talmud, for all her immortal longings she found a difficulty in admitting that the Scriptures contained any evidence of the Resurrection. Isa. xxvi. 19 was pointed out to her,—“Thy dead shall live; my dead bodies shall arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth the dead.” But she was not yet satisfied. “Yes,” she urged, “but that verse may refer to the dead restored by Ezekiel.” Finally convinced by the

¹ Though one may hope that *the* Cleopatra is intended, it is not quite certain that some other, such as the Syrian queen Cleopatra, is not intended. In many cases it is quite impossible to identify people named in the Talmud.

Rabbi's arguments, she wanted to know whether people would appear clothed or naked. The Rabbi might have given the answer of Mahomet when questioned on the same point—that on the day of judgment people would have something else to think about than to bother about their clothes; but he preferred an argument from an analogy in nature. As wheat goes into the earth naked and comes up in many garments, so does man go naked into the earth but arises in his garments.

“Why is the Sabbath distinguished from all other days?” Turnus Rufus asked on another occasion. “Why are you distinguished from all other men?” “Because it has pleased the Emperor to distinguish me.” “So it has pleased God to distinguish the Sabbath.” Being pressed as to how it could be proved that one particular day in the week really was the Sabbath, the Rabbi gave three proofs. First, on the Sabbath the river Sambatyon does not flow. Secondly, on the Sabbath the magicians cannot bring up the dead.

Thirdly, on the Sabbath the smoke ceases to rise from your father's grave. This last proof refers to the belief that even the wicked have rest after death on the Sabbath. It appears a somewhat startling proof to offer a tyrannical governor, but no doubt, to a man so intimately acquainted with the Scriptures as the Roman governor, the reference to his father's grave would contain a hint and warning of the fate which might be in store for him also.

The proof drawn from the river Sambatyon contains an allusion to one of the many legends which, through the long centuries of persecution, have alike delighted the imagination of the children and comforted the sorrows of the parents,—legends which, like some rare sense of touch acquired by the blind, fade away and are forgotten when the need which gave rise to them has itself passed away. The lost ten tribes (whom the Samaritans so impudently claimed to be!) wandered forth to the far side of the river Sambatyon. Where is the Sambatyon? No

one knows. As well ask, Where is Eden? A vague hint of direction, a well-known river or people, may sometimes be mentioned in these legends; but the world was not in those days a little round ball marked off by squares of longitude and latitude, into one of which every place could be pigeon-holed. "We are in love's land to-day; where shall we go?" We wander on and on, the sense of magic and unreality ever deepening, till at length, in these wonderful stories, we seem to have lost all touch with time and space. Six days a-week the Sambatyon rushes along its course, carrying with it mighty rocks; but on every Sabbath it is at rest. Beyond the river dwell the lost tribes. They were the captives who were bidden to "sing one of the songs of Zion" (Ps. cxxxvii.) When they wept by the rivers of Babylon, saying, "How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?" a cloud took them up and carried them to the lands where they dwell to-day in peace, watering their sheep and gather-

ing their crops. No noxious herb grows there, but as in the days of our first parents, the land brings forth all good things without labour.

It was not till some four centuries after the completion of the Talmud that this legend, most of which was written in post-Talmudic times, was amplified into full detail by the inevitable traveller who had visited these distant lands. Eldad, known as the Danite because he was supposed to belong to the tribe of Dan, had seen the mysterious river, and brought home an account of the lands occupied by the different tribes. "Only sand and stones flow down the course of the Sabbathyon, and their roar can be heard at half a day's journey. On the Sabbath a fire springs up on either side of the river course. The ten tribes talk Hebrew, and the Talmud, which they study, is written in the pure Hebrew tongue. They know none of the doctrines which arose after the return from Babylon, nor do they celebrate any of the events which oc-

curred during the captivity or during the Second Temple. Some are warlike and rule over their neighbours, but most spend their time in peace and study. All live to see their children of the third and fourth generation. They have no need to lock their doors at night, for there is no evil thing among them, and "a little boy travels with their cattle many days' journey without any fear of murderers or devils or wild beasts, or any other evil thing whatsoever." On the banks of the river they shear their sheep: then cry those who live on the other side of the river and say, "Ye brethren, ye tribes of Jeshuron [that is, of Israel], let us see your camels, your dogs, and your asses"; then add, "How large is this camel! how long is his neck! and how short is his tail! and they salute one another."

The legend of the Sambatyon is referred to in many Rabbinical works, and a later story tells of a Moor who had a glassful of sand from the Sambatyon which moved all the week till the beginning of the Sabbath,

when it became still, and thus the Jews of the city where he lived knew when the Sabbath had begun.

Here was a story in which the ghetto-dweller, turning from a world of facts to a world of fancy, could take refuge from persecution. If Elijah had not appeared to comfort him during the day, he could return home at night to dream of his own "Happy Islands" beyond the Sambatyon, where at that moment, somewhere beyond the Caspian Sea, somewhere in the remote mystic East, the people of his own race and religion were dwelling secure from fear of outrage and murder; till, to his waking senses, the roar of the mighty rocks down the river course turned to the roar of the mob at the ghetto gates.

Sometimes we are given a glimpse of country life. "He who has not seen the joy of water-drawing has seen no joy in his life," says a Rabbi, and we have a description of the illuminations and music which accompanied that joyful ceremony in the hot Eastern land.

Most pleasing, again, are the human touches occasionally revealed by some chance allusion to an incident intended to illustrate some argument. On one occasion we hear of a Rabbi breaking off some intricate discussion to ask his little daughter, who was sitting all the while on his knee, which of the learned men opposite her she would rather marry when she grew up. "Both of them," she replied; and we learn the curious coincidence that when she grew up she married one of them, and after his death, the other. The study of the Law, we are told, is equivalent to all the virtues together, yet the sacred study of the Law was apparently conducted with a perfect homeliness and lack of formality.

The same lack of formality, or lack of decorum, as a Western reader trained in a different school might call it, is constantly observed in the manner of conducting prayer. "Our Father" was taken in a very literal sense by people who were accustomed to offer prayers and blessings

on almost every conceivable occasion throughout the day. The Rabbis argue, and almost expostulate, in their worship,—not because they lack reverence, but because they understand reverence in a different manner from the Western worshipper, and do not regard formality of approach and conventional decorum as necessary aids to religious fervour.¹

One man was a cynic who did not believe that Truth was to be found in all the world, till he met a Rabbi who told him that if the whole world were filled with gold and offered him he would not tell a lie, whereupon the cynic, quite in keeping with the character of ancient people, was immediately convinced, and changed his opinion. The Rabbi went on to relate to him a story of how he

¹ As a modern writer has said of their descendants, "Decorum was not a feature of synagogue worship in those days, nor was the Almighty yet conceived as the holder of formal receptions once a-week. Worshipers did not pray with bated breath as if afraid that the Deity would overhear them: they passed snuff-boxes and remarks about the weather."—Zangwill's 'Children of the Ghetto.'

had on one occasion been guilty of a slight lapse from strict truthfulness, and of the consequence. He had once, in the course of his travels, come to a city where every one was equally truthful with himself, and no one died an untimely death. In such congenial surroundings he had taken up his abode permanently. He married one of the inhabitants, had two children, and all prospered with him. But one day a neighbour called to ask for his wife while she was engaged in washing her head. The Rabbi answered the door, and, being seized by a sudden attack of false modesty, hesitated to say she was washing her head, but replied that she had gone out. Thereupon both of his children suddenly died, and the neighbours coming to inquire into such an unheard-of occurrence in a city where no one died before reaching old age, he confessed what he had done, and was ordered immediately to leave.

Another tells stories of his own discomfiture on different occasions—at the hands of a woman, a boy, and a little girl, re-

marking that these three alone had ever disconcerted him. The woman was a widow with whom he was staying, and who gave him a little gentle reproof for his greediness. Noticing that two mornings in succession he ate every morsel of the beans on his breakfast-plate, the third day she put in them too much salt, so that he was obliged to leave some of them on his plate. When she questioned him, he had sufficient politeness to say he had eaten already, rather than criticise the cooking of his hostess, but she answered that perhaps he had left no corners of the field on the previous days (an allusion to the corners of the field which gleaners were required to leave for widows and orphans), and was making up that day by leaving an excess.

The boy who discomfited him was a boy whom he met on the road and asked the way to a village. The boy answered, "This is the longer but the shorter road, but that is the shorter but longer road." He took the second, but was obliged to

retrace his steps on account of the gardens and vineyards which obstructed him, making the shorter road the longer one. Meeting the boy again at the cross-roads, instead of venting his temper upon him for giving such an obscure answer, we are told that he embraced him, and said, "It is well with thee, Israel, that even thy small children are wise."

The retort of the little girl seems a more effective one. As he was crossing a path, the child ran up and told him he was trespassing on her parents' meadow. "No," said the Rabbi, "do you not see there is a footpath?" "It is such robbers as thou who have made the footpath," answered the child.

Another Rabbi was one day returning from a visit to his master, riding slowly along the road by a river, feeling very well content with himself, and very proud of the knowledge he had displayed. Along the road came a humble man with an ugly face, who greeted him, "Peace be with you, Rabbi." Instead of returning the

greeting, the Rabbi said, "How ugly you are! Are all your fellow-townsmen as ugly?" "I know not," replied the ugly man; "but complain to God, who formed me." The Rabbi, overcome with shame, begged forgiveness, but the ugly man refused to forgive him till he should have made his complaint to God. Still the Rabbi followed him from village to village, begging forgiveness, and as soon as the crowds assembled to praise and welcome the famous Rabbi, the ugly man told them his story. At length the sympathy of the crowd began to return to the Rabbi, and they urged upon the ugly man that he ought nevertheless to forgive, so at last he said to the Rabbi, "For their sakes I will forgive you, if you will offend no more."

Far better known are some of the stories of Hillel. In the Talmud they usually appear as appendages to little moral maxims. *One should be as patient as Hillel.* Once two men made a bet as to whether one of them could make Hillel

angry. Coming to his door one Friday night when he was washing and preparing for the Sabbath, one of them called in an insolent tone for Hillel. Putting on a mantle, Hillel at once came to the door. "What do you desire?" "To put a question." "Ask, my son." "Why are the Babylonians round-headed?" "This is an important question, my son," replied Hillel, and an answer is given. An hour later the interrogator calls again, and again Hillel comes to the door. "Why have the Tarmudists oval eyes?" "An important question, my son," and again a suitable reason is given. An hour later he returns: "Why have the Tarmudists large feet?" "An important question, my son," and once more an answer is given. "I have many more questions to ask," said his persecutor, "but I am afraid of wearying you." Hillel wrapped himself in his mantle. "Ask all thou desirest," was all he said. "Art thou Hillel, entitled 'prince' in Israel?" "Yes." "Then may there not be many like thee." "Why?" asked

Hillel. "Because thou hast made me lose four hundred zuz." "Better thou shouldst lose twice that amount," is the answer, "than that Hillel should lose his temper."

One should never get angry at meals. One day a poor man called at Hillel's house during his absence, and said to Hillel's wife, "I am to marry to-day, and have nothing in the house." Thereupon Hillel's wife gave him the meal she had just prepared for her husband, and began to make ready other dishes in their place. Meantime Hillel had returned, and was waiting patiently for his dinner. At last he ventured to ask why it was so late, and on hearing the reason, told his wife that he knew all that she did was for the sake of Heaven.

Hillel is always contrasted with Shammai, an equally pious man, but more rigid and of an impatient and violent temper. Shammai had established a rival school which differed in many points from that of Hillel in its interpretation of the Law. (One of the questions which was debated between them

for many years was whether or no it would have been better for man never to have been created.) One day a pretended pupil called upon Shammai and asked whether Shammai could teach him the Law while he stood on one foot. Shammai drove him out of the room, and he went to Hillel with the same question. "What is hateful unto thee," said Hillel, "do not unto thy fellow. This is the whole Law; all the rest is commentary."

The absorbing passion for studying the Law is once more curiously illustrated in the lament of a Rabbi for his brother-in-law, a great scholar who had just died. To people brought up in a different environment who find it difficult to realize the intensity of this love for study, there is something grotesque — almost humorous — as well as pathetic in the expression of his grief. "Who are you who would replace the dead?" he says to one who tries to console him. "When I put a proposition to him he would give twenty-four objections, and I had to give

twenty-four answers; you merely tell me there is a dictum (Boraitha) which supports me, as if I did not know that my argument had a good basis." Finally, weeping till he became demented, the Rabbis prayed for his death, and so at last his soul had peace.

Another man lost his son, and the Rabbis came to offer consolation. "Adam accepted consolation," said one. "Is not my grief sufficient that you must remind me of Adam's?" he replied. "Job accepted consolation," tried a second. "Is not my grief sufficient but you must remind me of Job's?" was the answer. "Aaron accepted consolation," ventured a third, and a fourth referred to David, only to meet with the same response. At last came a great scholar who tried a parable. "A king once entrusted a subject with a precious article: at last the king withdrew his charge back into his own possession, and the subject was glad when the responsibility was removed. Be glad your son spent his time in study and went away sinless, and

accept consolation." This last appeal was successful.

The Rabbi has already been mentioned who tried his wife's patience to breaking-point by inflicting penance on himself till his health broke down and she was obliged to nurse him. It was long, however, before she discovered that his illness was self-inflicted, and meantime she used to dissuade him from going out to the college, and feed him up at home that he might have strength to study. At last, when she discovered that he tortured and bled himself every evening (and that meantime he had used up all the money inherited from his father), she lost all patience and left him. At a critical moment he received a gift, and his wife repenting of her treatment of him, and sending her daughter to inquire how he was getting on without her, found him richer than ever. Finally he left off his afflictions, became well, and went to the college. Here he provoked ill-will, and fearing that owing to his unpopularity his colleagues would not give him

an honourable funeral, he bade his wife place his body, when he should die, in the attic. She carried out his wishes, and kept his body there for something between eighteen and twenty-two years. (We know this is so, because we have the story from one who himself heard it from the mother of another Rabbi, who in her turn heard it direct from the woman in question.) Every day she went up to look at him, and found his body fresh. One day she came down dejected, because she had seen a worm crawl from his ear, but he comforted her by appearing in a dream, and telling her that this was his punishment for having once allowed a young scholar to be insulted in his presence. When disputes arose in the college, the parties would come to her house to state their case, and a voice from the attic would declare which was right. At last the scandal of his not having been buried grew to such a point that the Rabbis of the college determined to give him a funeral. But now a new difficulty arose, because it appeared

that since he had been in the attic no one in the neighbourhood had suffered any harm from wild beasts, and consequently people opposed the removal of the body. Finally, when the inhabitants were off their guard the body of the Rabbi was removed and taken to the tomb of his father; a snake barred the way of the coffin, but upon an appeal from the Rabbis, withdrew, and the body was lowered into the earth. One of the leading Rabbis now asked for the widow of such a learned man in marriage; but she replied, "Should the hook on which a hero hung his weapon be used by the shepherd to hang his knapsack?" "I know I am not his equal in knowledge," replied the suitor humbly, "but I am at least his equal in pious deeds;" to which the widow retorts, "I did not know you were his inferior in knowledge, but I did know you were his inferior in pious deeds." The unfortunate man had only convinced her of his inferiority in both respects. (Here follows a long story explaining why and how the dead Rabbi had shown himself

greater in knowledge.) Seeing that chastisements were in favour, the dead man's rival proceeded to chastise himself, but his afflictions, we are told, were of less value, because inflicted for a bad motive; still, they were so far efficacious that though they did not prevent premature death in the neighbourhood as the afflictions of the former had done, yet they prevented any want of rain.

It is pleasant to find occasionally stories whose moral teaches kindness to beasts. Once a calf came up to a Rabbi for protection from the butcher. "Go," said the Rabbi, "for to this end wert thou created;" whereupon, because he had shown no mercy towards creatures, he was seized with constant pain for thirteen years, till one day, seeing some small creatures about to be killed, he saved them, remembering Psalm clxv. 9, "The Lord is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works," and was then immediately released from his pain, and because he had had mercy upon creatures was himself dealt with mercifully.

This last is not the only story which gives a pleasant sense of mutual affection and sympathy existing between master and beast. One is of an ass which, being stolen by robbers, refused to eat or drink till at last, fearing it would die and pollute their yard, they opened the gate and let it return to its master, and the ass went home "rejoicing." Its master's son "recognised his voice" outside, and the master cried, "Hasten and open the gate, or he will die of hunger." In the patriarchal ages, it could not yet quite be said that

"man's dominion
Had broken Nature's social union."

One Rabbi was blind, without arms or legs, and covered with sores. "How is it you are in such a plight?" his pupils once asked him, and he told them a story. "I was once on my way to my father-in-law with three asses laden with food and drink. On the way a poor man stopped me and asked for food. 'Wait till I have unloaded,' I said, but the man dropped dead.

‘May my eyes that were without pity lose their sight,’ I said, ‘and my slow hands and feet be lost, and my body covered with sores.’ Woe to me, then, were I in other plight than this.”

Yet another Rabbi was reduced to such poverty that he and his wife had but one garment between them. One day he was invited out, but was obliged to refuse because his wife had gone to market wearing their only garment.

Such stories could be multiplied almost indefinitely. They are interesting for the light they cast upon the social and domestic life of the people, as well as upon their beliefs and ideals. Laughable enough many of them appear on the surface, yet they always contain some favourite Talmudic maxim — that human dignity depends nothing upon externals, or that no useful trade or labour ever was or ever could be anything but honourable.

Some of the Rabbis shared with others among the ancients a belief in a mysterious inner significance of numbers and letters,

by a close study of which not only might great truths be learnt, but great powers acquired. Some of these discoveries are a little ingenious. The Hebrew word for "truth" is composed of the first, middle, and last letters of the Alphabet (as if we had an English word "amz"); the letters which compose the word are as far apart as can be, signifying that truth is but rarely found, whereas the Hebrew letters for "lie" all come closely together in the alphabet, signifying that lies are numerous. Applying this principle, we can extract a whole code of ethics from the alphabet itself. The point of some of these deductions is a little difficult to explain to a reader who is unacquainted with the Hebrew alphabet, though it may sometimes be made clear by an English analogy. The names of the third and fourth letters of the Hebrew alphabet have sounds similar to the Hebrew words for "be bountiful" and "to the poor." Thus the inference is easily drawn that a little maxim is hidden in the third and fourth

letters of the alphabet. But we can go further. Looking at the formation of the Hebrew characters, we find that one turns away from the other (as in English C might fancifully be said to be "turning its back" to B when the two are written side by side, B C). From this we infer that the one who is bountiful should look away when he gives his charity to the poor—*i.e.*, that he should give it secretly and not ostentatiously, or so as to shame the recipient. The Rabbi who reports this new teaching of inferences from letters exclaims enthusiastically that such knowledge did not belong to men even in the days of Joshua the son of Nun. Moreover, every Hebrew letter also stands for a number, so that words combined in one way may be the equivalent (in number, and therefore also in meaning) for words combined in another way, and thus a door is opened for endless inferences. Esoteric teaching of this kind did not, however, find universal favour, and especially fell into disrepute after the failure of the great

rebellion of Bar Cochba against Hadrian, in 130 A.D. Success had been predicted for the rebellion through various pieces of obscure reasoning, and a short triumph was enjoyed, during which all the chief cities of Palestine were taken from the Romans, and the Judæan conqueror, entering Jerusalem, struck coins which were to mark the beginning of a new national dynasty. But Roman military science conquered in the end, and after some years of fighting, Bar Cochba, of whose strength and courage many fabulous stories are told, was killed in his last stronghold, and the Roman historian Dio Cassius estimates that more than half a million of his followers died in battle alone. It has often been lamented that this last struggle for independence had no Josephus to chronicle its details. Noble ideals, petty wranglings, acts of heroism and treachery, are alike unknown. Was Bar Cochba a mere fanatic, an impostor ("son of a star" he was first called, and then "son of a lie," a play on his name), or one of the sub-

lime figures to be counted among the Hamilcars and Hannibals whom the Semitic races cast up from time to time, to shine the brighter for their background of sordid intrigue and jealousy? The Talmud once refers to his "two years" dominion among the Jewish dynasties. After his death a period of unexampled persecution arose, during which all ritual observance and all study of the Law were forbidden. Many are the stories of dying Rabbis appointing successors eager to carry on the chain of study, teaching, and martyrdom. Few joined the winning side. "*Victrix causa deis placuit, sed victa Catoni*" might have been the motto of many a patriot who remained loyal to the lost cause, though he had never heard the words of the noble Latin line. It was then that, remembering how much faith had been placed in the study of hidden meanings in words and letters which had seemed to promise success, people turned from such profitless labour, and forbade any one to predict the date of a deliverer. Yet the study

lingered on, and gradually revived its hold upon people's imagination. The study of the secret meanings of letters formed a branch of the Cabbala, an essentially esoteric doctrine of unknown antiquity, reduced to writing in the time of the Second Temple and vigorously developed right through the Middle Ages. Wonderful stories arose, century after century, of men who, by a life of study, had acquired power over the elements, and could make the angels do their bidding; and even to-day such beliefs yet endure.

How the study of the Law was continued after Bar Cochba, and the Jewish schools again took root, has been told in detail by Graetz in his 'History of the Jews.' Allusions to political events occur occasionally in the Talmud, but they are fragmentary and not consecutive. One of the victims of Bar Cochba's rebellion was the famous Rabbi Akiva; but so many embellishments have been woven around his name that it is impossible to say what

part he really played in the rebellion. We hear of him that in prison, with scarcely enough water to quench his thirst, he nevertheless used the little that was provided for him in washing his hands before meals (as required by the Law on the part of all except soldiers in war-time). We hear again that, after he had been put to death with torture, declaring to the last his belief in the unity of God, a voice was heard proclaiming him happy in having ascended to heaven.

There are many references in the Talmud to this mysterious voice, which, after prophets had ceased to appear, was sometimes heard at meetings of Rabbis deciding debated points. The tendency of the Rabbis was not to attach an exaggerated importance to it.

The Emperor whose goodwill gave the Judæans a period of rest from persecution, and enabled Jehudah to accomplish the first part of the gigantic task of reducing the Law into writing, was "Antoninus," who has been identified with various

Roman emperors. Many are the arguments and friendly discussions between Antoninus and the Rabbis which have been handed down in the Talmud. They range over every subject, from natural philosophy to domestic affairs. "Why does the sun rise in the east?" he asks one day. "You might have asked me a similar question if it rose in the west," the Rabbi replied. "No; I mean, Why does it rise and set at all, instead of going round in a circle to the spot whence it started?" The answer is, to salute its creator. Sometimes the Emperor asks his advice on political matters. How was he to get rid of certain obnoxious Roman officers, he once asked, and the answer recalls an allegorical answer given by the Roman Tarquin to his son many centuries before. The Rabbi asked the Emperor to walk with him in the garden, and, as they walked, he from time to time pulled out the large radishes from the beds, planting smaller ones instead, whereby Antoninus understood that he should remove the old

officers by degrees, and not all at once, or they might rebel.

Antoninus, in spite of the Rabbi's protests, sent him gold concealed in sacks. From the palace to the Rabbi's house ran an underground passage. When the Emperor paid his visits, he would take with him two slaves, one of whom he used to slay at the Rabbi's door, and one on his return at his own door. He always seems to have had the greatest dread of his friendship for the Rabbi becoming known. On one occasion, contrary to his express orders, he found a third person present when he paid his visit. The Rabbi, however, explained that the Emperor need not be alarmed, for their visitor was not a human being. To test the truth of this statement, the Emperor bade the visitor go and call the slave who slept at the gate. Now the visitor really was a human being, and on going to the gate and finding the slave dead, was placed in a difficulty, and meditated flight. Instead of running away, however, he prayed, where-

upon the dead slave was restored to life and went in to the Emperor, who merely remarked that he had always known even the smallest of such beings could restore the dead to life; but in future he requested the Rabbi to have no visitors, human or otherwise, present at their interviews.

Once the Emperor thought he had put his opponent into a difficulty. "When the soul comes before God," he said, "why should it not say that the sins with which it is charged were the sins of the body, and that now, when the body has been cast off, it is free from blame?" The Rabbi answers with a parable. "A king once had an orchard of figs, in charge of which he put two servants—one blind and the other lame. One morning several of the finest figs were missing, and when the king charged the servants with the theft, the blind one replied, "I could not see to steal them," and the lame one replied, "I could not walk to steal them." But the king saw what had happened. "The blind one carried the lame one," he said; and both

were punished accordingly. Body and soul stand in the position of blind and lame man, and both are equally guilty.

Sometimes the Emperor is more fortunate, and comes off victorious in the argument, whereupon the Rabbi quaintly remarks that Antoninus had thus taught him such and such a fact. But the Emperor's success in interpreting the Hebrew Scriptures never raises him to any undue vanity, for he is represented as offering his back for the Rabbi to mount to his bed, and saying, in reply to the Rabbi's protests against such an abasement of his dignity, that he hopes he may be the Rabbi's footstool in the world to come. He is consoled with a promise of a share in the future world, in spite of the prophecies against Edom (Edom is identified with Rome), for these prophecies only refer to those who do the deeds of Edom, for it reads "kings" of Edom (Ezek. xxxii. 29), not *all* the kings of Edom.

With such stories the Rabbis consoled themselves for the loss of their independ-

ence, drawing into themselves, building a spiritual instead of a material Temple, living their inner life, and maintaining their self-respect through all persecutions by the memory of their past, and the belief that they would yet emerge and triumph over all their enemies; for while race-consciousness survives, there never wholly dies the passionate longing for the day when the new psalmist shall once more sing, "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion we were like them that dream." For centuries the Talmud was the only outlet for their energies, and into it they put not only all their learning, such as it was, but their hopes and aspirations, often of necessity disguised in allegory. In reading contradictory statements, it must be remembered that not one man writes the Talmud, but a thousand, and each tries to harmonize the opinions of those who have written before. Though there is no order of time, the writings reflect the history of many centuries, and the feelings produced by all national events—hopes, struggles,

triumphs, and persecutions; and blended with all these run the minute discussions, the love of the Law, the delightful inconsequences, and the almost uncanny humour which weaves fantastic parables out of its own martyrdom.

The Talmud has so far baffled every attempt to rearrange her, or reduce her to a modern handy book of reference. Abandon the attempt, follow where she leads, and she will unfold herself in her own way. It is not pleasant to find commentators apologising for parts of the Talmud, and expressing the wish that they had never been written. Surely that ancient Rabbi must have looked far down the vista of the years when he spoke in parable, quoting Solomon, "Despise not thy mother when she is old"; or perhaps in his day too there were critics blind to the poetry, the humour, the pathos, the many delights of these faded records, who would have rewritten them more in harmony with the requirements of (then) modern thought and feeling. Heine has given us a picture

of the old grandmother seated in the chimney corner, kept to tell the children fairy tales. She may receive no effusive demonstrations of regard and a superficial observer might think her forgotten, but the grandchildren who listen to her fairy tales have an affection for her which is no less deep because she is antiquated, perhaps garrulous, and altogether out of date. So when that venerable grandmother the Talmud rests in some library corner, we shall not despise her for being old-fashioned and garrulous; we shall not be ashamed of her if she talks sometimes of things which offend more refined ears; if she may be at times tedious, now and again narrow or uncharitable, we shall remember that long ago she suffered much, and if we smile, shall smile very kindly. Better keep her as she is than smooth out her wrinkles, dye her grey hair, and bid her caper about in our neighbour's ball-dress, as some modern admirers would have her do. On idle winter evenings she will delight us with many a tale of bygone kings and

sages, devils and angels. With her on the seventh day, when the Sambatyon is still, we shall cross the river where the lost ten tribes water their sheep; we shall overhear conversations between the dead in their graves, or visit, in company with Alexander of Macedon, strange countries beyond the "dark mountains." We shall laugh at the discomfiture of many a learned ancient pedant, or rejoice at poetic justice overtaking evil-doers. Accepting her as she is, and loving her for her faults as well as her virtues, we must here leave her, remembering the advice of Maimonides, that when the kernel cannot be extracted, the shell at least should be preserved.

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