**SOLOMON:**

**HIS LIFE AND TIMES.**

BY

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INTRODUCTION.

Chequered fortunes of David—His early prosperity as King—His

career darkened—Uriah and Bathsheba—Joab's power over David

—The birth of Solomon—Significance of David's remorse.

FEW careers have been more chequered than that of David;

few even of the lives recorded in the sacred volume are more

deeply instructive. The ruddy shepherd-lad, who tended his

few poor sheep in the wilderness, rapidly sprang into the great

warrior, the darling and hero, the poet and ruler of his people.

Gaining yearly as Saul lost, superseding even Jonathan in the

favour of the multitude, he had been so openly regarded as the

future wearer of the crown, that the king's jealousy drove him

into outlawry, and repeatedly sought his life. Save from im-

minent perils, and from incessant temptations to adopt a career

of crime, he had shown such consummate tact and skill as the

chief of a dangerous band, that on Saul's death he had been

chosen king by the tribe of Judah, and solemnly anointed at

Hebron. After he had reigned seven and a half years as King

of Judah, the murder of Ishbosheth, son of Saul, left Israel

free to elect a successor, and David was unanimously invited to

rule over the Twelve Tribes. Then began a period of un-

exampled prosperity. He gained secure possession of the City

of Jerusalem, and consecrated it by the translation of the Ark

thither from Gath-Rimmon. He strengthened his throne by a

Court, a Bodyguard, and an Army. God "made him a great name

like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth."1 He

became the father of a large and beautiful family, He was recog-

nized not only as a King, but also as a Psalmist and Prophet. At

1 2 Sam. vii. 9.

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times he even wore an ephod, and exercised many of the func-

tions of the priestly office.1 On every border of his kingdom he

drove back and subdued his hostile neighbours. The Philistines,

the Moabites, the rising power of Syria, the predatory Edomites,

and Amalekites, were thoroughly broken into submission. From

a petty chieftain he became a great sovereign. With the Phœ-

nicians in the north-west, he was in cordial and intimate alliance.

One misfortune alone—a three years' famine—seems to have

disturbed the brighter and earlier portion of his reign.

Then calamity burst over him like thunder out of a clear sky,

and his glory and prosperity were shattered by his own sin.

The crime, the infamy, of one hour precipitated upon him for

all the rest of his life a terrible load of disgrace and ruin.

He had an officer named Uriah, who like many of those who

served in his bodyguard, belonged to the old race of Canaan.

He was by birth a Hittite, but had probably become a prose-

lyte, and was, at any rate, conspicuous for his chivalrous bravery

and austere sense of duty. Among his comrades was Eliam, a

son of Ahitophe1,2 who, like himself, had risen by valour and

conduct to be one of the thirty commanders of David's thirty

companies. Eliam had a fair daughter named Bathsheba,3 and

it was natural that he should have given her in marriage to a

fellow-officer so distinguished as Uriah. The Hittite soldier

loved her with a passionate tenderness.4 While he was absent

in the war against the Ammonites, Bathsheba lived in his

house, which was one of those which clustered under the shadow

of David's palace on Mount Zion. One evening David, accord-

ing to his wont, was walking on his palace-roof, after the burning

1 2 Sam. vi. 13, 17, 18; I Chron. xvi. 42.

2 2 Sam. xxiii. 34. Jerome ("Qu. Heb." on 2 Sam. ix. 3; I Chron. iii. 5)

mentions the tradition, which he had learnt from the Rabbis who taught

him Hebrew, that these two Eliams—the son of Ahitophel and the father

of Bathsheba—were one and the same person. Eliam's name is omitted

from 1 Chron. xi., whence some have inferred that he lost his post, and was

involved in his father's ruin, but perhaps he may be dimly indicated under

the name of "Ahijah the Pelonite" (I Chron. xi. 36). *Pelonî* in Hebrew

means "so and so," like the Spanish *Don Fulano*.

3 2 Sam. xi. 3. It is a somewhat suspicious circumstance, due perhaps

to Jewish falsification, that in I Chron. iii. 5, Eliam is disguised into Am-

miel, and Bathsheba into Bathshua. Bathshua is a heathen name. "The

daughter of Shua, the Canaanites" (I Chron. ii. 3; Gen. xxxviii. 2-12).

4 2 Sam. xii. 3.

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heat of day, when he saw Bathsheba, who was "very beautiful to

look upon," washing herself in a cistern on the top of her house.

Forgetful of all his past, and of all that was due from him as

God's anointed, he made Bathsheba the victim of his guilty

passion. There is no need to detail the fresh crimes in which

he was entangled by the desire to hide his guilt. His attempt at

concealment was frustrated by the fine feeling and honourable

firmness of his unsuspecting soldier,1 and no way remained to

escape the consequences of his misdoing except to plot the base

murder of Uriah while he was fighting the king's battles before

Rabbath-Ammon. David, whom God had chosen from the

sheepfolds, to be the ruler of His people Israel, became the secret,

treacherous assassin of his brave commander. The murder

could only be carried out by making Joab his accomplice.

From that hour his peace was gone. It might have been said

to him as to the chief in the great tragedy—

"Not poppy nor mandragora,

Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,

Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep

Which thou owd'st yesterday."

Joab, as commander-in-chief and nephew of the king, had

already been too powerful for a subject, but from that time he

became the complete controller of David's destiny, because he—

and at first he alone—was master of his guilty secret. Ahito-

phel too, hitherto David's most trusted counsellor, was now

secretly his enemy. He may not, at first, have been aware of

the murder of Uriah, but he was the grandfather of the woman

whom David had so foully wronged.2

That woman was the mother of King Solomon. The date of

Solomon's birth cannot be ascertained with any certainty, be-

cause we do not know the age at which he ascended the throne.

1 That Uriah had become a proselyte we infer from his language in

2 Sam. xi. II.

2 See Blunt's "Undesigned Coincidences," Pt. II. x. p. 145. Professor

Blunt is usually credited with the first notice of this probability. It had,

however, been pointed out in the commentary of David Qimchi, and he

only quotes it from earlier expositors (see Grätz, "Gesch. d. Juden." i. 263).

In 2 Sam. xv. 31, David's prayer that God would turn the counsel of

Ahitophel to *foolishness* seems to be a play on his name, "brother of

foolishness" (?), though his advice was regarded as an "oracle of God''

(2 Sam. xvi. 23).

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He speaks of himself indeed at that time as "a little child," but

the expression is metaphorical, and is only used as the language

of deep humility.1 He succeeded to the crown in early man-

hood. If so, he was probably born not long after the year B.C.

1035 of the chronology which is most usually adopted, and

which is, so far as we can discover, reasonably accurate.2

But before we leave the tragic circumstances which accom-

panied David's first introduction to the mother of Solomon, it

is worth notice that the deadly wound which it inflicted on

the king's conscience, and the indignation which it caused

in the hearts of all to whom it became known, are proofs

of that loftier morality and keener sense of sin which resulted

from the Divine training of the Hebrew people. There were

many of the surrounding nations among whom this crime of a

brilliant and successful monarch would have been regarded as

venial or indifferent. The subjects of a Pagan autocrat would

have easily forgiven such an offence, and he would have found

no difficulty in forgiving himself. Indeed it is doubtful whether

any Egyptian or Assyrian subject would have ventured to in-

quire into circumstances which were surrounded with mystery

and doubt. But "the eye of the Lord is ten thousand times

brighter than the sun," and it was by a holy inspiration that His

prophets had been taught to look on sin "with such a glance as

strook Gehazi with leprosy, and Simon Magus with a curse."

The gaze of Nathan pierced through the precautions which

veiled the guilty secret of the king, and his voice—the voice of

the king's own conscience, and of the conscience of all the nation

—awoke the offender to that burst of heartfelt penitence which

expressed itself in language never to be forgotten in the Peni-

tential Psalms. The king's repentance was as signal as had been

his crime.

1 I Chron. xxii. 5; xxix. 1. "Solomon my son is young and tender." But

the same phrase is applied to Rehoboam, when he was forty-one (2 Chron.

xii. 13; xiii. 7), unless that (מא) be a clerical error for *twenty-one* (כא).

2 The systems of chronology vary. Ewald dates the reign of Solomon

from 1025-986; Usher from 1017-977. Hales, Jackson, and Bunsen adopt

other schemes.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHILDHOOD OF SOLOMON.

Influences which surrounded the childhood of Solomon—His father—Evil

effects of his fall—His family—Bathsheba— David's fondness for his

children—The name Shelômôh—Jedidiah—Influence of Nathan—His

retirement—Solomon comes to be secretly regarded as the heir to the

throne—Claims of Absalom.

THE brief sketch in the last chapter will suffice to show us some

of the conditions of the Court and family into which Solomon

was born.

His father was a king who, in many respects, had fallen from

his high estate. The golden dawn and glorious noonday of his

reign were over. He was no longer the pride and the idol of

Israel and Judah. Not only had his administration ceased to be

so vigorous as once it was, but the dark story of his relations

to Bathsheba and Uriah was but an imperfect secret, and in

proportion as it became known David lost ground in the affec-

tions of his people. There was, indeed, no concealment in the

intensity of his remorse, and God forgave him, and restored to

him the clean heart and the free spirit. But the forgiveness of

sins is not the same thing as the remission of consequences,

and the consequences of sin are moral and spiritual as well as

physical. They leave their scars upon a man's character. Re-

pentance is less strong and less beautiful than his elder

brother Innocence. No man can stain his soul with such

crimes as those of David, and remain unscathed thereafter.

His powers of resistance are weakened; his tranquillity

becomes less secure. The intercourse of the boy Solomon with

his father must have been intercourse with a gloomy and

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saddened man, who was still capable indeed of flashes of his

old nobleness, but whose recorded deeds show a marked dete-

rioration from the splendid religious promise of his youth. He

withdrew more and more into the pompous surroundings of

a Court, and the voluptuous seclusion of the harem. His

judicial duties were so much neglected as to give strength to

the complaints and promises of Absalom. The spell of his

early ascendency was broken, and a deep indignation against

him burned in many hearts. In a twofold way his evil

example produced bitter fruit. On the one hand, it caused the

enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; on the other, it acted as

a spiritual empoisonment in the hearts of all who were unstable.

It broke down in many minds the altar of confidence in the

reality of virtue, leading them to say, "If he is not good, no one

is good." His sons inherited from him the legacy of imperious

passions, and they had also before their eyes the fatal example

of a weakness in the Reason and the Conscience which, in

David if in any one, ought to have sufficed to keep those

passions under firm control. The transgression of the monarch

tended to lower the morality of the entire nation.

The influence of David over any of his sons now that he was

weak and fallen, can hardly have been entirely beneficial, but it

is probable that his intercourse with Solomon was small. Be-

sides his daughters, David had at least twenty sons born of his

numerous wives.1 Following the bad custom of polygamy

which had only been practised to a very small extent by the

early patriarchs of his race, or by his immediate predecessor,

he had two wives during his wanderings, five during his reign

at Hebron, and an unknown number at Jerusalem, besides the

harem of ten or more concubines which was regarded as an

almost necessary appendage of Eastern royalty. The number

of his family, and the mutual jealousies between the separate

establishments, would naturally tend to diminish his intercourse

with his sons; nor is it the custom in the East for fathers to

take much part in the early training of their children, however

fondly they may be beloved. Polygamy necessarily tends to

break down domestic affections.

To Bathsheba must have fallen the chief share in the educa-

1 Seer 1 Sam. xxvii. 3; 2 Sam. iii. 2-5, v. 13-16; I Chron. iii. 5-8,

xiv. 4-7. There were also sons of concubines who are not named (2 Sam.

xv. 16; 1 Chron. iii. 2).

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tion of her child, and it is impossible to suppose that her

influence could have been very good. We know but little of

her, but that little is almost wholly to her disadvantage. If

her name was originally Bathshua1 this may possibly imply

that she was, in part at least, of heathen extraction; but

whether this be so or not she must have had a deep share in

David's guilt. In her son's reign, the young and beautiful

maiden of Shunem could be faithful to her peasant lover in

spite of the unequalled magnificence of the royal match which

was so passionately pressed upon her.2 Not so Bathsheba.

She seems to have offered no resistance to the far graver crime

of adultery committed against a most tender and faithful hus-

band. She came to David in secret. She must have acquiesced,

at least with silent complicity, in the base plot by which the

king would fain have concealed his guilt; and to that plot she

seems to have opposed no remonstrance. Of Uriah's murder

she may have known nothing, but, if he was sacrificed without

her cognizance at the time, she can hardly have remained

unaware of that which afterwards, in Court circles at any rate,

became an open secret. Yet she was so far from turning with

abhorrence from the hands which were red with her husband's

blood, that directly the legal period of mourning for Uriah was

over, she was content to add one more to the discreditable

number of David's wives. We may make every allowance for

the different views of morality taken by Eastern peoples in

ancient days, but the fact remains—Bathsheba had been a

willing adulteress, and she continued to enjoy till death the

earthly fruits of her transgression. There is no certainty, and

little probability in the notion of the Rabbis that she was "the

mother of King Lemuel," whose appeals to her son are preserved

in the Thirty-first Chapter of Proverbs; but, if she were, those

exhortations to chastity would have come with more weight

from other lips.

According to the order of names in I Chron. iii. 5, Solomon

was the *youngest* of five sons born to David and Bathsheba.

The eldest—the child of the adultery—died in infancy. The

1 I Chron iii. 5.

2 She is called the Shulamite, but Shunem was known as *Sulem* in the

days of Eusebius and Jerome, and the village is now called *Solam*. See

Robinson's "Researches in Palestine," vol. iii. p. 402. The only other

Shunammite in Scripture is Elisha's hostess (2 Kings iv. 12).

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other three were Shimea, Shobab, and Nathan, of wham the

latter became the ancestor of Christ after the extinction of

Solomon's line in the person of Jeconiah.1 Possibly, however,

Solomon's name may only be placed last by way of emphasis,

for in 2 Sam. xii. it is implied that Solomon was born first of the

sons of Bathsheba after her legal marriage, and this is also

distinctly stated by Josephus.2 David was a fond father to all

his children, but the circumstances of Solomon's birth tended

to make him specially dear to the rapidly-ageing king. He was

the son of a mother passionately, if guiltily, beloved, and his

birth came to fill up the void caused by the death of the first

child. David would naturally regard his birth and survival as

a proof that God in mercy had accepted his prayers, and seen

his remorseful tears.

When Solomon was born, the kingdom was at peace. David

had seen enough, and more than enough of war. The thought

of all the blood which he had shed weighed heavily upon his

conscience, and his enemies called him "a man of blood." His

yearning for peace appears in the name Absalom—"Father of

Peace"—which he had given long before to the son born to

him in Hebron of Maacah, daughter of Talmai, king of

Geshur. By this time it must have been still stronger, and he

gave to his son by Bathsheba the stately name of Shelômôh,

or "The Peaceful,"3 the name which is still so common in the

East in the form Suleimân.4 Nathan was immediately in-

formed of the auspicious birth, and the child was placed

under his sponsorship and care.5 He, too, hailed the birth

1 Luke iii. 31. Salathiel, the direct descendant of Solomon and Bath-

sheba in the line of Nathan, was probably adopted by Jeconiah. Comp.

Zech. xii. 12; and comp. I Chron. iii. 17; Jer. xxii. 30; Matt. i. 11, 12.

Salathiel's real father was Neri (Luke iii. 27), of the house of Nathan. If

"Assir" ("captive") was (as the Talmudists assert) a son of Jehoiachin,

he died young, and the exiled king adopted his kinsman, Salathiel.

2 "Antiq." vii. 7, 4,

3 According to one reading in 2 Sam. xii. 24, Bathsheba conferred the

name.

4 Comp. the names Shelômith, Lev. xxiv. 11; I Chron. xxvi. 25;

Numb. xxxiv. 27. So Frederick is Friedereich, "rich in peace." We speak

of Solomon because the New Testament and Josephus translated *Shelô*-

moh not by Σαλωμὼν), as is done by the LXX., but by Σολομών. The

long vowel is retained in Salôme.

5 2 Sam. xii. 25. The verse may either mean—" He (David) sent him (the

THE CHILDHOOD OF SOLOMON. 9

of the child as a sign that God had restored to David the

favour which had been promised to his repentance. He there-

fore gave to Solomon, "because of Jehovah," the more sacred

name of Jedidiah—"Beloved of Jah."1 David himself had been

called by a name which meant "The Beloved," "The Darling";

but to Solomon the prophet desired to give a name expressive

of something deeper than family affection.2 This name, how-

ever, is never again referred to, for it was not meant to be used

in common life. The name Solomon was like a prophetic inti-

mation of the ideal and the history of the magnificent unwarlike

king.3

In Nathan we might have expected that the boy would have

had a pure, wise, and faithful teacher; and such, we may trust,

was to some extent the case. But it is impossible to overlook the

fact that, after his one exhibition of fearless faithfulness, Nathan

seems to have sunk into comparative apathy. He lived till

Solomon's accession certainly, and perhaps late into the reign,

of which he wrote the earlier annals.4 If the Jewish tradition

mentioned by Jerome be correct, Nathan was the eighth, perhaps

the adopted, son of Jesse,5 and the same as the warrior

Jonathan, who is called David's "uncle" in 2 Sam. xxi. 21.6 He

has also been identified with the Nathan whose sons occupied

high places in Solomon's Court,—one of them, Zabud, being

"The King's Friend," and also "Priest."7 But the father of these

child) into the hand of Nathan;" or "He sent by the hand of Nathan," i.e.,

as Ewald (iii. 168) explained it "entreated the oracle through Nathan, to

confer on the new-born child some name of lofty import;" or even "He

(Jehovah) sent by the hand of Nathan." Comp. I Chron. xxii. 9.

1 Amahilis Domino. Comp. Lemuel, Jonathan, Nathanael, Adeodatus,

Diodorus, Theodore, Gottlieb, &c.

2 Comp. Ps. cxxvii. 2. "So every Muhammedan, besides his so-called

baptismal names, may have an additional name of loftier significance

ending in *eldîn*, which signifies the man in his religious capacity" (Ewald,

iii. 165: comp. Noor-ed-Din, Saleh-ed-Din, &c.).

3 I Chron. xxii. 9.

4 2 Chron. ix. 29.

5 Jerome, " Qu. Hebr."; I Sam. xvii. 12; I Chron. ii. 13-15.

6 It is more probable that "uncle " in I Chron. xxvii. 32 is a mistake

for "nephew," the mistake arising from a wrong punctuation of 2 Sam. xxi.

21. This Jonathan is described as a wise man, a scribe, and David's coun-

sellor.

7 It does not follow that this Nathan was of Aaronic descent, for David's

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officials was more probably the younger brother of Solomon.

The prophet Nathan himself did not continue to play any

memorable part in the religious service of the people. After

Solomon's accession his name is not mentioned, and although

David consulted him about the building of the Temple, and

the organization of public worship, we do not hear of his

voice being raised in any of the crimes and tumults which

marked the closing years of the hero-king. It was Gad the

seer, not Nathan the prophet, who warned David of the

punishment which would follow the guilty pride—possibly the.

tyrannous purpose of levying a poll-tax or conscription—

which had induced him to number the people in defiance of

the wishes of his wisest counsellors.1 If, indeed, we could

attach any importance to a confused fragment of the Greek

historian, Eupolemus, Nathan may have had some message for

David during the three years' pestilence.2 But Eupolemus con-

fuses different events, and if the census had any reference to the

system of collecting funds for the future Temple, Nathan may

have persuaded himself that the measure was justifiable. Pos-

sibly the weight of advancing years may have impaired his

energy, but to him we must still attribute the best of the influences

which surrounded the life of the youthful prince. Himself •

trained in the School of the Prophets, he must have instructed

Solomon in all the poetry, the "wisdom of the East," and the his-

torical literature of his nation, and especially in whatever portions

of the Mosaic law were then committed to writing. The literary

capacities which Solomon had inherited from his father must.

have received a careful cultivation, although they assumed a

sons are also called priests (2 Sam. viii. 18), and even Ira (2 Sam. xx. 26).

By the time the Books of Chronicles were written there was some feeling

against the union of civil and ecclesiastical offices, and instead of "kohen,''

"priest," they have " chief at the hand of the king." The LXX. render

the name αυλάρχαι in the case of David's sons, and the Authorized Version

"officers," while the Vulgate honestly gives *sacerdotes*, and the Revised

Version "priests," as well as Luther and Coverdale. See Ewald, "Alter-

thümsk.," p. 276.

1 2 Sam. xxiv. 25; I Chron. xxi. xxvii. 23, 24.

2 The passage is preserved in Eusebius, "Prep. Ev." ix. 30, "An angel

painted David the place where the Temple was to be, but forbade him to

build it, as being stained with blood, and having fought many wars. His

name was Dianathan." The blundering name is taken apparently from the

διὰ Νόθαν in the LXX. Version. Sec 2 Sam. vii. and I. Chron. xxii.

THE CHILDHOOD OF SOLOMON. 11

different development from that which has immortalized the

name of David as "the sweet Psalmist of Israel."

Though Solomon was the first Jewish king "born in the

purple," it is by no means certain that he had been destined

from the first to be David's heir. The old king may have felt

the same reluctance to name his successor as has been felt by

other great sovereigns; and to nominate an infant or a young boy

would be dangerous. It is not till the time of Adonijah's rebellion

that we hear of an oath to Bathsheba that her son should suc-

ceed to the throne,1 and as there is no independent mention of

that oath we do not know at what period it was given. It was

felt indeed that the king's nomination was one of the most

powerful factors in a claim to the throne, but the nomination

could hardly be arbitrary. The murder of Amnon, David's

eldest son, took place when Solomon was a child. Of the second

son, Chileab or Daniel, we hear no more, and it is probable that

he died early. Of the remaining sons, Absalom was the eldest

He certainly regarded himself as the intended heir. Not only

was David already a king when Absalom was born at Hebron,

but the youth was of royal descent on both sides, since his

mother Maacah was a daughter of the king of Geshur. He

was also strong in the admiration of the multitude, and in the

passionate affection which his father entertained for him. When

Absalom perished in battle against his father, Adonijah, the

eldest surviving son, regarded his own claims as valid. Next

in order to Adonijah were at least twelve sons of whom we know

next to nothing, and who may have been excluded either from

the lack of any commanding qualities, or because their

mothers were of private and undistinguished families.2 The pro-

raise to Bathsheba may have been one of the whispered secrets

of the palace, but it does not seem to have been generally

11 Kings i. 13, 17.

2 In 2 Sam. iii. 1-5, we have six sons of David mentioned—Amnon,

Chileab, Absalom, Adonijah, Shephatiah, Ithream; in 1 Chron. iii. 1-9 we

have (if the text be correct) besides these (Daniel being put for Chileab)

Shimea, Shobab, Nathan, Solomon, Elishama, Eliphelet, Nogah, Nepheg,

Japhia, Eliada; besides the sons of the concubines, and Tamar. A similar

list, with variations, occurs in 2 Sam. v.14-16 ; and in I Chron. xiv. 3-7, where

Ibhar is put next to Solomon. Besides these we have a Jerimoth in 2 Chron.

xi. 18, whose daughter Mahalath was married to Rehoboam. Josephus

("Antiq." vii, 3, § 3) gives a totally different list of eleven sons. Some of

them became "priests" (2 Sam. viii. 18, Authorized Version "chief rulers").

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known. It would be unfair to ascribe it solely to the ascendency

which Bathsheba had acquired over the mind of the uxorious

king. Solomon early displayed the capacity which marked

him as conspicuously superior to all his brethren. It was

clear to all "that the Lord loved him."1 David's insight in

choosing him to be his heir had received the prophetic ap-

proval of Nathan. But however early this design was formed,

there was an obvious wisdom in confining the knowledge of the

secret to a few. To make it generally known while Solomon

was a child would have been to awaken the turbulent jealousies

of his powerful and unscrupulous rivals, and to mark him out

for almost certain destruction. It must have early become clear

that such men as Amnon and Absalom and Adonijah—men of

fierce passions and haughty temperament—would be singularly

unfitted to carry out the peaceful and religious designs which

David wished to bequeath to his successor. The promise of

calm wisdom and stately demeanour which marked the childhood

of Solomon,2 combined with David's passionate devotion to

Bathsheba to make him pass over the pretensions of his elder

sons, and with the approval of his truest religious adviser, to

swear by the name of Jehovah, "Assuredly Solomon my son

shall reign after me."

1 2 Sam. xii. 24.

2 Compare Wisd. viii. 19, "But I was a clever child, and received a good

soul."

CHAPTER II.

THE YOUTH OF SOLOMON.

Troubles of the period—The crime of Amnon—David's supineness—Absa-

lom's revenge—His flight, return, and forgiveness—His ambition—His

rebellion—Ahitophel—David's flight from Jerusalem—His impotent

resentment against Joab—The murder of Amasa—Solomon learns who

are the friends and the enemies of his house—Intestine quarrels—The

numbering of the people—Dislike of the measure and its imperfect

results—The pestilence—The vision on the threshing-floor of Araunah.

THE youth of Solomon fell in a dark and troubled period,

during which the sins and errors of David were bringing about

their natural retribution.

The first event which shocked the nation and rent the king's

heart was the horrible misconduct of his eldest son Amnon,

who had been born to him during his days as a fugitive, by his

first wife Ahinoam of Jezreel. There is no need to detail one

of the foulest incidents which sully the sacred page. It is not

often that the fierce light of history burns into the secrets of an

Eastern palace, but, in this instance, it reveals a state of things

truly shocking. Violent and insolent as his ancestor Reuben, this

first-born of David did not allow the Mosaic law to restrain the

growth of his ungovernable passion for his half-sister Tamar.1

Aided by the cunning of his cousin Jonadab, the son of David's

brother Shimeah, he accomplished his purpose, and then, with a

1 Grätz ("Gesch. d. Juden." i. 264) assumes, without a shadow of proof,

that Tamar was a daughter of Maacah by an earlier marriage, so that there

was no blood-relationship between her and Amnon. A man guilty of con-

duct so atrocious as that of Amnon would hardly be hindered by any

barrier.

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sudden revulsion of feeling, rendered his crime yet more detest-

able by driving the maiden from him with pitiless brutality. His

conduct can only be accounted for by the glare of unnatural

horror often flung by a guilty conscience when a deed of shame

is done. With her "sleeved upper garment"1 rent, and ashes

on her head, the dishonoured princess fled to her own brother

Absalom, uttering loud cries of despair. He, with a deeply-

seated purpose of revenge bade her to dissemble her anguish

as he dissembled his own rage, and to remain in her palace

quiet though desolate. Under such circumstances it was David's

duty2 to see that punishment fell on the head of the atrocious

criminal. But David, like Eli, yielded to a foolish fondness for

his son, and spared to bring him to justice because he was his

first-born, and he did not like "to vex his soul."3 He was

"very wroth," but he did nothing.

But if the king would do nothing, Absalom determined that

due vengeance should wipe out the shame of incest and out-

rage.4 He nursed his wrath, and said nothing to Amnon. He

was sullenly waiting for the opportunity which was sure to rise

when suspicion had been lulled to sleep. After two years had

elapsed he made "a feast like the feast of a king"5 at Baal-

Hazor, near the little town of Ephraim—the hamlet in which

our Lord took refuge after His excommunication by the Priests.6

Sheep-shearings were recognized seasons of festivity,7 and it

was quite in accordance with Absalom's known character, that

he should desire to make the occasion as splendid as possible.

He, therefore, invited the king and the princes to be present

at the celebration. David, as Absalom no doubt had expected,

declined to go in person, on the plea that his visit would in

volve Absalom in great expense; but he permitted all the

king's sons to go. It seems to have been regarded as a matter

of course that Amnon would not be invited; but when David

1 2 Sam. xiii. 18. It was her dress as a princess (comp. Gen. xxxvii. 3).

2 See Levit. xx. 17.

3 2 Sam. xiii. 21. LXX.

4 It is a touching sign of Absalom's affection for his dishonoured sister

that he called his own daughter after her—Tamar (2 Sam. xiv. 27).

5 2 Sam. xiii. 27. LXX.

6 This cannot be regarded as certain. The words mean, according to

Ewald, "on the borders of the tribe of Ephraim." A various reading is

"the valley of Rephaim."

7 Gen. xxxviii. 12, 13; I Sam. xxv. 4, 36.

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had refused the invitation, and contented himself with blessing

Absalom, there was a plausible excuse for asking permission

that the eldest son, the presumptive heir to the throne, should

be present as David's representative. It was not without mis-

giving that the king granted the request, for hatred is not easily

concealed, and David was aware of his own neglect, and of the

deadliness of Amnon's offence. But he could never resist the

subtle fascination of Absalom's appeals, and disguising his sus-

picion he gave a reluctant assent. Revenge was now within

Absalom's reach. He ordered his servants to wait till Amnon

was flushed with wine, and then fearlessly to murder him,

promising them the protection of his position and influence.

The murder was accomplished. The banquet broke up in wild

confusion, and the terrible news was brought to Jerusalem that

all the princes were slain. In that awful moment as amid his

wailing courtiers he grovelled in the dust with rent clothes, and

recognized the fatal similitude to his own crime in these deeds

of lust and blood, the iron must indeed have entered deep into

David's soul.

His nephew, the subtle Jonadab, removed the most over-

whelming part of his anguish by assuring him that Absalom

could only have killed Amnon. He had read the secret of

Absalom's revenge in his face, as he read the secret of Amnon's

lawless passion. The appearance of the king's sons on their

mules, all weeping bitterly, confirmed the surmise of Jonadab.

But the facts were still sufficiently terrible. Dark spirits were

walking in the house of the Psalmist of Israel. A brother had

outraged his sister, and had fallen by his brother's hand.

Absalom was now the heir, and though his father had never

said him nay he did not venture to appear before the deeply-

incensed king, but fled to the Court of his maternal grandfather,

Talmai, king of Geshur. There he remained in exile for three

years. For a year David continued to wear mourning for

Amnon, and then his heart began to go forth once more to his

banished son.1 Joab, loyal to his master in every respect so long

as he was left undisturbed in the command of the army, read

the king's hidden yearning, and by the device of the widow of

Tekoah, induced him, to recall Absalom. Perhaps his conduct

in the matter was not quite so disinterested as it looked. Ab-

1 2 Sam. xiv. 1. Dr. Edersheim and others render it "the king's heart

was *against* Absalom" (comp. Dan. xi. 28).

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salom, at any rate, had ulterior designs. In murdering Am-

non he had borne in mind that his brother's removal left his

path clear to the throne, and he relied for success on his own

prowess, cunning, and popularity, supported as they were by

his father's boundless pride in his beauty. It probably never

occurred to him to regard Solomon as an obstacle in his way.

The kingdom needed a strong ruler, and being in the prime of

life he would not have feared that his wishes could be thwarted

by an inconspicuous child, the son of a mother of no import-

ance. He had been forbidden to see his father's face, and this

was the condition of his return. It was, however, essential to

his plans that there should be an open reconciliation between

his father and himself, and he had not the least doubt that this

could be assured if once the king could be induced to permit

him to enter his presence. Five years had now elapsed since

the tragedy at Baal-Hazor, and he thought that it was time for

the condonation of a fratricide, which he defended by his duty

as an avenger. He sent for Joab twice, but Joab was afraid or

unwilling to visit a prince who was in disgrace. With charac-

teristic insolence he therefore ordered his servants to set Joab's

barley-field on fire, and when the rude soldier came to demand

compensation he vehemently reproached him with having

brought him back from Geshur to no purpose. Joab accordingly

used his irresistible influence to bring about an interview between

David and his son, and it ended, as Absalom had expected, in

his father's extending to him full forgiveness, ratified by a kiss

of peace.

He might now have felt assured that he would succeed to the

throne, but his impetuous vanity and ambition would not suffer

him to await his father's death, His position as the king's

eldest son enabled him to surround himself with chariots and

horsemen and a bodyguard, and he also deliberately set himself

to create a popular movement in his own favour. In this base

plot he was aided not only by his own peerless beauty, an in-

fluence doubly powerful in Eastern countries, but also by the

growing remissness of the king's old age, and possibly of his

long illness. He gradually got round himself a powerful

party, and the conspiracy grew stronger every day, while the

king, rarely leaving the precincts of his palace, remained in

unsuspecting security. For four years, with unsleeping assi-

duity, he set himself to steal away the hearts of the people

THE YOUTH OF SOLOMON. 17

by blandishments and bribes. At last the time seemed ripe

for throwing off the mask. David's rule had in some way

alienated his own tribe of Judah, and the disaffection was

particularly strong in his early capital of Hebron. The in-

habitants of that old and sacred city perhaps looked with

jealousy on the growing glories of Jerusalem by which they had

been so totally thrown into the shade. Absalom, under pre-

tence of a vow, asked leave to sacrifice at Hebron, and went

thither with two hundred followers, from whom he had con-

cealed his designs. But no sooner was he safe in Hebron, than

he sent for Ahitophel, whose wisdom had secured him the high

post of the king's counsellor, and whose counsel was reverenced

in those days like an oracle of God. Now, Ahitophel was the

grandfather of Bathsheba, and it is difficult to imagine that he

would have joined Absalom if he had been aware that his own

great-grandson was David's destined successor. It is indeed

possible that ambition may have been suppressed by the sterner

passion of revenge. Like Absalom himself he may have nursed,

during many years, a secret wrath for Bathsheba's dishonour.

His motives must be only a matter of conjecture; but as his

grand-daughter was now the king's favourite wife, and the

mother of four of his sons, his defection is, at any rate, a clear

sign of David's waning popularity.

On receiving the news of this formidable revolt, David im-

mediately decided to leave Jerusalem until he should have

gathered a sufficient force to fight against his son's adherents.

He took with him all his wives and sons, only leaving ten con-

cubines to look after the royal abodes. Bathsheba and her

young son must therefore have been with him during that long

and tragic day, so full of heart-shaking scenes, which is described

at greater length than any other day in the whole Bible. Per-

haps they stood by David's side under the olive-tree by the

last house in the suburbs of Jerusalem, on the edge of the dark

Kidron, while the soldiers and people defiled past him. On the

sensitive mind of a boy those scenes must have left a deep im-

pression, and they also taught him the friends on whom he could

1 In 2 Sam. xv. 7 it is clear that the true reading is, "It came to pass

after *four* (not *forty*) years." This is the reading of the Peshito, the Vul-

gate, Josephus, and most modern critics. The conduct of Absalom was

like that of Agamemnon (Euripides, "Iphig." 337 *sqq*.) and Bolingbroke

(Shakespeare, "Richard II.," act v. sc. ii.).

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most securely rely. For without the aid of the mercenary and

alien bodyguard known as Cherethites, Pelethites,1 and Gittites

David must have been crushed at once. They were under the

command of Benaiah and Ittai of Gath, and they acted in

concert with a body of six hundred, the little nucleus of the first

standing army known to the Hebrews. The whole force was

popularly spoken of as the Gibborim or Heroes, a name which

properly belonged only to those who had shown distinguished

prowess.2 Of the priests, Zadok was conspicuous for loyalty,

and his reputation as a seer added greatly to David's strength.

Abiathar also remained faithful, but he is mentioned after Zadok,

though he was older and had the precedence in religious rank,

and he seems to have shown tardiness in taking the final

decision.3 Hushai the Archite,4 David's "friend," and perhaps,

like Ittai, of alien race, was also faithful. With rent garments

1 The origin of these names is disputed. Ewald and Hitzig (following the

LXX. in Ezek. xxv. 16; Zeph. ii. 5) regard them as Cretans (comp. Tacitus,

"Hist." v.2, but see 1 Sam. xxx. 14), and Philistines; but Gesenius,Thenius,

and Keil think that they are the names of officers, "executioners (2 Kings

xi.4) and couriers" (1 Kings xiv. 28), from כרת "to slay," and פלת "to run."

Josephus calls them σωματοφύλακες (2 Sam. xxiii. 23). In 2 Sam. xx. 23

and 2 Kings xi. 4 the word rendered in our Authorized Version by

"Cherethites" and "captains" is really כרי, perhaps "Carians."

2 The word "Gittites" in 1 Sam. xv. 18 should probably be "Gibborim"

or "Heroes," as in xvi. 6. This is the reading of the LXX. Grätz

("Gesch. d. Juden." i. 270) thinks that Ittai and the mercenary force had

been got together evidently but a short time before the rebellion, 2 Sam.

xv. 19) to overawe the designs of the Tanite Pharaoh Psusennes (?) on the

domains of Geshur. It has been conjectured that by "Gittites" are,

meant soliders who had served under David in old days at Gath.

3 He "*stood still*" (according to the conjectural reading) until all the

people had streamed out of the city, whereas Zadok and his Levites had at

once taken out the Ark to accompany David (2 Sam. xv. 24). But the

meaning of the passage is not quite clear. It may be that Abiathar had

accompanied Zadok with the Ark, and that his name has dropped out of

2 Sam. xv. 24 (of which there is a very possible trace in the LXX. reading απὸ

Βαιθάε), and that Abiathiar stood still (comp. Josh. iii. 17) with the king

under the olive-tree (LXX.), by "the last house" (2 Sam. xv. 17, Hebr.),

while the Ark was motionless until all the people had passed.

4 This title is of certain meaning. It might mean "from the town of

Erek," but no town of that name is known. Perhaps the Archites, like the

Jebusites, &c., were the remnant of some aboriginal tribe of Palestine.

Josephus, with a strange play on the word, calls him αρχιεταῖρος, "chie

of the companions."

THE YOUTH OF SOLOMON. 19

and ashes on his head, he joined David at the little oratory

(*proseucha*) on the top of the Mount of Olives (2 Sam. xv.

32, Hebr.). Mephibosheth, still perhaps brooding over the

miserable fate of Saul and his house, and the bloody end

of so many of his brethren, seems to have been lukewarm

at the best, but his powerful agent, Ziba, made up for this

remissness of the last surviving son of the friend of David's

youth. Joab also and his brother Abishai remained loyal

to their uncle and old master, and shared with Ittai the com-

mand of the forces. On the other side of the Jordan three

powerful and generous sheykhs, Shobi, the son of Nahash, who

had survived the destruction of his native Rabbah,1 Machir of

Lo-debar, and the aged Gileadite, Barzillai, rendered to the

fugitive king an invaluable service. The friends who thus rallied

round David were, with few exceptions, the friends and partisans

of Solomon at a later period.

It is needless to follow the story of Absalom's rebellion, defeat,

and death.2 The king's impolitic outburst of sorrow at the news

of his son's death shows how easy it would have been for

Absalom to have succeeded but for his own headstrong folly

His murder—for it was nothing else, though Joab may have

thought it justifiable—left no real competitor between Solomon

and the throne.3

Solomon was already of an impressionable age, and the events

of this rebellion must have taught him much. Among other

things he must have perceived the dangerous power of Joab

and the reckless use which he made of it. His language to the

king was even insolent in its tone of menace, and David in his

resentment superseded him in his command, and placed Amasa

—another of his nephews—in his place. The resentment was

perfectly impotent. Joab, master of David's secrets, was master

of David's fate. He had made himself indispensable, and he

1 He may have been a brother of the insulting Hanun, and as Nahash

had been a firm friend, and perhaps a kinsman, of David, David may have

made him "chief" (δυνάστης, Josephus, "Antiq." vii. 9, § 8) of the Am-

monite country in his brother's place.

2 It has been supposed that in Psalms iii., xxxix., xli., lv., lxii., lxiii., we

have allusions to the circumstances of Absalom's conspiracy.

3 The *mode* of Absalom's murder seems to have been exceptionally cruel.

Joab transfixed him with three wooden *staves*, and left his armour-bearers

to kill him. He had old grudges to satisfy.

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gave David plainly to understand that, while he would be

faithful in all other respects, he did not mean to be cashiered

from his command. His brutal murder of Amasa caused a

shock of disgust, and men remembered long afterwards his

horrible appearance as he went in pursuit of Sheba with his

girdle and all his garments down to his sandals soaked in his

murdered cousin's blood.1 Yet David did not dare to punish

him! There had been an obvious injustice and feeble im-

policy in the appointment of Amasa, a rebel and the son

of an Ishmaelite,2 over the head of the very commander

who had just defeated him in the king's battle. Indeed,

Amasa at once proved his own incompetence, and Joab, by

bringing the rebellion of Sheba to a speedy and successful

issue, placed himself beyond the reach of David's anger. The

manner of Amasa's murder had been craftily made to wear the

appearance of an accident, and perhaps this furnished David

with an excuse for not bringing to justice a kinsman who had

nought for him for so many years, and had become far too

powerful for his control. He hates him, he feels his dependence

on him, he is afraid of him, curses him again and again, tries

get rid of him, yet, in spite of the murders of Abner and

Amasa, always kept him at hand, and finally commands his son

to punish the servant whom he feared to touch himself.3

Again, Solomon must have perceived that the animosities of

the house of Saul still smouldered beneath the surface. The

curses heaped upon David in his hour of shame by Shimei, son

of Gerar, who was of Saul's family, showed that there were still

many adherents of the old royal house. He followed David to

curse him as the murderer of his race, and never stopped his

curses till the king and his followers had reached a spot which per-

haps from this circumstance received the pathetic name of Aye-

phim—"the place of the weary."4 David had certainly behaved

with generosity to the descendants of his former master, and

especially to Jonathan's son Mephibosheth. The guilt—for so

it was regarded at the time5—of the execution of Saul's seven

sons and grandsons—five sons of his daughter Merab,6 and two

1 I Kings ii. 5.

2 2 Sam. xvii. 25, Hebr.; comp. I Chron. ii. 17.

3 See Oort, "Bible for Young People," iii. 87 (E. tr.).

4 See 2 Sam. xvi. 14 (the probable reading).

5 2 Sam. xvi. 7.   
 6 So we should read in 2 Sam. xxi. 8.

THE YOUTH OF SOLOMON. 21

of his sons by Rizpah—must fall not upon David, but upon the

priesthood who furnished David with the answers of the oracle,

and on the Gibeonites who demanded this horrible expiation

by human sacrifice. But the lonely anguish of Rizpah, as, for

month after month, in burning heat and searching cold, seated

on sackcloth upon the rocks, she scared the vultures and the

jackals from the crosses on which hung the blackened and

shrivelled bodies of her two sons—

"Dead in the dim and lion-haunted ways,"

had awakened a deep sympathy, and the action of Mephibosheth

himself in not joining the faithful soldiers and courtiers who

left Jerusalem with David seems to show that a reaction in

favour of Saul's house was not deemed impossible even then.

Ziba, at any rate, charged his master with cherishing secret

hopes of the overthrow of David, and although Mephibosheth

excused his tardiness by the fact that he was lame, it has been

said that the excuse was as lame as he who offered it.1

Solomon's later policy towards Joab and Shimei and Abiathar

was probably influenced by all that he had seen and heard,

when, as a boy, he stood with his father under the olive-tree

beside the Ark, and accompanied his mother Bathsheba on that

long day of flight and weeping up the slopes of Olivet and

down the deep valley into the wilderness of Jordan.

He must also have learnt that the kingdom was still far from

consolidated. The furious quarrel between the men of Judah

and the men of Israel, and the revolt of Sheba the Benjamite

from the mountains of Ephraim, showed that tribal jealousies

could at any moment be fanned into a flame. The tribe of

Ephraim could not acquiesce in the loss of its old pre-eminence;

the men of Benjamin could not readily forget that the first

monarch of Israel had been one of themselves.

Another great calamity broke the returning peace of David's

later years. It was the numbering of the people and the pesti-

lence, which was regarded by the national conscience as the

punishment for this offence.

1 It must however be admitted that later Jewish sentiment condemned

the act as hasty and unfair. "In the hour when David said, 'Thou and

Ziba divide the land,' a *Bath Kol* (voice from heaven) came forth and said

to him, 'Rehoboam and Jeroboam shall divide the kingdom'" (Talmud,

Shabbath, 56. 2, quoted by Dr. Edersheim, "Bible History," v. 31).

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This passage of David's history is surrounded by obscurities,

for we are not told his exact motive.

There could have been nothing sinful in the mere wish to

ascertain the numbers of the population, and the statistics

of its various elements. The growth and organization of the

kingdom rendered such a step desirable. Possibly, also, David

was in dread of an Egyptian encroachment on his southern ter-

ritories, and may have felt it necessary to be prepared for war.1

Solomon in his reign carried out the census more completely, and

no pestilence followed, and no blame is attached to him. Moses

had thrice been ordered to take a census of the Israelites in the

wilderness, partly in order to ascertain the number of the fight-

ing men.2 But in Exod. xxx. 12 we find a command never to

number the people without requiring of every man half a shekel

as atonement-money, which was to be for every man "a ransom

for his soul unto the Lord," for the express reason "*that there*

*may be no plague among them* when thou numberest them."

David exacted no atonement-money, and may not even have

been aware of this law. It is clear, however, that the census—

or its unavowed motives—was repugnant to the general feeling.

Joab and his officers ventured to dissuade the king from his

purpose, but they counselled in vain. The mass of the people

shared Joab's sentiments, because they disliked so prominent

an assertion of regal power. They looked on the census as an

ill-omened expedient of worldly policy, and its results were not

even entered in the official chronicles.3 The historians ascribe

the impulse to "the anger of the Lord," and to "a Satan," and

Joab did the work both tardily and imperfectly.4 At the end of

nine months and twenty days he informed David that the

effective military force of Israel numbered 800,000 men, and of

Judah, 500,000.5 The tribe of Levi was omitted from the census

1 The little raid of the Egyptians on Gezer (i Kings ix. 16) is not defi-

nitely dated, and may have occurred before David's death. It was only

Solomon's marriage with Pharaoh's daughter which robbed it of its threat-

ening character, for Gezer was a Canaanite city on the lower border of

Ephraim. The site of Gezer has very recently been identified at *Abu*

*Shusheh*, also called Tell-el-Gezer, between Ramleh and Jerusalem (L.

Oliphant, "Haifa," p. 253).

2 Exod. xxxviii. 26; Numb. i. 2, 3, xxvi. 1-4,

3 I Sam. xxiv. 1; I Chron. xxi, 1. 4 I Chron. xxi. 5, 6; xxvii. 24.

5 In I Chron. xxi. 5 we have the astounding, total numbers. of 1,100,000

for Israel, and 470,000 fighting men for Judah.

THE YOUTH OF SOLOMON. 23

as a matter of course, in accordance with the ancient precedent,1

but the Chronicler says that Joab also purposely omitted to

number the tribe of Benjamin, because "the king's word was

abominable to him,"2 and that he did not include those who

were under twenty years of age.3 He seems to have thought

that by thus frustrating David's purpose he might avert the

calamitous retribution which was expected by the religious

sense of the nation. Of that feeling Gad became the spokes-

man, and David, having already experienced three years'

famine,4 and three months' flight from his enemies, has now to

suffer the misery of a three days' pestilence.5 His conscience,

though often tardy in its action, was never seared, and he

admitted that he had sinned a grievous sin, for which he im-

plored forgiveness. The "death" raged the appointed time,

and had slain 77,000 victims, when David saw the vision of the

Destroying Angel, with his sword outstretched over Jerusalem,

standing by the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.6

The king's prayer of agonized remorse was heard, and the

plague was stayed. The same day the seer came to David,

and bad him to rear an altar on the threshing-floor and offer

burnt-offerings. From that time David used to sacrifice on the

spot hallowed by such tremendous associations. It became

the site of the future altar of burnt-offering in the Temple of

Solomon,7 and its consecration added another impulse to the

growing desire to centralize in the capital the religious worship

of the entire nation.

1 Numb. i, 47-49.

2 I Chron. xxi. 6. Comp. Josephus, "Antiq." vii. 13, § 1.

3 The reason given, "because the Lord had said he would increase Israel

like to the stars of the heavens," shows how many current feelings were

offended by David's census. There is still throughout the East a super-

stitious prejudice against all numberings, as being calculated to provoke

a jealous Nemesis (Niebuhr, "Descr, de l'Arabie," p. 14).

4 I Chron. xxi. 12.

5 But according to one explanation of 2 Sam. xxiv. 15 the pestilence was

shortened and only lasted from morning till noon (LXX., Peshito), or

"till the time of the evening sacrifice."

6 2 Sam. xxiv. 23. The true rendering is, "All this did Araunah the

king give unto the king"—in which case we must suppose that Araunah

belonged to the old royal race of Jebus; or, as in the Revised Version,

"All this, O king, doth Araunah give unto the king."

7 2 Chron. iii.1.

CHAPTER III.

THE ACCESSION OF SOLOMON.

Feebleness of David's age—Abishag of Shunem —Conspiracy of Adonijah

—His adherents — His attempted coronation feast Adherents of

Solomon Counter efforts of Nathan and Bathsheba Interviews

of David with Bathsheba and Nathan—David rouses himself, and

orders Solomon to be anointed and crowned—Popular enthusiasm—

Collapse of Adonijah's plot—Terror of his guests—He is magnani-

mously pardoned—General amnesty—David's last song, and death—

His dying directions to Solomon—His burial.

The infirmities of old age came rapidly on one whose days

from his youth upwards had been passed in hardships, battles,

and anxious labours. At the age of thirty he had been chosen

king in Hebron, and he had reigned there for seven and a half

years. He had reigned thirty-three years in Jerusalem. He

was not, therefore, much more than seventy,1 and in modern

times many men at that age are full of vigour. But the Jews

at this period rarely outlived the threescore years and ten of

man's allotted time. Indeed, Solomon and Manasseh were the

only kings of Judah who survived the age of sixty; and in

Solomon's case, it is not even certain that he reached that age.

David was already bedridden, and the vital force was so

much exhausted that he could get no warmth from the clothes

heaped upon him. His attendants knew no better plan for him

than to provide a nurse, fair and young, who might tend and

cherish him.2 Their choice fell upon the beautiful Abishag of

1 Josephus, "Antiq." vii. i5, § 2.

2 Josephus ("Antiq." vii. 14, § 3) says that this was the advice of his phy-

ians. It is recommended by Galen ("Method, Medic." viii. 7), and this

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THE ACCESSION OF SOLOMON. 25

Shunem, a little town of Issachar on the southern slopes of

little Hermon.1 It is singular that, even for this subordinate and

humble purpose, they thought it necessary to search out the

loveliest maiden whom they could find in all the coasts of

Israel.

Another of David's vain, ambitious, unruly sons determined

to seize the opportunity for usurpation which was opened to

him by his father's increasing feebleness. Now that Amnon

and Absalom were dead, Adonijah, the eldest surviving prince,

entered into a conspiracy to forestall his father's death and to

seize the kingdom. In personal gifts, as in recklessness of

character, he resembled his two elder brothers, and he was

undeterred by the warning of their fate. Like Absalom, beauti-

ful and bad, he had been born while David was king at Hebron;

but as the name of his mother—Haggith—means "a dancer,"

we may conjecture that she was a person of inferior rank to

Maacah of Geshur, and Ahinoam of Jezreel. But Adonijah,

as well as his elder brothers, had been puffed up by the admi-

ration and undue leniency of his father, who "had not displeased

him at any time by saying, Why hast thou done so?" His

first step was to imitate Absalom by providing himself with

chariots, horsemen, and fifty runners. His next step was to

secure two adherents who stood in the highest offices of Church

and State—Joab, the commander of the army, and Abiathar,

the high priest. Strange to say, he succeeded in winning over

both these great officials to his side. Either they were unaware

of the choice of Solomon to be David's successor, or they pre-

ferred the beauty and strength of a young man of thirty-five—

who might now claim the rights of primogeniture—to that of

one who had scarcely emerged from the seclusion of the harem

and was little more than a boy. They might also have thought

that their adhesion to the plot would secure its triumph, seeing

the decrepitude into which David had now sunk. Jealousy

may also have had its part in their motives. Joab could hardly

fail to observe that Benaiah had superseded him in the con-

method of giving warmth was adopted till long after the Middle Ages.

Reinhard, "Bibelkrankh. d. A. Test.," p. 171, mentions that a similar

plan was recommended to Frederic Barbarossa.

1 It is three and a half miles north of Jezreel. The Syriac and Arabic

versions read "Sulamite" here, as in Cant. vi. 13, "Oh Shulamite." On

the identity of the two names Gesenius and Fürst are agreed.

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fidence of the king, and Abiathar, the sole survivor of a house-

hold slain for David's sake, the faithful companion of David's

wanderings and of his reign at Hebron,1 could hardly have

looked with complacency on the growing influence of Zadok.

Or had Adonijah promised both of them an amnesty for past

crimes and past slackness as the price of their adhesion? Both

of them, it must be remembered, but especially Joab, had good

reason to dread the beginning of a new reign, unless the new

king were hound to them by the closest obligations.

Strengthened by the support of two such followers, Adonijah

threw off the mask, and—once more in imitation of Absalom's

methods—invited all the princes except Solomon, and "all the

men of Judah, the king's servants,"2 to a great banquet. He

evidently reckoned on the tribal jealousy which made Absalom

fix upon Hebron as the headquarters of his revolt. The actual

spot which Adonijah selected for his coronation-sacrifice was

"the stone of Zoheleth, which is by En-rogel." Nothing is

known about this "stone of the serpent," one of the many

*Ebens* with which Palestine abounds, and which probably

possessed a sacred character. A spring of water would be

necessary for the occasion, but we only know that En-rogel,

"the fullers' fountain," lay at the south-east, on the boundary

line between Judah and Benjamin,3 and therefore in the close

vicinity of Jerusalem.4 It may perhaps be identified with the

Fountain of the Virgin, opposite the village of Siloam.5

But Adonijah, in his contempt for the failing powers of his

father, had not taken sufficient account of the weight of influ-

ence opposed to his pretensions. Zadok, the younger and

more popular priest, and descendant of the older line of Aaron's

family, was on the side of Solomon,6 and was supported by

1 2 Sam. ii, 1-3.

2 I Kings i. 9. In verse 25 we have instead, "all the captains of the

host." Abishai was probably dead.

3 Josh, xv, 7; xviii. 16.

4 It was a well-known spot (Josh. xv. 7; xviii. 16). In Absalom's re-

bellion the two young priests Ahimaaz and Jonathan had waited there for

news from the city (2 Sam. xvii. 17). Regel means "a foot," and clothes

were stamped with the feet.

5 Josephus, "Antig." vii. 11, says that it was "in the royal garden,"

which is possible enough.

6 From I Chron. xvi. 39 we should conjecture that Zadok was in per-

manent charge of the old Tabernacle "in the high place at Gibeon; "but

the point is uncertain.

THE ACCESSION OF SOLOMON. 27

Nathan, the venerable prophet. Benaiah, the son of Jehoiada

a man of great personal prowess and distinction, could com-

mand the allegiance of the *Gibborim*, and this trained bodyguard

of 600 warriors was always ready for action. And if Adonijah

had won over the younger princes of David's family to favour

his pretensions, two older and weightier princes—Shimei and

Rei—perhaps the sole and now aged survivors of David's goodly

band of brothers, were faithful to Solomon.1

Nathan, shaking off the lethargy of ease and years, saw that

not a moment must be lost. Solomon had been from his birth

his special ward, and lie had always marked him out as the

destined heir of David's throne, and the fulfiller of designs for

which David was unfitted by his past history. But it is difficult

to get access to an Eastern king at any time, and especially

when he is bedridden. Nathan could find no other way of

letting David know the imminence of the crisis than by obtain-

ing an interview with Bathsheba, and relying on her ascendency

over the mind of her husband. He told her that at that moment

the son of Haggith was practically king, while David knew

nothing of it; and that Adonijah's success meant the certain

death of herself and of Solomon.2 He instructed her at once

to visit the king's bedchamber, and to remind him of his oath

to her that Solomon should reign. He promised to be close at

hand, and to confirm the news that Adonijah had been pro-

claimed in defiance of the king's wishes. Perhaps he feared

that, in the decay of his powers and the apathy of age, David

might delay all effective action till it was too late, unless his old

feelings and affections were roused by Bathsheba.

Bathsheba went to the aged hero who was alone with Abishag.3

1 Ewald conjectures that this Shimei was David's brother Shimeah

("Gesch. Isr." iii. 266). There is a Shimei, a high officer of Solomon in

Kings iv. i8, and he had a brother Shimeah (I Chron. iii. 5). Rei has

been identified by Jerome ("Qu. Hebr." in I Kings i. 8) with Ira the Jairite,

David's "priest" (2 Sam. xx. 26); but Ewald identifies him with Raddai

(I Chron. ii. 14), the fifth son of Jesse. In Hebrew, however, the inter-

change of Raddai and Rei (רֵעִי) is without parallel, and that of Rei (רעי)

and Ira (עירא) is easy.

2 1 Kings i. 12. The impression left by the narrative is, that Solomon

was still too young to take vigorous steps on his own behalf.

3 Had Abishag been anything more than a nurse, the most stringent

laws of Eastern etiquette would have rendered the entrance of Bathsheba

impossible.

28 SOLOMON.

she entered with a deep how and prostration,1 which showed

David that she had something serious to tell. The evident

trepidation and solemnity with which both Bathsheba and

Nathan approach the old and broken king contrasts with

the free and bold intercourse of earlier days. It shows

that David; as his power grew, became more and more an un-

approachable Eastern sovereign.2 In answer to his brief ques-

tion Bathsheba reminded him of his oath that Solomon should

sit on his throne, narrated to him the details of Adonijah's

conspiracy, and told him that the eyes of the nation were upon

him to exercise his acknowledged privilege of appointing his

successor.3 If the throne were suffered thus to go by de-

fault, she indicated that her own life and that of Solomon—

who alone of the princes had not been invited to Adonijah's

feast—would speedily be sacrificed.4

While she was yet speaking the Prophet was announced, as

had been concerted between them. He, too, prostrated himself

as though he felt a certain dread in delivering his message.

"Had David really sanctioned," he asked, "the accession of

Adonijah? At that moment a coronation feast was being

held, and the prince's followers were shouting, 'God save king

Adonijah.' Was this in accordance with David wish? had he

ordered it to be concealed from Nathan, and Zadok, and

Benaiah, and Solomon, who had been omitted from the number

of invited guests?"

Then Bathsheba—who in accordance with Eastern propriety

1 1 Kings i. 31, "Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the earth,

and did reverence." The word (sometimes rendered worship, as in Ps.

lxv. 11; I Chron. xxix. 20) was applied to these Eastern acts of servile

homage (2 Sam. ix. 6; Esth. iii, 2-5), which had now found their way into

David's Court.

2 How widely different is the access to the palace of Ishbosheth, where

the murderers had only to pass one woman who had fallen asleep in

cleaning wheat—2 Sam. iv. 6 (Hebr).

3 So the Persian kings nominated their successors (Herodotus, vii. 2).

4 This was no extravagant supposition. Cleopatra and her son Caranus

were put to death by Alexander (Pausan. viii. 7, § 5); Roxana, and her son

Alexander, by Cassander (Justin. xv. 2). The murder of all "the seed

royal "was quite a common incident in Eastern despotism (2 Kings xi. 1).

See "Speaker's Commentary," *ad loc.* Gratz explains " I and my son

shall be counted sinners " (I Kings i, 21), to mean that David's marriage

with Bathsheba "als eine schandbare gebrandmarkt werden würde."

THE ACCESSION OF SOLOMON. 29

had left the chamber while Nathan was speaking—was recalled.

The king—swearing by his most solemn form of appealed, by

"the Lord that had redeemed his soul out of all distress"1—

renewed the oath which he had sworn at sonic previous period,

and, with a flash of all his old energy, took the decisive step of

having Solomon anointed and enthroned even in his own life-

time. With another solemn prostration Bathsheba retired, and

Zadok, Nathan, and Benaiah were summoned to the king's

chamber. He ordered them to mount his young son upon his

own royal mule which none but the king might ride,2 and to

conduct him in procession to Gihon, a place which, like

En-rogel, had a supply of water, and was not far from the

city.3 There Zadok was to anoint him with the consecrated oil

taken from David's tabernacle on Mount Zion. This was a

step of solemn-import.4 It had not been done in the case of

Adonijah, perhaps because the sacred oil was in the charge of

Zadok;5 or perhaps, again, because Adonijah was regarded

as the legitimate successor. Then they were to blow the

trumpets,6 and shout "God save king Solomon."

The Levite Benaiah—half-priest, half-soldier—replied to the

king's commands with an emphatic "Amen," and a prayer that

1 2 Sam. iv. 6; comp. Ps. xix. 14. "O Lord, my strength, and my

Redeemer."

2 Comp. Gen. xli. 43; 2 Kings x. 16; Esth. vi. 8. This circumstance

would have a great effect on the popular imagination. In Persia it was

death to pit, even by accident, in the king's seat (Herodotus, vii. 16;

Q. Curt, viii. 4, 17).

3 See 2 Chron. xxxii. 20 ; xxxiii. 14. It was probably at the east of

Jerusalem, and afterwards became a part of the city (2 Chron. xxxii. 20;

xxxiii. 14). The Targ. of Jonathan, and the Syriac and Arabic Versions in

1 Kings i., identify it with Siloam. According to the Talmud, kings ought

always to be anointed near a fountain—Keritoth, 5 (Otho, "Lexic.

Rabbin." s.v. Rex).

4 Judg. ix. 8; I Sam. x. i, xvi. 13; 1 Kings xix. 16; 2 King 3:6;

2 Chron, xxiii. 11. It has been inferred from these passages (the anointing

of Saul, David, Jehu, and Joash) that the anointing was only necessary in

cases of a disputed succession.

5 1 Kings i. 39, "Zadok the priest took a (rather the) horn of oil out of

the tabernacle" (lit. out of the tent). The question arises, out of which

tabernacle? He could hardly have had time to go to Gibeon and back, so

that probably David's tabernacle on Mount Zion is meant.

6 Comp. the tumultuous consecration of Jehu (2 Kings ix. 13).

30 SOLOMON.

God might ratify his choice,1 and make the throne of Solomon

even greater than the throne of his father, Then the impos-

ing procession set forth, with its bodyguard of Cherethites and

Pelethites, and it was seen at a glance that nothing short of a

civil war could shake the crown of the youth who had on his

side the Prophet, the Priest of the house of Eleazer, and the

Captain of the bodyguard, and who had thus been anointed

and proclaimed by the king's direct command. The people

were also on his side. The boisterous feast of Adonijah awoke

no popular enthusiasm; but it was kindled so vehemently on

behalf of Solomon, that the earth rang again with the music of

pipes and dances.2 The *coup d'etat* of Bathsheba and Nathan

had been managed from first to last with consummate skill, and

was crowned with complete success.

Adonijah's feast had ended, and the revolt had still to be

carried out, when the practised ear of Joab caught the sound of

the trumpet from Gihon, and of the tumultuous rejoicing in the

city.3 His heart misgave him, and, as he spoke, the company

caught sight of their fellow-conspirator Jonathan, the son of

Abiathar, who came running towards them.4 Adonijah affected

to regard his approach as a good omen,5 but Jonathan only

brought the fatal tidings, that while they had been feasting the

friends of Solomon had been acting; that he had been solemnly

anointed at Gihon, and was at that moment sitting on the throne

of the kingdom amid the rapturous congratulations of his Court.

He then added the most chilling proof that Adonijah's attempt

had failed — it was that the aged king had given his public

sanction to the coronation of Solomon. Apparently he had

been brought forth from his sick-chamber, and, in sign of

prayerful approval of his servant's blessing, "bowed himself

1 Jer. xxviii. 6, "The prophet Jeremiah said, Amen: the Lord do so."

2 Josephus, "Antiq." vii. 14, 5; 1 Kings i. 40. In this verse, by a slight

variation of reading, the Septuagint has "danced with dances" for "piped

with pipes." "The earth rent with the sound " (LXX., ερράγη), should

probably be "the earth rang." (Vulg., insonu. Josephus, ως περιη-

χεῖσθαι τὴν γῆν.

3 This shows that both En-rogel and Gihon were near the city, and

within hearing distance of each other.

4 He, too, had joined Adonijah, though he had acted as a watchman and

spy against Absalom (2 Sam. xv. 27; xvii. 17).

5 Perhaps this was an auspicious formula (2 Sam. xviii. 27).

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upon the bed,"1 and blessed the God of Israel who had thus

enabled him before he died to see one of his sons sitting upon

his throne.2

At these tidings the inflated bubble of Adonijah's crude and

ill-starred conspiracy immediately burst. The guests rose and

scattered themselves in every direction. Adonijah himself,

deserted by every one of his adherents, fled in terror to the

altar—perhaps the one which David had erected on the thresh-

ing-floor of Araunah—and grasped hold of the horns of the

altar.3 His cry for pity was brought to the young king. "Be-

hold," they said, "Adonijah feareth king Solomon: for, lo, he

hath caught hold of the horns of the altar, saying, Let king

Solomon sware unto me to-day that he will not slay his servant

with the sword."

Solomon behaved with calm magnanimity. The devotion of

the people had shown that he had nothing to fear from

Adonijah's rivalry. Had Adonijah been successful he would

certainly have put Solomon, if not Bathsheba also, to death.

So much was known from the character of the man. But

Solomon was unwilling to add another pang and another tragedy

to those which had already rent the heart of his father. He gave

his word, which he thought sufficient without the addition of

an oath, that so long as Adonijah's conduct was trustworthy,

not a hair of his head should fall to the ground.4 Adonijah was

led down the altar steps and taken into Solomon's presence.

He bowed himself before his younger brother, who, without

deigning to reproach him, only addressed to him the laconic

order, "Go to thine house." He was not even imprisoned or

deprived of his rank; but he was told plainly that a second

offence would not be overlooked.

The other conspirators were for the present pardoned. The

rebellion, to which they had lent their influence, was treated as

folly which might be disdainfully amnestied in the joy of a new

1 1 Kings i. 47; comp. Gen. xlvii. 31.

2 In the solemn assembly described in I Chron. xxviii., when David gave

to Solomon his charge about building the temple, we are told that "the

king *stood up upon his feet*."

3 See 2 Sam. vi. 17, 18; Exod. xxvii. 2, xxix. 12, xxx. 10. Sprinkled

with the blood of, the sacrifices they were "symbols of blessing and salva-

tion," by grasping which the offender put himself under God's protection

(Bähr, "Symbolik," i. 47).

4 A proverbial expression (1 Sam. xiv. 45; 2 Sam, xiv. xx).

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accession, unless they should be guilty of some fresh trans-

gression.1

And now David's death drew near. He had been on the

throne for forty years and six months.2 His last poem has been

preserved to us. In it he calls himself "the man who was

raised on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet

Psalmist of Israel." He alludes to his prophetic gift as coming

from the Spirit of God. The God and the Rock of Israel had

taught him, "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in

the fear of God." Such a righteous ruler is as the cloudless

light of the morning sun, and the tender grass which springs up

and gleams in the sunshine after rain. He expresses the con-

viction that God had granted him an everlasting covenant, and

would cause all his salvation and all his desire to grow.3 Worth-

lessness, indeed, would still continue, and required no gentle

handling. It must be beaten down as with iron and the staff of

a spear, and finally burnt with fire.

But besides this last legacy of song David left some specific

directions to his youthful, inexperienced son. He bids him to

be courageous, and show himself a man;4 and he assures him

that the one secret of his future prosperity depends on his

obedience to the will of God as written in the law of Moses.

He seems to have addressed him both in a private exhorta-

tion, in which he gave him full directions about building the

"house of the Lord,"5 and also at a very solemn public gather-

1 Of these events the Books of Chronicles give no hint. They say only

(I Chron. xxiii. 1): "So when David was old and full of days, he made

Solomon his son king over Israel." Then, after a long account of David's

preparations, and of his organization of the worship, they pass to a solemn

assembly in which David proclaims Solomon as his successor (xxviii.), and

has him anointed, "the second time" by Zadok, to be "ruler" (xxix. 22);

after which the narrative passes on to David's death, and Solomon's offer-

ing; at Gibeon (2 Chron. i.).

2 2 Sam. v. 5; I Chron. iii. 4,

3 The true rendering seems to be-

" For is not my house so with God?

Yet He bath made, with me an everlasting covenant,

Ordered in all things and sure;

For all my salvation and all my desire

Will He not make it to grow?" —2 Sam. xxiii. 1-7.

4 Comp. Deut. xxxi. 7; Josh. i. 6, 7, &c.

5 I Chron. xxii.

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ing,1 in which he entrusted him to the charge of the whole con-

gregation, and ended his address with a very noble prayer and

blessing, and with enormous holocausts.

To our modern notions it would have seemed better had he

confined his directions to matters of moral duty and public

service; but again and again in reading the life of David we

are reminded of the differing moral standards of different ages

and countries, and of the imperfect views prevalent in those

times of comparative ignorance, "which God winked at."

David had suffered so terribly at the hands of Joab and Shimei

in the frightful clays which succeeded Absalom's rebellion that

he felt as if he had neglected the demands of justice by per-

mitting them to live. Trained to regard as sacred the duties

of "the avenger of blood," his conscience was uneasy at the

thought that he had been too remiss and too impotent to see

those duties fulfilled. He recalled Joab's two murders of Abner

and of Amasa when he had "shed the blood of war in peace,

and put the blood of war upon his girdle that was about his

loins, and in his shoes that were on his feet;"2 and he enjoined

Solomon not to let his hoar head go down to the grave in peace.3

He gave the same injunction respecting Shimei, the only dan-

1 1 Chron. xxii.-xxix. At the close of this scene the Chronicler says

(ver. 20) that the whole congregation "worshipped the Lord and the king."

The expression significantly shows both the exaltation of the monarch and

the sacred character with which he had been invested.

2 See 2 Sam. iii. 39; xix. 5-7; xx. 10. David does not venture to remind

Solomon of Joab's murder of Absalom, which perhaps rankled most deeply

in his heart, but to which Solomon himself owed his throne. Nor does he

mention Adonijah's rebellion. But Joab had evidently been a lifelong thorn

in David's side; he had found "this son of Zeruiah" too hard for him

(2 Sam. iii. 39).

3 Joab was probably not much younger than David, though he was his

nephew. Zeruiah, the mother of the three heroes, Joab, Abishai, and

Asaliel, was indeed a "sister of the sons of the Jesse" (1 Chron. ii. 16),

but perhaps herself a daughter not of Jesse, but of Nahash, a former hus-

band of Jesse's wife. Abigail, at any rate, mother of Amasa and sister of

Zeruiah (2 Sam. xvii. 25), is called the "daughter of Nahash." The Rabbis

identify Jesse and Nahash; but if, as Dean Stanley conjectured, Nahash

was the king of Amnion, we can account for the kindness existing between

Nahash and David, and the cruel character of Nahash was reflected in his

grandsons. Further, if Joab was thus a grandson of the king of Ammon

as well as a nephew of David, we can see a fresh reason for the position he

assumed.

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gerous representative of the cause of Saul. On the other hand,

he enjoined kindness to Chimham and the other sons of Bar-

zillai the Gileadite, who had shown him such conspicuous loyalty

at the most trying moment of his life.1

So David died, and was buried in the city which he had

founded, and his sepulchre was pointed out down to the remotest

days of Jewish history.2

1 2 Sam. xix. 31

2 Acts ii. 29; comp. Neh. iii. 16; Ezek. xliii. 7-9. There were no graves

in Jerusalem but those of the kings and (tradition says) of the Prophetess

Huldah. Legend spoke of treasures concealed in David's tomb (Josephus,

"Antiq." vii. 13, § 3).

CHAPTER IV.

THE KINGDOM OF SOLOMON.

Development of Jewish royalty—The nation enters upon its manhood

—The *Gibborim*—The army—The nation realizes its unique position

—Possession of a strong and beautiful capital—Passionate fondness

for Jerusalem—Commencing centralization of worship—The Ark at

Jerusalem—"Jehovah's people "—Outburst of poetry—Dawn of prose

literature—Elements of danger—Limits of the kingdom—Lines of

possible progress—Significance of the records of Solomon.

"THEN sat Solomon upon the throne of David his father, and

his kingdom was established greatly."1 It was never quite

forgotten by the national consciousness that the throne of the

King of Judah and Israel was "the throne of the Lord."

The time of his full accession to the throne offers us the

opportunity of judging the nature and resources of the kingdom

which he was thus called upon to rule.

That kingdom had been amazingly developed since the rude

and simple days of King Saul, though we can as little regard it

"as one of the great Oriental Empires on a par with Chaldaea

1 According to Tarikh Montekheb, and most of the Eastern historians,

Solomon was not twelve years old when he came to the throne. (D'Her-

belot, " Bibl. Orient.," s.v*. Soloman Ben Daoud.*) This tradition is also

adopted by Eupolemus in the fragment preserved by Eusebius. Josephus

says he was fourteen ("Antiq." viii. 7, § 8). Most modern writers suppose

that he was about twenty; and he must certainly have been more than

twelve or fourteen, if he had a son about the commencement of his reign.

He reigned forty years, and Rehoboam at his accession was forty-one

(1 Kings xi. 42; xiv. 21). If, indeed, we could assume that forty-one is

a clerical error for twenty-one in I Kings xiv. 21, many difficulties would

be removed. Comp. 2 Chron. xiii. 7.

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and Assyria," as we can place David on a level with such great

world-potentates as Rameses and Cyrus.1

In Saul's days Israel and Judah were little more than a loose

federation of tribes, each more or less independent of the

others, and all of them, time after time, an easy prey to the

surrounding nations. The immense advance made by David

may be estimated by the fact that his household troops and

bodyguard alone consisted of six hundred trained and mighty

warriors,2 whereas in the wars against the Philistines, before his

conquest of Goliath, Saul and Jonathan his son had been the

only two well-armed men in the host of Israel.3 The nation

passed from boyhood to full manhood in the days of David as

thoroughly and as rapidly as Greece did in the days of Miltiades

and Lysander.

The *Gibborim* ("heroes," or *bravi*) were to David what the

Prætorian cohort was to the Roman emperors, or the Varangian

Guard to the Byzantine emperors, or the Janissaries to the

Sultans, or the Swiss Guards to the French kings.

They were soldiers by profession, dependent on the king for

their houses and their pay, and subservient to him with an

allegiance which was not without danger to the popular liberty.

To belong to this body was itself a distinction, and the records

of deeds of prowess achieved by the leading officers were like

the chronicles of chivalry, and fired the imagination of younger

aspirants for warlike fame. Besides them, or mingled up with

them and often under the same command, were the Cherethites,

Pelethites, and Gittites, in all probability a band of foreign mer-

cenaries, who served as a body of lictors to execute the king's

commands.

David hardly possessed a "standing army" (as we should

understand the term) in addition to these private troops; but,

if we can rely upon the accuracy of the numbers, there were

1,300,000 men in Israel and Judah capable of bearing arms.4

1 These are the opinions of Canon Rawlinson, "Five Great Monarchies,"

vol. ii. p. 333, quoted approvingly by Grätz, i. 299.

2 The nucleus of these had been with him in his wanderings (2 Sam.

xxiii.8-13; I Sam. xxv. 13).

3 Even in a time of war Saul had only had 3,000 men with him (1 Sam.

xiii.2).

4 A sort of standing army had been one of the evils of a monarchy

which Samuel had foretold (I Sam. viii. xi, 12).

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Besides the levies which could be called out at any time, David

seems to have maintained in his service a body of 288,000 men,

who served in monthly relays of 24,000 under the command

apparently of leading Gibborim.1 But much obscurity hangs

over this statement, for this body of troops took no discernible

part either in Absalom's or Adonijah's rebellion. They may,

however, have been a sort of drilled militia serving in garrison

towns. Cavalry was never an effective branch of the service, as

it had been always discouraged by the religious teachers of the

nation. David houghed the horses which he took in war, for

the nature of the country made them, in any case, all but use-

less. The offensive arms used by the soldiers were chiefly

spears and bows; for defence they were supplied with shields,

and probably with nothing else, though the Qurân credits David

with the invention of chain armour.2

But besides this strong military organization David left to his

people the tradition of victory. When the troops of Israel

went to battle they were very far from being the timid warriors

of old days whom a single champion could terrify. They had

grown into a force which had a prestige to maintain, and which

struck terror into the enemy by its very name and by the fame

of its leaders.

The whole nation was further elevated by the consciousness

of its position. A people which has produced so gifted a son as

David rises at once to a higher rank. A vista of infinite possi-

bilities opens before it. David owed none of his advantages to

the accident of birth. Warrior and Poet and King and Priest

and Prophet as he was, he had come to the front by the blessing

of God upon his own natural genius. Many a bright-eyed

youth on the hills of Judah as he contemplated that brilliant

career of a sovereign taken from the sheepfolds may have felt in

his heart the stirrings of high and honourable ambition.

The sense of nationality was enhanced by the possession for

the first time of an undisputed capital. No city in the land

could thenceforth rival Jerusalem, and David by conquering it

from the Jebusites rendered a service of which the effects

1 1 Chron. xxvii. 1-15. Afterwards the troops were divided by their

different arms (2 Chron. xiv. 8).

2 Sura xxi. 80, quoted by Ewald, iii, 146. Goliath, however, had

squamous armour (*qasqassîm*, I Sam. xvii, 5), and Ahab's "harness''

(2 Chron. xviii. 33) was a sort of coat of mail, or corslet (*shiryôn*).

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lasted for many centuries. He furnished the Hebrews with a

citadel beautiful, central, and all but impregnable from its natural

advantages. Jerusalem soon attracted to itself the passionate

affection which has magnetized the imagination of Jews for so

many centuries. Beautiful in situation, the joy of the whole

earth, God was well known in her palaces for a sure refuge. In

exile their poets sang—

"If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,

Let my right hand forget her cunning;

Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth

If I remember thee not;

If I prefer not Jerusalem

Above my chief joy"1 (Ps. cxxxvii. 5-8).

And at the most solemn moment in the history of the Lord

Himself, His only recorded outburst of weeping was when He

cried to Jerusalem, "If thou hadst known, even thou at least

in this thy day, the things that belong to thy peace! but now

they are hid from thine eyes."

But besides this, David, with deep insight, was determined

that Zion, "the City of David," should henceforth be the centre

not only of the national life, but also of all the deepest religious

associations of the people. This consecration of a new city

into a shrine was by no means an easy task. Palestine abounded

in high places and sanctuaries of all kinds, many of which, like

Hebron, had been venerated from time immemorial. Moreover,

the old Tabernacle of the Wanderings still stood at Gibeon, and

David did not venture to remove it. The Ark, however, was

not at that high place. After its capture by the Philistines, it

had come to be regarded with such intense terror, that the men

of Bethshemesh, only desirous of getting rid of it, sent to the

people of Kirjath-jearim to come and fetch it; and they had

placed it on a hill under the charge of Eleazar the son of

Abinadab. David's first attempt to carry it thence to Jerusalem

had been cut short by the tragic death of Uzzah, and it had been

left at the house of Obed-Edom in Gath-Rimmon. But hearing

that it had brought to Obed-Edom a great increase of prosperity,

David had brought it to Mount Zion with a joyous procession of

1 Compare Psalms xlviii. 12, 13; cxvii. 18, 19; cxxii.; cxxv. 2.

2 Luke xix. 42--ἔκλασυσεν, "He wept aloud." In the case of Lazarus

He only εδάκρυσεν, "shed silent tears."

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Levites, singers, elders, and soldiers, amid a scene which made

a deep impression on the national imagination. Thenceforth it

never left Jerusalem till it was either destroyed in the invasion

of Nebuchadnezzar, or carried away to Babylon, or, according

to the Jewish tradition, safely hidden by Jeremiah.1 For a short

time it made Jerusalem as sacred as Gibeon, until, in the reign of

Solomon, the old Tabernacle was removed from Gibeon alto-

gether, and stowed away in one of the chambers of the Temple.

Solomon did but carry out the far-seeing plan of his father,

which caused the capital of the nation to be henceforth regarded

also as the City of Jehovah, and the "*Kibleh*" or sacred direction

of the nation's worship, which it continued to be, even when they

were carried into distant lands.2

Of David's great preparations for the building of the Temple,

and of the elaborate religious reform with which it was con-

nected, we shall speak hereafter; but the Temple was only the

visible sign of the impress which he stamped upon his people,

and which was his most memorable service. It was the sole

effectual mode of counteracting their tendency to plunge into a

career of worldly commerce and conquest, and to become ob-

livious of the loftier mission to which they were called. With

the distinctness of their nationality was brought home to them

the lofty consciousness that they were "Jehovah's people." The

monarchy had not been inaugurated until they had learnt the

lessons of the long period of the Judges, which taught them, by

reiterated crises of defeat and servitude, that they could only

be strong in God's protection, and that this protection depended

on their own faithfulness. David immortalized his own yearn-

ings and convictions in imperishable song, and thus they passed

into the common thoughts of the nation. The supreme gifts

with which God had endowed him were given him for the pur-

pose of fixing the faith of Israel, and pointing to the Messianic

hope which was to be their main support during ages of affliction.

It was granted to him to pour forth the songs which were the

most precious part of their worship. The poetic spirit thus

awakened did not wholly desert them for more than five hun-

dred years, and it echoed to the last the sacred aspirations by

which it had been inspired in the breast of the hero-king.

This outburst of poetry was naturally accompanied by a wider

1 2 Macc. ii. 1-8. 2 Dan vi. 10.

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development of prose literature. We henceforth hear of a

Recorder or Historiographer as one of the regular officials in

the Court of the kings of Judah. For the first time the

"Chronicles" or State papers began to be carefully preserved.1

No less than three great prophets—Samuel, Gad, and Nathan—

became biographers of parts of his life and reign,2 and it formed

an epoch sufficiently important for long subsequent notice by

heathen historians like Nicolaus of Damascus and Eupolemus.3

But it would be wrong to overlook the fact that the legacy

left by David to his son was not one of unmixed good. In the

senile neglect of kingly duties which seems to have marked his

later years, and which forfeited in great measure the old affec-

tion of his people, we mark the deteriorating influence of more

pompous surroundings, a deeper seclusion, a more arbitrary

government. All his Temple preparations were less inspiring

and less significant than one of his earlier outbursts of spiritual

emotion. In a larger harem, a more punctilious etiquette, a

more materialized conception of religion, we find traces of the

lowered ideal of the kingliness and worship which had shone forth

in days when he was as yet unweakened by his great sin, and its

terrible retribution. The grandeur of Solomon's inheritance was

impaired by the personal deterioration of its glorious founder.

We may conclude this survey of the state of the people over

whom Solomon was now called to reign, by mentioning the

limits of the kingdom which David's power had so widely ex-

tended. When Saul died, Israel was struggling for bare exist-

ence against the paltry power of the Philistines. Before David

died he was king of a district which might be said, with little

exaggeration, to stretch from the Orontes to the border of the

Egyptian desert, and from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates.

Parts of this territory were nominally ruled by native kings, but

they all more or less acknowledged the supremacy of David.

Very early in his reign at Jerusalem, he had crushed the Philis-

tines and taken from them Metheg-ha-Ammah, "the bridle of

the mother city," or, as it is expressed in the Chronicles, "Gath

and her daughters,"4 though he allowed Gath to retain a tribu-

tary king.5 He almost annihilated the predatory hordes of

1 1 Chron. xxvii. 24. 2 Ibid. xxix. 29.

3 Josephus, "Antiq." vii. 5, § 2; "C. Apion." i. 23; Eusebius, "Prcep.

Ev." lx. 30.

4 2 Sam. viii. 1; I Chron. xviii. 1. 5 I Kings ii. 39.

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Amalek in the south. Aided especially by Benaiah, who slew

with his own hand two sons of Ariel the king of Moab,1 he

had reduced the Moabites to tribute, and put a multitude of

them to death. Northwards he had conquered Hadarezer,

king of Zobah, who had probably lent his assistance to Hanun,

king of Ammon, when that foolish son of David's old friend

Nahash had rejected the advances of David with wanton

insult.2 In this war he stormed Rabbah, the strong capital of

Ammon.3 It was from this city that he took the jewelled crown

of Milcom which, according to Jewish tradition, no one but Ittai

of Gath had ventured to tear from the idol's forehead.4 He de-

feated the kings of Zobah and Maacah in a great victory. In a

subsequent battle at Helam,5 he so completely routed the Syrian

forces of Damascus, and their auxiliaries, of whom some had

joined them from beyond the Euphrates, that he broke down the

Aramæan supremacy and subjected the Syrians to tribute. These

successful wars greatly increased his wealth,6 and he received

large congratulatory or propitiatory presents from Toi, king of

Hamath on the "Orontes,7 who sent his own son to cement the

treaty between them. The overthrow of the Edomites in the

Valley of Salt, somewhere to the south of the Dead Sea,8 and

the occupation of their towns with Israelite garrisons completed

the triumphs by which David "gat him a great name," and

handed down to his son a strong and compact empire. In his

person the old promise to Abraham was first fulfilled.9

What his son made of that empire we shall see in the follow-

ing pages. Israel was liable to a new danger. That the Israelites

should feel that they had now attained to a cosmopolitan condi-

tion, and that their kingdom could enter into a feeling of solid-

1 2 Sam. xxiii. 20, 21; I Chron. xi. 22. The true reading is, "he slew

the two sons of Ariel of Moab."

2 2 Sam. x. 4.

3 Ibid. xii. 29. The Ark was taken to this siege, and David himself

was present at the capture.

4 Josephus, " Antiq." vii. 5. ; Jerome, "Qu. Hebr. " ad I Chron. xx. 2.

5 2 Sam. x. 16, 17. The Vulgate reads חֵילָם, and renders "*adduxit*

*exenitum eorum*."

6 From Hadarezer's soldiers were taken the "shields of gold" (2 Sam.

viii. 7), which were the proudest of all the trophies of Jerusalem (Cant. iv. 4).

7 Josephus says that Toi wanted to buy off David's opposition with

"vessels of ancient workmanship" ("Antiq," vii. 5; § 4).

8 2 Sam. viii. 13.

9 Gen. xv. 18-21.

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arity with surrounding kingdoms was natural, and in some

respects advantageous. But the advantage would be purchased

at a fatal cost if the sons of the Chosen People forgot their

unique function, and, while they entered into the career of

worldly politics, ceased to look, or looked only with a feeling of

half contempt, at the rock whence they were hewn, and the hole

of the pit whence they were digged. Would Solomon guide

them safely through the perils of contamination from those

"gay religions full of pomp and gold" which adored devils for

deities, and against which the very existence of the Hebrews

was intended to be a Divine protest? Would he inspire them

with loftier ideals than those of vulgar magnificence, material

prosperity, and a liturgical religion? Would he leave them

with a deeper conviction that no national happiness was com-

parable with that of the nation which had the Lord for their

God? Or would he, on the other hand, sink into a mere Oriental

despot, absolute amid the torpor of a dreadful serfdom, gorged

with wealth amid an oppressed population, the loveless lord of

a voluptuous harem, ruling over the destinies, but not in the

hearts of his people? If he fell into the latter temptations, the

"Syrian, ready to perish," who was the father of the race, would

have been a safer pattern and a less erring guide.

The sacred records enable us indeed to answer these ques-

tions, but their treatment of the reign of Solomon differs

characteristically from their account of David. The rich and

varied story of the hero occupies a large part of two entire books.

The original documents which recorded the fame of Solomon—

the "Book of the Acts of Solomon," and the writings of Nathan,

Ahijah, and Iddo—have disappeared, but the Books of Kings

and Chronicles devote not more than ten or eleven chapters to

the Wise King; and those chapters are mainly occupied with

details about his commerce, his buildings, and his organization.

They dwell but lightly on his fall, to which indeed the Chronicler

makes no allusion. There was little of spiritual instructiveness

in a reign during which, from the disappearance of Nathan from

public life down to the rise of Ahijah, the voice of the prophets

was dumb, and men spoke in whispers under a despotic rule.1

1 The details derivable from other sources such as Josephus, and the few

fragments of Pagan historians, Dins, Eupolcimus, Nicolaus of Damascus,

Alexander Polyhistor, Menander, and Laitus, which are referred to by him

("Antiq." 5, § 3), by Eusebius ("Præp. Evang." ix. 30), and by Clemens

of Alexandria ("Strom," 1. 21, § 114), are of little or no importance.

CHAPTER. V.

INITIAL TROUBLES OF SOLOMON'S REIGN.

Tragic events—Secret ambition of Adonijah His visit to Bathsheba—The

Queen-mother —Interview between them—Her unsuspecting acceptance

of his request for the hand of Abishag—She visits the king—Her

gracious reception—Sudden fury of Solomon—Possible causes for his

violent anger—He dooms Adonijah to death—Alarm of Joab—

Benaiah ordered to slay him—Hesitates to drag him from the horns of

the altar—Execution of Joab—Fate of his posterity—Disgrace and

banishment of the High Priest Abiathar—Zadok and the House of

Eleazar—Destiny of the two families of Eleazar and Ithamar—Shimei

ordered to live at Jerusalem—His visit to Gath to recover his slaves—

His execution—Vigour of Solomon's rule—His kindness to Chimham,

son of Barzillai—Foreign enemies—Escape of Hadad from the massacre

of the Edomites—His reception in Egypt—His return—The Syrian

Rezon—Geshur—Solomon's affinity with Pharaoh—One of the Tanite

dynasty—National disapproval of the wedding in later times— Estab-

lishment of Solomon's power—The Second Psalm—Note on the Pha-

raoh of 1 Kings iii. x.

BEFORE entering on the peaceful developments of Solomon's

government, it will be necessary to glance at some of the

troubles which marked the beginnings of his reign, before he

had won for himself a secure seat upon David's throne.1

1 It is obviously no part of my task to enter into minute critical questions

as to the date and origin and character of various elements in the Books of

Kings. They are acknowledged by all inquirers to be honest and trust-

worthy sources of information, though they are fragmentary and did not

assume their final form till about B.C. 560. But though the language and

references of these Books show that they were not composed as a whole

till nearly five centuries after the earlier events which they record, the author

43

44 SOLOMON.

The first tragedy was but a sequel to the rebellion of

Adonijah.

Solomon had not stained his accession by any deeds of blood.

The deadly spirit of Eastern monarchies, which

"Bears like the Turk no brother near the throne,"

had not led him to interfere with the rank or peace of any of

David's other sons. Even Adonijah had been magnanimously

pardoned, and had been allowed with unusual generosity to live

in his own palace, and resume his position as a prince of the

royal house. But the vain and restless spirit of the son of

Haggith could not rest content. He brooded sullenly over the

collapse of his conspiracy, and on the vain fancy that the

choice of Israel had confirmed the right of seniority by which

he claimed the kingdom. He determined upon subtle means to

strengthen his pretensions, and vainly hoped that the young

brother—whose qualities, were as yet unknown, and whom in

his heart he probably despised—would not be keensighted

enough to penetrate his designs. He determined, if possible,

to gain for his wife, Abishag, the beautiful maiden of Shunem,

who had been selected rather as the nurse than as the bride of

David's old age. The possession of a late king's wife would, by

all the customs and traditions of Eastern monarchy, greatly

enhance the dignity of his position, and give him opportunities

for urging further claims.1

Yet he did not venture to approach Solomon himself with a

request, which even to his stupidity must have been seen to be

of a perilous character. He determined to ingratiate himself

with Bathsheba, and so to beguile the king into granting a

favour of which perhaps he might not suspect the secret import,

or which, at any rate, he would not like to refuse if his mother

asked it.

As Queen-mother, Bathsheba was now the highest lady in

undoubtedly made use of ancient and authentic documents. The Books

of Chronicles are later in date, and are written to present certain views

and aspects of the Sacred History, especially as seen from a Levitical

standpoint.

1 See 2 Sam. xii. 8, where Nathan says to David that God had "given

him his master's wives into his bosom." See, too, 1 Kings xx. 7; 2 Kings

xxiv. 15; Herodotus, iii. 68; Selden, "Uxor. Hebr." i. 10. The request was

at the best unseemly and illegal (Levit. xviii. 8; xx. 11).

INITIAL TROUBLES OF' SOLOMON'S REIGN. 45

the realm. Owing to the jealousies which are inherent in

polygamy, the wife of an Eastern king, even if she be the chief

wife, is yet only one among many, and is in reality a sort of

superior slave. The rank of queen is held by the king's mother.

Every reader of the chronicles of Israel and Judah will have

been struck by the fact that the name of the Queen-mother is

carefully recorded, even when the record is silent as to the king's

wives.1 The influence of Bathsheba must have been further

strengthened by the fact that to her in no small measure Solo-

mon was indebted for the saving of his life, and for his throne.

She was visibly alarmed by the visit of Adonijah. "Comest

thou peaceably?" she asked him, in a formula which was cus-

tomary at moments of misgiving.2 He said, "Peaceably," and

asked leave to prefer a request. "Say on," she said. Adonijah

reminded her, with no very scrupulous regard for truth, that

the kingdom had been his, and that all Israel set their faces on

him, but that he now recognized that though he was king by the

will of men, he was not so by the grace of God, who had be-

stowed the kingdom on his brother. He had come to ask but

for one compensation for so immense a loss, and he once more

intreated Bathsheba not to refuse him. "Say on," she repeated,

cautiously confining herself to the fewest words. Then he

asked her to obtain Solomon's permission for him to wed

Abishag the Shunammite.

Strange to say, Bathsheba failed to see the significance

of the request. Perhaps she pitied the prince who had so

nearly wrested the splendid prize of royalty from her son's

hands, and she may have thought that the position of Abishag

differed entirely from that of David's other wives. "Well,"

she answered, "I will speak for thee unto the king."

She seems to have lost no time in fulfilling her promise.

Solomon received her with every demonstration of love and

respect. He rose to meet her, bowed himself before her, and

ordered another throne to be placed for her at the right hand

of his own. Then she mentioned her "small petition," and

begged him not to refuse it. "Ask on, my mother," he said;

"for I will not say thee nay."3

1 See I Kings xv. 13; 2 Kings xi. 1.

2 I Sam. xvi. 4, 5; 2 Kings ix. 22.

3 We see at once the difference of Bathsheba's position as wife of David,

whom she approached with prostration, and as Queen-mother, to whom

46 SOLOMON.

Then she spoke the fatal words which doomed Adonijah to

death. "Let Abishag, the Shunammite, be given to Adonijah

thy brother to wife."

Was there any secret jealousy or scheme of secret ambition

at work in the mind of Bathsheba, which made it seem to her

not undesirable that the beautiful Shunammite—one it must be

remembered so beautiful that she had been sought for "out of

all the coasts of Israel"—should be removed from the Court of

Solomon? It is not possible to unravel the dark intrigues of

Eastern palaces; but Bathsheba, if any such motive had been

working in her mind, must have been amazed and terrified by

the sudden, and to her incomprehensible, blaze of anger with

which her "small petition " was received.

"And why," he burst out, "dost thou ask Abishag, the

Shunammite, for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom also,

for he is my elder brother; even for him, and for Abiathar the

priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruiah!

Was the king's sudden fury clue only to the suspicion of

another conspiracy?

It may be so; but an attentive study of the Song of Songs

has led many critics to believe that other and more passionate

feelings were also at work. Passing over for the present the

question of the authorship of Canticles, it is very probable that

the little poem may be founded on traditional circumstances;

and if so, the lovely Shulamite of the Song, whose pure love

for her shepherd lover triumphs over all the seductions of a

royal wooer, may have been meant for no other than Abishag

of Shunem, and may indicate that Solomon desired to make

her his queen. By the ordinary custom of Eastern Courts he had

a right to do so,1 and the damsel was young,2 and "very fair." If

so, the transports of jealousy may have precipitated the conduct

which he believed to be also dictated by the safety of his

crown.3

the king himself bows. An Eastern king's wife receives little public notice,

but a Queen-mother (*Sultana walidé*) is received with the deepest respect

even by the reigning king. See Cheyne's Isaiah i. p. 47 (on Isa. vii. 13).

1 See 2 Sam. xii. 8, xvi. 22; Herodotus, iii. 68-88.

2 I. Kings i. 2-4, "A young virgin . . . very fair."

3 Compare the helpless remonstrance of Ishbosheth with Abner when he

took Rizpah, Saul's concubine (2 Sam. iii. 7; see, too, Wollaston, "Mu-

hammad," p. 5).

INITIAL TROUBLES OF SOLOMON'S REIGN. 47

At any rate, he at once swore, by the most solemn form of

oath, that this petition should cost Adonijah his life.

He had a strong and ready agent at hand in the person of

Benaiah, and this officer apparently, on that same day, de-

spatched the prince with his own hand: "He fell upon him that

he died."1 According to Eastern notions this execution was amply

justified, and there is not the least sign that Solomon showed

any cruel jealousy towards his other brothers. Indeed, he ad

vanced the sons of his brother Nathan to posts of great honour

and responsibility, and when his own line became extinct, the

Davidic succession was restored in the person of Salathiel, a

descendant of Nathan.2 In this respect Solomon contrasts

favourably even with a Constantius for it would have been even

easier for Solomon than it was for the Christian emperor to

sweep away every adult sharer in the royal blood.

The terrible news of Adonijah's execution was at once con-

veyed to Joab. Whether he was still secretly fostering the

cause of Adonijah we do not know, but Solomon was convinced

that this was the case. A various reading in I Kings ii. 28

says that "he had turned after Adonijah, though he turned not

after Solomon." His conduct showed his terror if it did not

prove his guilt. He at once fled to "take sanctuary," as it

would have been called in the Middle Ages, at the tabernacle

of the Lord—probably the old tabernacle of the wilderness,

which was still served by Zadok or Abiathar at Gibeon—and

there he "caught hold on the horns of the altar." And King

Solomon, when he heard the tidings—so runs the addition of

the Septuagint Version—"sent to Joab, saying, What hath

happened to thee, that thou hast fled unto the altar? And

Joab said, I was afraid of thee, and fled unto the Lord!" But

Solomon had determined that this dangerous and blood-stained

man should die. The protection and pardon which David had

promised him had ended with David's life. Innocent blood

still remained unavenged. Joab had left himself without

excuse. He could not lord it over Solomon as he had lorded

it over David by threatening to divulge the guilty secret of his

life. He had no time, and he had probably lost the power, to

raise an armed resistance against the compact force of mer-

1 The Septuagint adds, "And Adonijah died on that day,"

2 Zech. xii. 12; Luke iii. 27-31.

48 SOLOMON.

cenaries whom Benaiah commanded. Benaiah received the

order to fall on him, and went at once to Gibeon. But when

he saw the defenceless old man clinging to the horns of the

altar, he hesitated to slay him there, and bade him in the king's

name to come forth. "Nay," said Joab, "but I will die here."

Benaiah scrupled to violate the sanctity of the place which

had been respected when Adouijah had taken refuge there after

his first rebellion.1 He went back to the king for further in-

structions. But Solomon not hesitate. The altar, in his

judgment, was not meant to shelter so heinous a criminal. The

law of Moses was expressly on his side, for it had ordered that

a wilful murderer was to he torn away even from the altar,

since blood was a pollution of the land.2 He considered that

recent events were as a Divine warning to wipe away in the

blood of the guilty the dark stains of unpunished crime which

might mar the prosperity of David's house. We must judge

him neither by our customs nor by our moral standards.

Benaiah obeyed, and, without one friend to lift an arm or

breathe a petition in his favour, the hoary conspirator fell in

Gibeon, hard by the scene of his vilest and most treacherous

murder—the murder of Amasa "at the great stone of Gibeon."3

It was a just retribution, but a deplorable end to a career of

glory which had struck terror into the enemies of Israel. The

conqueror of the City of Waters, the suppressor of Absalom's

and Sheba's rebellions, died as a common criminal by the

hands of justice.

Solomon's vengeance pursued his guilty cousin no further,

and his friends—who, be it remembered, must have been

Solomon's own kinsmen of David's house—were allowed to bury

him honourably on his own estate in "the wilderness." But

men remarked that a curse—the curse of David after Joab's

murder of Abner4—seemed to cling to his descendants. It

1 So in Athaliah's case the High Priest Jehoiada was naturally anxious

that she should not be slain within the precincts of the sacred building

(2 Kings xi. 15).

2 Exod. xxi. 14; Numb. xxxv. 30-33.

3 2 Sam. xx. 8.

4 Comp. Deut. xix. 13. The fact that Abner was murdered at Hebron,

a refuge city (Josh. xxi. 13), took away from Joab even the poor excuse

that he was acting as a *Goel* ("blood-avenger") for Asahel his brother;

besides which Abner had only slain Asahel in self-defence, and against his

will.

INITIAL TROUBLES OF SOLOMON'S REIGN. 49

was believed that those descendants were marked out by

calamity, and that among them. were always some who were

afflicted with leprosy, or were personally contemptible, or who

fell by the sword, or were sunk in poverty and want.1 From

Jewish history they henceforth disappear.

The High Priest Abiathar seems to have viewed the acces-

sion of Solomon with only a sullen acquiescence, and the king

believed that he also was a supporter of the new plot. But he

hesitated to put him to death. He was old; he had long occupied

the highest position in the priesthood; above all, he had been

for many years the unswervingly faithful follower of David's

fortunes when he was a hunted outlaw, although David had

been the unwitting cause of the dreadful massacre at Nob, in

which Ahimelech, the father of Abiathar, and all his kinsmen

had perished.3 The "sharer of all the afflictions wherewith

David had been afflicted," the priest of his religion, the coun-

sellor of his reign—he who had so often consulted the once

famous but now neglected Urim and Thummin—he who

probably had anointed him king at Hebron4 —could not be

put to death with so little formality as even Joab. He was

banished to his paternal estate at Anathoth,5 and "thrust out"

from all priestly functions during the remainder of his life, not

without a significant warning that he would not again be spared

if he gave ground for offence.6 From this time he vanishes

from history. He was regarded as "a man of death." A doom

hung over his head, and, aged as he was, it is probable that he

did not long survive so terrible a disgrace.

Zadok now became sole priest, and in his person was restored

1 2 Sam. iii. 29, "Let there not fail from the house of Joab one that

. . . *handleth the distaff*" (like a woman). The word means "distaff" in

Prov. xxxi. 19. The rendering of the Authorized Version, "that leaneth on

a staff" (i.e. a cripple), is also tenable.

2 See I Sam. xxii. 20; 2 Sam. xv. 24-29.

3 The line of descent was Eli, Phinehas, Ahitub, Ahijah, Ahimelech,

Abiathar. It is not certain whether Ahijah and Ahimelech were not

brothers, or even the same person called by two equivalent names.

4 See for Abiathar's previous history I Sam, xxii., xxiii. 6, 9, xxx. 7;

2 Sam. ii. 1, 4, v. 19, xv., xvii. 15-17; I Kings ii. 26; I Chron. xxvii. 34.

5 Anathoth (now Anata) was a priest's city N.N.E. of Jerusalem, and

little more than an hour's distance (Josh. xxi. 18; 1 Chron. vi. 60; Jer. i. 1,

xxxii. 6-12.

6 I Kings ii. 26, "I will not at this time put thee to death."

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the lost prerogative of the house of Eleazar, the elder son of

Aaron. Eli had been a descendant not of Eleazar, but of

Aaron's younger son Ithamar,1 and from him the priesthood

had descended through several generations. How the house

of Ithamar had succeeded in displacing the house of Eleazar

we are not told, though it is implied that it was in conse-

quence of the Divine sanction.2 The Jewish legend on the

subject is striking, and not impossible. They say that Phi-

nehas, the son of Eleazar, had approved and even carried

out with his own hand the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter, but

that this human sacrifice—as in the analogous story of Ido-

meneus of Crete—had aroused such an outburst of popular

indignation that Phinehas and his family had in consequence

been displaced. Had Eli proved himself worthy, the priesthood

would have been established in his line, but his culpable negli-

gence and the crimes of his sons brought down a curse upon

his whole family. When Zadok—then a young and valiant

man—had joined David at Hebron, it was found that, of the

twenty-four priestly courses, only eight were of the line of

Ithamar, and sixteen were of the line of Eleazar.3 From

this time Zadok is always mentioned before Abiathar, though

the actual precedence seems to have belonged to the latter as

the older man, and the one already in uncontested possession

of the dignity. After the conquest of Jerusalem, and the re-

moval of the Ark to Mount Zion, Zadok was perhaps provided

for by being placed at the head of the priestly service in the

capital, while Abiathar remained in charge of the ancient

Tabernacle on the High Place of Gibeon.4 When the design

of building a magnificent Temple to Jehovah as the centre of the

national worship had once been determined on, it may well have

been felt that it would be interfered with by the existence of so

venerable a shrine as that of Gibeon, and Solomon may not

have been sorry that the defection of Abiathar enabled him to

concentrate the sacerdotal dignity in the person of the repre-

1 See 1 Chron. xxiv. 3; 2 Sam. viii. 17; and compare I Chron. vi. 4-15;

Ezra vii. 1-5.

2 I Sam. ii. 30. 3 I Chron. xii. 23; xxiv. 4.

4 Or the arrangement may have been the other way. See 1 Chron. xvi.

39, compared with xv. 11; 2 Sam. xv. 21, 25. We might almost infer

from these passages that the functions of the priests at the two sanctuaries

alternated.

INITIAL TROUBLES OF SOLOMON'S REIGN. 51

sentative of the older and more powerful line by whose hands

he had been anointed king.1 In that line it continued undis-

turbed till the days of the Maccabees.2

There were eighteen high priests, each averaging a term of

twenty-five years' office, for the four hundred and fifty-four years

from this time till the Captivity; and then, after a lapse of fifty-

two years, the line resumed its office, and there were fifteen

more high priests of this family till the days of Antiochus

Epiphanes. The house of Abiathar, on the other hand,

dwindled, for some time at least, into misery and insignificance.

Some of its members perished by the sword in the flower of

their age,3 while others were reduced to a poverty so abject that

they had to come crouching as suppliants to the priests of the

house of Zadok to obtain some inferior offices about the Temple,

or at least "a piece of silver, and a morsel of bread." Zadok no

doubt took part in that organization of the priesthood and of the

whole Levitic system which was one great work connected with

the completion of the Temple. From this time, however, we

hear little or nothing about him. As he joined David in his

early wanderings he must now have been at least sixty years

old, and sixty years was regarded as an advanced age among

the Jews of this epoch. Zadok's name is not mentioned in the

long details of the ceremony of Dedication; and in the list of

Court officers, Azariah, "the son" or more accurately the

grandson—of Zadok is mentioned first as the Priest. The son

of Zadok was the swift runner and crafty diplomatist Ahimaaz,

who must have died in his father's lifetime, leaving the heritage

of the chief priesthood to Azariah his son.4

The supporters of Adonijah were now crushed, but one power-

ful enemy of the house of David still remained. Shimei was

the sole formidable representative of the ruined house of Saul.

1 This seems to be the sole historical instance of the deposition of a High

Priest during more than eight centuries.

2 B.C. 170. They also furnished the chief Levites (Ezek. xl. 46; and

in Ezek. xliii. 19, xliv. 15. &c., they alone arc recognized, nothing being

said of the "sons of Abiathar,"

3 1 Sam. ii. 33-36 (see the reading of the Septuagint).

4 For Ahimaaz see 1 Chron. vi. 8, 9; 2 Sam, xv., xviii. The Ahimaaz

of 1 Kings iv. 15 is a different person, and in 1 Chron. vi. 9, 10 there is

some obvious disruption in the text (see *infr*. p. 64). Josephus says that

Ahimaaz became High Priest, and such seems to have been the Rabbinic

tradition. If so, it can only have been for a very short time.

52 SOLOMON.

David had felt that he was still dangerous, and held that the

pardon which he had bestowed was not binding on his successor.

At any rate, Solomon, in his determination to secure his throne

by vigorous measures, sent for Shimei, and ordered him to leave

his home at Bahurim in the limits of the tribe of Benjamin, in

which Saul's adherents were chiefly to be found,1 and to come

and live under surveillance at Jerusalem. He told him in the

most distinct terms that if, on any pretext whatever, he left the

limits of the city and crossed the Wady of Kidron, he should be

put to death; and his blood would be upon his own head.2

Shimei accepted these conditions on oath,3 and for three years

he observed them. At the end of that time two of his slaves ran

away to Achish, king of Gath, and Shimei went to Gath to

demand their extradition. Perhaps he fancied that the fact

would not be known, or persuaded himself that the nature of

his errand would be a sufficient justification, or that the stern

decree had practically fallen into desuetude: or perhaps he

imagined that as he had not crossed the Kidron, or entered the

domain of Benjamin, there could be no great harm in his going.4

But Solomon was not a man to suffer the suspicion of any

weakness in his conduct. Shimei had proved himself wholly

undeserving of favour in past days, and now, with strange levity

and infatuation, and without even asking leave, he had broken

the oath which he had taken, and defied the warning by which

it had been accompanied. Again we must not judge of Solo-

mon's conduct by modern rules. Judged, as he should be

judged, by the standard of his contemporaries, he was so far

from being regarded unmerciful, that he was specially credited

with *not* having sought from God the death of his enemies.5

He probably saw in Shimei's conduct a proof that the curse of

1 Bahurim, where Shimei lived (I Kings ii. 8) was very near Jerusalem

(2 Sam. iii. 16; xvii. 18).

2 Only by crossing Kidron could he enter the tribe in which he was most

dangerous, but he was also forbidden to go "any whither."

3 I Kings ii. 42.

4 A curious Talmudic notice says: "Let a man reside in the same place

as his Rabbi; for so long as Shimei the Son of Gera lived, just so long did

Solomon (Shimei's disciple) defer marrying the daughter of Pharaoh "

(Berachoth, f. 8, 1; Schwab, "Traité des Berakhoth," p. 252; Hershon,

"Treasures of the Talmud," p. 257). Shimei seems to have had illustrious

descendants in Mordecai and Esther (Esth. ii. 5).

5 I Kings iii. 11.

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God was resting upon him, and that he was foredoomed to a

bloody end. Sending for him, he sternly upbraided him, and

once more gave to Benaiah the fatal order. In the person of

Shimei the last of the domestic enemies of David's house

perished, and the kingdom was established in the hands of

Solomon. He had made clear to all men that it was no *fainéant*

who had succeeded to the warrior and poet who had founded

the throne. He had illustrated some of the precepts which were

afterwards enshrined in his Proverbs as representing an ideal

royalty. "A king that sitteth on the throne of judgment scat-

tereth away all evil from his eyes." "A wise king scattereth

the wicked, and bringeth the wheel over them." "The wrath of

the king is as messengers of death, but a wise man will pacify

it." "An evil man seeketh only rebellion, therefore an evil

messenger shall be sent against him." "The fear of a king is as

the roaring of a lion; whoso provoketh him to anger endanger-

eth his own soul." "Take away the wicked from before the

king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness."1

On the other hand, "in a king's favour is life." Solomon con-

tinued the grateful acknowledgment which David had bestowed

on the loyal house of Barzillai. Chimham, the youngest son of

the aged Gileadite, continued to reside at his Court and to eat at

his table; and having apparently received a grant from David's

paternal estate, he founded a family of which the descendants

were still flourishing in the days of Ezra. He founded at Bethle-

hem a *khan*, or caravanserai, which was known by his name

ages afterwards.2 Probably the sudden outburst of commerce in

Solomon's reign made it a prosperous undertaking, and con-

sidering the stationary character of all Eastern institutions, we

may well believe that it was in the stable of that caravanserai

that the Christ was born.

But if Solomon did not wholly escape from opposition in his

own kingdom, it was hardly likely that foreign enemies would

leave him undisturbed. They had quailed before the prowess of

David, and they feared the name of Joab even when David was

dead. But of Solomon and of Benaiah, the new commander

of the forces, they knew nothing. It was not without a

1 Prov. xx. 8, 25; xvi. 14; xvii. 11; xx. 2; xxv. 5.

2 Jer. xli. 17. The house of Barzillai became mingled with the priestly

line of Hakkoz by the intermarriage of an heiress of that line with the son

of Hakkoz (Ezra ii. 61).

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struggle that Solomon was allowed to fulfil the omen of his

name.

The first and most persistent of his enemies was Hadad, a

prince of Edom. "Revenge and wrong," the poet says,

"Bring forth their kind;

The foul cubs' like their parents are."

Hadad had reasons to hate the name of David with an undying

hatred. After the defeat of the Edomites Joab had remained no

less than six months in the conquered country with the express

object of exterminating the detested race. Such a task is, how-

ever, always impossible. Some of the Edomites had escaped

from this indiscriminate massacre, and among them were some

of the king's servants, who had been so fortunate as to save a

little child—the sole survivor of his house. They fled by way of

Midian and Paran to Egypt; and the reigning Pharaoh, who was

hostile to the growing power of Israel, had given to Hadad a

warm welcome. He had not only maintained him and assigned

him an estate, but had even condescended to bestow upon the

homeless fugitive the hand of the sister of his own queen, or

Queen-mother, Tahpenes.1 This lady bore him a son, who was

named Genubath, who was treated in all respects like an Egyp-

tian prince. But the splendours of Pharaoh's palace did not lull

the wrath and vengeance which Hadad nursed in his heart

against the destroyers of his race. On hearing that his old

enemies were dead, he begged Pharaoh's leave to return from

the placid pomp of an Egyptian palace to the wild freedom of

his native land. The Egyptian king was hurt by the request,

which he regarded as ungrateful; but with all the passion of an

avenger of blood Hadad persisted in his wish, and, whether

openly or secretly, succeeded in escaping from Egypt. He found

his people slowly recovering from the dreadful blow which had

1 *Gebîrah* may mean "Queen-mother " (I Kings xv. 13). In the Septuagint

this Pharaoh is wrongly called Shishak (Σουσακίμ), and his queen Theke-

mina, and it is added that an elder sister of Thekemina, named Anô, was

given in marriage to Jeroboam. The Pharaoh must have been one of the

Tanite kings of Lower Egypt, but we cannot pronounce with any certainty

what was his name. The Septuagint additions are quite apocryphal. The

protector of Hadad must have lived some time before the accession of

Shishak, and the name of Shishak's queen was not Tahpenes, but

Karaäma.

INITIAL TROUBLES OF SOLOMON'S REIGN. 55

been inflicted on them in the last reign, and he was acknow-

ledged as their king.1 Solomon was far too strong to be seriously

shaken, but Hadad harassed him continually with a guerilla

warfare, which could be easily carried on from the mountain

fastnesses of Idumæa.2

Nor was Hadad the only enemy. One of David's most decisive

and splendid victories had been gained over Hadarezer, son of

Rehob, king of Zobab. A Syrian named Rezon, son of Eliada, had

escaped from the overthrow, and from the wreck of the Syrian

forces had collected an army sufficiently strong to conquer

Damascus. Whether he was long able to maintain himself

there we do not know, but he was a thorn in Solomon's side

during the whole period of his reign.

Besides these troubles in the south and west of his dominions,

Solomon was also harassed for a short time by a revolt of the

Canaanites who rallied round the little kingdom of Geshur.

From this danger, however, he was liberated when he espoused

Pharaoh's daughter. For Pharaoh, landing an army at Joppa,

took Geshur,3 and presented it to Solomon as the dowry of his

daughter. The marriage seems to have taken place early in

the reign. Tradition long remembered these espousals, and

the crown which on that day the Queen-mother herself placed

upon the head of her still youthful son.4

This magnificent alliance—the most magnificent ever made

by any Hebrew king—gave Solomon a new grandeur in the

eyes of all surrounding nations. The Pharaoh in question must

have been a king of the twenty-first or Tanite dynasty, then

1 I Kings xi. 22, LXX., "And he was indignant against Israel, and

reigned in the land of Edom.'' This depends on the reading Edom for Aram

(אַרָם Aram, Syria) in I Kings xi. 25. If the reading Aram be right, then

we must suppose with Josephus ("Antiq." viii. 7, § 6) that Hadad failed in

his attempt on Idumaia, but in some way or other became king of part

of Syria, which may have been ceded to him by Rezon. But there is a

confusion in the original text.

2 I Kings xi. 14-25 sufficiently shows that though narrated out of order,

these events belong to the early parts of Solomon's reign.

3 Gezer is identified by Ewald with Geshur; and Geshur may have

become troublesome because Absalom was a grandson of its king Tohnai.

Deut. xxiii. 7, 8 seems to permit marriage with Egyptians.

4 Cant. iii, 11. This was probably Solomon's first marriage. Pharaoh

would have been less likely to give his daughter to Solomon if he already

had a wife—the Ammonitess Naamah—and a son Rehoboam.

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rather in the decline of its power. Shishak, between 990-980 B.C.,

founded a new dynasty after the middle of Solomon's reign.1

The father-in-law of Solomon must therefore have been one of

the last two kings of the Tanites—either Psinaces or his son,

Psusennes II. More probably it was the former, for

Psusennes II. only reigned fourteen years, and with him the

dynasty of Zoan came to an ond.2 Of Pharaoh's daughter we

hear very little. It is clear that she bore no son to Solomon,

and she probably died before the shameful multiplication of his

harem. Whether she became a proselyte to Judaism we do not

know, but at any rate Solomon was not turned aside by her to

build a temple for any deity of Egypt. The national conscience,

however, was never entirely reconciled to this departure from

theocratic traditions. "When Solomon married the daughter

of Pharaoh," says the Talmud, "Gabriel descended and fixed.

a reed in the sea. A sandbank formed around it, upon which

the mighty city of Rome was subsequently built."3 The meaning,

I suppose, is that at the moment of his sin began the series of

events which after long centuries destroyed his people by

Roman vengeance, and made of Jerusalem and the Temple

a heap of desolation.

As regards the other foes, Hadad was little more than a

marauder, and Rezon was probably crippled by Solomon's con-

quest of Hamath.4 Solomon, in consequence of his own con-

fidence in the Divine establishment of his power was now king

as far as the Euphrates on the east, and as far as the river of

Egypt on the south. The Second Psalm remains as a triumphant

epinician ode in which he, or a poet of the time speaking in

his name, gives thanks to God who has made him triumph over

his enemies, and in which he uses the large, prophetic style of

utterance which only acquires its full significance when we

regard Solomon in his better aspects as the type of the Perfect

King of David's line who should rule in righteousness over all

mankind.

1 Mr. R. S. Poole, "Dictionary of the Bible," s.v. Shishak, dates his

accession from Egyptian sources *circ*. 983.

2 Josephus says ("Antiq." viii. 6, § 2) that after his time (when the Bubas-

tite dynasty began) Egyptian kings dropped the exclusive title of Pharaoh,

and were known by their own names. According to Brugsch, "Gesch.

Ægypt." 657, the name of Psusennes on the monuments was Piseskban.

But see *infra*.

3 Sanhedrin f, 21. 2. 4 2 Chron. viii. 3.

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NOTE ON THE PHARAOH OF 1 KINGS III. I.

It appears from the Egyptian monuments that the twenty-first, or Tanite

dynasty of Egyptian kings was founded by Hir-hor, an ambitious priest of

Amon at Zoan (Tanis) about B.C. 1100. For the most part the annals of

Egypt during the reigns of these kings are a blank. Hir-hor raised himself

to power by driving out Rameses XIII. (?), when the country had sunk

into moral and intellectual degeneracy. The manes of his successors on

the monuments are (according to Brugsch) Plankhi, Pinotem I., Piseb-

khan I., Pinotem II. The names seem to be Assyrian, and Hir-hor pro-

bably made an alliance with Assyria. But the house of Rameses still had

adherents, and Pinotem I. married a princess of that family. After about one

hundred and thirty years (B.C. 1100-975) Shashanq I. founded the dynasty

of Bubastis (Pibeseth, Ezek. xxx. 17), and strengthened himself by marrying

a daughter of the last Tanite king. See Brugsch, "History of Egypt from

the Monuments," ii. 200-214. (E. tr.); Rawlinson, "Ancient Egypt," vol.

ii. ch. xxiii. pp. 412-416; Lenormant, "Hist. Anc.'' vol. 1. p. 304.

CHAPTER VI.

SOLOMON'S SACRIFICE AND DREAM.

General peacefulness of Solomon's reign—He offers a tenfold hecatomb at

Gibeon—His dream—Modes of Divine communication—His prayer

for wisdom.—The ideal not perfect—A conditional promise — Great

sacrifice on Mount Zion—The dead and the living child—Nature of

Solomon's wisdom—The wisest man of his age—His proverbs and

songs, and other intellectual efforts—Riddles—Hiram and Abdemon.

IT is not possible to discover the exact order of events in

Solomon's reign; but it probable that the inaugural sacrifice

with which he celebrated the secure establishment of his throne

was not offered until God had given him some peace before the

face of his enemies. That peace was lasting. He was not

again seriously troubled till towards the close of his reign of

forty years.

Accordingly, when his vigour and self-reliance had struck

terror into all opponents, he went in solemn procession to the

High Place at Gibeon, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and

offered the enormous sacrifice of a thousand burnt-offerings on

the venerable altar which Bezaleel had constructed nearly five

centuries before.1 The splendour of this tenfold hecatomb illus-

trated the magnificence of his conceptions as one who intended

to be every inch a king; and while it showed his sense of grati-

1 See 2 Chron. 1. 2, 3. For going to Gibeon, the chief seat of the

national worship, served by the entire priesthood, Solomon is certainly

not to blame. Where it is said (1 Kings iii. 3) that he "loved the Lord

. . . only he sacrificed and burn: incense in high places," the phrase

expresses the view of later centuries. The implicit prohibition of Lev.

xvii, 3-5 could hardly apply to a Lime when the Ark was at Zion and the

Tabernacle at Gibeon; and high places, in the absence of a regular temple,

were sanctioned by prophets and priests alike. Perhaps the *Wady Sulei-*

*man* may retain a trace of Solomon's visit to Gibeon.

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tude for God's protection, it would also powerfully influence the

imagination of the people and prepare them for the religious

development by which the reign was to be marked.1

And there at Gibeon the Lord appeared to Solomon in a

dream of the night. The consultation of Urim and Thummim

seems to have fallen into desuetude after the days of David,

and about this time there occurred a marked cessation of pro-

phetic activity. We never read that Solomon, like his father,

inquired of the Lord by the high priest. To a certain extent

he was his own priest, and he seems to have offered some of

his burnt-offerings with his own hand. The prophetic work of

Nathan and Gad was finished, and Ahijah of Shiloh had not

yet risen into prominence. Dreams were the third—and indeed

the lowest order of Divine communications. In a dream

God bids Solomon to choose some sign of His favour, and

Solomon, in accordance with the whole tendency of his cha-

racter, asks for kingly wisdom. He is but "a little child," pro-

bably not more than twenty years of age,2 and cannot compare

himself with his father David—a warrior, a poet, a statesman,

a king trained by long and varied experience. Israel had grown

into a mighty and countless people, and Solomon prays for an

understanding heart that he may be enabled in his constant

functions of a judge to discern between good and evil.3

His prayer was pleasing to God, for it was noble and unselfish.

A man of smaller mind might have asked for riches, or glory,

or success in war; and specially—considering the vagueness

and dimness of ancient views about immortality—for length of

days. And God, to reward his better choice, promised him in

pre-eminent, measure the gift of a wise and understanding heart,

and gave him in addition the riches and honour which he had

not directly sought. He had shown something of the spirit

1 The sacrifice of 1,000 victims was sufficiently known to give rise in later

Greek (Julian and Eustathius) to the word χιλιόμβη, for what the LXX.

calls χιλίαν ολοκαύτωσιν. Xerxes offered 1,000 at Troy (Herodotus, vii.

43), and Crœsus 3,000 (Herodotus, i. 50).

2 In 1 Chror. xxix. 1; 1 Kings iii. 7, he is called "young and tender"

at his accession. But the phrase, "I am a child," was more or less pro-

verbial (Jer. i 6).

3 See James i. 5; Wisdom vii. 7, ix. 12. The importance of the king's

judicial functions in the days when he was both the judge and the jury is

illustrated in the training of Cyrus (Xen. "Cyrop." i, 3 § 16; comp. 1 Sam.

viii. 20; 2 Sam. xv. 2-4).

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which seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,

and therefore all other things were added unto him. The pro-

mise of length of days was, however, made conditional on

Solomon's continued faithfulness, and he forfeited its fulfilment

by his subsequent apostasies. He reigned forty years, but died

at the age of sixty, and did not attain the age of his father.1

The conditions on which the gift of "wisdom" were made to

depend might have served to Solomon as a warning that his

ideal of wisdom was not as yet the highest—that all wisdom

begins and ends in the fear of the Lord; that without holiness

the gift of earthly prudence and political insight and varied

knowledge are of no permanent avail.

Solomon awoke, and behold it was a dream.2 But he felt

that it was a Divine dream; and in sign of his gratitude he

went from Gibeon to the altar on Mount Zion, and stood before

the Ark, and offered fresh burnt-offerings and thank-offerings,

and made a great feast to all his servants.3

The instance which the historian gives us of Solomon's wis-

dom is exactly of a kind which would have taken the fancy of an

Eastern people.

Two harlots came to the king as he sat in the gate to decide

all causes. They brought with them two infants, one living and

one dead, and each of them claimed the living child as her own.

It was a case of conflicting testimony, which to many might

have seemed impossible to decide. Solomon at once decided it

by a flash of intuitive sagacity. He ordered one of his soldiers

to cut the living child in two, and give half to each of the

women.4 Then the passionate cry of the mother's heart, "O my

lord, give her the living child and by no means slay it,"

revealed at once to whom the child belonged. "Give her the

living child and by no means slay it"—the king meditatively

repeated the mother's words, and then burst forth with swift

decision—"She is the mother thereof."

But Solomon's fame for wisdom was founded on far richer and

wider endowments than this swift practical sagacity, this "dis-

1 Compare Wisdom iv. 8, 9.

2 Ps. cxxvii. 2, "God given to *His beloved* even sleeping."

3 1 Kings iii. 15. This is not mentioned in the Book of Chronicles.

4 See Suet. Claud. 15. Josephus says that he ordered the *two children*

to be divided between the mothers, and that the people at first laughed at

his simplicity. See Ambrose, "De Off." ii. 8.

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cernment to understand judgment." God gave him "wisdom"

in a higher significance. He had at least a partial sense of

the relation in which man stands to God, and man to man;

of the wisdom which begins with righteousness, and regards

it as the highest end of life to depart from evil. He had an "un-

derstanding exceeding much," in which is included intellectual

power, and "wisdom for a man's self;" and "largeness of

heart even as the sand that is on the sea-shore;" that is, an infi-

nite thirst for knowledge, and capacity for attaining it. Egypt

and Arabia and Chaldæa were famed as the homes of wisdom,

but neither Egypt, nor Arabia, nor Chaldæa had produced any

men whose learning and insight were equal to those of Solomon.

He surpassed all the children of the East.2 All the surrounding

nations heard his fame. He was wiser than Ethan the Ezrahite,

and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol. Ethan

and Heman, the Ezrahites, were celebrated as poets and musi-

cians.3 Heman is called "the king's seer in the words of the

Lord,"4 and the Eighty-eighth Psalm remains in all its depth

and beauty to attest his powers of inspired thought and expres-

sion. Chalcol and Dardas seem also to have taken large share

in the organization of the Temple services with its psalms and

hymns and spiritual songs. Perhaps the words "sons of

Mahol" refer to all four of the persons mentioned, and it is not

impossible that they are thus meant to be described as "sons of

the choir," or sacred singers.6 But none of the four could be

1 Gen. xli. 8; Exod. vii. 11; Acts vii. 22.

2 Comp. Job i. 3; Matt. ii. 1. These *Benî Kedem* seem to be the nomad

tribes of Arabia and Mesopotamia. (See Gen. xxix. 1; Judg. vi. 3, 33,

vii. 12). It is interesting to find this frank recognition of Ethnic wisdom and

inspiration from which that of Solomon differed not in kind, but in degree.

3 I Chron. ii. 6, xv. 19; Ps. lxxxviii. title, xxxix. title. Ezrahite seems to

be a mere transposition of Zerahite. They were descendants of Zerah, the son

of Judah. If so, however, they cannot be identified with the *Singers* and

*Levites* of 1 Chron. vi. 44. There seems then to have been two Hemans,

and two Ethans, except on the not impossible supposition that Heman the

(Kohathite) married a heiress of the house of Zerah, and was

reckoned in Zerah's genealogy.

4 I Chron. xxv. 5.

5 For Chalcol and Dara (Darad, or Darda), see I Chron. ii. 6, where they

are great-grandsons of Jacob, by the line of Zerah, son of Judah, and brothers

of Ethan and Heman.

6 It is true that *Machôl* means "a dance" rather than "a choir," but in

Ps. cl. 4, it may perhaps be used for an instrumen of music; and Rashi

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compared to Solomon. Of the extensive literature which tradi-

tion assigns to him but little remains. Of his three thousand

Proverbs only a handful are preserved, and they contain scarcely

any allegories or riddles, or passages of figurative poetry, but

chiefly the sententious antithetic apothegms which preserve in

the memory the results of experience, and the lessons of insight.

Of his thousand and five songs1 there is only one which, with the

exception of two psalms,2 has been even traditionally ascribed

to him. Besides these songs and proverbs, he spoke, we are

told, of the trees, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop of

the wall; and of beasts, and fowl, and creeping things, and

fishes. It is a matter of conjecture whether this passage refers

to a dawning knowledge of natural history and botany, or

whether it merely implies a poetic admiration of all that is beau-

tiful in nature, and skill in the application of it to moral instruc-

tion or religious parable.3 Of this skill we find traces not only

in the "Wisdom literature" assigned to his authorship, but also

—and that with exquisite freshness—in some of the Psalms.4

Various forms of veiled and pregnant speech known as "rid-

dles" and "dark sayings" were also much cultivated in this

epoch of literature. Riddles have always played an important

part in the story of the East. Josephus preserves a curious tra-

dition that Solomon, and Hiram, king of Tyre, challenged each

other to trials of skill in this form of "wisdom"—inability to

read the riddle being acknowledged by pecuniary fines.5 At

first Hiram was entirely defeated in this intellectual contest,

but at last he discovered a Tyrian youth named Abdemon, of

great natural gifts, by whose assistance he successfully encoun-

tered, and even defeated, his royal ally.

says that these four "were skilled in composing hymns, which were recited

in the dances of song." See Dr. W. Allis Wright, s.v. in "Dictionary of

the Bible." Comp. "daughters of song," Eccles. xii. 4. Grätz says that

these four were descendants of Chamul, son of Pharez, and that מחול is

only a transposition of חמול (Numb. xxvi. 21).

1 The LX.X. says 5,000 songs.

2 Ps. lxxv., cxxvii. The eighteen apocryphal "Psalms of Solomon"

belong to the age of the Maccabees.

3 Eccles. xlvii. 17. Josepluts, "Antig." viii. 2, § 5; κα’ θ’ εκαστον γὲ εῖδος   
δένδρου παραβολὴν εῖπεν. On the nature of Solomon's wisdom see Hooker,

"Eccl. Pol.'' III. viii. 9; Bacon, "Advt. of Learning," book i.

4 See Renan, "Hist. des Langues Sémitiques,” p. 127.

5 Comp. Theophilus in Eusebius, " Præp. Ev." ix. 34, § 19.

CHAPTER. VII.

THE COURT OF' SOLOMON.

Growing complexity and magnificence of the Court—High officers—

Azariah grandson of Zadok—Use of the word "Priest"—The two

Scribes—The Recorder—The Captain of the Host—Zadok—Bamoth

or High Places—The Farmer-general—"The King's friend"—The

Chamberlain, growing importance of this official—The Superintendent

of the levies—Forced labour—The twelve districts to supply the Court

—Significance of these districts—Judah possibly exempted—Immense

exaction of provisions—The burden not felt at first—Prevailing peace

—Solomon's one conquest.

THE fourth chapter of the First Book of Kings shows how vast

a stride the Jewish monarchy had. taken during the reign of

David. Saul had been a king of primitive simplicity, content

with a humble and modest royalty, dwelling under the pome-

granate tree in the Precipice,1 or under the tamarisk in the High

Place at Gibeah,2 carrying his great spear in his hand, and often

with no larger army about him than a few faithful henchmen.

David, in his later years, had surrounded himself with some-

thing of the state of other monarchies, but his harem and his

palaces were insignificant compared with those of Solomon,

who in his splendour and magnificence followed the dubious

model of Egyptian, Phœnician, and Assyrian kings.

He was surrounded by an immediate circle of high officers,

who held the rank of princes (*sarim*), and ate at his table. In

David's warlike Court the highest rank was assigned to the

Captain of the Host, and the Captain of the Bodyguard. In

1 Authorized Version, "in Migron" (1 Sam. xiv, 2).

2 I Sam. xxii. 6.

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Solomon's Court precedence is assigned to more peaceful

functionaries.

First among them was Azariah, the "son," or rather the

grandson of Zadok,1 who is called the "Priest."2 He certainly

did not supersede either Zadok or Abiathar, but he had pro-

bably suceeded to the office of Chief Priest by his father's

death. It has been supposed that the priestly title is given to

him in the older sense in which it is given to the sons of David,

for whose title of "priests "3 the Chronicler substitutes the ex-

planation "chief about the king."4 Even David on certain

occasions wore the ephod, so Azariah—being of priestly birth

—might no doubt have performed sacerdotal duties connected

with the palace. There is, however, no need for the supposition

here, for it is obvious that the clause, "this is he that executed

the priest's office in the house that Solomon built in Jerusalem,"

in 1 Chron. vi. to has been accidentally misplaced, and applies

to the grandson of Zadok, not to the son of Johanan.

Next to him were two "Scribes"—Elihoreph and Ahiah—sons

perhaps of the Sheva (probably the same as Seraiah), who had

been scribe to David.5 They seem to have acted as Secretaries

of State, and the extension of Solomon's power made it neces-

sary to employ the services of two, whereas hitherto one had

sufficed.

Next to these came Jehoshaphat, the son of Ahilud, the

"Recorder" or "Remembrances," who had held the same office

in the reign of David.6 This necessity for an officer to act as

1 Zadok, *Ahimaaz*, Azariah.

2 The Septuagint omits the title, which perplexed the translators. We

find, however, that even in David's time there seems to have been an ap-

proximation between the royal and priestly functions, and the development

of this connection was probably strengthened by Phoenician influences

(Movers, " Phönizier," p. 548). In 2 Sam. viii. 18, we are told that

"David's sons were *priests*."

3 Kohanim, 2 Sam. viii. 18; LXX., "chief courtiers;" Syriac, "mag-

nates;" but it is strange to render the same word in two quite different

senses in two lines.

4 Literally, "the first at the king's hand."

5 See 2 Sam. viii. 37; xx. 25. In I Chron. xviii. 16, he is called Shavsha.

Grätz (i. 245) calls the scribe (Sopher) "Listenführer," or "Rottenführer

über den Heerbann." The Rabbis derived the title from *saphar*, "to

count." Comp. Isa. xxxiii. 18. See Grätz's learned note (i. 457).

6 2 Sam. viii. 16, xx. 24; 1 Chron. xviii. 15. LXX., ο επὶ τών απομνημά-

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annalist, or royal historiographer, is another indication of the

growing importance of the Jewish throne.

Benaiah was promoted to the captaincy of the host left vacant

by the execution of Joab. The present text of the Book of

Kings would lead us to suppose that he also continued to be

Captain of the bodyguard. It would, however, have been

dangerous to the stability of the throne to concentrate two such

offices in the hands of one man. The Captain of the Body-

guard was more than ever needed as a counterpoise to any

military ambition which might be kindled in the breast of the

Commander-in-chief. It is probable, therefore, that a sentence

preserved in the Greek translation represents the original

reading, and that Eliab, the son of Shaphat, replaced Benaiah

in the command of the Cherethites and Pelethites.

Zadok, as long as he lived was the Chief Priest, but as in

the analogous case of Annas in the days of our Lord, the

disgrace of Abiathar, by the civil power, did not obliterate the

memory of his long priesthood, and he was still regarded as

being one of the titular heads of the priesthood during the

remainder of his life.

There was no longer a famous shrine at Gibeon, but the wor-

ship at the High Places still continued for ages after the Temple

was built. It was too deeply rooted in the notional customs to

be got rid of, and it was only after centuries of struggle that

Hezekiah ventured upon a step, which was regarded by many

as revolutionary and impious, in destroying the High Places

altogether.1 It is quite certain that neither Solomon nor any of

his predecessors were conscious of any dereliction of duty in

sanctioning the continuance of local sanctuaries.2 If the pro-

hibition of Deuteronomy was then in existence, it was clearly

unknown to the majority of the nation.3 It was only in later

times that the toleration of these Bamoth came to be looked upon

as a blot—though a venial blot—on the memory of even the

holiest kings.

των; Isa. xxxvi. 3, ο υπομνηματογράφος. Comp. Suet., "Aug," 79, "Qui

e memoria Augusti." *Mazkhir*, or "Chancellor." Grätz ("Gesch. d.

Juden." i. 459) calls him "Erinner." See Ezek. xxi. 24; xxix. 16.

1 See the remark of the apostate Rabsbakeh, 2 Kings xviii. 22; 2 Chron.

xxxii. 12.

2 Judg. 20, xiii. 19; I Sam. ix. 12; &c.

3 Deut. xii. 13, 14.

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The post of Superintendent, or Farmer-general, over the

twelve heads of local administration was held by Azariah, the

son of Nathan; and his brother Zabud was also a "kohen,"

and "the king's friend." It has been assumed too hastily that

the Nathan here intended was the Prophet, and that the high

promotion of his two sons indicates that he had sunk into

courtly proclivities, which hampered the outspoken faithfulness

of his earlier days. But Nathan is rarely mentioned without

his title of "the Prophet," and it is at least as probable that

Azariah and Zabud were sons of Nathan, the brother of Solomon,

and therefore nephews of the king. It is true that Nathan was

either younger than Solomon or only a little older, so that his

sons must have been very young men. But it must be re-

membered that this list does not entirely apply to the early

part of the reign. As we find Solomon's sons-in-law in it, we may

easily find his nephews. It was necessary to provide mainten-

ance, and occupation, and high official rank for the members of

the royal family. The title "Priest" in its lay sense, or *civil*

sense, seems only to have been given to the princes of the

house of David. If this conjecture be correct, it is another

indication of the often renewed attempt to unite kingly and

priestly functions. This cannot surprise us, since it began, even

in the previous reign, and seems to have been borrowed from

the Phœnicians. It was a direct means of strengthening the

royal house and the Court party.1 Solomon had no intention

of allowing Zadok to become a priest of the kind that kings have

had to cope with in all ages from the days of Ethbaal down to

those of Thomas à Becket. We shall see that, even in the most

solemn details of the Temple inauguration, Solomon is every-

thing, and Zadok or his successor sinks into such complete

insignificance that his name is not once mentioned during the

entire ceremony.

The Secretary and the Recorder were permanent officials in

the royal establishment, and to them we must add a new and

important functionary—the Chamberlain, or High Steward,

who was "over the household."2 The existence of such an

1 See Movers, "Phönizier," p. 50. We may recall the facts that

"*Bishop* of Osnaburgh" was even in this century the title of one of our

princes; and that Charles II., on his deathbed, is said to have pronounced

the blessing over his own bishops.

2 Nearly three centuries later, in the Court of Hezekiah, we read

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officer to regulate the admissions to the king, the management

of the palace, and the etiquette of the Court, shows that the

more primitive form of royalty was now being rapidly assimi-

lated to the statelier usages of the great surrounding kingdoms.

As the form of government became more and more personal,

the Chamberlain, from his right of immediate access to the king,

became the most important personage in the affairs of govern-

ment, just as the eunuchs were often the chief ministers in the

Courts of the Byzantine Emperors.

The function of the last great official on the list is somewhat

ominous. Such splendour as that of Solomon could not be

maintained except at the cost of heavy taxation. We now find,

almost for the first time, an officer who "was over the tribute,"

or rather "the Levy," that is, the *corvée* or forced labour.1 This

office was held by Adoniram or Adoram, the son of Abda.

Under Saul there had been an overseer of the flocks, and David

had been obliged to appoint a custodian of the king's treasures,

and stewards who managed his pastures, vineyards, olives,

sycomores, camels, herds, and flocks.2 If David's numbering

of the people had been due to an intention of subjecting them

to a poll-tax, something like this must have been actually carried

out under the government of Solomon. The people began to

discover too late that "bondage with ease" is not to be com-

pared to "strenuous liberty." In tribute, and proscription for

various kinds of compulsory service, the people were now

beginning to feel the burden of monarchy, of which they had

been so emphatically warned by their indignant prophet.3

Adoram must have had a long spell of toil under David and

Solomon; at the beginning of Rehoboam's reign, when he

must have been an old man, his unpopular office cost him his

life.

For the Court of Solomon, with its polygamy, and the multi-

"Eliakim, who was over the household, and Shebna the Scribe, and Joah

the son of Asaph the Recorder." The Chamberlain has now became the

*chief* official (2 Kings xviii. 18; comp. Isa. xxii. 15, where Shebna is a

person of great and objectionable influence).

1 He is said to be "*al-ha-Alas*." He is cursorily mentioned in 2 Sam.

xx. 24, which refers to the closing years of David. The word *Mas*, "levy,"

is of dubious derivation.

2 I Chron xxvii, 25-31.

3 I Sam, viii. 11-18.

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tude of its retainers, soldiers, and eunuchs,1 must have consisted

of some thousands of persons, and their maintenance was very

costly. To secure a due provision of food and delicacies for

the palace, the king appointed twelve officers, one for each

month of the year; and each was bound to furnish the requisite

contributions in kind and money from one of the twelve districts

into which the land was divided.2 The importance of their

position may be estimated from the fact that two of them were

sons-in-law of Solomon, married to his daughters Taphath and

Basmath, of whom we hear nothing farther.3 In the division of

districts we find Mount Ephraim, three sections of the maritime

plain, the plain of Jezreel, Asher, Issachar, Naphtali, Benjamin,

and three sections of the country east of the Jordan. The

districts seem, however, to have been formed with very little

reference to ancient tribal limits, which were scarcely likely to

find favour in schemes of monarchical centralization. The ob-

ject of the whole arrangement was mainly the somewhat ignoble

one of supplying the inexhaustible expenses of a luxurious Court.

It was very remarkable that Judah does not seem to have been

included in the division, though it occupied so large a portion

of Palestine. It is difficult to suppose that so obscure a place

as Sochoh4 could have been intended as the tax station for

1 That the degraded service of eunuchs in the royal harem must have been

introduced by this time seems clear if the word *sarîsîm* be taken literally in

I Sam. viii. 15 ; 1 Chron. xxviii. I. There could have been no more

ominous proof of commencing decadence and faithlessness.

2 Compare the exactly similar arrangement in the courts of ancient and

modern Persia (Herodotus, i. 692; Chardin, "Voy. en Perse,'' iii. 345). It

is curious that some of the officers are not named, but only called by their

patronymic, "*the son of* Hesed," &c. This is probably due to an accidental

mutilation of the original document, for names are given by Josephus. If

we accept the conjecture (suggested by the LXX., καὶ Νασέφ εῖς εν γῆ

’Ιούδα), and add " in the land of Judah" to I Kings iv. 19 (taking Judah

from ver. 20), there would be thirteen instead of twelve of these Netzibim.

The Targum adopts this reading, and says that the thirteenth deputy was

"to maintain the king in the *intercalary* month."

3 The allusion is, however, a proof that this organization could not have

been fully established till Solomon was far advanced in his reign. The

husband of Taphath—the son of Abinadab—may have been Solomon's

first cousin (1 Sam. xvi. 8).

4 There were two Sochohs. The one here meant bordered on Philistia.

Grätz says, "Auffallend ist besonders dass über Juda kein Nezib gesetzt zu

sein scheine."

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Judah. Had Judah, then, an immunity from the burden of this

impost? If so, the exemption was most impolitic, and could

not have failed to exacerbate the existing jealousies. An in-

teresting notice informs us of the immense stores required by

the household for a single day—namely, thirty cors of fine

flour, sixty cors of meal, ten stall-fed and twenty pasture-oxen,

and a hundred sheep, besides harts, roebucks, fallow-deer, and

fowls. Taking the *cor* at one of its lower valuations, this seems

to imply as much as 18,000 lbs. of bread a day; and considering

how little meat is required in the East, we should conjecture that

the maintenance would be enough for at least ten thousand

persons.1 Solomon also collected a large force of chariots and

chariot-horses (*susim*), and he had twelve thousand horsemen,

and swift horses for the royal couriers,2 requiring a large pro-

vision of straw and barley. They were kept in various cities

and barracks. In the intoxication of personal grandeur, the

old dislike to cavalry and chariots was forgotten, and the old

injunctions —as Samuel had prophesied would be the case—

were set aside.3 But there must have been many who

looked on this innovation with dislike. They did not care

to see "the chariots of Pharaoh" in the Court of Solomon,4

remembering that "a horse is a vain thing to save a man," and

that God, who "delighteth not in the strength of a horse," had

enabled David with his simple infantry to defeat the immense

cavalry of Hadarezer, as Barak had defeated Sisera before.

But it was not in the earlier years of the reign that the

burden proved intolerable. On the contrary, the people at first

enjoyed an immense prosperity, due to peace and extended

commerce. They lived in festivity and ease, and exulted in the

power of their king, whose dominion was acknowledged from

Tiphsah on the west bank of the Euphrates5 to Gaza and the

1 Thenius says the flour would daily feed fourteen thousand. As many

or more were daily fed by the kings of Persia.

2 Not "dromedaries," as in Authorized Version. Comp. Esth. viii. 10,

3 Deut. xvii. 16; I Sam. viii. 11, 12; 2 Sam. viii. 4; Josh. xi. 9.

4 Cant. i. 9.

5 Tiphsah, or Thapsacus, was afterwards attacked by Menahem (2 Kings

xv. 16). It was the ford (*pasach*, "to pass over") of the Euphrates; Xen.,

"Anab." i. 4, §11; Arrian, "Exp. Alex." ii. 13, iii. 7. Its site is believed

to be the modern *Suriyeh*. The phrase "on *this* side the river," literally is,

"*beyond* the river" (I Kings iv. 24), and furnishes a curious proof that the

passage was not composed *till the days of the Exile*; the western bank of

the river being described from the Babylonian point of view.

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Mediterranean; and from Damascus to the "stream of Egypt,"

*i.e.,* Rhinokolura (the Wady el Areesh). They were proud that

his mere name was sufficient to protect them from all their

enemies. It was only by slow degrees that the glamour of suc-

cess was dissipated, and the nation began to realize the burden

of oppression. At this time the general community below the

Court officials and princes consisted of four classes of persons.

These were, in descending degrees of dignity—

1. The freeborn Israelites (*ezrach*, Exod. xii. 49, &c.), whose

burdens were made as light as possible.

2. The native Canaanites, who were in vassalage to the

Crown, and were sufficiently numerous to be sometimes formid-

able (*Toshabîm*, Lev. xxii. 23, &c).

3. The strangers—like the Athenian Metoikoi or "resident

aliens"—whom commerce or other influences had drawn into

the country, and who generally placed themselves under special

protection (*Gerîm*, Lev. xvii. 8, &c.).1

4. Slaves of three classes, namely either—

(1) Slave taken in war; or

(2) One who had sold himself into slavery in consequence of

poverty or debt.

(3) One born in the house (*verna*, "the children of the

maidservant").2

From the burden of war they were happily exempt. The

raids of Hadad and Rezon did not give any serious trouble

to the nation at large, and the only aggressive action taken

throughout the reign was so transient that it is omitted alto-

gether in the Book of Kings, and dismissed in a single line of

the Second Book of Chronicles.3 "Solomon," we are told,

"went to Hamath-Zobah, and prevailed against it." Of further

details we know absolutely nothing, and it has even been con-

jectured that Hamath-Zobah cannot mean the *great* Harnath on

the Orontes, but must mean some other Hamath in the separate

kingdom of Zobah. Since, however, Toi, king of Hamath,showed

signs of weakness when he sent presents to David, Solomon

may have had little difficulty in annexing his capital. It was

reconquered for Israel by the warlike Jeroboam II. some two

centuries after this date.4

1 Lev. xxv. 44; see Grätz, 1. 336. On the *toshabîm*, see Jahn, "Arch.

Bibl." i. 11, § 181. They and the *gerîm* are rendered προσοίκοι, προσήλυτοι, γειώρας, in the LXX.

2 Gen. xiv. 14. 3 2 Chron. viii. 3. 4 2 Kings xiv. 28.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BUILDINGS OF SOLOMON.

The Temple—The design of David—He is forbidden to build—His immense

preparations—In what sense the Temple was "exceeding magnifical"—

Its substructions, walls, and cisterns, and the toil they involved—Em-

bassy from Hiram of Tyre, and compact between the two kings—The

levy or *corvée*—The burden-bearers and quarrymen—The Canaanites

were the Helots of Palestine—The Giblites—The slaves of Solomon—

Hiram of Naphtali—General form of the Temple and its measurements

—Curious statements of the Chronicler—The Holy of Holies quite dark

—Utter lattices of the Holy Place—The outer chambers—What a

visitor would have seen— The outer court. —The inner court—The

brazen altar—The molten sea and the caldrons—Why the brazen oxen

were permitted—The actual Temple--What was its external aspect?—

Had it pillars within? —Jachin and Boaz—Theories about them—The

Porch—The Sanctuary and its furniture—The Oracle; its door—The

Ark—The Cherubim—Built in silence—The general workmanship—

Time that it occupied in building—Organization of Levitic ministry—

The Temple a symbol of God's Presence—The actual building not used

for prayer or public worship—The sacrifices and what they involved—

Water for ablutions—The Ceremony of Dedication—The old Taber-

nacle—The procession—Tranference of the Ark to its rock staves

—Splendour of the ceremony--The Cloud of Glory—Solomon's prayer;

its spirituality—Stupendous thank-offering and festival—The fire from

heaven—Prominence of the king in priestly functions—Second vision of

Solomon—Intense affection and enthusiasm inspired by the Temple,

and illustrated in various psalms—Functions of the Levites.

FIRST and foremost among the buildings of Solomon was the

Temple on Mount Moriah, which was destined for so many

centuries to exercise a profound influence on the religious con-

ceptions of the Jewish people. As soon as there began to be

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kings and palaces, it was felt incongruous that after so long a

period the Ark of the Lord should still be housed in wood and

in curtains.

For this Temple David had, "with much labour,"1 made im-

mense preparations, but he had not been permitted to carry

out his cherished design.2 The voice of Nathan did but in-

terpret for him his own sense of religious fitness when it assigned

the building of the House of God to a son, whose course should

have been less chequered by moral failure, whose hands should

have been less stained with blood,

Yet he did everything else which was possible to him. He

collected stonemasons and artificers, and amassed—according

to the Chronicler— 100,000 talents of gold and 1,000,000 talents

of silver, and brass and iron without weight, and cedar-trees in

abundance, and onyx stones, and stones edged with antimony,

and precious stones and lustrous marble.3 The gold and silver is

doubtless meant to include the contribution attributed to David

out of his private property namely, 3,000 talents of gold,

and 7,000 talents of silver, and the free-will offerings of the

princes—namely, 5,000 talents of gold, 10,000 darks and 10,000

talents of silver. The mention of *darics*—coins named after

Darius—shows us that the author of these statements lived

many centuries after the days of which he is speaking.4 Even

the smaller sums sound enormous, but the larger are mani-

festly due to that fatality of enormous exaggeration, which,

whether due to corruption of the text or not, affects some of

the numbers stated in the Books of Chronicles. Nothing can

be more futile than the attempt to show that such a prince

as David could have been able to amass gold—not to speak of

the other treasures—which amounted in value, on the very

lowest computation, to £120,000,000, and which, if the Jewish

talent be meant, represented many thousands more than a

billion pounds. At the very zenith of even Solomon's magnifi-

cence his annual revenue only reached the sum of six hundred

and sixty-six talents. David no doubt had made the best pre-

1 Not "in my trouble," as in Authorized Version (1 Chron. xxii. 14).

2 The preparations are mentioned by the Chronicler (1 Chron. xxix. 6-9;

2 Chron. ii. 3-7), but the Book of Kings says nothing about them. See I

Kings vi. 2 and 2 Chron. iii. 3. The wish and intention are recorded in

2 Sam. vii. 1-29.

3 1 Chron. xxii.

4 I Chron. xxix. 4.

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parations in his power, but the scale of them must be measured

by very different numbers.

Jewish tradition has accepted the most extravagant state-

ments about the Temple of Solomon, yet sober and trust-

worthy documents prove that, though small, it was indeed for

that age "exceeding magnifical." The substructions alone

deserve to rank with the *Cloaca Maxima* at Rome and others

of the greatest works of early ages. Mount Moriah, already a

sacred locality from having been the supposed scene of Abra-

ham's sacrifice, lies north-east of Mount Zion.1 It had acquired

recent and additional sacredness from the vision of the angel

whom David had seen during the pestilence with his sword

drawn over Araunah's threshing-floor.2 The altar reared by

David to commemorate his deliverance, marked the site of the

future Temple, which might otherwise have been built on the

loftier heights of the Mount of Olives. But the choice of this

hallowed site caused immense difficulties. The sides of the hill

were steep; its summit was rough and of insufficient size for the

fore-courts of the house. The entire sanctuary, with its two

fore-courts, had to be made into a large square, which we may

assume from the notices of Ezekiel to have been five hundred

paces in length and in breadth.3 These courts had to be sup-

ported by immense walls which have partly survived the ravages

of so many conquests. The earliest of these those on the

east side—are doubtless the work of Solomon, though large

additions were made by Joash and other later kings, until all

the four sides were completed, and the original area of the

summit much enlarged. The immense blocks of smooth and

bevelled stone, of which some are 30 feet-long and 7 feet high,

and weigh more than 100 tons, are in the finest style of Cyclo-

pean architecture, and are still the admiration of every traveller.4

These walls were of astonishing heighth. Part of the old wall

1 Gen. xxii. 2. The site of the Temple is called Mount Moriah in 2 Chron.

iii. 1 alone, but it says nothing about Abraham.

2 1 Chron. xxii,

3 Ezek. xlii. 15-20; xlv. 2. Comp. Josephus, "Antiq." xv. 11, § 3;

"De 13. J." v. 5. The Rabbis say, "hie mount of the Temple was five

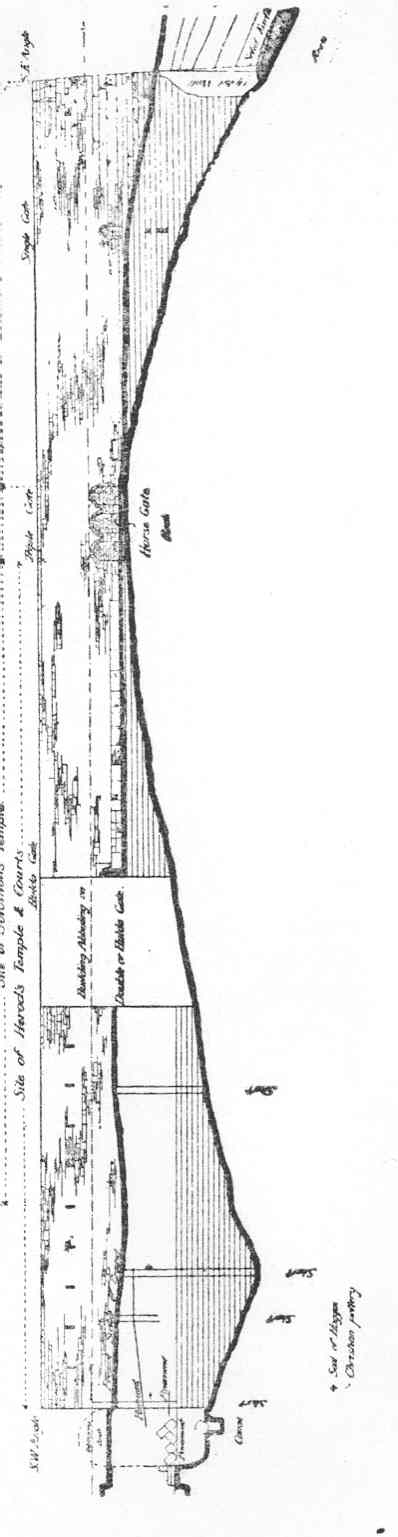
hundred yards square" ("Middoth," c. 2).

4 The largest stone—that at the south-west corner — is 38 1/2 feet long.

According to Sir C. Warren, these huge blocks were hewn from a quarry

*above the level of the wall* and lowered by rollers down an inclined plane.

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now rises 30 feet, but Captain 

Warren discovered that an even

greater extent of its surface lies

buried under the débris of ages,

beneath the soil of the nineteen-

times captured city.1 The stone

was partly hewn from those deep

quarries, drains, and caverns,

over which Jerusalem is built.

Cisterns of immense capacity

and subterranean conduits had

also to be hewn out of the solid

rock for the storage and con-

veyance of the water which was

necessary to purge the profusion

of refuse accumulated by count-

less sacrifices under the blazing

Eastern sun.

1 Josephus grossly exaggerates when

he says that the eastern side was 450

feet high. Still, vast substructions were

required to build the great level of the

Temple area. Of the extent of these

some estimate may be formed from

the excavations of Sir C. Warren and

Captain Wilson, described in "The

Recovery of Jerusalem." At the south-

east angle of the wall it descends to a

depth of 80 feet below the present sur-

face; and at the south-west angle by

"Robinson's arch," no less than three

pavements were discovered, showing

the gradual filling up of the valley,

on the lowest of which were found the

fallen *voussoirs* of the arch. That the

whole of this mighty wall was meant

to be visible seems to be proved by

the fact that the stones are carefully

dressed, edge-drafted, sad bevelled.

See the appended diagram, and Bart-

lett's " Walks about Jerusalem," pp.

161-178. -Williams, "The Holy City,"

pp. 315-362. Kugel, "Gesch. der

Baukunst," 125 ff. (1855).

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At a very early stage of his preparations, Solomon received an

embassy from Hiram, king of Tyre, who had always been on

the friendliest terms with David, and whose daughter Solomon

is said to have married.1 Hiram, as we learn from a fragment

of Menander of Ephesus, preserved in Josephus, was the son of

a king named Abibaal,2 and had ascended the throne in early

youth in B.C. 1001. He was in the eleventh year of his reign

when Solomon, who had now been king for three years, entered

into close relations with him. His alliance was of the utmost

importance for the future commerce of Israel, and alone ren-

dered possible the splendid buildings which now began to adorn

Jerusalem. He reigned thirty-four years, and died at the age

of fifty-three. He was succeeded by his son Baleazar, and his

grandson Abdastartus;3 and then after various sanguinary re-

volutions the throne was seized by Ethbaal, priest of Astarte,

the father of Jezebel. When the Greek translators say that he

sent his servants "to anoint" Solomon, the assertion must be

due to some singular confusion, but it points to a close alliance

between the kings who first raised Tyre and Jerusalem re-

spectively to the zenith of their fame.

Solomon, welcoming the proffered friendship of the Tyrian

king, begged him to allow his skilled workmen to hew cedar-

trees and cypress-trees out of Lebanon, and Hiram in return

for annual gifts of twenty thousand cors of wheat and barley,

and twenty thousand "baths" of oi1,4 gave him large assistance.

The labour involved was immense. The trees were sent down

the heights of Lebanon by the process technically known as

*schlittage*,5 and thence by road or river to the sea-shore. Huge

1 Tatian, "Orat. ad Græce," p. 171. Neither David nor Solomon seem

to have considered that Hiram occupied a kingdom which had been in-

tended to form part of "the Promised Land" (Numb. xxxiv. 6-8;

Judg. i. 31).

2 There is an interesting relic of this prince at Florence, a sardonyx with

the inscription of "Abibaal." It represents a king with a high crown and

staff, and in front of him a four-rayed star. (Duncker, ii. 264, E. tr.).

3 Menander of Ephesus quoted by Josephus ("C. Apion." i. 18).

4 This is the reading of the LXX. and Josephus in 1 Kings v. 11. Comp.

2 Chron. ii. 10. Josephus says that the official correspondence between the

two kings was preserved in the Jewish and Tyrian archives. "Pure," or

'beaten oil," i.e., oil extracted by beating the olives, not by the press, was

he best kind. The Chronicler (2 Chron. ii. 10) adds barley and wine.

5 Schlittage is still much used in the Vosges to carry trees down hill. They

are pushed along an artificial path called *vovtou*, made of rounded trunks.

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rafts of the costly timber were thence floated by sea to Joppa, a

hundred miles, and then with infinite toil were dragged about

thirty-five miles up the steep and rocky roads to Jerusalem.1 These

works required a levy (*mas*), or "tribute of men" out of all Israel

to the number cat thirty thousand, who worked in relays of ten

thousand for three months, of which one month was spent in

Lebanon and two at home.2 Adoniram was at the head of this

army of soccage labourers, who were not *called* bondmen (a thing

which had been expressly forbidden by the law of Lev. xxv. 39),

though such they practically were.3 Besides these there were

no less than seventy thousand burden-bearers and eighty thou-

sand quarrymen who were under the charge of three thousand

six hundred officers.4 These, according to the Chronicler, were

bondslaves from the unextirpated remnants of the Canaanite

races. They were in fact the helots of Palestine.5 We may be

very sure that, in being torn from their homes, to serve an alien

king, for the purposes of an alien worship, in lives made bitter

with hard bondage, there must have seethed in the midst of

them a fearful spirit of sullenness, venting itself in curses, secret

indeed, yet all the more deep and not unheard in heaven. An

accidental allusion shows both the novelty and permanence of

this body of slaves; for lowest of all among the exiles who

returned from Babylon—lower even than the Nethinim, the

posterity of the Gibeonites who had been doomed for ever to be

"hewers of wood and drawers of water"—are 392 *hierodouloi*, or

menial ministers who are called "sons of the slaves of Solo-

mon," the dwindling and miserable remnant of that vast levy of

1 Mr. Twisleton mentions that the stone of St. Paul's, quarried in Port-

land, and sent to London round the North Foreland, had to go more than

twelve times as far.

2 The ill-omened word Alas, "tribute," or "task," was familiar to the

Israelites in the history of their Egyptian bondage (Exod.

3 I Kings v. 13. See 2 Chron. viii. 9, and 1 Kings ix. 22. (This passage

is not in the LXX.)

4 Three thousand three hundred in I Kings v. 16; but see 2 Chron. ii.

2-18. The number employed is far larger than that required for the most

gigantic modern works, but it must be remembered that there were few

inventions for saving human labour.

5 In I Kings ix. 20-23 we have a statement that there were (apparently

to build the cities, &c., in Palestine), five hundred and fifty overseers,

which would imply some twenty-seven thousand five hundred work-

men.

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serfs,1 who in achieving these great works "laboured without

reward, suffered without redress, and perished without pity."

For the skilled work the king had to rely on Sidonian

artisans, among whom special mention is made of the Giblites,

the people of Gebal or Byblos, which was north of Berytos, and

nearest to the cedars of Lebanon.2 Ezekiel long afterwards

mentions the wisdom and artistic genius of this Phœnician

community.3 Even in Homer the Sidonians are famed for

embroidered robes and skill in workmanship,4 and Solomon

asked for cunning workmen in gold and brass, in carving, en-

graving, and in blue and crimson.

In addition to so large a host of workers, others were em-

ployed in casting bronze in earthen moulds. This was done in

the clay soil of the Jordan valley, between Succoth and Zarthan.

The polishing and moulding of the bronze was beyond the skill

of the Israelites, and for all this ornamental work the king had

to borrow the services of another Tyrian, also named Hiram,

who, though born at Tyre, was the son of a woman of Naphtali,

and whose skill, like that of Michael Angelo, seems to have

been serviceable for every branch of artistic work.5 Three

years, during which materials were being amassed, were needed

before the work began.6

That the general character of the architecture was Phoenician

we cannot doubt. Walls of huge stones roofed with cedar,

planks of wood overlaid with gold, simplicity of outline, massive-

ness of structure, buildings and rooms in shape like cubes,

cedar beams, upper storeys of light wood-work were cha-

racteristics of the buildings of Tyre as they were of Solomon's

temple and palaces. From Tyre, too, came the use of curtains

dyed in the scarlet juice of the trumpet-fish, and the dyes

obtained from the purple-fish, crimson, purple, violet, and

amethyst, which were so costly, because three hundred pounds

of the fish were required to dye only fifty pounds of wool.

1 Ezra ii. 55. LXX.

2 I Kings v. 18, Authorized Version, "stone-squarers;" Vulgate, Giblii;

LXX. (Alex.), καὶ οι Βιβλιοι.

3 Ezek. xxvii. 9.

4 Hom., Il, vi. 290, xxiii. 743; Od. iv. 614.

5 The expression "father" in 2 Chron.. ii. 13, iv. 16, seems to mean

"master-workman.''

6 I Kings vi. 1; 2 Chron. iii. 1.

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Volumes have been written about the Temples of Solomon

and of Herod, but the very wide differences of view between

competent inquirers prove conclusively that the data are insuf-

ficient to enable ,us to form any detailed conception of their

appearance.

The general measurements are indeed tolerably certain, and

they at once show us that the actual building was of very small

size. The walls were very thick, and the spaces within them,1

measured sixty cubits or 90 feet in length2 from east to west, and

twenty cubits or 30 feet in breadth from north to south. In heighth

the main part of the building was thirty cubits or 45 feet. These

numbers show that the dimensions of the Temple were meant to

be exactly twice as large as those of the ancient Tabernacle, of

which the general plan was scrupulously followed.3 The cham-

1 This is not expressly stated, but is inferred from various details.

2 We have the high authority of Mr. Fergusson, "Temples of the Jews,"

p. 16, for saying that the assumption that a cubit 18 inches meets all the

chief difficulties.

3 Wisd. ix. 8., "Thou hast commanded me to build a Temple in Thy

Holy Mount, and an Altar in the city wherein Thou dwellest, a copy of the

Holy Tabernacle which Thou didst before prepare from the beginning."

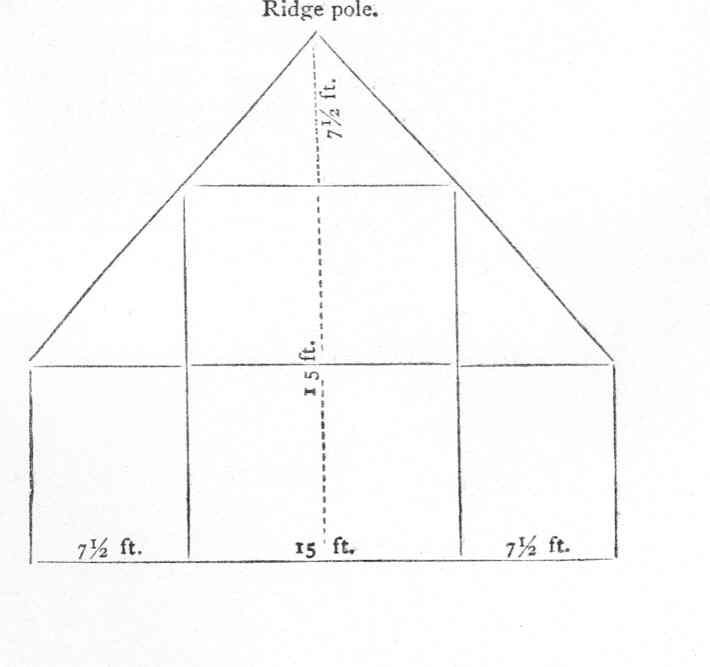
Thus the Temple was 45 feet high, and probably the Tabernacle was 15

feet + a ridge of 7 1/2 feet == 22 1/2 feet. The doubling of the proportions

will be better understood by this diagram of the Tabernacle which also

shows that the side - chambers had their analogy in the old "Tent of

Meeting."



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bers upon the roof, if such there were, might seem to have implied

a complete departure from the ancient model, but they may

have been meant to occupy (by analogy), the space which must

have intervened between the flat roof of the old Tabernacle, and

the tent-like covering of the outer curtain which protected it.

The Porch, too, represented the space between the actual

entrance of the Temple and the ground overshadowed by the

outer covering of skins.1 This Porch extended along the whole

breadth of the house, and was ten cubits deep from east to

west. If the numbers given by the Chronicler be correct, it rose

to the astonishing and altogether disproportionate heighth of

120 cubits or 180 feet. It would thus be four times loftier than

the body of the house. This number is not mentioned in the

Book of Kings, which does not say how high the Porch was.

Neither the Temple of Venus (Astarte), at Paphos, represented

on coins of Caracalla, nor any other, presented this astonishing

disproportion; and as the Temple of Zerubbabel was sixty

cubits high, and that of Herod one hundred and twenty cubits

high, it is possible that the number may have been corrupted in

course of time. The true heighth of the Porch was, in all pro-

bability, thirty cubits, or 45 feet, i.e., it was of the same heighth

as the house itself. This is what we should expect, as it was the

case also in the Tabernacle. It may seem incredible that

the Chronicler should have added together the thirty cubits of

*each* side of the Porch, and so made it one hundred and twenty

cubits high; but there does seem some ground for suspecting

him of this extraordinary practice. Indeed, he admits it in the

case of the wings of the Cherubim. For be first tells us that

*the wings were twenty cubits long*, and then explains himself to

mean that *each of the wings was five cubits long*.2

The Holy of Holies, the Shrine, or Oracle, was overlaid with

pure gold, which expended the astonishing amount of six hundred

talents.3 As in the Tabernacle, it was a perfect cube,4 and it

was left in the mystery of unbroken darkness. This need not,

indeed, have been the case, for it was twenty cubits high, and

the three storeys of chambers which were built along its sides,

were only fifteen cubits high. Thus there would have been

room to let in latticework windows (like those of a cathedral

1 See the pictures and plans of the Tabernacle by Fergusson in the

"Dictionary of the Bible."

2 2 Chron. iii. 11. 3 2 Chron. iii. 8. 4 Comp. Rev. xxi. 16.

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clerestory) in the topmost five cubits. This, however, would

have interfered with the awful sanctity of the shrine, wherein

was shadowed forth the dwelling-place of God amid thick

darkness. Nor was light a matter of necessity, for the Holiest

Place was only entered once, and then only for a few moments,

during the whole year. On the other hand, in the Holy

Place or Sanctuary where incense was daily burnt on the

golden table, and in which the Priests in their courses were

daily employed in lighting or putting out the lamps, and

placing or removing the shewbread, windows were indispen-

sable both for light and ventilation.1 They were made with

narrow lights, i.e., with crosswork lattices in the fifteen cubits of

wall which rose above the chambers.2 Two sides of the Temple

were surrounded by three storeys of chambers. They are called

side-chambers,3 and they certainly ran the length both of the

Holy and the Holiest Place. Whether they also enclosed the

end of the Holiest Place seems doubtful. Each storey was five

cubits high. The lowest storey was five cubits broad, the

second six, and the third seven. The greater breadth of the

upper storey was possible, because the wall of the house was

thick enough to allow of rebatements of one and two cubits

broad, in which the cedar floor of the chambers rested, without

any holes for the joists in the sacred building.4 A winding

stair led up into the middle chamber of the middle storey, and

thence into the upper storey. These chambers communicated

with each other, and were, according to Josephus, thirty in num-

ber. They were useful for a multitude of purposes. It does not

appear that they were ever inhabited, but they served as store-

rooms for the priests' garments, and for the immense accumu-

lations of Temple furniture.5 The hangings and coverings of

the old Tabernacle—of which we hear no more—were probably

stored away in one of these rooms, which cannot have been

mere cupboards, but must obviously have had windows on

the outside. We are nowhere told the number or the length

1 As in the old Tabernacle, the golden candlestick was only lit in the

evening and put out in the morning.

2 Authorized Version, "windows of narrow lights"; marg., "skewed and

closed"; Revised Version, "windows of fixed lattice-work."

3 I Kings vi. 5, Revised Versicn.

4 Thus they were a sort of "lean-to."

5 I Kings vii. 51; 2 Kings xi. 10; 2 Chron. v. 1.

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of these chambers, which, indeed, are not mentioned at all

in the Book of Chronicles. Ezekiel says, "The side-chambers

were three, one over another, and thirty in order." This seems

to mean that there were thirty in all on the *sides* of the house,

besides those (if any) at the end of the Oracle. Josephus

seems to understand "thirty in order " as though it meant thirty

times three, for he says there were *ninety* chambers. It is much

more probable that there were three storeys of five chambers on

each side, so that if there were any at the end there would be

thirty-nine in all.

The splendour of the Temple consisted in the costliness of its

materials. Every effort was made to build an abode which

should be worthy of Jehovah's habitation as far as the re-

sources and knowledge of that day permitted. But the art

of the period was immature, and the resources of so small a

kingdom were very limited compared with those of the Roman

or Byzantine Empire. Justinian's boast, "I have vanquished

thee, O Solomon," and the Khalif Omar's boast as he pointed to

the Dome of the Rock, "Behold, a greater than Solomon is

"here," might have been uttered by smaller potentates with

equal arrogance and equal truth.

Let us try to represent what a visitor would have seen had he

been permitted to wander into the sacred courts and buildings

of this most celebrated of earthly shrines.

Passing through the thickly clustering houses of the Levites1

and "the Porticoes,"2 he might enter the Temple precincts by

one of the numerous gateways mentioned in the Book of

Chronicles and elsewhere.3 These gates were of wood, overlaid

with brass. When he stood in the Outer Court he would have

seen on one side of the Temple area a grove of trees—olives,

palms, cedars, and cypresses —which added to the beauty of

the building, but were afterwards abused for idolatrous pur-

pose.4 The Halls of Assembly in this court were the work

1 I Chron. ix. 27.

2 These porticoes (*Parbarim*) are rendered "suburbs" in 2 Kings

xxiii. 11; comp. 1 Chron. xxvi. 18.

3 "Two gates did Solomon construct devoted to acts of mercy. Through

one gate the bridegrooms used to pass, through the other the mourners.

The people on the Sabbath rejoiced with the bridegrooms and consoled the

afflicted" (Sopherim).

4 Ps. lii. 8; xcii. 13. There may be some dim reminiscence of fact in

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of later times. In the Outer Court itself he would have seen no

permanent structure, but morning and evening it would be

crowded with worshippers and with Levites passing to and fro

in their daily ministrations. To pass from the Outer Court into

the court which Jeremiah1 calls "the Higher Court," and which

is usually known as "the Court of the Priests," the visitor

would have had to pass up some steps, through an enclosure

built with three rows of hewn stones surmounted by a cornice

of cedar beams. Here he would have seen the great brazen

Altar, which, indeed, was visible over the partition from the

Outer Court. It was always intended that the people, standing

in the Outer Court, should see the whole series of daily and

festal ministrations and sacrifices which were conducted on

their behalf by the sons of Aaron. It was a large structure

covered with brass, and filled inside with earth and stones.

It was forbidden to clamp these stones together with iron,

because, as the Talmud says, iron is to shorten life, and the

altar to prolong life.2 It stood ten cubits high, the length and

the breadth of it being twenty cubits.3 On the south-eastern

side the stranger would have admired the huge laver for the

constant ablutions of the priests which was regarded as one

of the finest specimens of the skill of Hiram of Naphtali. It

was made of brass, and was known as the "brazen" or "molten

sea." It had a length and breadth of thirty cubits, and stood

five cubits high on the backs of twelve brazen oxen of the same

height, of which three faced towards each quarter of the heavens.4

It contained two thousand5 "baths" of water. Its rim was in

the form of a lily-blossom, and under this rim hung a garland

of wild gourds in bronze to the number of three hundred, which

the legend that Solomon planted in the Temple golden trees, which

produced all manner of fruits, and withered at the approach of idolaters

(Yoma, f. 21. 2).

1 Jer. xxxvi. 10. 2 Middoth, iii. 4.

3 According to the Talmud the altar was on the line of demarcation

between the districts of Judah and Benjamin (Yoma, f. 12. 1). The

Gemarists referred to this as a fulfilment of the blessing to Benjamin in

Deut. xxxiii. 12. We cannot tell whether it was of the form described

in Ezek. xliii. 14-16. It was a new altar. What became of Bezaleel's

old altar at Gideon is not stated.

4 A similar vessel of stone, 30 feet in circumference, adorned with the

image of a bull, lies among the fragments of Amathus in Cyprus (0.

Muller, "Archäol." § 240. 4; Duncker, ii. 184).

5 Or three thousand (2 Chron. iv. 5).

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had been cast in two rows. It served as a great reservoir for

all the requirements of purification, and smaller supplies of

pure water could be carried wherever they were wanted in ten

brazen cauldrons on wheels, of which five stood on the right

of the Temple and five on the left. These, too, were adorned

with cherubic emblems and "pensile garlands." There were

no oxen under the laver of the Tabernacle (Exod. xxxviii. 8).1

Perhaps the devout and instructed stranger might have asked

with surprise whether these twelve brazen oxen were not so

many violations of the strict terms of the Second Commandment,

and whether the sanction of such "graven images" in the

House of God was not a defiance of the express law of God?

He would probably have been told in reply that a tacit excep-

tion had been made even by Moses in favour of the figures of

the Cherubim, which were symbols of the Divine Presence, and

that the idea of the Cherubim involved the fourfold attitudes of

the ox, the eagle, the lion, and the man. It is certain, however,

that this answer was not found *perfectly* satisfactory. Josephus

says that Solomon "sinned and fell into error about the obser-

vation of the Laws" in supporting the molten sea with oxen, and

in planting lions on the steps of the throne.2

There are four extant descriptions of Solomon's Temple.

The most ancient and trustworthy is that found in the Book of

Kings (v.-vii.). Later, but founded no doubt on early descrip-

tions and documents, is that in the Second Book of Chronicles.

The description of Josephus ("Antiq." viii. 3, § 7, 8) is mingled

with all kinds of Rabbinic and apocryphal exaggerations. A

fourth description is preserved by Eusebius3 from the Greek his-

torian Eupolemus. Of the value of this account we are unable to

judge, because we do not know from what sources it was derived.

It is probable that the actual Temple stood on an elevated

platform, like that which now rises 16 feet above the level

of the ground, upon the centre of which lies the Sakhra rock,

which g.ves its name of "Dome of the Rock" to the Mosque

of Omar. The Temple of Herod, according to the Mishna,

was entirely built on raised arches.4

We know that inside the Temple no stone was visible; all was

of gilded cedar wood and olive and cypress wood variously carved,

1 The reading "oxen" in 2 Chron. iv. 3 should probably he "wild-

gourds,'" as in 1 Kings vii. 24. 2 Josephus, "Antiq.," viii. 7, § 5.

3 Eusebius, "Præp. Ev." ix. 34. 4 Parah. iii. 3. 6.

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and tapestried in parts by purple and embroidered hangings.

But what was the *external* aspect of the sacred building itself—

"the joy of the whole earth"? Strangely enough our existing

records leave us entirely in the dark on this point. In the works

of later Rabbis we have glowing and highly imaginative descrip-

tions of the aspect of the Third Temple, but even these are

too vague to help our imagination. The outside of Solomon's

Temple, and its general appearance, are left almost undescribed.

We know that there was a richly-ornamented porch, but we do

not even know with any certainty whether the building itself

was covered with one level roof,1 or whether, on the outside, as

well as within, the Holy of Holies appeared to be of lower

elevation. We do not know whether the roof was flat, or, as

the Rabbis say, ridged. On the top of it there seem to have

been some gilded upper chambers.2 There can be no reasonable

doubt that the roof of the old Tabernacle rose in a ridge,

for otherwise the outer skins would have sunk down and torn

the curtains, which, in case of a rainfall, might have been broken

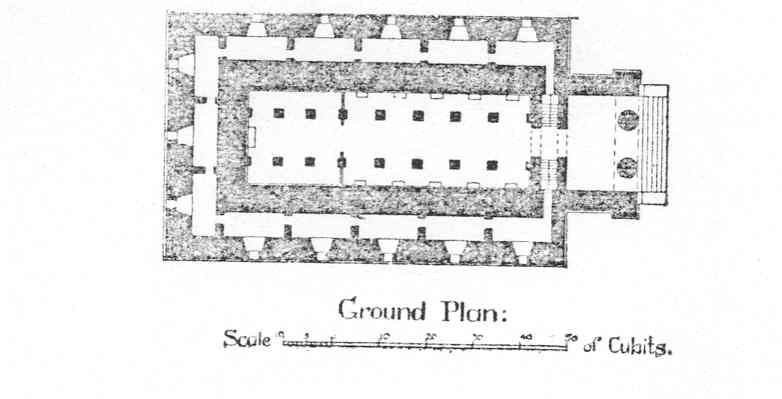
through altogether. It is true that the Temple was covered

with beams and boards of cedar, but unless they were sloped to

both sides, or supported by pillars, it would have been difficult to

secure beams more than 30 feet long from becoming warped and

sagged.3 We know that on approaching it we should have seen a



1 As Ewald thinks. He supposes that the space of ten cubits above the

roof of the Holy of Holies was left quite empty, but that the roof of the

Holy Place was prolonged to the end of the building (iii. 238).

2 2 Chron. iii. 9. In 2 Kings xviii. 12 we read of altars on the top of

the upper chambers.

3 This is the ground plan of Mr. Robins. It should be noticed that

when Solomon is said to have made "pillars for the House of the Lord

(1 Kings x. 12), the words should be rendered "rails" or "balustrades"

(Comp. 2 Chron. ix. 11).

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three-storeyed house, over which rose the lattice-perforated wall

of the Temple itself; but, besides this uncertainty about the

roof, we do not even know whether the outer surface was of

stone, or whether it was over-laid with cedar wood, or with

precious metals,1 as the Chronicler seems to imply; nor whether

it was ornamented or left blank. Nay, it has even been a

matter of dispute whether the general character of the Temple

was Greek, or Egyptian, or Phoenician; though the use of

cedar beams and large blocks of stone hewn in squares, and

joined without mortar, together with the whole history of the

structure, seems to prove decisively that the style of architec-

ture was borrowed directly from neighbouring Tyre.2

Approaching the Porch the eye would have been first caught

by two superb pillars, which were regarded as being in those

days a miracle of art, and which for unknown reasons received

the names of Jachin (the name of a son of Simeon in Numb.

xxvi. 12) and Boaz, the name of Solomon's ancestor.3 They

were of gigantic thickness, being each twelve cubits (18 feet

in circumference, and were of fluted bronze. The actual

shafts were only eighteen cubits (27 feet) in height.4 Their

"capitals," which were five cubits (7 feet) high, resembled

an opening lotos-blossom, and round the calyx of each was

a net-work, to which was attached a double wreath of bronze

pomegranates to the number of two hundred. On the top

of the chapiter was a beam or abacus ornamented with lily-

1 That it was overlaid externally with thin plinths of gold and silver

might seem incredible, yet according to Polybius (x. 27, § 10) this was

actually the case with the roof of the palace at Ecbatana., and according to

Herodotus (i. 98), with two rows of the external battlements of the city-

walls.

2 Duncker, ii. 278. From the amount of cedar wood employed in the

construction the Temple is called "Lebanon" (Zech. xi. 1).

3 "After some favourite persons of the time, perhaps young sons of

Solomon" (Ewald, iii. 237). He illustrates the conjecture by the names of

Phasael and Marianne which Herod gave to his two towers at Jerusalem.

The LXX., in 2 Chron. iii. 17, call them Κατόσθωσις and ’Ισχυς, "cor-

rection" and "strength." The words cannot mean, "He will establish,"

and "In strength," as Reville suggests.

4 In 2 Chron. iii. 15 and Jer. lii. 21 (LXX.) the height is said to have

been thirty-five cubits, but this is perhaps an error for thirty-six, the height

of the *two together*.

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work.1 Yet, strange to say, it is a matter of dispute whether

these two pillars stood detached before the Porch, or were

mere ornaments within it, or formed part of its absolute sup-

port, or, as is now believed by many, belonged to a detached

gate (loran) in front of the Porch itself.2 They were broken up

and carried away four centuries afterwards by the king of

Babylon.3

The Porch was probably hung inside with gilded shields,

David's spoils of war, won from the splendidly equipped soldiers

1 Pomegranates typified good works. "Giotto placed a pomegranate fruit

in the hand of Dante, and Ratfaelle crowned his Dante with blossoms of

the same." "Lilies" were a new ornament, and peculiar to this epoch

(only mentioned in Canticles and in Hosh. xiv. 5).

2 The use and position of these pillars depends a good deal on the

rendering of the word כֹּתֶוֶת, translated "*chapiter*" in our Authorized

Version, but *epithema* in the Septuagint. Some have taken it to mean "an

entablature." Taking advantage of this hint, Fergusson, in his latest de-

signs, supposed that the pillars were neither detached like obelisks, and

with exaggerated capitals, but that they supported a screen or gateway,

"like the vine-bearing screen described by Josephus and the Talmud as

existing in front of the Temple of Herod." His design for this supposed

gateway is "based on the Japanese and Indian *toran* like those forming

gateways to the Great Tope at Sanchi. His conception may be roughly in-

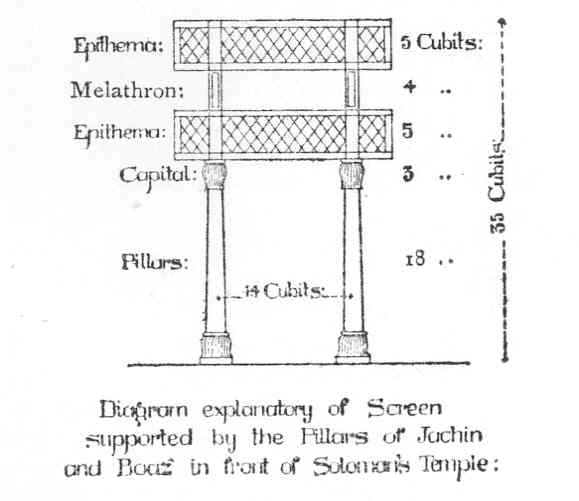
dicated thus. It will be seen that this harmonizes with the statement in

1 Kings vii. i6, for thus there is a double "chapiter" or *epithema* of network

ornamented with pomegranates, each epithema being five cubits high, and

one (a *melathron*) of lily-work six cubits high; and thus also we get the

total height of thirty-five cubits in 2 Chron. iii. 15.



3 2 Kings xxiv. 13; Jer. lii. 21, 22

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of Hadarezer; perhaps also with other specimens of armour like

the sword of Goliath. It was ornamented apparently with the

sort of conventional circular carving which is described as lily-

work, and was exceedingly common in Persian buildings.

Passing through this porch, the Priests came to the large

two-leaved door of the Holy Place, made in four squares.1 It

was a door of cypress wood2 overlaid with gold of Parvaim,3 and

it turned on golden hinges. The gold of ceiling and walls was

carved with ornaments of flowers and pomegranates, and palm

branches.4 In the Holy Place stood the golden altar of incense,

and the golden table on which was placed the daily offering of

shewbread, or "bread of the face," bread offered up in the

presence of God. According to the statement of the Chronicler,

instead of the one table of shewbread in the Tabernacle there

were ten—five on the south and five on the north side.5 What

became of the old golden seven-branched candlestick we are not

told. It must undoubtedly have been preserved, but Solomon

seems to have supplied its place with ten candlesticks, five on

each side the door of the Holiest.6 Nothing that was in the

Holiest Place was visible from the Sanctuary except the projecting

ends of the golden staves which had been used to carry the Ark.7

The door of the Holiest Place, which was probably much

smaller than that of the Holy Place, was made of wild-olive

wood, and seems to have been in two leaves. The object of

1 Such seems to be the meaning of the obscure clause in I Kings vi. 34.

The advantage of the construction would be that only a *quarter* of the

door need be opened at a time.

2 Authorized Version, "fir-tree."

3 Gold of *Parvaim* must mean the best gold, but is variously explained

and occurs here only. It has been derived (1) from Sepharvaim (Knobel); (2)

from Sanskrit *paru*, "hill" (Hitzig); (3) from Sanskrit *pûrva*, "eastern,"

(Wilford); (4) from Taprobane (Bochart).

4 2 Chron. iii. 5, where "chains"=festoons, and "cieled" should be

"inlaid."

5 2 Chron. iv. 8. But the Book of Kings only mentions one table of

shewbread (1 Kings vii. 48), and 2 Chron. xiii. 11, xxix. 18, speak of one

candlestick and *one* table for shewbread in common use.

6 Josephus, with his usual extravagance, says that Solomon made ten

thousand candlesticks and ten thousand tables; to say nothing of ten

thousand priestly garments of fine linen with purple girdles, two hundred

thousand trumpets and albs for the Levites, &c.

7 It is not clear how these were *visible*, as there was a *curtain* (2 Chron.

iii. 14). Perhaps they bulged out this curtain; or was the curtain *inside*?

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the leaves was to open only a small part of the door if necessary.

What is meant by "the lintel *and* sideposts were a fifth part *of*

*the wall*" is very uncertain. The Vulgate renders it "the portal

having posts of five angles," but neither does this throw much

light on the subject. Perhaps it is meant that as the cedar

partition was twenty cubits broad, and twenty cubits high, so

the framework of the door was four cubits high and broad;

whereas the door of the *Holy Place* was a *fourth* part of the

wall, namely five cubits broad and high. The wooden leaves of

this smaller door, like those of the Holy Place, were carved

with cherubim, palm-trees, and open flowers, and overlaid with

gold. This door of the Oracle—or at least one leaf of it—was

always open, but the interior was concealed from view by a veil

of blue, purple, and crimson,1 woven with cherubim, before which

hung festoons of golden chains. The partition in which the

door stood was of cedar wood. The floors of the entire house

were of cypress wood, overlaid with gold.

The question naturally arises whether the entire structure was

supported by interior pillars or not? They are not mentioned,

but it seems almost certain that they must have existed in order

to give stability to the cedar beams. If so, there were probably

four on each side in the Holy Place, and two on each side in

the Oracle. The tables in the Holy Place would then stand in

the interspaces of the pillars.

The Holiest Place was plunged in unbroken and perpetual

gloom. It contained nothing but the Ark, and one or two other

precious memorials of the Mosaic age.2 Such was the sanctity of

this most venerable relic and of the stone tablets of the Mosaic

Law which it contained, that it was transferred into the Temple

of Solomon unaltered, and placed upon the now sacred rock on

which had stood the threshing floor of Araunah,3 and which was

identified by uncertain Jewish tradition with the rock on which

Abraham had purposed to offer his son Isaac.4 But though the

1 Mentioned only in 2 Chron. iii. 14.

2 Nothing is however said of the pot of manna, the rod of Aaron, and

the Book of the Law.

3 See x Chron. xxii. 1. In the LXX. addition to the narrative of 2 Sam.

xxiv. 25 we find "Solomon afterwards enlarged this altar of David, for

at first it was but small." (See 2 Chron. iii. 1.) "Moriah" means "ap-

pearance of Jehovah."

4 Josephus, " Antiq." i. 13, § 1. vii. 13 § 4. Targum of Onkelos on

Gen. xxii.

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Ark and its original *capporeth* or "propitiatory" was left un-

changed, Solomon overshadowed it with a new and magnificent

covering. This consisted of two cherubim ten cubits high,

their outstretched wings, of which each was five cubits long,

extended to the wall on either side, and touched each other

over the centre of the Ark.1 These cherubim, which were

doubtless analogous in conception to the winged figures so pre-

valent in Egypt and Assyria, represented the highest forms of

created intelligence. Those on the "mercy-seat" were represented

as gazing down upon the Tables of the Moral Law as the direct

revelation of Jehovah's will. In the Tabernacle these cherubic

figures *faced each other;*2 in the Temple they looked outward

towards the Holy Place.3 We do not know whether they were

in the shape of winged angels or of winged calves. That they

were not like the "fourfold visaged four" of Ezekiel may be re-

garded as certain, but each of the four cherubic emblems was

regarded as forming a perfect cherub, and as symbolizing the

highest forms of created life, as being themselves an aspect of

the revelation of the Divine, and especially in proportion as

they remain in union with the moral law of God.

It is needless to add that the service of the Temple required

a countless number of golden, silvern, and brazen vessels,

which were made under the superintendence of the Tyrian

artist. Even the commonest utensils for the service of the

Sanctuary and the Oracle—the censers, the bowls, the plates,

and even the instruments to trim the lamps—were of pure gold.

The whole structure was completed in sacred silence. The

awful sanctity of the shrine would have been violated if its erec-

tion had been accompanied by the harsh and violent noises

which would accompany the ordinary toil of masons. Every

stone and beam therefore had been carefully prepared before-

hand, and was merely carried to its place; "So that neither was

1 In 2 Chron. iii. 10, they are called "cherubim of image work'' (marg.,

moveable). The odd word צעצעים is probably a clerical error for עצים,

"wooden." Josephus is probably insincere, when he says, "No man can

tell, or even conjecture, of what shape the cherubim were." Pagan slanders

about the Jews worshipping an ass, &c., made him chary of the admission

of animal symbols. On this subject see my article in Kitto's "Cyclo-

pxdia," and Canon Cheyne's " Isaiah," vol. i. p. 40.

2 Exod. xxxvii. 9.

3 2 Chron. iii. 13, "Their faces were inward, i.e., towards the Holy

Place."

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hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron heard in the house while

it was building."1

The workmanship must have been good, for we only read of

necessary repairs first in the reign of Joash, about B.C. 856, a

century and a half after the Temple had been dedicated, and

once again two centuries later, in the days of King Josiah. It

had stood upwards of four 'centuries, when it was destroyed by

Nebuchadnezzar.

The erection occupied seven years and a half,2 in spite of the

small size of the actual Temple. Size indeed was no element of

its magnificence, for it was much smaller than many an English

church. But it must be remembered that it was not in-

tended either for priests or worshippers. Ancient and Eastern

worship was mainly in the open air; the shrine itself only

symbolized the residence of God. Even when we allow for

immense preparations, the time devoted to the building is com-

paratively insignificant. The temple of the Ephesian Artemis

took two hundred years to build, and four hundred to embellish.

One pyramid required the toil of three hundred and sixty

thousand men for twenty years.3 Westminster Abbey did not

assume its present size and aspect for many centuries. But no

building in the world has ever been more widely famous than

the Temple of Solomon. The name of the Jewish capital had

no connection either with the Temple or with Solomon, but it

was so identified with the king and the city in the imagination

of mankind that the word Jerusalem was significantly perverted

into Hierosolyma, as though it were of Greek derivation, and

meant "the Temple of the Solymi."

Israel had now an earthly king, but the tribes had not

forgotten that their ideal was still a theocratic government;

that, in the highest sense of all, the Lord God was their King,

and that in that House and in Jerusalem He had put His name

for ever. The Temple was thenceforth the centre of all their

national life, and that centre was no idol shrine, no material

image, but the symbolic palace of Him whom heaven, and the

1 Probably in consequence of the prohibition of iron tools in erecting the

altar (Exod. xx. 25).

"No workman's axe, no ponderous hammer rung,

Like some tall palm the noiseless fabric sprung."

2 From the fourth to the eleventh year of Solomon's reign.

3 Pliny, "Hist Nat." xxxvi. 12.

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heaven of heavens, could not contain. The Tabernacle of God

was with men. He would dwell with them and walk with them,

but still they should see nothing material: no manner of simi-

litude should confuse their conception of a God who was a

Spirit. This was the one fact which struck the heathen with most

amazement. When the profane foot of Pompey intruded into the

Holiest he was lost in astonishment to find nothing there

*vacuam sednz et inania arcana*.1 In consequence of this the

general view of the Greeks and Romans about the Jews was

that, as they had no visible object of worship, they worshipped

the clouds—"Nil praeter nubes et coeli numen adorant."

For it must be remembered that the actual Temple was not

in those days primarily intended to be a House of Prayer. Its

golden chambers were not trodden by the feet of a single

worshipper except the Priests and Levites, and none but the

High Priest ever entered into the darkness of the Holiest Place,

and that but once in the whole year. The Temple was the

visible House of God, the place where His honour dwelt, a House

for Him rather than for His congregation. And the *main*

public worship of the Temple precincts consisted of chanting

and sacrifice, although we read also of prayers being offered

both publicly and privately in the great open court.

It is probable that the taste of a modern worshipper would

have been shocked beyond measure by the appearance and

smell of the Temple Court. On many occasions it must have

been converted—there is no other expression—into a ghastly

*abattoir*, which but for immense care in purification would soon

have been prolific of pestilence.2 In that comparatively con-

fined area cattle, large and small, were constantly being slain

to the number of many thousands. The floors must literally

have swum with blood, and under the blaze of Eastern sunlight,

the burning of fat and flesh on the large blazing altar must have

been carried on amid heaps of sacrificial foulness—offal and

skins and thick smoke and steaming putrescence—which must,

beyond all human possibility of prevention, have given to the

Outer Court the semblance of huge shambles. No doubt the

system of rocky subterranean drainage was colossal, and it is

1 Tacitus, "Hist." v. 9.

2 The Talmud invents two miracles—that "the carcases never became

putrid, and no fly was ever to be seen in the slaughter-houses" (Yoma,

f. 21. 1).

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probable that there was once a perennial spring on the

Temple Mount.1 All that an army of Priests and Levites.

could do to keep the place clean and tolerable was done.

The molten sea, the wheeled caldrons of water, the supplies

stored up in rocky cisterns, and brought from the Pools of

Solomon at Etam, were doubtless in incessant requisition; but

as the driven and doomed animals were constantly congre-

gated and slaughtered in the actual precincts, no power short

of a stupendous and unrecorded miracle could have kept pure

and clean and sweet, to our modern conceptions, the crowded

scene of sacrifice where, morning and evening, droves of

oxen were assembled, and sometimes even in hecatombs the

victims bled. We must not, however, forget either that these

sacrifices were full of awful significance to the worshippers, or

that the sacrificial ceremonies were accompanied by private

devotions, and by the thrilling music of psalms and hymns and

spiritual songs.

The ceremony of the Dedication was by far the most mag-

nificent that the nation had ever seen.2 So immense were the

preparations which it required that, as has sometimes been the

case with modern coronations, it was postponed for nearly a

year after the completion of the building. It was thus made

nearly coincident with the autumn Feast of Tabernacles, so that

the two feasts in succession occupied fourteen days.3

The old Tabernacle—contrasting strangely in its rough sim-

plicity with the gorgeous costliness of the new Temple, and

a striking proof of the vast advance made by the fortunes of

the people—was brought by a solemn procession of Priests and

Levites from the High Place at Gibeon, which was henceforth

1 See Tacitus, "Hist." V. 12, "*fons perennis aquæ*"; and comp. Ps.

xlvi. 4, lxxxvii. 7; Zech. xiv. 18; Ezek. xlvii. 1-12. The water supply of

Jerusalem has been grievously diminished by denudation and the cutting

down of trees.

2 From I Kings vi. 38, ix. 1, we should infer that Solomon delayed the

dedication Thirteen years, till all his buildings were finished. It seems better

to suppose that this is merely due to the arrangement of the documents;

for from 2 Chron. v.-vii., we should certainly draw the more natural con-

clusion that the Temple was dedicated as soon as it was finished.

3 The Temple was finished in the eighth month of the eleventh year

(I Kings vi. 38); it was dedicated it. the seventh month (Tisri or Ethanim)

of the twelfth year.

THE BUILDINGS OF SOLOMON. 93

to be abandoned.1 With it they brought all that yet remained

of its ancient vessels and furniture, especially the golden altar

of incense and the golden table of shewbread.2 This removal

was doubtless inaugurated with sacrifices. But far more splendid

was the procession of Priests, Princes, and chief representatives

of the tribes which brought the Ark from the temporary sanc-

tuary in which it had been placed on Mount Zion forty years

before. It was in the month Ethanim,3 and was doubtless a

repetition on a more imposing scale of the triumphal march,

accompanied by songs and dances, with which David had

accompanied the Ark from the house of Obed-Edom.

The Priests lifted the Ark out of its shrine, and replaced it

in the Holiest; the Levites of the family of Kohath carried it

from Gibeon to the Temple Mount. All the Elders, and Priests,

and Levites, and people of Israel flocked to Jerusalem, from

the borders of Harnath, on the north of Libanus, to the torrent

of Egypt—the brook

"which parts

Egypt from Syrian ground."

No true Israelite, however distant his home, would like to be

absent from the celebration of an event of such unique im-

portance in the history of his nation.

The king himself accompanied the procession in all his

royal state, and again the road swam with the blood of sacri-

fices, too many to be counted. The great Outer Court was

thronged with myriads of worshippers who were not allowed

to proceed further. The Ark passed into the darkness of the

Oracle, and was seen no more till it was carried away by Nebu-

chadnezzar four centuries afterwards, except so far as it was

dimly visible under its blood-besprinkled mercy-seat to the

eyes of the High Priest by the light of his burning censer on

the Day of Atonement.

So mysterious was the emblem, that the historians record it

1 It was probably stowed away in one of the chambers (1 Chron. xxiii. 32).

It was supposed to be still in existence in the days of Jeremiah (see

2 Macc. ii. 4). The Rabbis say that it was put in a room at the top of the

Holiest.

2 Eupolemus *ap*. Eusebius, Præp. Ev." ix. 34.

3 Ethanim (called Tisri after the Exile) was part September and October.

The name, perhaps, means (LXX., 'Αθανίμ) the "month of gifts," i.e.,

vintage offerings (Thenius).

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as noticeable that the staves by which it was carried were now

drawn out in sign of rest. This had been previously forbidden.1

The ends of these long staves were only visible when a spec-

tator stood in the Holy Place, opposite to the door of the

Holiest, but even then could not be seen by any one who stood

in the Porch or Court.2

When the Ark was deposited on its rocky support,3 under the

protecting wings of the golden cherubim, the king, who com-

pletely absorbed the leading, functions on this occasion, took

his seat in the presence of his congregated people on a brazen

scaffold three cubits high, five broad, and five long, which had

been erected for him in the midst of the Court of the Priests,

in front of the altar. From this point he was visible to the

whole congregation assembled in the Outer Court, for he was

only separated from them by a low partition wall, and he stood

on higher ground. The steps of the huge altar itself were occu-

pied by dense groups of Priests and Levites, and musicians,

robed in white, and holding in their hands the glittering harps

and cymbals, and the psalteries in their red frames of precious

wood.4 A hundred and twenty trumpeters, all Priests, rent the

air with the sudden blast of their silver trumpets, as the king

took his seat, clad in his gorgeous robes and conspicuous in

manly beauty. Then the mighty song of praise swelled from

innumerable voices. The moment was one of awful solemnity,

in which the feelings of the Priests and of the whole congrega-

tion were wrought to the highest pitch, and amid the blaze of

sudden glory—the Shekinah or glory-cloud, which was to them

a token of God's immediate approval—even the anointed

ministers of the house were overpowered with awe, and so

much dazzled as scarcely to be able to perform their ministry.

1 Exod. xxv. 13-15. Nothing is said of the sacred objects mentioned

in Heb. ix. 4.

2 2 Chron. v. 9, where the words, "were seen from the Ark," are almost

certainly a corruption for "from the Holy Place" (1 Kings viii. 8).

3 Just as the Greeks regarded the Temple of Delphi as the navel

(omphalos) of the world, so the Jews regarded the Temple of Jerusalem as

the centre point of the universe, for which they quoted Ezek. v. 5 (Yoma,

53, 54).

4 The One Hundred and Thirty-sixth Psalm, or some psalm of the same

structure, was chanted by alternate choirs of Levites, who, at the close of

the ceremony, seem to have chanted in an unwonted attitude of prostration

(2 Chron. vii. 3).

THE BUILDINGS OF SOLOMON. 95

When the burst of music and psalmody was hushed, the heart

of the king–deeply moved at that supreme moment of his

life—broke into brief words of prophetic song. Turning his

face to the standing multitudes he blessed them, and briefly

spoke of the history and significance of the new House of God.

Then in the presence of all the congregation he came forward

to the altar of the Lord, and with his palms upturned to heaven,

as though to receive its outpoured gifts—which was the usual

attitude of Eastern prayer—he kneeled down. This is the first

instance in Scripture in which this attitude of prayer is men-

tioned, and it was a sign of deep humiliation. To the latest

days of Jewish history men as a rule stood up, instead of kneel-

ing down, to pray.

The prayer was a long and passionate entreaty to God to

show His favour to His Temple, and to hear the prayers and

supplications of His people, both individually and collectively,

and even of strangers, who in the agonies of sin, or defeat, or

famine, or pestilence, or exile, should pray either in the courts

of that house or turning their face towards it.1 But the most re-

markable feature of the prayer is its extreme spirituality. Rising

far above the spirit of his age, the builder of the Temple feels,

and expresses the thought of St. Paul, that God dwelleth not

in temples trade with hands, neither is worshipped with man's

hands as though He needed anything, seeing that "the heaven

of heavens cannot contain Thee, how much less the house that

I have built." The king then rose from his knees, and once

more blessed the congregation with a loud voice, ending with

an exhortation to the people to be faithful to God's command-

ments.

Then began the stupendous thankoffering of 22,000 oxen, and

120,000 sheep. Doubtless neither king nor people had yet fully

realized that these were not in themselves pleasing to God, but

that to Him the righteousness of a sincere heart is dearer than

thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil. We find

it hard to realize the possibility of so immense a slaughter, but

it may be paralleled even by modern instances.2 The brazen

1 Dr. Edersheim ingeniously compares it with the Lord's Prayer. It

resembles in many respects the Book of Deuteronomy, and consists of an

introduction, seven petitions, and a solemn conclusion.

2 Julian's holocausts were so enormous that men sneeringly declared

that the race of men was threatened with extinction. Josephus tells us of

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altar however, huge as it was, was wholly inadequate to such

unprecedented masses of offerings, and, for this occasion, Solo-

mon consecrated the whole Court. The Chronicler adds to the

older narrative that during this tremendous ceremony a fire de-

scended miraculously from heaven and consumed the offerings,

and that when the vast multitude saw the falling flame, and the

glory-cloud of God's visible Presence, they prostrated them-

selves upon the earth, while once more the trumpets pealed

forth, and the Levites raised the choral chant, "Praise the

Lord, for He is good, for His mercy endureth for ever!" The

sacrifice was followed by a feast of the collected myriads of

worshippers, which lasted for a week, and was succeeded by

the Feast of Tabernacles.1 When the whole ceremony of in-

auguration was finished—the day of which David had dreamed

and sung far off2 — the king dismissed the people, who in their

turn blessed him and went to their homes with hearts full of joy

and gratitude for all that God had done for their nation and for

the house of David. There was no more magnificent solemnity

than this in the whole history of the Jews, and the memory

and the consequences of it continued to the latest days. And

so unique was the position of Solomon towards the house—so

fully was the half-sacerdotal character of his soverignty recog-

nized—that he not only offered sacrifices in person three times

every year upon the brazen altar, but was even permitted—if we

rightly understand an obscure text in the Book of Kings3—to

the 256,500 paschal lambs offered in Jerusalem in one year ("B. J." vi. 9,

3). Dean Stanley refers to Burton's "Pilgrimage," i. 318, where we are

told that the Khalif Moktader, at Mecca, sacrificed 40,000 camels, and

50,000 sheep. It must be remembered that, except in the case of whole

burnt-offerings, the greater part of the animal was eaten when the fat parts

had been burnt on the altar.

1 This is the probable meaning of 1 Kings viii. 65, 66, where, however,

the words, "and seven days, even fourteen days," which do not accord with,

"On the eighth day," are not in the LXX., and are probably interpolated

from 2 Chron. vii. 9. Nothing whatever is said of the Day of Atonement,

which does not seem to have been observed. There are other difficulties,

for the eighth day of the Feast should be the twenty-second of the month

(Lev. xxiii. 39), but in 2 Chron, vii. 10 it is called the twenty-third.

2 See Ps. cxxxii.

3 I Kings ix. 25. This and other texts are no doubt susceptible of the

interpretation that "qui facit per alium facit per se;" but certainly the

*impression* left by the repetition of such notices is that Solomon performed

those priestly offices in person.

THE BUILDINGS OF SOLOMON. 97

enter into the Holy Place itself and burn incense upon the

golden altar. If this was so, the concession was unique, and in

later times the leprosy of King Uzziah was regarded as a direct

punishment for his presumptuous usurpation of an office which

belonged properly to the Priests alone.1

Nor was this Cloud of Glory and descending flame the only

token of Divine favour. When all was over Solomon once more

saw a vision such as he had seen in Gibeon towards the begin-

ning of his reign. God said to him in his dream that He had

accepted his prayer, and, on the one condition of faithfulness,

would establish the kingdom in his house, and continue to bless

his people.

If we would estimate the mingled enthusiasm and love

inspired in the hearts of faithful Israelites by the Temple and its

services, we have only to read such a Psalm as the Eighty-fourth.

"How amiable are Thy tabernacles, Thou Lord of hosts!

My soul longeth, yea fainteth, for the courts of the Lord.

\* \* \* \* \*

Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house:

They will still be praising Thee.

\* \* \* \* \*

I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God

Than to dwell in the tents of wickedness."

or Psalm cxxii.—

"I was glad when they said unto me,

Let us go into the house of the Lord.

\* \* \* \* \*

For my brethren and companions' sake

I would now say, Peace be with thee.

For the sake of the house of the Lord our God

I will seek thy good."2

1 It was the belief of the Jews that the Second Temple differed from the

first in the presence of five things—the Ark; the Sacred Fire; the She-

kinah; the Holy Spirit (i.e., the possession by the High Priest of the gift

of prophecy); and the Urim and Thummim (Yoma, f. 21. 2). This,

however, is only an inference by *Gematria*, from the omission of the final

h (ה) in the verb, "I will be glorified" (ואנבד) in Hag. i. 8; since the

letter (ה) = 5. The Talmudic hyperboles about the Temple are amazing,

*e.g*., that the noise of its opening gates was heard ten miles off, and that

the goats of Jericho smelt its incense (Yoma, f. 39, 2).

2 Similar feelings are expressed in Psalms xxiv., xxvi., xlii., lxxii., and

others.

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The affection of the nation for this sacred building and its

successors never ceased. They called it the "House of the

Sanctuary," the "House of Ages."1 In the Talmud we find the

enigma, "Let the Beloved, son of the Beloved, come and

let him build the Beloved to the Beloved on the land of the

Beloved, by which the Beloved may be atoned for":—which

means, "Let Solomon (2 Sam. xii. 25), the son of Abraham (Jer.

xi. 15), build the Temple (Ps. lxxxiv. 1) to God (Isa. v. 1) in

Benjamin (Deut. xxxiii. 12) to atone for Israel (Jer. xii. 7).

The Temple was the last relic of their independent nationality

for which they fought. When it rose in lurid light above their

last struggle with the legions of Titus,

"As 'mid the cedar courts and gates of gold

The trampled ranks in miry carnage rolled,

To save their Temple every hand essayed,

And with cold fingers grasped the feeble blade;

Through their torn veins reviving fury ran,

And life's last anger warmed the dying man."

To this day a Jew entering Jerusalem for the first time rends

his garments and cries, "Our holy and beautiful house, where

our fathers praised Thee, is burned with fire."2

"Since the destruction of the Temple," said Rabbi Simon Ben

Gamaliel, "a day has not passed without a curse, the dew does

not come down with a blessing, and the fruits have not their

savour."3

The completion of the Temple was the natural occasion for

carrying out in practice that reorganization of the entire minis-

tries of service which, as we read in the Book of Chronicles,

David had devised, and which was rendered absolutely essential

by the great multitude of the Priests and Levites.

The Levites, divided into the three main families of Koha-

thites, Gershonites, and Merarites, were no less than 38,000 in

number. They now acquired a new importance and a large

increase of duties. They were divided as follows—the general

care of the Temple service was entrusted to 24,000; 6,000 were

officers and judges; 4,000 were porters; 4,000 were musicians.

1 Josephus, "Antiq." viii. 15, § 2.

2 Moed Qaton, f. 26. I.

3 Soteh, f. 48. 1; Berakhoth, f. 59. 1 (Hershon, "Talmud. Miscell."

p. 230, &c.)

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How elaborate was the musical service may be judged by

the fact that besides the singers there was a band of no more

than 288 with their leaders, all skilled in playing musical

instruments: the 3,700 singers were also divided into 24

courses.1 Probably the antiphonal service of the sanctuary

was of a character as stately and imposing as was at all

possible to the resources of the age, and the music, simple

as it must have been, had a charm for the multitude who

assembled in the Temple Courts and deepened their affection

for their holy and beautiful House of God.

The two families of Priests were divided into twenty-four

courses, numbering one thousand seven hundred and sixty, and

were required to provide for the due maintenance of the services

week by week. Besides these there were numerous Nethinim

—temple-serfs, descendants of the ancient Gibeonites—who were

employed in the more menial offices as hewers of wood and

drawers of water. The whole worship of the nation was

thus concentrated round one building which was meant to sym-

bolize the actual residence and presence of Jehovah in the midst

of His people. This was the reason why no treasures of gold

or precious stones were deemed too costly, no skill of art too

elaborate to be lavished on a sanctuary where God was believed

to dwell between the outstretched wings of the cherub-chariot.2

1 The details are given in i Chron. xxiii.-xxvi.

2 This expression is used of the two cherubim of Solomon even in

1 Chron. xxviii. 18. The Temple is called the " Palace " of Jehovah in

xxix. i, 19, though there only. The word is a Persian word (*bîrah* ), else-

where only found in Nehemiah, Esther, and Daniel.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE PLAN AND ASPECT OF THE TEMPLE.

Ideal reconstructions—Few remains—Scantiness of trustworthy information

—Fancies of Josephus—Recent excavations—The Talmud—Size of

the platform—Theories as to the style—I. Professor Wilkins and the

Greek theory; now abandoned—2. Canina and the Egyptian theory—

3. Fergusson, Robins, and others believe that the architecture was

Asiatic and Phoenician; reasons for this view—Analogous buildings—

The Temple as restored on the Phoenician theory.

THE authorities on which we have to depend for the recon-

struction of Solomon's Temple are purely verbal. We do not

possess even the slightest pictured outline, and the sole remains

of it, if there be any, are only in the massive substructions of the

vast platform on which it rested. Practically the Book of Kings

is our only real authority. The authors of the Book of

Chronicles furnish but few elucidatory details. Josephus idea-

lizes and exaggerates, doubles, and sometimes even quadruples,

the authentic proportions. He is also misled by attributing to

Solomon the architectural features which belonged only to the

Temple of Herod with which he was familiar. The "great and

broad cloisters," the "high gates overlaid with gold, and fronting

each of the four winds," and other details, are, as far as Solomon

is concerned, the mere product of the Jewish historian's

imagination. A single fact may suffice to convict him of extra-

vagant hyperbole. He says that Solomon filled up great valleys

into which a man could not look without his head swimming,

and that the ground was elevated four hundred cubits (600

feet). The recent excavations of Captain Warren and others

have shown that "the lowest stone of the oldest wall of the

100

ON THE PLAN AND ASPECT OF THE TEMPLE. 101

present Temple area stands on the rock itself, and the summit

of Mount Moriah is but 163 feet above the rock on which

the lowest stone rests. That is to say, Josephus has *quadrupled*

the height in his glowing description.1 . . . He rarely con-

tradicts the Sacred Scriptures, but rather omits or supplements

them, or else takes advantage of some verbal discrepancy or

peculiar mode of expression to introduce his own notions,

whenever it serves his purpose to do so, or tends to exalt

the glory of his people Israel."2

If Josephus can only be used with extreme caution as an

authority for Solomon's Temple, the Talmud may be pro-

nounced absolutely worthless for this purpose. It hardly even

professes to preserve a single traditional detail of the smallest

value. Indeed, the allusions of the Talmud have reference

almost exclusively to Herod's Temple; and although this Third

Temple, like that of Zerubbabel, five centuries earlier, was in

its main conception a reproduction of that of Solomon, which

was again five centuries before Zerubbabel's, yet it differed in

size, in magnificence, and probably also in many external par-

ticulars. The ideal Temple of Ezekiel is modelled on that of

Solomon, but throws no high on the points which are obscure.

In reading the descriptions of Herod's Temple, we must re-

member Mr. Fergusson's warning, that it made up "a rich and

varied pile worthy of the Roman love of architectural display,

but in singular contrast with the modest aspirations of a purely

Semitic people."

Modern excavations, though they have produced many in-

teresting results, have not as yet succeeded in finally solving

such elementary problems as the size of the platform on which

Solomon's Temple was built, or the part of the entire platform

which the Temple occupied, or the position of his palace with

reference to it. Even as to the space occupied by the Temple

1 The only things which he diminishes are the Cherubim. He makes these

only half their real height, but, to make up for it, says that they were of solid

gold.

2 I take these remarks from the interesting and valuable pamphlet of Mr.

E. C. Robins, F.S.A., "A Review of the Various Theories respecting the

Form, &c., of the Temple of Solomon" (Dryden Press, London, 1886),

Mr. Robins has very kindly allowed me to avail myself of his researches in

this Appendix, and to use the designs by which they were illustrated when

he read his paper before the Society of Architects.

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precincts, there are discrepancies of theory. Substructions

traditionally known as "Solomon's Stables" occupy the south-

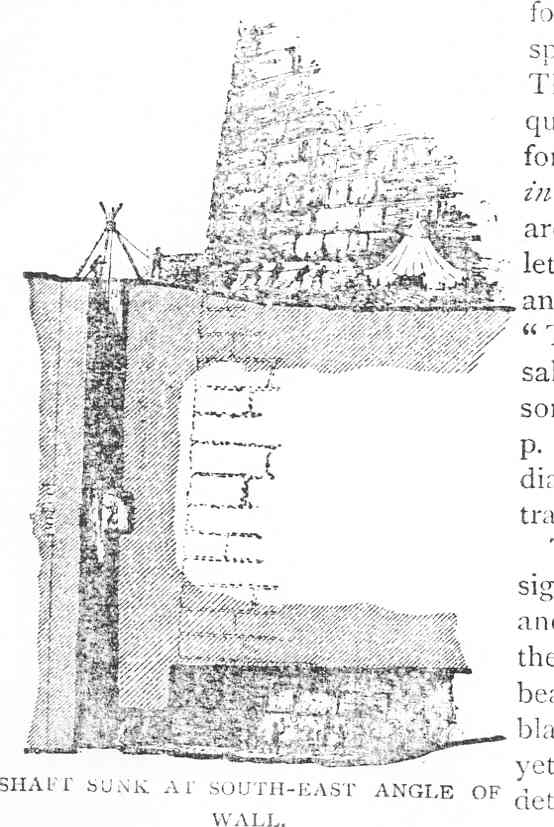
east corner of the Haram area. Here, undoubtedly, are the

most ancient remains, and it is an interesting fact that one of

the lowest stones bears a Phœnician inscription. This, and

other inscriptions, are in red paint, apparently put on by a brush,

for there are also a few

 splashes of red paint.

They are believed to be

quarry-marks, made be-

fore the stones were placed

*in situ*. The larger letters

are five inches high. The

letters resemble O Y Q,

and may be numerals. See

"The Recovery of Jeru-

salem," by Captains Wil-

son and Warren ( 1871),

p. 139, &c. The appended

diagram will clearly illus-

trate the whole subject.

The re-constructive de-

signs of modern architects

and antiquaries, though

they must of necessity

bear some sort of resem-

blance to each other, are

yet so widely unlike in

details that they go upon

entirely different assump-

tions, even as to the national style of architecture adopted.

1. According to Professor Wilkins, in his "Prolusiones Archi-

tectonicæ," the style was *European*, and distinctively Greek. He

thinks, in fact, that it became the type of Greek architecture

in subsequent ages,

"Ere first to Greece the builders' art was known,

Or the light chisel brushed the Parian stone,"

On the assumption that the Jewish cubit was 21.888 inches, he

draws a plan of the Temple which is nearly the size of the

Temple of Paestum. He has scarcely found a single follower

ON THE PLAN AND ASPECT OF THE TEMPLE. 103

except Mr. Hakewill. It will be sufficient to give the design

of Professor Wilkins.1

2. Far more reasonable and less arbitrary is the view of those

inquirers who looked to Egypt for the type of Solomonic

architecture,

This was the opinion adopted by Professor Hosking in the

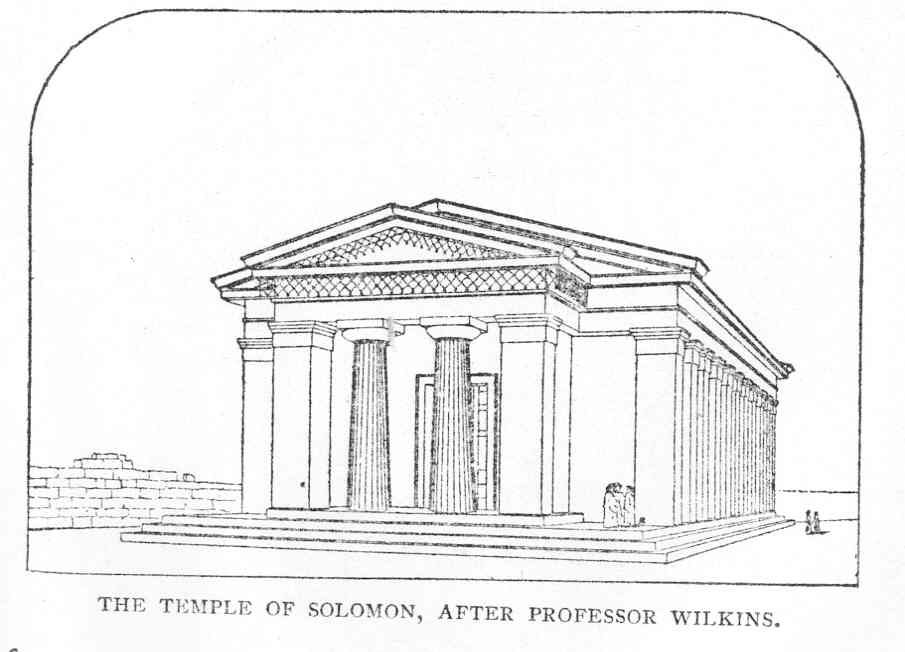
"Encyclopadia Britannica"; by Commodore Canina, of Rome,

in his small folio on "Jewish Antiquities"; by Mr. Thrupp,

his book on "Ancient Jerusalem"; and by the Count de Vogüé,

in his book on "Jerusalem and Its Temples." It is now de-

servedly abandoned as untenable. Eupolemus, indeed, in a



fragment preserved by Eusebius, says that Pharaoh sent to

Solomon, with his daughter, eighty thousand workmen to help

in building the Temple. But he calls the Pharaoh *Vaphres*,

and the story is, on the face of it, entirely unhistorical.2

3. The belief that the style of architecture of Solomon's

Temple was *Asiatic*, and specifically Phœnician, may now be

regarded as established by the historic evidence of our docu-

ments, and by the skilled reasoning of Mr. Fergusson and

1 For the use of these illustrations I am indebted to the kindness of Mr.

Robins.

2 Eupolmus in Eusebius, "Præp. Ev." ii. 30-35.

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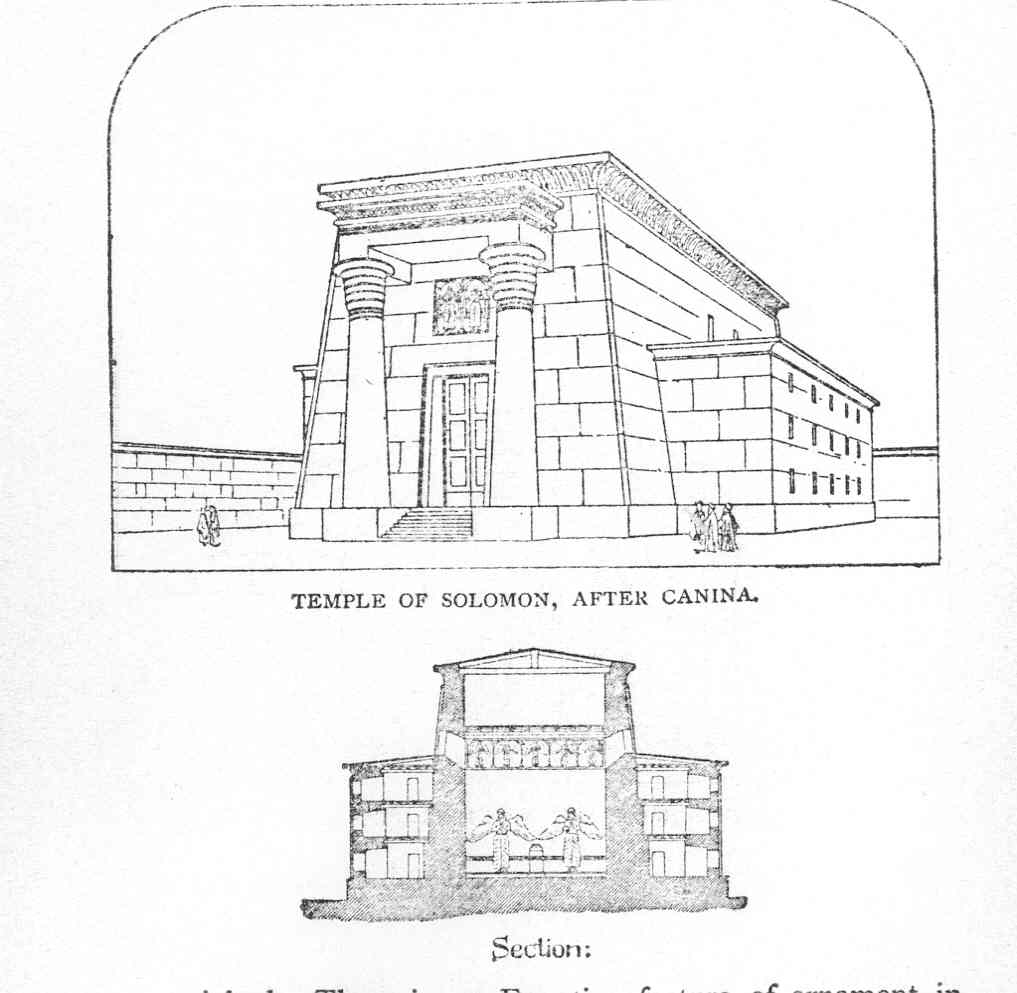
many other architects, among whom Mr. Robins must take a

high place.1

Mr. Robins follows the views of Mr. Fergusson, and points out

that Solomon from first to last was indebted to the assistance of

Phoenician workmen for every detail of art with which his temple



was enriched. There is no Egyptian feature of ornament in

the Temple which is not also Phoenician, and the pomegranate

1 Mr. Fergusson has dealt with the subject in "Principles of Beauty in

Art," 18,19; "The History of Ancient and Modern Architecture," 1865;

"The Temples of the Jews," 1878; and articles on the Tabernacle and

Temple in Smith's "Dictionary of the Bible," 1863. Mr. Lewin takes the

same view, and also Messrs. Perrot and Chipiez, in the "Revue Générale

de l'Architecture," Jan., 1886.

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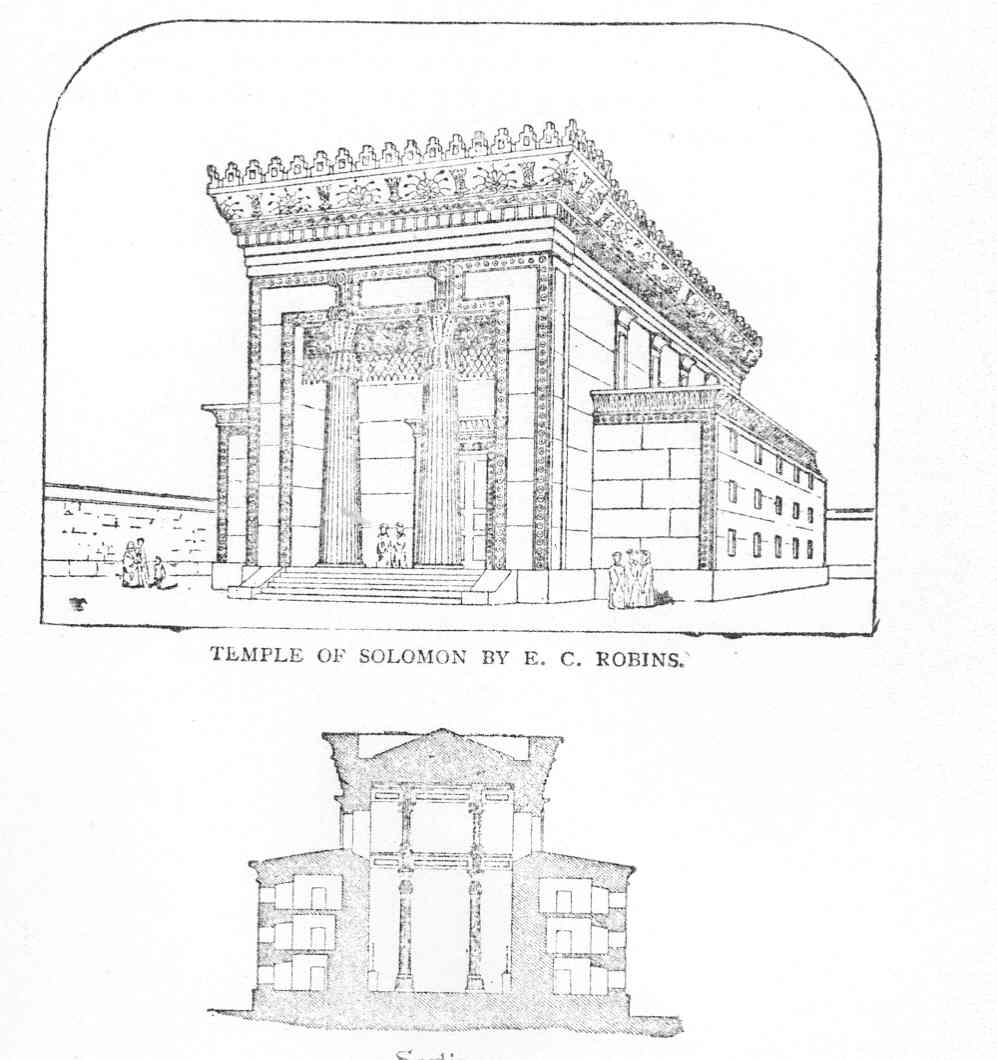
is not an Egyptian fruit. Phœnician art ultimately came from

Assyria and Persia, and it is to those countries that we must

look for illustrative details. The style of masonry at the

south-eastern angle of the Haram area closely resemble that at

Passargardæ. Architects consider that the Temple bore a more



general resemblance to that of Venus (=Astarte) at Paphos—an

island colonized by Phœnicians—than to any other. There are,

indeed, no remains of this temple worth speaking of, but repre-

sentations of it are found on coins and gems.1

1 Kugler, "Gesch. d. Baukunst," 121.

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The details of the design by Mr. Robins are entirely gleaned

from examples at Nineveh and Persepolis—the doors and windows

from Persepolitan palaces; the upper and crowning members of

the cornice from the tomb of Darius, and a pavilion in the sculp-

tures at Khorsabad; the lower cornice from the bas-relief of

El-tell-Armarna, and from the stylobate of the temple at Khor-

sabad; the enrichments for the pavement, and other details

from ornamental pottery at Konyunjik; the pillars from Perse-

polis, with adapted capitals and network.

CHAPTER IX.

SOLOMON'S OTHER BUILDINGS AND CITIES.

The passion for building—Splomon's palace, and its adjoining edifices:—

Obscurity of all details—The House of the Forest of Lebanon; its

shields—The Porch of pillars—The Hall of Judgment—The Palace—

The staircase to the Temple—Water supply—Gardens—Summer re-

treats—Works of national usefulness — Fortification of the city—A

chain of fortress towns—Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer—The Beth-Horons—

Baalath— Store cities, and chariot-towns — Roads — Tadmor in the

wilderness.

KINGS that have once indulged their passion for magnificence

by the erection of great buildings are scarcely ever content with

rearing a single edifice. Solomon's work as a builder was con-

tinued with more or less activity through the remainder of his

reign.

First came the erection of a palace, which occupied thirteen

years.1 The old palace on Mount Zion was amply sufficient for

a humble warrior-chieftain like David, but seemed altogether

too insignificant for a grand Oriental potentate like Solomon. A

king who now began to be so closely connected with the dynasts

of Tyre and Egypt, was not content even with cedarn chambers.

The description of this palace, and of his other royal buildings

in Jerusalem, is given so briefly in the Book of Kings, that we

can form no real impression of its architecture. Strange to say,

it is even a disputed point whether the palace, the House of the

Forest of Lebanon, the pillared portico, the porch of the throne,

and the palace of Pharaoh's daughter, were so many separate

1 It was much larger than the Temple, and no preparations had been

made.

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buildings, or whether, as Josephus says, they were but portions

and wings of the one royal palace. No commentator or archæ-

ologist, ancient or modern, has attempted any real or intelligible

description of these works, for the sufficient reason that the

details are far too brief and obscure. Of the ancients Josephus

gives reins to his fancy, and talks of Corinthian pillars adorned

with leaves and branches, of magnificent and refreshing groves,

and many other marvellous facts; while the commentator Villal-

pandus furnishes us with a ground-plan of which the details must

be drawn from his inner consciousness. Others make the build-

ing so small that it would have been physically impossible for

the king and his harem to find room in it.

It is almost certain that the description of 1 Kings vii. 1-13 is

meant to apply to the various parts of one structure,1 which served

all the purposes of royalty, and was built on Ophel, the southern

continuation of the Temple mount. The first part of this struc-

ture is called "The House of the Forest of Lebanon." Some have

supposed that this refers to a summer villa built by Solomon at

the foot of Mount Lebanon;2 but this notion is at once refuted

by the fact that the chief and splendid ornament of this hall of

cedars consisted of two hundred shields of beaten gold, and three

hundred bucklers of the same precious material.3 Each of the

shields, which like the Greek θυρεοὶ, the Latin *scuta*, were large

enough to cover the whole body, required an outlay of six hundred

shekels of gold (about £1,200) and each of the bucklers (ασπίδες,

*clypei*) required three *manehs* of gold (about £300) for its gild-

ing.4 These golden shields were all carried away by Shishak,

king of Egypt, in the following reign, and assuredly he did not go

to Lebanon to fetch them. The royal hall in Jerusalem was called

by admiring fancy "the House of the Forest of Lebanon," because

its pillars resembled a forest of cedar wood. It was a house

one hundred cubits long, fifty broad, and thirty high. Four (or

according to the Septuagint, three) rows of cedar pillars, of which

three rows stood over one another, fifteen in a row, supported a

1 Kings vii. 2 should be rendered "For he built," not "he built also."

2 See 1 Kings ix. 19; 2 Chron. viii. 6.

3 For the ornamenting of buildings with shields see 2 Sam. viii. 7;

Kings x. 17; Cant. iv. 4; Ezek. xxvii. 11; 1 Macc. iv. 57, vi. 2.

4 According to 2 Chron. ix. 16, a *maneh* of gold is one hundred shekels.

It is usually taken to be of the value. of 2 1/2 lbs. of gold. Rehoboam re-

placed them by brazen ones.

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building of three storeys. If there were only forty-five pillars,

and yet four rows of fifteen, we can only suppose that one row

of pillars was built into the side-wall.1 Each storey had but a

single chamber, of which the lattices were opposite to each

other, and the beams as well as the pillars were of cedar wood.

The chambers, perhaps, constituted the royal treasury.2 But is

it not a somewhat idle attempt to attempt to restore a building out

of unscientific descriptions and an uncertain text?3

In front of this building was erected another porch—which

being a colonnade only was called the Porch of Pillars—fifty

cubits long and thirty wide, of which we are not told the

specific use.

And in front of this, perhaps separated from it by a court,

rose the proper porch of the palace, which served as the Throne-

room, or Hall of Judgment. It was entirely wainscotted with

cedar wood, and was "the King's Gate," where he administered

justice to his people. In this hall stood the regal throne, which

was the wonder of the age.

Abutting on these buildings, but separated from them by a

court, of which the walls were built of large hewn masses of

stone, was the actual palace, also built of polished marble, and

overlaid within with beams of cedar wood like the walls of the

Temple. Behind this stood the harem, of which the finest

1 So Josephus, "Antiq." vii. 5, § 2.

2 As it seems impossible to form any very definite conception of the build-

ing from the scanty data, I simply append the note of Reuss, "Voici l'idée

que nous now, faisons de cette construction. Trois étages de pièces

reposaient sur une colonnade, laquelle en formait le rez-de-chaussée;

cette colonnade ainsi que les planchers intermédiaires, étaît en bois de

cèdre. Les quarante-cinq pièces étaient disposées de manière qu'elles

avaiént vue sur une sour intérieure, et elles recevaient le jour non par des

fenêtres ("hallôn," vi. 4), qui, en Orient, sont géndralement petites, mais

par de larger ouvertures, qui prenaient peut-être tout l'espace entre les

cloisons qui séparaient une pièce de l'autre; de sorte que le tout formait

trois galeries superposées." The text, he adds, tells us nothing of the

number of the columns, the size of the court, the extent of the rooms, the

external appearance, the necessary staircases, the height of the storeys,

the number of the rooms, &c.

3 Mr. Fergusson (s.v. Palace, in the "Dictionary of the Bible") says

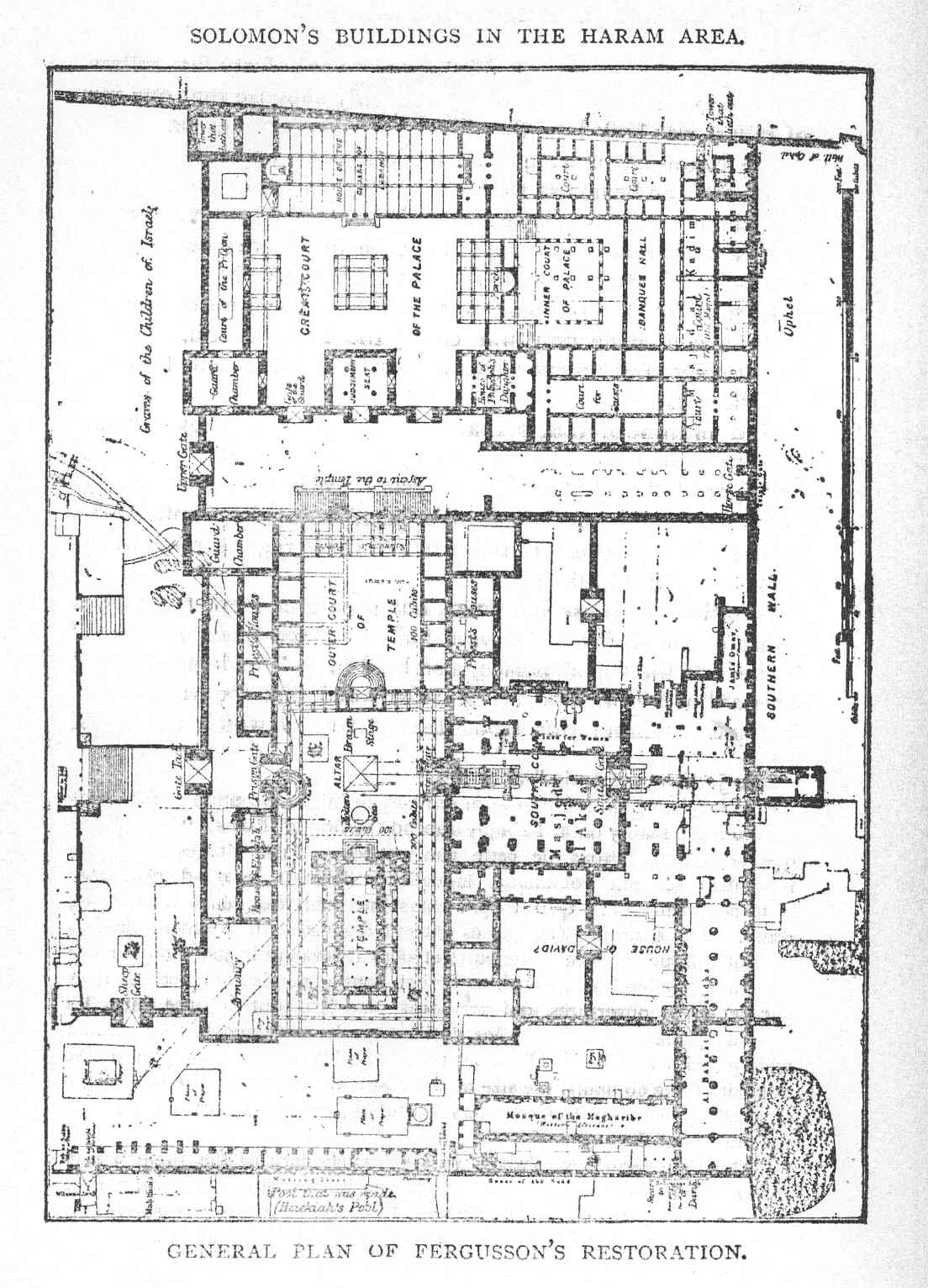
that all the earlier attempts to restore the plan of these buildings were

Vitruvian (*i.e*., classic), which, like the Egyptian plans, necessarily failed.

We must go for help to Nineveh and Persepolis. Diagram sections are

given in "Dictionary of the Bible," vol. ii. p. 659.

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portion was devoted to the use of the Queen consort, the

daughter of Pharaoh. Hitherto this princess had lived m a

part of David's old palace on Mount Sion, but Solomon has

scruples about assigning this to her as a permanent residence,

because the site had been hallowed by the temporary sojourn

of the Ark. Nothing is said about the structure of the harem,

which remained in mysterious seclusion from the public eye.

We only know that it must have been magnificent and costly

to contain its vast retinue of concubines, and eunuchs, and men

and women singers.

As the palace stood on a lower elevation than the Temple,

the king built for his private use a staircase of the red and

scented sandal wood, which now became an article of import

for the wealthy. This precious staircase led to the seats in the

Temple, which were specially used for the king on State occasions,

of which one seems to have stood in the inner court surrounded

by a balustrade, and another was supported on a platform or

pediment of brass.1

But palaces, however splendid, would have been but dreary

residences if they had not easy access to parks and gardens.

The laying out of these was a task far from easy in a district

so rocky and hilly as that which surrounds Jerusalem. But it

had been no small part of the king's care for his people to pro-

vide the capital with an elaborate and most costly system of

water-courses, derived in part from perennial springs of water on

the Temple Mount, and partly from enormous pools, of which the

water was conveyed by aqueducts, or through vast subterranean

conduits hewn out of the solid rock.2 By means of this water

Solomon was able to provide a king's garden on the southern

slopes of the hills on which the city stood,3 as well as a "House

of the Vine" (Beth-hac-Cerem) perhaps near the hill now known

as Fureidîs (or "Little Paradise ").4 He also had a beautiful

pleasance at Etam, not far from Bethlehem. The ideal Solomon

of Ecclesiastes speaks language which could doubtless have

been used literally by the real Solomon: "I builded me houses;

1 See 2 Kings xi. 14, xvi. 18, xxiii. 3; 2 Chron. vi. 13.

2 On this water system for the supply of Jerusalem are founded the

idealized conceptions of the prophets (Joel iii. 18; Zech. xiv. 8; Ezek.

xlvii. 1-12; comp. Tacitus, "Hist." v. 12; Eusebius, "Præp. Ev." ix. 37;

Josephus, "B. J." ii. 9, § 4; "Antiq." xviii. 3, § 2.

3 2 Kings xxv. 4; Neh. iii. 15.   
 4 Jer. vi. 1.

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I planted me vineyards; I made me gardens and orchards; I

planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits; I made me pools of

water to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees."1

It is probable also that he had summer retreats, in which he

could exchange the parched and sultry air of Judaea for the

pleasant breezes cooled by the snows of Lebanon, and for walks

overshadowed by its cedars. These may be included among

his buildings in this region, mentioned in'the Book of Kings,2

of which tradition preserves a find recollection in the allusions

of the Song of Songs to "the tower of Lebanon, which looketh

towards Damascus," with its gardens and living streams.3 He

also had a vineyard at Baal-Hermon or Baal-Hamon,4 producing

a revenue of which four-fifths was paid to the king.

These works of personal magnificence were accompanied by

others of national usefulness. The kingdom which contained

such treasures of wealth could not be left defenceless. After

Solomon's palaces were completed he turned to the task of forti-

fication. He built Millo (called Acra in the LXX.)—a name given

apparently to some wall raised on an earthwork—and thereby

"closed the breaches of the City of David," so that no vulnerable

point might be left in the circuit of the city. This fortification,

as the Septuagint adds (it Kings x. 22), suppressed the last hopes

of the native races. He also protected his entire domain by a

chain of forts built at every point of chief access. The fortifi-

cation of the old Canaanite capital Hazor, at the foot of

Lebanon (Judg. iv. 2), gave security to Naphtali and the

north from any possible attacks of Rezon, king of Damascus.

Megiddo was made defensible to command the rich plain of

Jezreel. Gezer, the town which Pharaoh had conquered and

given to him as the dower of his daughter, protected the defiles

on the west of Ephraim. The walls of Bethhoron, the Upper

and the Nether, dominated one of the natural passes leading to

Jerusalerm5 Baalath—probably on the borders of Dan—over-

awed the Philistines. He also built store cities for provisions,

and cities to accommodate his cavalry and horses. This branch

of his military array was always looked on with distrust, and

1 Ecci. ii. 4-6. 2 I Kings ix. 19.

3 Cant. vii. 5 ; iv. 4. 4 Cant. viii. 11 (LXX.); Judg. iii. 3.

5 It was the scene of three great battles—the victories of Joshua (Josh. x.),

of Judas Maccabæus (x Macc. iii. 13-24), and of the Jews over Cestius

Gallus (Josephus, "B. J." ii. 19).

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even with hatred, by the stricter Israelites. It was never likely

to be of any real service among the rocky ways of a country

which over the larger part of its extent is a series of rounded

hills. It flourished so little as to be an actual subject of derision

to the enemies of Judah.1

Some towns he must have also built for the purposes of his

extended commerce. They were chiefly in the northern dis-

tricts, and especially in the direction of Hamath, which he had

conquered. Josephus, who follows some magnificent Jewish tra-

dition, says that these towns stood on paved roads which traversed

the land in various directions. The main road for the increasing

traffic between Egypt and Asia ran past Gaza and west of Jeru-

salem to Damascus, where it was joined by another road, which

led from Tyre to Thapsacus on the Euphrates. To be at once

an emporium and a protection for the northern traffic, Solomon

built the most famous of all his cities, Tadmor, in the wilderness,

the Greek Palmyra.2 It stood in an oasis, in which there still

grow a few palms, and the site was so admirably chosen, and so

well supplied with water, that it flourished for a thousand years.

Why the words "*in the land*" are added to "in the wilderness"

is uncertain, but they probably imply that even this distant

oasis belonged to the territory which Solomon had conquered.3

The ruins sufficiently show to what splendour the city rose.

Tradition also assigns to Solomon the building of the Syrian

Baalbek, but this is impossible. Baalbek cannot be identified

with Baalath, and if Solomon had built this great Syrian city,

it would certainly have been mentioned in the royal records of

his time.

1 See 2 Kings xviii. 23.

2 The text in I Kings ix. 18 has Tamar; the margin has Tadmor; 2

Chron. viii. 4 has Tadmor. It always was a city of merchants. Movers

tries to identify Tadmor with Hazezon - Tamar, "the sanctuary of the

palm," or En-gedi (Ezek. xlvii. 19; xlviii. 28). Tadmor is a day's journey

from the Euphrates, and 176 miles from Damascus. It is difficult to be-

lieve that it was occupied by Israelites, and the LXX. does not accept the

identification.

3 After "in the land" Ewald would add the words, "of Aram;" Ber-

theau and Keil would add, "of Hamath;" and Böttcher would read

instead, "in the wilderness of Paran."

CHAPTER X.

SOLOMON'S COMMERCE.

The ideal of peaceful wealth—Extended commerce: I. by land and II. by sea

—I. Influence and splendour of Phoenicia i. Land traffic with Tyre;

Hiram and Solomon; Embarrassed condition of Solomon's resources;

He alienates twenty cities; Scorn and dissatisfaction of Hiram; An

obscure transaction; Inexplicable conduct of Solomon; Prosperity of

Hiram—ii. Land traffic with Arabia; Spices and precious stones—iii.

Egypt and the Tanite dynasty; Land traffic with Egypt Horses and

chariots; Profits of the trade; Two great inland roads—II. Sea traffic:

i. The Phoenician traffic with Tarshish—ii. Traffic by the Red Sea to

Ophir; Ezion-Geber—Theories about Ophir; identified by many with

*Abhîra* at the mouths of the Indus—Beautiful and curious articles of

export—i. Ivory (*Shen habbîm*)—ii. Apes (*Kôphîm*)—iii. Peacocks

(*tukkiîm*)—iv. Almug-trees—Sanskrit origin of these words—Did the

fleets circumnavigate Africa?—Result of the commerce—Losses—In-

tercourse with idolators—The Red Sea fleets a failure—The king's

revenue—His enormous expenses—Advantages of the commerce, direct

and indirect.

IT would have been in Solomon's power to chose for his people

the ideal of military glory which had prevailed in the days of

his father; but he chose instead the ideal of peaceful wealth

and material aggrandisement. He might have said to his

people, as a modern statesman said to the French bourgeoisie,

"*Enrichissez-vous*." Nothing is more remarkable in his reign

than the immense and sudden development of a widely-extended

commerce which kindled the imagination of the Chosen People,

but which brought them few real advantages, and vanished

almost as soon as it had been established. Yet though the

special traffic vanished, being almost exclusively connected

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with luxuries and with the Court, it gave the earliest strong

impulse to those commercial tendencies which totally altered

the characteristics of the Jews, and changed them in time from

an agricultural into a mercantile race—a face whose famous

Rabbis spoke of agriculture in tones of scorn.

This traffic was twofold, by land and by sea: by land, with

Tyre, Egypt, and Arabia; by sea, with Spain, India, and the

coasts of Africa.

I. It is not strange that two great neighbouring Powers—

Phœnicia and Egypt — should have exercised so strange a

spell of fascination over the mind of Israel. Phœnicia—the

land of palms—was the representative of enterprise and culture,

and the pride of life; and under the first Hiram, Tyre, which

was but a hundred miles from Jerusalem, had sprung to the very

summit of her glory. Even the comparatively humble palace

of David had been built by Tyrian workmen, and was a "house

of cedar,"1 and from that day forward Phœnician elements began

to be mingled with Hebrew civilization. The Tyrians supplied

the world with the scarlet robes of kings. The discovery of

Tarshish had affected the Phœnicians much as the discovery

of the New World affected Spain. It poured into their coffers

a flood of wealth. For oil and trinkets their sailors brought back

from Tarshish—"the fountains of Tartessus rooted in silver,"—

such abundance of precious ore that the very anchors of the home-

ward-bound vessels were made of silver to save unnecessary

freight.2 Copper (aes Cyprium) had long been supplied them

from Cyprus, and they brought tin and other metals even from the

Scilly Isles. From two to three hundred talents of gold came

to them yearly from Tarshish and from the island of Thasos.

Their art was at this epoch the most renowned in the ancient

world. Their capital was "the crowning city, whose merchants

are princes, whose traffickers the honourable of the earth." The

twenty-seventh chapter of Ezekiel is the splendid epitaph of

their magnificence, no less than the prediction of their impend-

ing fall. "O thou that art situate at the entry of the sea, which

art a merchant of the people for many isles, Thus saith the Lord

God; O Tyrus, thou hast said, I am of perfect beauty." Judah

supplied her with wheat, and comfits, and honey, and oil, and balm.

1 2 Sam. v. 11; vii. 2.

2 Herodotus, iv. 152; Aristotle, "De mirab. ausc." 147 Duncker,

"Hist. of Antiq." ii. 85 (E. tr.). Tartessus is the Guadalquiver.

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The merchants of Syria traded in her wares for vessels of clay

and metal, armour, emeralds, purple broidered work, fine linen,

and pearls, and agate. The name Sidon (צִידוֹי), which the Book

of Genesis gives to the firstborn of Canaan, means "a fishing,"

and since about 2,000 years B.C. these maritime cities had en-

joyed the riches and blessings of the sea. They had probably

been strengthened by emigration at the overthrow of the kingdom

of the Hittites by the Amorites about B.C. 1,300, and had gradu-

ally spread their settlements towards the north-west. When

they had exhausted the fishery of the purple limpet on their

own coasts, they obtained it from the Straits of Eubcea and the

bays of Hellas. The luxury and commercial prosperity of Tyre,

"the joyous city whose antiquity is of ancient days,"1 seemed

inexhaustible, and the wealth and art of Sidon were famous

even in the days of Homer.

1. The land traffic with Tyre was chiefly founded on the

exigencies of Solomon's architectural undertakings. We have

already seen that he would have been unable to construct either

the Temple or his palaces without the aid of the skilled wood-

carvers and metal-casters of Phœnicia. He is said to have

visited Tyre in person, and even to have worshipped in one of

the Sidonian Temples. Documents, genuine or spurious, were

long preserved, which professed to be an interchange of letters

between Hiram and Solomon. For more than twenty years this

amicable and mutually advantageous intercourse continued,

and, as in the days of Herod Agrippa, Hiram's country "was

nourished by the king's country" in return for commercial and

artistic benefits. It is even possible that Solomon among his

numerous wives may have married a daughter of Hiram, for

this is stated by Eusebius on the authority of Tatian,2 and he

tolerated in later days the worship of Astarte in honour of a

Sidonian wife.3 This alliance between the Tyrian and Israelite

king had a singular ending, of which the details are excessively

obscure. Like all kings, even down to our own day, who have

yielded to the passion for building, Solomon embarrassed his

resources, immense as they were. Not being a wholly irre-

sponsible despot, he could not afford to be like Louis XIV.,

who is said to have burnt the accounts of the building of

Versailles without looking at them. When the Temple and his

1 Isa. xxiii. 7. 2 "Præp. Ev." x. 11. 3 1 Kings xi. 5.

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palatial buildings were finished, it became necessary to settle

his obligations with the king of Tyre, and it seems that the only

way left him of doing this was to alienate a part of his own

dominions. At the end of twenty years Solomon gave to Hiram

"twenty cities in the land of Galilee;"1 and apparently in

return for these Hiram gave Solomon one hundred and twenty

talents of gold. Now the alienation of any part of the soil of

Judaea was in opposition alike to the letter and spirit of the

Mosaic law. "The land shall not be sold for ever," says the

Book of Leviticus; "for the land is mine; for ye are strangers

and sojourners with me."2 Even if the district had been

conquered by Solomon himself, and if the inhabitants were

still mainly Canaanites, still the region was within the limits of

the Promised Land, and was part of Jehovah's gift to His

people.3 Solomon may have been wholly unaware of the

existence of any such law in the complete desuetude into which

most of the Mosaic ordinances had fallen, but in any case the

voluntary cession of twenty Galilean cities by way of equivalent

for a debt might well appear to be a blot on Solomon's admini-

stration, and one of the earliest proofs that he had exhausted

the capabilities of his treasury. What follows is still more

surprising, especially if we are right in supposing that Hiram

one hundred and twenty talents of gold represented the balance

after the debt was paid. Hiram went and visited his new

acquisition, delighted with the thought that henceforth he

would be less wholly dependent on the produce of a rival king-

dom, and that Tyre would add an inland district to her strip of

sandy coast. A personal visit to the territory disenchanted

these hopes, and filled him with vexation. Frankly he con-

sidered himself to have been overreached, and inadequately

rewarded. The transaction evidently appeared to him to

have been a shabby one. The cities "were not right in

his eyes." He said, in strong disgust, "What cities are these

which thou halt given me, my brother?"4 The very name of

the ceded land kept alive for years afterwards the memory of

Hiram's disappointment. It was "called Cabul unto this day."

1 1 Kings ix. 11-14. 2 Lev. xxv. 23, 24.

3 In Numb. xxxiv. 6-8 the Mediterranean is assigned as the western

border of the Promised Land, and it only failed of being so through the

supineness of Asher (Judg. i. 31, 32).

4 "He said to Solomon that he did not want the cities" (Josephus).

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"Cabul" means "as nothing,"1 as though Solomon, with all his

vaunted magnificence and fabulous generosity, had given to his

hereditary ally and friend as good as nothing for the long years

of assistance in carrying out designs which could not have been

accomplished without his aid.

The sequel of this transaction looks yet more dubious.

Solomon did not return the gold, but Hiram did return the cities.

Either because of the miry and unproductive character of

the soil, or the turbulent poverty of the inhabitants, they were

of no use to him, and he did not even care to keep them, fore-

seeing that they would only be a cause of annoyance and

expense. This being so, we might have supposed that, for his

own credit and reputation, Solomon would not acquiesce in the

imputation of having overreached one whose aid he had so freely

used for twenty years, and that he would have given him an

even more munificent equivalent. This, however, he either could

not or would not do. He quietly took back his rejected gift,2

and reoccupied with Israelites the twenty despised towns which

up to that time seem to have belonged to "Galilee *of the Gen-*

*tiles*." Of further dealings between Hiram and Solomon we not

unnaturally hear no more. Hiram had furnished Solomon with

gold as well as timber during the building of the Temple.3 If

he now sent a hundred and twenty talents of gold4 as an equiva-

lent for the cities, Solomon should have returned it. But the

details of the whole transaction are too obscure for us to under-

stand. It is, however, certain that Hiram must have gained

from his intercourse with Solomon, for he was an eminently

prosperous king. Ascending the throne as a youth, B.C. 1001,

he had resubdued the rebellious cities of Cyprus, and had used

1 Not as in the English margin "displeasing" or "dirty," the meaning

also assigned to the word by Josephus. The Authorized Version has "he

(i.e., Hiram) called them the land of Cabul," but the verb may be rendered

impersonally—"one called them" (LXX., προσηγορεύθησαν). There was

in this very region a town already called Cabal (Josh. xix. 27) in Asher (nine

miles east of Accho), and perhaps Hiram took up the name and played

upon it.

2 2 Chron. viii. 2.

3 Kings ix. 11-14; Josephus, "Antiq." viii. 5, § 3.

4 The talent of gold is usually estimated at £ 6,000. Josephus, quoting

Menander, talks of Hiram having to pay large fines for failing to answer

riddles; but he represents the hundred and twenty talents as a voluntary

present from Hiram to Solomon ("C. Apion." i. 17).

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his rich resources in enlarging the island on which Tyre was

built and surrounding it with walls of solid masonry. He also

built or restored the Temples of Ashtoreth and Melkarth, in the

latter of which he dedicated a pillar of gold, seen there by

Herodotus five hundred years later by the side of an erect

emerald which gave light by night.1 His reign of thirty-four

years seems to have been of unbroken prosperity.

2. Another part of Solomon's land traffic was with Arabia,

from which must have been mainly derived the supply of spices

of which we now begin to find such prominent mention. The

very word spicery (*nêcoth*) 2 is from the Arabic, *naka'at*, and

seems to mean gum tragacanth and frankincence, the aromatic

resins of various thorny shrubs. Myrrh no doubt formed part

of the spicery which the Queen of Sheba gave to him; spike-

nard is the root of a species of valerian which grows in the

Himalayas;3 aloe is the heart-wood of an Indian tree;4 and

cassia is the bark of a species of cinnamon. All these became

common in the days of Solomon.5 They may have come to

him by sea traffic, but are largely imported throughout the East,

and may have been brought chiefly from Eastern Arabia.6 From

this source also he may have derived a great part of his precious

stones, though the sapphires (lapis lazuli) could only have come

from Babylonia.

3. Egypt as well as Phœnicia became a more and more

potent factor in the development of the Hebrews under Solo-

mon. The Ramesid dynasty ruled at Thebes till B.C. 1100;

but under the successors of Rameses VI., from 1200 to 1074,

the High Priests of Thebes became almost equally powerful,

and at last the twentieth dynasty succumbed. They were suc-

ceeded, according to the Egyptian priest Manetho, by seven

princes, who belonged to Tanis or Zoan, who reigned for a hun-

dred and fourteen years. We have already given the names of

these princes as furnished by the monuments. In Manetho

they are different. He says that the first of them was Smendes,

1 Herodotus, ii. 44; Duneker, ii. 266. The pillar was probably of green

glass (Theophrastus, "Lap." 23).

2 Hebr., Gen, xxxvii. 25.

3 *Nardostachys jata-mansi.* 4 *Aquilaria agallocha.*

5 Prov. vii. 17; Cant. iv. 10, 14, 16; Ps. xlv. 8.

6 Ewald thinks that *nêsheq* in I Kings x. 25 means not "armour," but

some Arabian perfume.

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who removed the seat of government from Thebes, where it had

been placed for five centuries, to the Delta. He was succeeded

by Psusennes I. who reigned for forty-six years (1048-1002), and

was perhaps the protector of the young prince of Edom. The

fourth king of this house was Amenothis (998-989), and some

have thought this was the Pharaoh who gave his daughter in

marriage to Solomon. The last Tanite king was Psusennes II.,

who in 960 was succeeded by Shishak (Scheshonk, Sesonchis),

the founder of the dynasty of Buhastis. Shishak seems to have

been of Semitic origin, and to have forced his way to favour,

which was cemented by the marriage of his son Osorkon to

Rakatnat, the daughter of Psusennes. With him ceased the

friendly relations between Egypt and Judah. He is the king of

Egypt (*Melek Mizraim*), not honoured in 1 Kings xi. 40 with the

title Pharaoh, who plundered Jerusalem of the wealth which

Solomon had amossed.1

The main traffic with Egypt was for the horses and chariots

for which the land of the Pharaohs became famous, and which

are so prominently represented in the Egyptian frescoes.2 Solo-

mon kept the profits of this trade, as of all his commerce, in

his own hands. He was the kingly merchant, and his people

had but a small share of the accruing advantages. The trans-

port was carried on by large caravans, and the trade was exten-

sive because Solomon had not only to keep up his own large

supply of four thousand two hundred horses3 for his fourteen

hundred chariots (three fine horses for each chariot), and

chargers4 for his twelve thousand horsemen, but he also found a

large demand for these warlike and splendid equipages among

all the Hittite and Aramean kings. The Hittites were more or

1 Africanus and Eusebius allot one hundred and thirty years to the

Tanite dynasty. The list of Africanus, is, Smendes, Psusennes I., Nepher-

cheres, Amenothis, Bochor, Psinaches, Psusennes II.

2 Gen. xlvii. 17; Exod. ix. 3, xiv. 6; Deut. xvii. 16; 2 Chron. xii. 3; 2

Kings xviii. 24; Isa. xxxi. 1-3; Jer. xlvi. 4; Ezek. xvii. 15, &c. See

Bochart, "Hieroz." i. 169.

3 Forty thousand in 1 Kings iv. 26 is a misreading for four thousand.

See 2 Chron. ix. 25.

4 פָּרָשִׁים. The "dromedaries" of 1 Kings iv. 23 are rather "runners"—

i.e., swift riding-horses. In Cant. i. 9 Ewald renders it "Pharaoh's chariots

at Solomon's Court." The two towns mentioned in 1 Chron. iv. 31, Beth-

marcaboth, "house of chariots," and *Hazar-Siusim*, "Court of chargers,"

may be among the cities which Solomon built for his stables.

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less tributary, but the various principalities clustering round

their chief capitals of Carchemish (*Jerablûs*) and Kadesh near

Emesa, were still under chieftains of such importance that

Solomon numbered Hittite princesses among his wives. The

Hittites are represented on the Egyptian monuments riding in

chariots drawn by two horses, and containing three men apiece.1

When we are told that in this commerce "a chariot came up

and went out of Egypt for six hundred shekels, and a horse for

a hundred and fifty,"2 the meaning is disputed; but it seems to

be that this was the amount of *profit* on each separate sale.

Eight or nine pounds would have been far too small a sum for

an Egyptian war-horse, and thirty-five pounds for a chariot, the

best of its kind and imported all the way from Egypt. The

"linen-yarn" introduced by our Authorized Version3 into this

Egyptian commerce seems to be a pure mistake. The word ren-

dered "linen-yarn" by Le Clerc and other commentators either

means (as the Septuagint understands it) "from Coa," or "from

Tekoah," as Thenius supposes;4 or the verse may mean "a drove

(or string) of royal merchants used to fetch a drove (or string) of

horses at a price."

Two great inland roads were used for these various branches

of traffic, and Solomon doubtless improved these roads as well

as rendering them more safe and useful by the construction of

stations and caravanserais. The khan, or caravanserai, of his

hereditary guest Chimham at Bethlehem, which remained

famous for so many centuries, may have been one of these.

The caravan route from Egypt led through Palestine, and then

turned westward across Cœle-Syria to Carchemish on the

Euphrates, passing thence across Mesopotamia to Harran, to

the Tigris, and thence to Nineveh, Babylon, and the Persian

Gulfs The route was perhaps deflected for a time by the build-

ing of Tadmor. The second route led along the Western Coast

of Arabia through Mecca and Midian into Northern. Egypt and

Palestine. No doubt both these great arteries of commerce

1 The Hitittes (or *Khita* as they are called in the monuments), once a

powerful and literary people, but now their power was broken. Toi, king

of Hamath, was their chief king in David's time.

2 I Kings x. 29.

3 Ibid. x. 23. The word is מקוה.

4 Following the LXX., καὶ εκ θεκνουέ.

5 See Professor Sayce, "The Bible and the Monuments"

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were stirred into unwonted activity by the impulse derived from

the magnificent designs of the wise king.

II. But far deeper admiration was stirred by his wider and

more daring sea commerce, of which we find early traces in

Psalm cvii. and in the Book of Proverbs.1

1. The sea commerce of the ancients also followed two routes.

One of these was exclusively in the hands of the Phœnician

sailors of Tyre and Sidon. They sailed from these harbours to

Chittim (Cyprus), and so among the Ægean islands, and to

Sicily, Malta, and the Northern Coast of Africa. Their ulti-

mate destination was generally Tarshish, the flourishing

Phœnician colony in Spain, probably not far from the mouth

of the Tartessus or Guadalquiver. In order to reach this they

had to sail through Abyla and Calpe (Gibraltar), the famous

"Pillars of Hercules" and to launch into the mysterious At-

lantic.2 From this destination the Phœnician merchantmen

were called "ships of Tarshish," though they often sailed along

the whole coast of Spain, braved the terrors of the Bay of

Biscay, and reached as far as the Cassiterides and the southern

shores of Britain. Was Solomon allowed to break through the

exclusive monopoly of the Phœnicians and to share in this

traffic? In the Book of Kings we are told that, he had a

"Tharshish navy" with the navy of King Hiram,3 but this may

merely apply to his Red Sea traffic, the name "Tharshish

navy "being generic to imply ships of a particular build, just

as we might talk of "an Indiaman" without necessarily im-

plying that the ship sailed only to India. The commodities

mentioned as forming the freight of this Tharshish navy are

such as could not come from Spain, nor would a voyage to

Tartessus have occupied three years. In the Book of Chronicles

we are told that "the king's ships *went to Tharshish* with the

servants of Huram;"4 but here too the articles imported are

the same, and it is possible that some confusion or misun-

derstanding may have arisen.5 It hardly seems likely that an

1 Prov. xxiii. 34, 35; Ps. cvii. 23-30.

2 If Old Hippo was founded by Sidon the Phœnician sailors had done

this long before. A passage of Dioclorus (v. 19. 2) makes it probable that

they had even visited Madeira and the Canaries.

3 I Kings x. 22. 4 2 Chron. ix. 21.

5 Keil's argument that "at sea" (בַּיָּם ) can only mean "on the Medi-

terranean" will hardly stand.

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exclusively maritime people would have permitted the partner-

ship of a king who might prove to be a very dangerous rival.

It would surely have been impossible for Solomon to keep a

separate navy either at Tyre or Sidon, and the miserable and

dangerous harbours or roadsteads of Dor, Acco, or Joppa, would

have been wholly unsuitable for such a purpose.1

2. But much more novel and splendid was the new naviga-

tion attempted for the first time from Ezion-Geber to Ophir,

Ezion-Geber ("the giant's backbone") was the harbour of

Eiath, or Eloth, a town at the north of the Gulf of Akaba, and

probably on the site now occupied by the wretched village of

Akaba itself.2 Eloth was still a city in the time of Abulfeda

(about 1300), but of Ezion-Geber there are no traces. It de-

rived its name from the double line of hills which here run down

towards the sea. Hiram and his Tyrians would feel no sort of

jealousy about mercantile voyages starting from a port wholly

out of their reach, and sailing to regions which they could not

independently visit. They were, therefore, quite ready to gain

commercial advantages by enabling Solomon to build ships

on the Red Sea,3 and by supplying him with trained mariners.

Their share of voyages which brought back four hundred and

twenty talents of gold must have been considerable. Solomon was

so deeply interested in the venture that he visited Eloth in per-

son, perhaps to see the ships launched.4 Of the general incidents

of these voyages we are unfortunately told nothing, but in Solo-

mon's time Jewish and Phœnician sailors seem to have made

their way to the far-distant Ophir. It would be tedious and useless

to go through the list of places which have been identified with

this famous name. Keil, who has written a special treatise on,

this commerce of Solomon, maintains that Ophir is neither in

1 I cannot agree with Prof. Sayce in thinking that Jon. i. 3, Ezek. xxvi. 2,

Hosh. xii. 7, show that any real maritime connection ever sprung up be-

tween the two kingdoms.

2 Akaba, according to Ewald, means "back," and is a dialectic variation

and abbreviation of Ezion-Geber. Josephus says that in his day it was

called Berenice.

3 2 Chron. viii. 18. This is perhaps the meaning of the statement that

Hiram sent him "ships." He might have sent "ships" to Joppa as

models; otherwise the phrase is perplexing. The Jews never took kindly

to the sea-life (Jon. i. 9).

4 2 Chron. viii. 17.

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India, nor on the East Coast of Africa,1 but in the southern part

of Arabia.2 On the other hand, it is now generally identified

with *Abhîra, i.e*., the land of "the herdsmen," at the mouth of the

Indus,3 "inhabited by a people speaking the Dravidian language,

allied to the modern Tamil." Not only are the imports all of

them of Indian origin, but the names given to them, with the

exception of the gold and silver and precious stones, are wholly

unknown to Hebrew. They are Sanskrit words, which even at

this early age have undergone dialectic variation. They are the

names of ivory, apes, peacocks, and almug wood. It can be easily

understood that the inhabitants of the brooding and changeless

East were filled with astonishment when for the first time they

saw the smooth lustrous ivory used for furniture; and balus-

trades and harps and psalteries made of the rich-coloured

scented sandal wood. How much greater must have been their

amazement when they saw the inexpressible glories of the

peacock's plumage, and grew familiar with that "great iridescent

work of God"! Curiosity, and something of horror, must have

mingled with the feelings with which they first gazed on the

wrinkled, chattering apes with their dreadful caricature of the

human face and form-

"Simla quam similis, turpissima bestia nobis!"

i. The word used for "ivory" is *shen habbîm*," tooth of ele-

phants " (LXX., οδοντες ’ελεγάντινοι). *Shen*," tooth," and kar-

*noth shen* "horns of tooth," are Hebrew words, but *habhîm* is

derived from the Sanskrit *ibhas*, "elephant," and seems to come

direct from the Tamil corruption of the word, preceded by the

Semitic article.4

ii. The word rendered "apes" is *kophîm*, and is connected

with the Sanskrit *kapi*, in the Tamil form of it. The apes

Quatremére places it at Sofala (" Mem. de l'Acad. des Inscr." 1845)—

"For thee his ivory load Behemoth bore,

And far Sofala teemed with golden ore."

2 Partly because, in Gen. x. 29, Ophir is a son of Joktan.

3 Lassen, " Indische Altcrth." i. 538; Duncker, "Hist. of Antiq." ii. 265.

4 I take these particulars mainly from. Prof. Max Mtiller's " Lectures on

the Science of Language,'' 5th edit., pp. 223-228, who refers to Lassen's

"Indische Alterthumskunde," i. 537. But some would read "*Shen*,

*kabnîm*," ivory, *ebony*. Comp. Ezek. xxvii. 15. The *plural* indicates, as in

the case of *algummim*, &c., that the wood was brought in *planks*.

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meant are perhaps the long-tailed variety common in various

parts of India. Apes are mentioned here alone in the Bible.

That these apes did not come, as some have conjectured from

Gibraltar, seems clear from the fact that the Phœnician vessels

might long ago have made them familiar in Palestine if they

had been brought from Calpe. They may have been brought

in the course of the three years' voyage from South India, or

even from Ceylon.

iii. Peacocks are called *tukkiîm*.1 The word has been

understood to mean Numidian birds, delicacies from *Tucca* in

Mauretania, or another species of monkey. There is now no

doubt that it means the peacock, which in old classical Tamil

still bears the name *tôkei*, dialectically pronounced *tôgei*, a name

still used on the coasts of Malabar.2 In modern Tamil *tôkei*

only means the peacock's tail. Ivory and apes and gold might

come from other countries, but the peacock is indigenous in

India alone.

iv. Almug-trees, or, as the Book of Chronicles calls them,

algum-trees,3 have been sometimes taken for the trees which supply

the thyine or citron wood of North Africa, which was so much

in use among the luxurious Romans;4 but they are now believed

to be the red sandal wood which is peculiar to India, and of

which the temple doors of India are often made.5 The wood

would serve well for the frames of harps and psalteries, though

hardly for pillars, as it has no strength.6 In Sanskrit the sandal-

wood tree is called *valguka*, and it is. chiefly found on the coast

of Malabar.

1 Omitted by the LXX. Josephus says that the fleets brought home

"ivory and Ethiopians, and apes."

2 "It has been derived from the Sanskrit word *sikhin*, meaning, fur-

nished with a crest " (Max Mülner).

3 2 Chron. ii. 8, "Send me album-trees out of Lebanon." If it grew on

Lebanon it must be cypress.

4 Vulg., Thyina; LXX., πεύκινα, πελεκητά--

"Their sumptuous gluttonies and gorgeous feasts,

On citron table or Atlantic stone" (" Par. Regained," iv.).

5 In Rabbinical writings *almug* is coral. Josephus, like the LXX., calls

it "pine-timber," but says it is whiter and more glittering than the wood

of the fig-tree ("Antiq." viii. 7, § 7).

6 I Kings x. 12. Perhaps the word rendered "pillars" should be

"railings," as in the margin of the Revised Version. In 2 Chror ix. 11,

"stairs" seem to be meant (marg. of Authorized Version).

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Some have supposed that the Tharshish-fleets of Solomon

sailing from Joppa circumnavigated Africa, and even visited

the—

"Farthest Indian isle Taprobane,"

from which they may have derived cinnamon, the aromatic bark

of *Cinnamonium zeylanicum*. But if they got to Ceylon at all,

it is much more likely that they sailed thither direct from Ezion-

Geber, through the straits of Babel Mandeb. Phœnician ships

would hardly have braved the passage round the "Capo Tor-

mentoso," to which the Optimism of King John of Portugal gave

the title of "the Cape of Good Hope." But the three years oc-

cupied by the voyage of Solomon's mariners from the Red Sea

haven would have allowed ample time for the ships to visit

the coasts of India;1 and although it is not of course impossible

that the products named might have been obtained from nearer

places whither the names of them might also have found their

way, yet there is, to say the least, a strong probability that the

fleets of Solomon, with their Phœnician and Jewish sailors, did

get as far as the mouths of the Indus to which gold and gems

might have been brought from the North, and sandal wood,

apes, and peacocks from Southern and Central India. In this

very spot we find a place which Ptolemy names Abider, and

Hindu geographers Abhira,2 and where recent travellers still find

a race of Ahirs, "the descendants, in all probability, of the people

who sold to Hiram and Solomon their precious wares." The

identification is very ancient. In the LXX. "Ophir" is trans-

lated Sophir, and "Sofir" is in Coptic the name for India. The

Arabic Versions render it "India." In the Vulgate, Job xxvii.

16, "it cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir," is rendered,

"Non conferctur tinctis *Indiae* coloribus."3 Josephus identifies

it with the Golden Chersonnese, *i.e*., the Malay Peninsula.

1 This was achieved by Pharaoh Necho (Herodotus, iv. p. 42).

2 The identification of Ophir with Ablrtra cannot be regarded as certain,

but Lassen and Max Muller point out that besides these words here

noticed, the Biblical names for "cotton," "nerd," and " bdeliuim,” are of

Sanskrit origin, and point to early commercial intercourse between India

and Palestine, Ezekiel (xxvii. 13 ff.) is a witness for the wonderful area

reached by Tyrien commerce.

3 Max Müller *l.c*. Mr. Twistleton in the "Dictionary of the Bible,"

follows Keil in arguing that Ophir was some port in Arabia, because in

Gen. x. "Ophir" is a son of Joktan.

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The results of this wide commerce which so dazzled Solomon's

contemporaries were far more showy than solid. If it enriched

the king, it by no means seems to have enriched the people.

Even the king must have been liable to heavy losses, and his

gains, whatever they may have been, were neutralized by the

overwhelming expenses necessary to maintain the splendour

and luxury of a Court arranged upon a scale too ambitious for

the resources of his little kingdom. Every branch of the trade

seems either to have ceased or languished at the death of Solo-

mon or even earlier. The intercourse with foreign nations often

enlarges the intellectual capacities of a rising people, but this is

chiefly the case when it introduces them to new and noble forms

of literature, or improved conceptions of life. In these respects

the Hebrews of that day had little or nothing to learn. They

had been chosen for God's people, and had been isolated from

the nations around them, in order that they might keep alive the

germs of a revelation indefinitely purer than that which was

vouchsafed to any other branch of the Semitic or Aryan race.

Whatever literature may have been existing in Phœnicia or

Egypt a thousand years before Christ, it was valueless by com-

parison with the oracles of God. Israel contracted the taint of

monstrous idolatry, a despotic monarchy, and a disgraceful

polygamy, but made no real progress in the art of life. The

attempts made to revive the Red Sea commerce were spasmodic

and unsuccessful. The chief effort—that made by King Jehosha-

phat—ended in the shipwreck of all his vessels in a storm at

Ezion-Geber; and when Ahaziah, king of Israel, offered his co-

operation it was decidedly refused. Gold and silver and ivory

could be got from other quarters; sandal-wood, apes, and

peacocks, when the novelty had worn off, were not considered

worth the risk and the immense cost of their importation.

Neither the Indian wood, nor the Indian bird or animal are

once again mentioned in Scripture.1

The profits of this expedition are said to have reached 420

talents of gold. The king's annual revenue is stated at 666

talents of gold,2 which would perhaps be £ 5,000,000 of our

1 The "peacocks" in Job xxxix. 13 have no place there. The verse

should be rendered, "The wing of the female ostrich bcateth joyously: is

it a kindly pinion and plumage?"

2 The fact that Hengstenberg and others should connect this accidental

number of talents with the number of the Beast (1) in the Book of Revela-

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money. This did not include the profits of his commerce,

whether derived from "merchantmen," or (as the Revised Ver-

sion renders the word) chapmen or itinerant traffickers, or

other traders;1 or from "the tribute of the subject people;"2 or

from all the kings of the mingled people,3 or the governors of

provinces. It is amazing to think that so immense a revenue

should so soon have been dissipated. But nothing consumes

the wealth of kings so rapidly as magnificent buildings.

Although the commercial side of Solomon's activity was not

without its drawbacks, there can be no doubt that it had

counterbalancing and permanent advantages, both direct and

indirect. Among the latter may be mentioned the construction

of better roads, which is always a powerful element in advancing

civilization. We should infer that Solomon's attention was

turned in this direction from the necessities of the case. His

roads are not specially mentioned in Scripture, but Josephus

tells us that "he did not neglect the care of the ways, but laid

a causeway of black stone along the roads which led to Jeru-

salem which was the royal city, both to render them easy for

travellers, and to manifest the grandeur of his riches and

government." The black stone was perhaps basalt. It is true

that in modern Palestine there are scarcely any traces of such

roads, but the same remark applies to the great military road

from north to south constructed by the Romans a thousand

years later.4

tion, a number which, like the 888 of the name Jesus in the Sibylline books,

is decided simply by the fact that the numerical value of "Neron Kesar"

(the Emperor Nero), in Hebrew letters is 666 —shows the wildly absurd

principles, or no principles, which have dominated for so many thousands

of years in the so-called "interpretation" of Scripture.

1 The "spice merchants" of our Authorized Version in I Kings x. 15 is

a mistake.

2 LXX., I Kings x.

3 Where by mistake the Authorized Version reads "Arabia"; LXX., τῶν   
βασιλέων τοῦ πέραν.

4 See Grätz, i. 323.

CHAPTER XI.

SOLOMON IN ALL HIS GLORY.

Visitors and presents—Royal state—Solomon, on a progress, as described

by Josephus—As described in the Song of Songs—A nuptial psalm

(Ps. xlv.) —Allusion to Solomon by our Lord—Other allusions—His

vory throne—Visit of the Queen of Sheba—Traditions about the Queen

of Sheba—Legends of her visit and questions—Her admiration of his

buildings and his magnificence—Interchange of presents—Naturaliza-

tion of the balsam-plant—Our Lord's allusion—Summary of Solomon's

wealth and grandeur.

HISTORY, Poetry, and Legend combine to magnify the splen-

dour of Solomon. Many visitors flocked yearly to Jerusalem

to witness the magnificence of the great king, to see his temple,

to hear his wisdom, and to admire his foreign curiosities; and,

according to the Eastern custom, none of these came empty-

handed. Some of them brought presents of gold and of silver;

others brought rich garments from Babylon and Tyre; others

brought armour,1 spices, horses, and mules. The habits of the

Court were completely changed. Saul, in his rustic kingliness,

even David in his warlike simplicity, would have gazed with

astonishment on this outburst of Egyptian gorgeousness. But

Solomon profited in some respects by the fact that both Egypt

and Assyria during his day were under temporary eclipse,

so that he filled an unusually large space in the eyes of his

contemporaries.

Even David and Absalom had been content to ride on

mules, as Solomon himself had done when he was first ap-

pointed king. But now he never rode forth except in one of

1 1 Kings x. 25; the word is of doubtful meaning.

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"Pharaoh's chariots," which were so elegant and bright as to be

compared to a lovely maiden.1 The prosaic narrative of Jose-

phus and the soft poetry of the Canticles alike describe the

traditional reminiscences of the king's pomp and luxury as he

went to visit his well-watered garden at Etam, or was carried

in his luxurious palanquin to his summer retreats amid the hills

of myrrh and the leopard-haunted woods of Lebanon.2 Jose-

phus tells us that when he started from Jerusalem for his

gardens, he would ascend one of his glittering chariots at

early dawn to ride down the green windings of the Wady

Urtâs. The chariot was doubtless one of the choicest of

those which had been imported from Egypt, and resembled the

richly-chased and brilliantly-coloured cars in which we see the

kings of Egypt represented at peaceful ceremonies in their

temple frescoes. It was drawn by swift and stately horses,

magnificently caparisoned, and was followed by a train of

archers, riding on war-horses, in purple attire. They were

youths chosen to be of the king's bodyguard for their beauty

and stature, and "their long black hair flowed behind them,

powdered with gold-dust, which glittered in the sun as they

galloped along after their master."3

Yet more brilliant is the picture delineated in the Song of

Songs. Leaning from her lattice, the lovely Shulamite sees

a dim cloud coming up from the pasture-land, which seems

to breathe of myrrh and frankincense. It is indeed the

smoke of delicious spices burnt before the advance of a royal

visitor. As it approaches nearer she recognizes the flashing

armour of the Gibborim, or "mighty-men," who form the

king's bodyguard. Their swords are girded on their thighs,

and sixty of the most valiant of them are ranged around a

chariot-litter to protect Solomon from the brigands who might

attack him in the night. As the cavalcade approaches, she sees

the splendour of the royal palanquin. It is made of cedar

wood, its pillars are of silver, its floor of gold, its cushions of

purple, its carpet of rich embroideries, woven for as a

token of love by the maidens of Jerusalem. Inside it sits the

king himself, wearing his royal crown, the jewelled crown which

1 Cant. i. 9.

2 2 Chron. xi. 6; Cant. iv. 8; Robinson, "Palestine," i. 168.

3 Josephus, "Antiq." viii. 7, § 3.

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his mother placed upon his head on the day when he married

the Princess of Egypt. Go forth, ye daughters of Sion, and

gaze upon King Solomon!1

In manlier tones than those of the Song of Songs a

psalmist describes another phase of this many-sided splen-

dour in what is called "a song of loves," written for the

sons of Korah to a tune called "Lilies." He describes the

king as fairer than the sons of men, his lips full of grace, his

life enriched with blessings. With his sword upon his thigh

he rides prosperously forth, capable of terrible deeds, but

only in the cause of truth, mercy, and righteousness. His

arrows shall be in the heart of his enemies; his Divine throne

and righteous sceptre shall be for ever. Because he has loved

righteousness and hated iniquity God has anointed him with

the oil of gladness above all other kings. His garments breathe

forth perfumes of Arabian and Indian spices, and music makes

him glad out of his ivory palaces. Among his loved ones are

the daughters of kings, and pre-eminent among them stands at

his right hand the queen, as in a blaze of light, clothed in gar-

ments richly covered with the wrought gold of Ophir, in which

she has been carried from the inner palace on Tapestries of

needlework, surrounded by her virgin companions, amid a

burst of rejoicing melodies. The gazing multitude exult in her

1 Cant. iii. 6-11. We may borrow a few illustrative lines from Mr.

Browning's "Popularity "

"Who has not heard how Tyrian shells

Enclosed the blue, that dye of dye,

Whereof one drop worked miracles,

And coloured like Astarte's eyes

Raw silk the merchant sells?

Enough to furnish Solomon

Such hangings for his cedar-house,

That, when gold-robed he took the throne,

In that abyss of blue, the Spouse

Might swear his presence shone.

Most like the centre-spike of gold

Which burns deep in the bluebells womb,

What time, with ardours manifold,

The bee goes singing to her groom,

Drunken and over-bold."

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beauty, in her submissiveness, in the love for her husband which

has caused her to forget her Egyptian home. Kneeling before

her the rich among the people entreat her favour with presents,

and among them are the representatives of Tyre with their

purple merchandize. The poet promises that in place of the

father she has left the queen shall have children whom she may

make princes in all lands, and he ends with the prophecy that

the king's name shall be remembered in all generations, and

praised among all peoples.1

And when our Lord sat on the green hill slope of Kurn Hat-

tin, beside the Galilean lake, and saw the fields around Him

bright with the scarlet anemone and the golden amaryllis, and

wished to teach the people the lesson of trust in God, He said

that these "lilies of the field" toil not neither do they spin,

"and yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not

arrayed like one of these."

We have already seen that this personal magnificence seems

to have been adopted in imitation of the Courts of Egypt

and Tyre. Of the splendour of the Egyptian kings we

have ample proofs in the pictures and inscriptions of their

monuments. In the prophet Ezekiel we find descriptions of

Tyre and her kings, which read like a page from the story of

Solomon. The king of Tyre is reminded that he is a man

and not a god, though he set his heart as the heart of God,

and was wiser than Daniel, and no secret was hid from him.

"Thou sealest up the measure, full in wisdom, and perfect in

beauty. Thou wast in Eden, the garden of God; every pre-

cious stone was thy covering, the ruby, the topaz, the diamond,

the beryl, the onyx, the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, the

carbuncle, and gold; the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy

pipes was in thee Then vast the anointed cherub that

covereth; and I set thee so that thou wast upon the holy

mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down in the midst

of the stones of fire." If Solomon made silver to be as stones,

so Tyre "built herself strongholds and heaped up silver as the

dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets."2

1 Ps. xlv. Delitzsch refers the psalm to Joram, "the son of Jehosha-

phat, the second Solomon of Jewish history,'' and thinks that it refers to

his nuptials with Athaliah. Dean Perowne, and most others, refer it to

Solomon.

2 Ezek. xxvii., xxviii.; Zech. ix. 3.

SOLOMON IN ALL HIS GLORY. 133

Yet another picture may be derived from the Book of Eccle-

siastes, with its allusions to Solomon's great works—his houses

and vineyards, his gardens and paradises, his pools and fruit-

trees, his hosts of slaves, his herds of cattle, his men-singers

and women-singers, and musical instruments, and chariots, and

palanquins, and all the delights of the sons of men. But the

best of all his glory was that, for many years, the people were

happy with a natural prosperity, and so shared in the blessings

of wealth and peace. The "ships of Tarshish" brought to

Solomon "the abundance of the sea;" the kings of Tarshish

and the Isles brought presents, and the kings of Sheba and

Saba offered gifts; the long lines of camels and dromedaries,

laden with gold and incense, passed through the streets; the

flocks of Kedar and the rams of Nebaioth were slain for the

royal table; sons of strangers built the palace walls, and tribu-

taries brought their silver and their gold. But the people had

yet more legitimate reason for their pride in their monarch in

the early years of his reign. Peace flourished out of the earth

throughout a dominion which extended from sea to sea, and

even on the mountain-tops the corn shook like the cedar-

boughs of Lebanon. Like rain upon the mown grass, and

showers upon the dry land, his justice and beneficence refreshed

the poor of his people.1 Judah and Israel were at one. Ephraim

did not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim, but they alike

dwelt safely each under his own vine and his own fig-tree from

Dan even to Beersheba in the days of Solomon, drinking, and

making merry,2 and multipying like the sands of the sea, so that

the very names given to the children indicated the weal and

growth of the people.

No account of Solomon in all his glory could pass over the

mention of his "throne of royal state" so famous in Eastern

legend. It resembled, and perhaps surpassed, the thrones

of the Pharaohs which we see on the monuments of Egypt.

It was a throne of ivory inlaid with gold of Uphaz. It was

ascended by six steps, on each side of which stood a golden

lion, the lion of the tribe of Judah, and the natural emblem

of sovereignty. Besides these twelve, each of the arms of

the chair was guarded by a golden lion, and the king's feet

rested on a golden footstool. According to the Rabbis the

1 Ps. lxii. 2 I Kings iv. 20-25.

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rounded back of the chair was formed by the figure of a bull—

meant, doubtless, for the bull of Ephraim—of which the head

looked backwards.1 Upon the throne he sat to give judgment,

robed, no doubt, in purple—

"Livelier than Melibœan or the grain

Of Sarra worn by kings and heroes old

In time of truce;"

while his magnificence only served to set forth the proud per-

sonal beauty which seems to have been a common inheritance

of the sons of David, and which made him "the chiefest among

ten thousand."

The culminating point of this career of magnificence was the

visit of the Queen of Sheba, or as she is called in the Gospel of St.

Matthew, "the Queen of the South."2 According to Josephus

the name of this queen was Nikaule, and he apparently iden-

tifies her with the Nitokris of Herodotus,3 regarding her as a

Queen of Egypt and Ethiopia.4 Hence the Æthiopian Christians

have invented a legend that her home was Makeda, and that

she became one of the wives of Solomon, and had by him a son

named Melimelek, the ancestor of their line of kings.5 The

Arabs, on the other hand, have given her the name of Balkis,

and surrounded her story with endless legends.6 There

can be no doubt that Sheba (שְּׁבָא)—which is quite different from

Seba (סְבָא), the name given to Meroe and Ethiopia—was a

country in Arabia Felix, famous for its traffic in gold, frankin-

cense, and precious stones. The queen, whose country was

affected by Solomon's commerce, heard of "his fame concerning

1 This may be due to some mistake between צָגוֹל "round," and צֶגֶל "a

calf;" whence the reading of the LXX., προτομαὶ μόσχων, "busts of

calves." For lions on thrones see Layard's "Nineveh," ii. 30. Of course the

throne could only have been veneered with ivory, like the "ivory palaces "

and towers of Ps. xlv. 8; Cant. iv. 4.

2 Matt. xii. 42. 3 Herodotus, ii, 100.

4 Josephus, "Antiq." viii. 6, 5.

5 Ludolf, "Hist. Ethiop." ii, 3. The Ethiopians call him Menilehek,

which has no true derivation in Ethiopic; and also *ibn-el-haqîm*, "son of

the wise" (Ludolf, l.c.).

6 Qur'ân, Sur. xxvii. 20-45. For some of the legends about her see

D'Herhelot, s.v. Balkis, Weil, "Bibl. Leg." 194-211.

SOLOMON IN ALL HIS GLORY. 135

the name of the Lord;"1 heard of him, doubtless as a king who

had built the great Temple to Jehovah, and perhaps heard the

rapidly formed Eastern legends about the power which he ac-

quired from his devotion to the mysterious, unpronounced, in-

communicable Name. Now the wit and wisdom of the East is, to

a large extent, enshrined in proverbs, and tested by riddles and

the solution of dark sayings;2 and the Queen of Sheba was so

deeply stirred by the rumours that came to her, that she deter-

rained to see this marvellous king and to test his vaunted wisdom

with hard questions. Deep, indeed, must have been her yearn-

ing, and great his fame which induced a secluded Arabian queen

to break through the immemorial customs of her dreamy land,

and to put forth the energy required for braving the burdens

and perils of so long a journey across the wilderness. Yet this

she undertook, and carried it out with safety. Jerusalem long

remembered the "very great train of her camels bearing spices

and very much gold, and precious stones." She at once began

to try whether the king's wit and wisdom corresponded to the

fame of them. There is nothing impossible in some at least of

the persistent legends about the nature of her questions. One

of her tests was to dress a number of girls and boys in the same

dress, and to bid Solomon tell the boys from the girls. He

ordered basins of water to be brought, and bade them wash

their hands. The boys from habit at once put their hands in

the water, the girls stopped to turn back their sleeves. The

queen then held in her hands two bouquets--one of real and

one of artificial flowers, and asked Solomon, without moving

from his throne, to distinguish between them. He ordered the

lattice to he opened; the bees came in, and began to settle on

the real flowers.3

When she had tested his ready discrimination and acumen

she "communed with him of all that was in her heart," and

1 The expression is very frequent in I Kings viii. 17, 18, 1-9, 20, 29, &c.

Of the Fathers, Origen and Augustine make her a queen of Ethiopia;

Justin, Cyprian, and others, more correctly, of Southern Arabia. See

Pineda, "De rebus Salomonis," v. 14.

2 Josephus said that she sought some mitigation of intellectual difficulties

—λῦσαι τὸ απορον τῆς διανοίας δεηθεῖσα. Comp. Matt. xii. 42.

3 In the Second Targum on the Book of Esther we read that Solomon

received the queen seated on a throne upon a floor of glass. She thought

that he was sitting in the midst of water.

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Solomon satisfied to the full all her desire for knowledge. After

that he showed her his palace and its surroundings. She saw

him seated on the unrivalled lion-throne of gold and ivory, dis-

pensing justice in the pillared hall of cedar. She saw him seated

at the banquet, at his table1 covered with the richest delicacies

brought from distant lands in boundless profusion. She saw the

vessels and lavers of pure gold,2 and the goblets for wine, the

great guests seated at the table, and the retinue of gorgeously-

attired attendants,3 and the various stringed instruments framed

in aromatic wood. She saw him ride abroad in his Egyptian

chariot among his bodyguard. She could not, indeed, enter

the courts of the Temple, or examine its molten sea, and its

carvings of palm and lotus and cherubim, for she was a heathen;

but she saw the golden shields carried before him as he went

thither in state, and the mound across the valley, and the gilded

sandal-wood staircase by which he ascended to the House of

the Lord.4 Doubtless, too, she saw the foreign curiosities—the

rare perfumes, the wrinkled apes, the gleaming peacocks sun-

ning their magnificent plumage about the courts and by the

garden fountains. She was struck dumb with amazement by

all that she had witnessed; "there was no more spirit in her."

She confessed that she had been unable to believe the rumours

which had told of the king's wisdom and prosperity, but that

the reality exceeded the fame. Happy were the servants and

courtiers who stood by him, and heard his wisdom;5 blessed

was the Lord his God who delighted in him, and who out of

love for Israel had given them such a king to do judgment and

justice among them.

The visit ended in an interchange of royal presents. The

1 The Gothic kings of Spain had a golden table which passed for the

table of Solomon.

2 1 Kings x. 21 ; LXX.,λουτηρες χρυσοῖ.

3 The word rendered " cupbearers " means *repotatoria*, the whole drink-

ing apparatus. The Hebrew has "-the sitting of his servants (i.e., great

officers), and the standing of his ministers."

4 The words rendered "and his ascent" (I Kings x. 5, ועליתו), are

possibly a corruption of ועלתו, "and his *burnt-offering* which he offered in

the House of the Lord,'' as in the margin of the Revised Version; and

as we read in 2 Chron. ix. 4.; LXX., τὴν ολοκαύτωσιν, τὰ ολοκαυτώ

ματα. The mistake, however, may be in the latter passage and not in

this.

5 The Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic here read " happy are *thy wives*."

SOLOMON IN ALL HIS GLORY. 137

queen gave to Solomon a hundred and twenty talents of gold,1

and precious stones, and very great store of such spices from

"Araby the Blest," as were never equalled at any period of the

kingdom. Among these spices was some of the real Arabian

balsam, and Josephus tells us the interesting fact that, in con-

sequence of her visit, the balsam-plant was naturalized in the

famous gardens at Jericho,2 which many centuries later still

continued to yield a large income to the Herodian princes.

Solomon was not to be outdone in munificence by the Arabian

queen. Beside the usual return of presents "he gave unto her

all her desire, whatsoever she asked," so that she returned with

a glad heart to her native land.

Her visit was by no means the only one which made this reign

remarkable, for "all the earth sought to Solomon to hear his

wisdom which God had put in his heart." These were forgotten,

but the visit of the Queen of Sheba was immortalized by a

thousand legends, and remembered to the latest generations.

The allusions to King Solomon in the New Testament are ex-

ceedingly few, but in one of these our Lord draws a lesson from

the bright example of this queen. "The queen of the south,"

He said, "shall rise up in the judgment with this generation,

and shall condemn it; for she came from the uttermost parts of

the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a

greater than Solomon is here."

We cannot be sure of the date of various sayings in the Book

of Proverbs, but they indicate the immense development of

kingly power. Superhuman insight and a Divine power of

judgment are attributed to kings.3 And when we read of the

dizzy elevation to which kings were upraised by the popular

submission, we can well understand that even a true and noble

nature could hardly fail to degenerate amid the isolation of such

splendour.4

The emphatic summary of all this magnificence is that "the

king made silver," or, according to the Greek translation, "gold

and silver," to be in Jerusalem as stones, and the cedars made

1 Josephus ("Antiq." viii. 6, 6) says, with more probability, twenty

talents. Even this would be £12,000. The reading hundred and twenty

may be an accidental reminiscence of ix. 14.

2 Josephus, " Antiq." viii. 6, § 6.

3 Prov. xvi. 10, xx. 8, xxv. 2; 2 Sam. xiv.

4 Prov. xxx. 24-31 ; xvi. 14, 15; xxi. 1; xxv. 3.

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he to be as the sycomore trees that are in the Shefelah1 for

multitude. The description is a hyperbole, but it marks the

prosaic fact, otherwise traceable, that a rapid and serious depre-

ciation took place in the value of silver. In former days ten

shekels had been enough yearly salary for a Levite minister, and

that Levite no less a person than Jonathan, the grandson of

Moses; now two hundred shekels was the pay of a vineyard

keeper, and six hundred shekels was paid for a single chariot.2

1 Authorized Version, "the vale"; Revised Version, "the lowland"

(1 Kings x. 27).

2 See Judg. xvii. 10; Cant. viii. 11.

CHAPTER. XII.

THE DECLINE OF SOLOMON.

An unsubstantial pageant—Solomon's heart not "perfect"—Two deadly

evils—What a king ought *not* to do: 1. The multiplication of horses;

2. Accumulations of treasure; 3. Polygamy—Number of his wives—

Evils of polygamy—Solomon's apostasy—Moral deterioration—In-

fluence of strange wives—Unreal tolerance: 1. Worship of Ashtoreth;

2. Of Milcom; 3. Of Chemosh—Idol shrines on "the mount of corrup-

tion"—Evil effects of extravagant luxury—Grievous bondage felt by the

people—Expense of maintaining the Court—A Divine warning—The

growth of adversaries—Degeneracy of the people, and of the youth—

Illustrated in the advice of the "young men" to Rehoboam—Torpor of

the priesthood—Silence of the prophets—Jeroboam; his early life, his

rapid rise, his politic bearing—Ahijah the Shilonite—Symbol of the

disruption of the kingdom—Jeroboam begins to plot and is forced to

fly into Egypt—Alienation of Egypt under Shishak I.—Close of the

reign—Gifts and character of the king—Three stages in his career:

1. His early prosperity; 2. The zenith of his glory; 3. His decline-

"Vanity of vanities"—Arabian legend of his death—His life less in-

teresting than that of David—Doubts expressed as to his salvation-

Orcagna—Vathek—Dante—Services which Solomon rendered —The

darker aspect of his reign—The *true* Jedidiah.

THE glory of Solomon vanished like an unsubstantial pageant,

and left nothing behind it but a vague memory. The true golden

age of the Jewish past was far more the age of their hero-poet

David, with its outburst of song and golden deeds, than the

Byzantine gorgeousness of Solomon, which the sequel proved

to be splendid with the colourings of decay.

The Book of Kings, with a play upon his name, which if

intentional has a certain grimness of its own, says that when he

was old—though he could not have been more than fifty-five—his

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wives turned away his heart," and his heart was not perfect

(שָׁלֵם *shalêm*) with Jehovah."1 The Book of Chronicles, after

dwelling on the ideal of his glory, his building of the Temple,

his prayers, and his commerce, refers to the prophets who had

acted as his historiographers, and adds only that he slept with

his fathers.

Two deadly evils lurked behind the superficial brilliancy, and

wrought incredible harm to king and people—the curse of poly-

gamy and the curse of despotism. The primitive simplicity of

the monarchy was nobler, though less showy, than this irides-

cence of moral stagnancy and luxurious decline.

There must have been many who watched with unfavourable

eyes the displacement of national simplicity by alien magnifi-

cence. Strange and apparently universal as was the desuetude

into which the provisions of the Mosaic law had fallen, and little

as Solomon seems to have been conscious of the obliteration of

Mosaic conceptions which was manifest in his proceedings,

it is clear from the Book of Deuteronomy that he was doing in

every direction the very things which were least in accordance

with the true ideal of kingly power among the Chosen People.2

Three things had been specially forbidden to the theocratic

sovereign, and all these three things Solomon conspicuously

did. If we judged by that passage alone we should think

that Solomon was held up as the example of everything which

a king ought not to be.

1. He had been forbidden to multiply horses, or to send

caravans to Egypt for the purpose of procuring horses, because

intercourse with Egypt was held to be undesirable, and God had

said, "Ye shall henceforth no more return that way." Yet Solo-

moil's traffic in horses, and the sims for which he procured them

for the kings of the Hittites and of Syria were among the most

memorable features of his land commerce.

2. He had been forbidden to aggrandize himself by excessive

accumulations of silver and gold; and Solomon had made it a

part of his glory to make silver as stones in Jerusalem, so that

it was nothing accounted of because of the abundance of gold

of Ophir.

1 There may be no special paronomasia to the name *Shelomoh*, for the

same phrase occurs in 1 Kings viii. 60, It is the root of *Islam, Moslem.*

2 Deut. xvii. 16, 17.

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3. He had been forbidden to multiply wives to himself that

his heart turn not away; and he loved many strange women

besides the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Amo-

rites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites.1 And the prophesied

result had followed to this

"Uxorious king, whose heart though large,

Beguiled by fair idolatresses, fell

To idols foul.''

It has been charitably supposed by some that these wives and

concubines were regarded in the light of hostages, and that their

multiplication from among heathen nations with which affinity

had been expressly forbidden,2 was due rather to the thirst for

power than to the love of pleasure. The sacred historians give

no opening for any such palliating conclusion. The most ancient

and trustworthy of them says expressly that "Solomon clave

unto them in love."

The number given might seem not only unparalleled, but even

incredible. He had, we are told, 700 wives and 300 concubines.

We must remember that Solomon was only the king of a very

small and comparatively unimportant kingdom, yet this number

of 1000 inmates in a single seraglio is greater than that recorded

of the most absolute potentates in the greatest kingdoms of the

world. The largest harem of which we read either in ancient or

modern days was that of Darius Codomannus, and of him we

are only told that he had one wife and 329 concubines.3 It is hard

to suppose that the Canaanite and surrounding tribes could have

furnished seven hundred "princesses," and still harder to imagine

how Solomon's palace, had its dimensions been tenfold greater

than they were, could have found room in their women's apart-

ments for a harem of one thousand, with their very numerous

necessary attendants.4 We cannot venture to alter the text, but

1 Wives from the two last nations were explicitly forbidden (Exod. xxxiv.

12-10). In Deut. vii. 3, marriages with Canaanites are expressly forbidden,

yet Salmon married Rahab, David married Maacah.

2 Exod. xxxiv. 11-16; Deut. vii. 1-4; Ezra ix. 2, x. 3; Nehem. xiii. 23.

3 Parmen. *ap*. Athen., "Deipn." iii. 3. According to Curtius there were

with him "*regiae pellices trecentæ sexaginta*," "Vit. Alex." iii. 3. Comp.

Rosentniiller, "A. u. N. Morgenland," iii. 181. A scarabæus of Amen-

hote (p. iii.) mentions that he had more than 317 wives, Brugsch, "Egypt."

iii. 607 (E. tr.).

4 1 Kings xxii. 9; 2 Kings viii. 6, ix. 32, xx. 18; Jer. xxix. 2, xxxiv. 19;

Esther i. 10, &c.

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we must either suppose textual corruption, or some immense

Oriental hyperbole, or the inclusion of all the female attendants

in the sum-total. Probably for seven hundred we should read

seventy; and in any case the statement conflicts with that of

Canticles, where we read that Solomon had sixty wives and eighty

concubines, to which, however, are added "and virgins without

number." It may indeed be truly said that we should expect a late

poem to be far less historical than an early prose history; but, on

the other hand, it is in the fancies of the poem that we should

look for exaggeration rather than in a sober narrative. The

notice in the Canticles points to a possible source of the most

deadly unpopularity. If all true servants of the ancient theocracy

could hardly have failed to look with deep disfavour on Solo-

mon's polygamy, how much would that disfavour have been

intensified among the Chosen People if their own daughters were

doomed to the gilded dishonour of an immense seraglio! The

story of the Canticles, while it points in this direction, happily

shows us also that there were maidens in Israel who preferred

a poor and humble love to a languid share in the society rather

than the heart of a luxurious king.

There can hardly be a doubt that, among other abuses and

degradations, eunuchs made their disastrous appearance at the

Court of Solomon. "Such insects," says an old historian,

"gather in such palaces like flies in a summer day." In a large

harem they become all but inevitable, and are therefore found

wherever that form of polygamy exists. It is true that they are

mentioned but once, and that only in the Court of David, where

the Authorized and Revised Versions read "officers" (1 Chron.

xxviii. 1). On the other hand, Samuel had distinctly mentioned

them among the crowd of rapacious plunderers whose greed

their kings would have to satisfy (1 Sam. viii. 15). In later

reigns, if the word *sarîs* is to be understood literally, they became

a phenomenon as common as they were discreditable in the

Israelite as in the Persian courts:1 But at the best the lives spent

in Eastern courts and harems gives occasion to every form of

immorality, misery, and *ennui*. It provokes the jealous and

raging rivalries of aimless women demoralized by luxury and

1 Cant. vi. 8. Rehoboam (2 Chron. xi. 21) had 18 wives and 60 concu-

bines; but whereas Solomon only left (so far as we know) one son and two

daughters, Rehoboam had 28 sons and 60 daughters. The Talmud limits

a king's wives and concubines to 18 (Otho, "Lex. Rabb." p. 518).

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idleness, who have nothing to do but to quarrel with each

other, and to intrigue for the royal favour with their mean,

pampered, and dehumanized attendants.1

It is a remarkable fact that the highly-eulogistic Chronicler

passes over Solomon's fall entirely, and makes no mention either

of the shameful number of his wives or of his strange apostasy.

For an apostasy we must call it, as St. Augustine does. In his

early days, "he loved the Lord," but the historian tells us dis-

tinctly, that when Solomon was old "his wives turned away his

heart after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with

the Lord his God as was the heart of David his father."2

The fact that this backsliding is said to have taken place

when he was old, whereas he could not have been more, and

was probably less, than sixty years old even when he died, seems

to show that the force of his will was much broken by enervating

self-indulgence. Like Samson, he had become too weak to

withstand the constant pressure of feminine importunity. But

besides this we must allow for the sort of latitudinarianism and

sense of political expediency which must of necessity have been

introduced into such a mind as that of Solomon by incessant

intercourse with heathen dynasts, and the ambition to imitate

their ways. Possibly some tendency to tamper with magic and

sorcery, and to pry into the secrets of the future, may have

added another element of deterioration.3 Sensuality led to

religious indifference, and indifference to absorbing worldli-

ness, which ended in the most daring violations of God's most

emphatic and express commands. It had been sufficiently

objectionable to contract alliances with idolaters, and to make

no effort to induce their acceptance of a purer faith. But if

this laxity might for special reasons have been condoned; if

1 See Oort, "Bible for Young People," iii. 48 (E. tr.).

2 There is a curious piece of casuistry in the Talmud: "Whoever says that

Solomon sinned is decidedly wrong. . . . His wives turned away his heart *to*

*walk* after other gods, but he did not go. . . . But what of 1 Kings xi. 7?

He *intended* to build a high place for Chemosh, but did not build it " (Shab-

bath, f. 56. 2; comp. Sanhedrin, f. 55. 56). All that can be said for Solo-

mon is that he is not stated personally to have "served" other gods.

3 Suidas (s.v. ’Εζεκίας) quoted by Dean Plumptre, says that Hezekiah

found (magic?) formula for the cure of disease engraved on the posts of

the Temple, and destroyed them because they tended to idolatry. The

Dean thinks that this may be the clue to the severe condemnation of Asa

for "seeking to the physicians" and not to the Lord (2 Chron. xvi. 12).

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psalmists exquisitely sang his nuptials with Pharaoh's daughter,

and so far as we know, no prophet interposed; the least, surely,

which could have been expected was that the rites of heathen-

dom for these alien queens should only have been permitted

in the most private manner, and with the least offensive forms.

So far was this from being the case, that though Solomon prob-

ably continued his three great annual visits to the Temple, he

not only tolerated, but encouraged, and that openly, the exercise

of heathen rites in close neighbourhood to the Temple which he

might well seem to have built in vain. We are able to mark in

this respect a distinct degeneracy. At first he had been uneasy

at the mere presence of Pharaoh's daughter in the City of

David because it had been hallowed by the presence of the Ark

of God.1 For her he seems to have built no temples.2 In all

probability she died early, for after the completion of the palace

we hear of her no more. But for the sake of his other wives he

lent to idolatry the sanction not only of tolerance, not only of

acquiescence, but of direct participation in the most revolting

forms of superstition. The bare mention of the fact in the

Book of Kings affords us no measure of the depth of his fall. If

we are to take the statement literally he offered burnt-offerings

and thank-offerings on stated occasions during all his life upon

the great brazen altar, and also burnt ,incense. The case is

thus made much worse.3 The worship of Jehovah was rigidly

and jealously exclusive whenever it was in any way sincere.

But Solomon's devotions became not merely eclectic, but were

a syncretism of the most glaringly contrasted and violently

opposing elements, between which no union was for a moment

possible. Like the dregs of a mixed population which the kings

of Assyria placed in Samaria—an ignorant multitude, who

"feared the Lord and served their own gods"4—so Solomon,

1 2 Chron. viii. 11.

2 Some have even supposed that she became a proselyte. The Talmud

however says, "When Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh, she

brought to him a thousand different kinds of musical instruments, and

*taught him the chants to the various idols* (Shabbath, f. 56. 2).

3 1 King ix. 25. The verse suggests several unanswered questions. Does

the "three times in a year" refer to the three yearly feasts of Passover,

Pentecost, and Tabernacles? is it intended that the king performed these

sacerdotal acts--even the burning of incense—with his own hands? What

is the exact meaning of the obscure phrase, "upon the altar " (Revised

Version "therewith")? 4 2 Kings xvii. 33.

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but with infinitely less excuse, worshipped alike in the Temple of

Jehovah and in that of Chemosh, and that not only in secrecy, but

publicly on the hill opposite his own palace and Temple.1 In

addition to all the other influences which led him astray, we may

perhaps account the exaltation of a knowledge which, when it

ceased to be humble and sanctified, inflated him with a vain

sense of superiority to what he may have begun to disdain as the

provincial prejudices of his own people.2 Beguiled by the conceit

of a cold intellectualism, and blinded by the dizzy solitude of an

autocrat, the author of the spiritual and impassioned prayer at

the Dedication of the Temple sanctioned the hideous nature-

worship which degenerated into the apotheosis of cruelty and

lust. For Solomon "went after"—in other words, idolatrously

worshipped 3—Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians.4 This

was the goddess

"Whom the Phœnicians call.

Astarte, queen of heaven, with crescent horns,

To whose bright image nightly by the moon

Sidonian virgins paid their vows and songs."

One of the chief towns of Bashan was called after her, Ashtaroth

Karnaim, "Ashtoreth of the two horns," or "the crescent moon."5

It is needless to attempt to characterize her cultus, which in dif-

ferent Semitic nations assumed widely different forms. We may,

however, venture to hope that this adoration of the moon and of

the heavenly hosts assumed a purer form among the early

Phœnicians than it did in later ages, and among other peoples.

In the form of it which Solomon permitted, and in which he

even joined, it can hardly have been stained with the worst

aberration which Augustine describes as existing among the

Carthaginian colonists of Tyre.6 A late tradition says that

among the wives of Solomon was a daughter of Hiram, and it

may have been in her honour that a spurious toleration was

accorded to an unholy cult.7 However that may be, Solomon

1 2 Kings xxiii. 13. 2 1 Cor. viii. 1, "Knowledge puffeth up,"

3 Justin Martyr preserves a tradition ("Dial. c. Tryph." 34) that Solomon

visited Sidon, and there for the sake of a wife, joined in idolatrous worship.

4 Comp. Deut. xi. 28; xiii. 2, &c.

5 On this worship of the heavenly bodies compare Job xxxi. 26-28.

Astarte was the Meleketh, the heavenly maiden or queen.

6 Aug, "De Civ. Dei." ii. 3.

7 Jer. vii. 18, xliv. 19; 1 Sam. xxxi. 10; 1 Kings xiv. 24; Hos. iv, 14, &c.

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could never again utter the appeal of the more faithful

Job—

"If I beheld the sun when it shined,

Or the moon when walking in brightness,

And my heart hath been secretly enticed,

And my mouth bath kissed my hand, .. .

I should have denied God that is above."

If the worship of Ashtoreth was inevitably connected to a

greater or less extent with impurity, that of "Milcom the

abomination of the Ammonites" was deeply dyed with blood.

Lust, as in all forms of Pagan idolatry, stood hard by hate.

There can be little doubt that Milcom is but a diminutive and

perhaps endearing form of Moloch, unless the termination be

taken for a pronominal suffix, meaning, "their king."1 For it

is clear that the Milcom of 1 Kings xi. 5, cannot be a different

deity from the Molech of ver. 7, each of which idols is called

"the abomination of the children of Ammon."2 He was—to

quote once again the accurate description of our great poet,

which is but a splendid reproduction in verse of the "De Dis

Syriis" of his learned contemporary, Selden—

"Moloch, horrid king, besmeared with blood

Of human sacrifice and parents' tears,

Though for the noise of drums and timbrels loud

Their children's cries unheard, that passed through fire

To his grim idol. Him the Ammonite

Worshipped in Rabba and her watery plain

In Argob and in Basan, to the stream

Of Utmost Arnon. Nor content with such

Audacious neighbourhood the wisest heart

Of Solomon he led by fraud to build

His temple right against the temple of God,

On that opprobrious hill; and made his grove

The pleasant valley of Hinnom, Tophet thence

And black Gehenna called, the type of hell."

Almost all the ancient idolatries were various forms of sun and

star worship. As Ashtoreth was the "Queen of Heaven," and

typified the soft splendours of the night, so Moloch is the King

1 So Gesenius, s.v. He is called Malcham in Jer. xlix. 1.

2 Movers, however ("Phöniz." i. 324), distinguishes between them, and

Ewald with his usual positiveness says, "there is no doubt that Molech

was different from Milcom."

THE DECLINE OF SOLOMON. 147

who represents the raging fierceness of the noon and of summer

heat, the scorching and terrible Power whom it seemed natural

to appease with blood.1 If therefore Solomon permitted and

joined in the worship of this frightful deity, we do not know in

what it could have consisted except in those rites of which the

Scriptures speak with the most deep abhorrence.2

3. The only other deity expressly mentioned as having been

honoured by Solomon with a High Place was Chemosh, the abomi-

nation of Moab. To his worship the Moabites seem to have been

so exclusively devoted, that they are called by Jeremiah, "the

people of Chemosh."3 It is an interesting confirmation of this fact

that his name occurs frequently on the celebrated Moabite

Stone, and since Carchemish means "the fort of Chemosh,"

his worship must have been widely spread among the Hittite

tribes. He too, like Milcom, was a sun-god, and perhaps also a

war-god, and was often propitiated with bloody rites. On the

Moabite Stone those who have been slain in battle are spoken

of as " an offering to Chemosh."4 Milton identifies him with

Baal Peor—

"Peor, his other name when he enticed

Israel in Sittim, on their march from Nile

To do him wanton rites, which cost them woe.

Yet thence his lustful orgies he enlarged

Even to that hill of scandal by the grove

Of Moloch homicide; lust hard by hate

Till good Josiah drove them thence to hell."5

This identification is, however, a mistake into which Milton

was misled by Selden, as he in his turn had been misled by

Jerome.6

The phrase, "and likewise did he for all his strange wives,"

might seem to imply that other deities also had altars raised

1 Comp. 1 Kings xviii. 28; Jer. vii. 31; Zeph. i. 5; 2 Kings iii. 27;

2 Chron. xxviii. 3. In 2 Sam. xii, 31, "brick-kiln" should be rendered,

"place of Moloch."

2 See Lev. xx. 1-5.

3 Jer. xlviii. 7; comp. Judg. xi. 24. Jerome says that. the chief seat of

his worship was Dibon. Eusebius says that the Greeks called him Ariel

("lion of God," "Onomast." s.v.). Chemosh means "conqueror."

4 Gesenius, "Thes." 693, identifies him with Mars; and Bezer (*ad*

Selden p. 323) with the malign star Saturn (comp. 2 Kings iii. 26, 27).

5 2 Kings xxiii. 13. 6 Comm. Isa. xiv. 2.

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and incense burnt to them. If so, however, they are not named,

and probably the main types of worship among the surround-

ing nations were represented by these most famous deities. The

Hittites and the Edomites, from whom his other wives were

taken, do not seem to have had any special and separate gods.

The shrines for these abominations of the heathen were not

built in the Holy City itself. Probably even Solomon's daring

cosmopolitanism would have shrunk from thus polluting the

close proximity of the Temple. Nevertheless, they were placed

in audacious neighbourhood to the Temple, which they actually

confronted "on the hill that is *before* (i.e., east of) Jerusalem."

That hill can only mean the Mount of Olives. At the present

clay, "the hill of scandal," "the opprobrious hill" is identified

with the *southern* crest of Olivet; but this must have been a

modern specialization, for in the thirteenth century, according

to Brocardus, the shrine of Moloch was believed to have been

on this hill, and that of Chemosh on the southern elevation.

The name itself "*mons offensionis*" is as old as the Vulgate.1

The name given to it in the Book of Kings is "the Mount of

corruption " or "destruction," and it is a strange and signifi-

cant fact that these idolatrous shrines were not ravaged and

defiled till the days of King Josiah.

To Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, through whom retribution

came on Solomon's apostasy, is given the terrible recurrent

epitaph that "he made Israel to sin." No such stigma is attached

to the name of Solomon, and yet it is clear from the subsequent

history that his example must have been very fatal in its effects.

It familiarized his people with the names and the worship of

deities to whose rites they were incessantly prone in later years.

Even in the fourth year of Rehoboam, we are told that the

high places (*bamoth*) or tapestried shrines of deities like these,

became common, and that their pillars and phallic symbols

were to be seen "on every high hill and under every green

tree," and that their worship involved, and was invoked to

sanction, the vilest moral abuses.2 The warnings of the Mosaic

books found a terrible fulfilment, and the ruin caused by

Solomon's degeneracy far outweighed the brief advantage of

his magnificence and wisdom.

2. But there was another canker at the root of Solomon's

1 In 2 Kings xxiii. 13. 2 1 Kings xiv. 22-24.

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glory, and it brought about its own natural punishment. If his

polygamy involved a physical decay and a spiritual decrepitude,

his worldly ostentation demanded from his people sacrifices

from which they reaped no satisfaction, and led to the impo-

sition of burdens far heavier than they were willing to bear.

The temples, cities, forts, and palaces with the construction of

which he gratified his passion for building were rendered

possible by the exaction of forced labour; and the indolent

luxury and gilded pomp of his Court could only be maintained

by the imposition of taxes which fell with crushing weight on

a pauperized people. Doubtless at first Solomon tried to pro-

cure the necessary labour from the soccage—the "tribute of

bond-service" imposed on the Helot population of the subju-

gated nationalities. Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and

Jebusites, we are told, were driven to the menial labour, while

for the freeborn Israelites were reserved the more honourable

services of national defence.1 Yet this statement stands side

by side with the admission that Solomon raised a "tribute of

men" out of all Israel to the number of thirty thousand.2 On

no previous occasion, since they left Egypt, had Israelites thus

been compelled to do the work of a house of bondage, and

then was fulfilled the warning of Samuel to them, when they

felt so strong an infatuation for a monarchy, that their king

"should take their men-servants and their maid-servants and

their goodliest young men and put them to his work."3 These

thirty thousand were one in forty-four of the able-bodied popu-

lation. Ten thousand of them were always at work, and the

grievance was bitterly felt.

At first, indeed, the people saw it under the glamour of a

prosperity which satisfied their national pride, but it became less

and less tolerable as the gleam of momentary splendour died

away.

For besides this, there was a tribute in money as well as in

men, and an Adoniram to enforce it. Solomon's army had to

be supplied, and his glittering bodyguard had to be equipped

and paid. Such a Court as Solomon's required (as we have

seen) and wasted an immense daily provision. Whence could

it all come, and how could all the seraglio be supported, and

1 1 Kings xi. 20-22; comp. 1 Chron. xxii. 2.

2 1 Kings v. 13-18.

3 I Sam. viii. 16.

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the attendants clothed and fed, except by resources drawn from

the grudging and toiling multitude? Solomon so completely

exhausted his treasury that he had been driven to the cession

of a part of the sacred territory to Hiram, and if the cession

was in itself humiliating, it was still more so in the circumstances

by which it had been attended. No doubt every consideration

of expediency would restrain Solomon from enforcing any com-

pulsory tax as long as possible. Money payments have always

been unpopular in Eastern countries, and up to this time they

were unknown to the free Israelites. The tithe which he probably

exacted would be disliked; though a tithe for royal purposes was

scarcely an innovation, since the king claimed a sort of priestly

character. But neither tithe, nor commerce, nor presents, nor

foreign tolls, nor the proceeds of his own domain proved sufficient

for the needs of so magnificent a spendthrift. We are not told

that he established a poll-tax, but the complaints which found

expression after his death are so strong that he may possibly have

done so. The yoke of Solomon was declared to be very grievous,

a "chastisement with whips," and old men must have rued the

national folly which voluntarily abandoned a proud freedom for

a dazzling absolutism. A deep and sullen discontent smouldered

in the hearts of the people, and required but the least breath of

wind to fan it into a flame.

Nor was Solomon left unwarned of the failure and catastrophe

which was to darken the close of his career, and to fall with its

full weight of calamity on the opening days of the reign of his

only son. God, who had twice appeared in vision to bless his

earlier efforts, and who had granted to him such exceptional

gifts and opportunities, made known to him once more His pur-

pose. Because Solomon had forsaken his God, God forsook him,

and warned him that his son should only be heir to the fragment

of a denationalized and divided kingdom. But though the full

measure of punishment was postponed, Solomon was not suffered

to go personally unpunished, and the form in which the Divine

displeasure was manifested must have been peculiarly galling to

one who had revelled so long in the plenitude of successful

power. His commerce nullified, his fame tarnished, his

dominion reduced to comparative insignificance, Solomon be-

came the prey of adversaries whom he would utterly have

disdained in the dawn of his power, yet whom he could neither

control nor punish in these paler and less crowned years.

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We are told nothing of his personal feelings, but so wise and

so gifted a king could not have blinded himself to the con-

sequences of the false development of his ambition and world-

liness. When kings set an unworthy and enervating example,

their people follow it. The polygamy, the religious indiffe-

rentism, the haughty exclusiveness which now marked the Court

would certainly be imitated in the houses of princes and nobles.

The Book of Proverbs gives us unexpected and painful glimpses

into a deeply seated corruption. From it we learn that violence,

impurity, and commercial dishonesty had assumed great pro-

portions in the cities of Judah, and that the influx of foreign

merchants and colonists had brought in their train "strange

women" who lured to their destruction the souls of the "simple"

and God-forgetting youth.

Not such were the sons whom an early and perhaps Solo-

monian poet1 had described as growing up like tender plants, nor

the daughters which were as the polished corners of the Temple;

not such the simple agricultural prosperity of those who were

delivered from "strange children": not such the happiness of

the people who have the Lord for their God!

A single and incidental notice will enable us to measure the

width of the moral chasm which separated the days of David

from those of Solomon. When Solomon was dead and the Ten

Tribes were on the verge of open revolt, the old men who had

been contemporary with Solomon's earliest. days gave Rehoboam

wise advice, which, had he followed it, would have prevented the

disruption of his kingdom. But when he consulted the true

children of the reign and those who exhibited its gradual

degeneracy—"the young men who had grown up with him and

stood before him"—their advice was so insolently foolish, so

senselessly irritating, so utterly devoid of every element of

policy and justice, that it enables us to see the haughty spirit of

oppression which had been fostered by a semi-Egyptian sove-

reignty. Such feather-pated youths as these could never have

existed in the simpler courts of Solomon's predecessors. They

show us the giddy intoxication, the dementation preceding

doom, which is bred in the votaries of tyrants who, knowing

nothing of the hearts of their people, are absorbed in their own

pleasures, and blinded by their habitual pride. Luxury, in-

1 Ps. cxliv. 12-15.

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dolence, effeminacy, had done their work in the hearts of the

sons and daughters of Judah. Their land was full of silver and

gold and there was no end of their treasures; their land was

full of horses, and there was no end to their chariots. Their

land also was full of idols.

Yet we hear of no single word of priestly protest. The

Priesthood seems to have sunk into the torpor of ceremonialism

under the patronizing dominance of the king. Doubtless they

burned with perfect precision "the two kidneys and the fat,"

and went through the whole round of rites which belonged to all

that was then known of the Levitic ordinances. But they seem

to have been content with this strenuous idleness of perpetual

functions which they mistook for work. There is not the

faintest sign that they exercised, or tried to exercise, any sort of

moral or spiritual influence, or even that they offered so much

as a barren protest when they saw the counter-smoke of incense

rising from idolatrous altars on the opprobrious hill. Nothing

could have stemmed the rolling tide of national corruption but

the bold and independent voice of prophecy. Prophets had

risen before at the crisis of agony and punishment and in the

face of flagrant crimes or monstrous abuses; but for long years

no prophet seems to have felt the descending flame of inspira-

tion amid this many-coloured gorgeousness and slow autumnal

decay of the truest principles of an entrusted religion. Nathan

died, and Gad died, and for a long period there was no prophet

more. Every free power was overshadowed by the upas-blight

of an irresponsible despotism; every free voice hushed by the

unquestioning decision of an oracular royalty. There seems to

have been an attempt to persuade the people that there was

always and literally "a Divine sentence on the lips of kings,"1

and that nothing was required to supplement so infallible a

wisdom. It was not till after Solomon had been long upon the

throne that a new race of prophets sprang up, and of these the

most prominent—Ahijah of Shiloh and Shemaiah—looked with

strong displeasure on the change which the king had brought

over the spirit of the nation. They did not like to see a native

Pharaoh transforming the Promised Land into a new fiery

furnace, and looking with equal eyes on the shrines of Moloch

and the Temple of the Lord. They looked on such toleration

1 Prov. xvi. 10

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as little better than apostasy. Even true toleration was not

possible till hundreds of years later, but this was a toleration

entirely unwarrantable, for it involved the recognition of deities

whose worship was in its very essence cruel and impure.

The adversaries of Solomon are mentioned together in the

Book of Kings.1 Of Hadad and Rezon I have already spoken,

and although in the earlier years of his reign Solomon was able

to hold them in check, they probably became more troublesome

and dangerous as time went on. It was not however from these

foreign enemies that the chief danger rose. It rose from a man

perfectly insignificant but for the notice and promotion which

he had received from Solomon himself. This was Jeroboam

the son of Nebat.

The name of this youth—like that of the king's son Rehoboam

—points to the fact that he had been born in the early golden

days of prosperity during which the nation took pride in its ex-

tension and its increasing multitudes. Jeroboam, like the Greek

Polydemus, implies the numbers, and Rehoboam, like Eurydemos,

the enlargement of the people.2

His position was isolated, his origin obscure. Widows in the

East are a peculiarly downtrodden and unprotected class, and

Jeroboam was the son of a widow of the obscure town of

Zeredah—probably Zarthan in the valley of the Jordan.3 The

vicinity of Zarthan to the clay ground in which the bronze

vessels of the Temple were cast by Hiram may have brought

him into connection with the vast thrones of Solomon's work-

men. His own vigour and activity did the rest. He was

evidently a man of great shrewdness and fine presence, and

Solomon, who—though his Court abounded in drones and

parasites—could recognize *a man* when he saw him—had cast

a favourable eye on his industry when he was building the

earthwork of Millo, and repairing the breaches in the City of

David. Jeroboam belonged to the tribe of Ephraim,4 and

1 1 Kings xi. 14-25.

2 Others make Jeroboam mean "the kinsman (i.e., God) contendeth;

and Rehoboam "the kinsman (*i.e*., God) enlargeth."

3 I Kings vii. 46; 2 Chorn. iv. 17, Zeredathah.

4 1 Kings xi. 26; "an Ephraimite," Revised Version. In the Authorized

Version the word is incorrectly rendered "an *Ephrathite*" which would mean

an inhabitant of Ephratah or Bethlehem. There is the same mistake in

1 Sam. i. 1.

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Solomon promoted him while still young to be the chief

superintendent of the "burden"—that is, of the bands of forced

labourers—hired from the districts of Ephraim and Manasseh.

The position was not only invidious, but dangerous, and nothing

shows more clearly the tact and suppleness of Jeroboam's

character than the fact that he so used his opportunities as to

satisfy his superiors without alienating the admiration of his

fellow-tribesmen. When Adoniram was stoned, Jeroboam was

made king. But his work as overseer revealed to him a state of

things which perhaps was unsuspected by Solomon. He learnt

that the recent exactions had, on the one hand, created a wide-

spread disaffection to the house of David, which now began

to appear as a naked tyranny shorn of its brief and delusive

magnificence; and that, on the other hand, the jealousy of the

northern tribes in particular had been rekindled by the burdens

laid on them for the advantage of an alien king, and the

embellishment of a distant capital. How early the seeds of

ambition were sown in his mind we do not know. If we

are to attach any historical importance to the circumstantial

additions interpolated into his history by the Greek translators

we must believe that he fortified a city and called it by the

name of his mother, Sarira, who is described as a harlot;1 that

becoming rich he not only emulated, but outdid the example of

Absalom, by providing himself with three hundred chariots;

and that his interview with Ahijah did not take place till his

return from Egypt. Although the order of events in the Hebrew

narrative is not necessarily chronological, it leads us to a different

view. We should judge from it that Ahijah the Shilonite, as well

as Solomon, had cast his eye on this brave and intelligent youth,

and seen in him the predestined agent of a great revolution. As

a Shilonite, and therefore a member of the northern kingdom,

and one who perhaps mourned over the ruin and desertion of

his native Shiloh,2 which had sunk into total insignificance amid

the rising glories of the Temple, and of Jerusalem, he would be

likely to resent the wrongs of his people, and to be chosen by

God as the interpreter of the feelings which were to work out

the designs of Providence. The intervention of a Prophet was

1 From the LXX. (Vatican) reading of I Kings xiv. 1.7 it seems as if

they identified Sarira with Tirzah, the capital of the northern kings till

Omri's tithe.

2 1 Kings xiv. 2-4.

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needed, since no whisper of reproof or of contradiction rose from

the subservient priests, who, absorbed in their functions and

ceremonies, rendered no service either to freedom or to spiritual

religion. It has been supposed that he spoke first to Solomon,

but if he did so, no record of the fact is preserved in the sacred

narrative, nor do we infer from anything which we know of Solo-

mon that it would have been possible or useful for a Prophet to

penetrate the circle of pomp by which he was surrounded. The

courage would not have been wanting, for long afterwards, when

he was old and sick and blind, Ahijah fearlessly uttered to the

wife of Jeroboam the fearful doom of extirpation which was to

fall upon the usurper's race. But God made known to Solomon

His own displeasure without the need of prophetic intervention,

and it was Ahijah's task to stir up this appointed instrument. It

would have been dangerous, perhaps fatal, to them both if he

had delivered the Divine message at Jerusalem. But on a stated

occasion, when Jeroboam had left the holy city, Ahijah with-

drew him from the main road into the open country. The prophet

was clad in a new robe, and emphasizing his message by one of

those symbols which are more effective than any speech, he

seized the new robe from his own shoulders, and rent it into

twelve pieces.1 Ten of these pieces he ordered Jeroboam to

take, and told him that thus should God rend ten tribes from

the apostate house of David, and would give them to him. One

tribe—two tribes in reality, which from their close connexion

were practically regarded as one—would God leave to the son

of Solomon, nor should the disruption take place till Solomon

was dead, because of God's promise to David and His choice

of Jerusalem; for these reasons God would not take aught of

the kingdom (so the verse should be rendered) out of the hands

of Solomon himself.2 A warning followed, that as the house of

David had been afflicted because of its sins, s the prosperity

of Jeroboam should be conditional on his faithfulness.

1 In the apocryphal additions to the Septuagint the *rôle* of Ahijah of

Shiloh is transferred (after the death of Solomon) to Shemaiah "the Enla-

mite," who is, bidden to take to himself "a new garment which has never

been in water." The passage is often understood as though Abijah rent

the new robe of Jeroboam; but the meaning is (as in our Revised Version)

that "*Ahijah* had clad himself in a new robe." For he symbol itself

compare Saul rending Samuel's robe (I Sam. xv. 27, 28).

2 I Kings xi. 34.

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Perhaps the prophet's words did but give embodiment to the

young man's dreams. What he said, how he acted, we do not

know. Apparently he was too impatient to wait for his master's

death, and had to be taught by failure that the accomplishment

of the prophecy rested in higher hands than his. In some way

or other "he lifted up his hand against the king." Probably

Jeroboam had not concealed from friends and partisans among

his fellow Ephraimites the prophecy of Ahijah, and so he was

hurried into premature rebellion. His plot came to the king's

knowledge, and he sent to arrest the traitor. But Jeroboam at

the first sign of danger fled into Egypt. Egypt had proved to

Solomon as it proved to so many Jewish kings, a very broken

reed on which to lean. The Pharaoh, who had helped Solomon,

and given him his daughter in marriage, had been superseded

by Shishak I., the Sheshonk of the monuments, and the Seson-

chosis of Manetho, the first king of the twenty-second dynasty,

and the first Pharaoh mentioned in Scripture who is referred to

by his own name, and can be certainly identified. He seized

the throne of Egypt, and founded the Bubastite dynasty about

B.C. 960. In the Book of Kings Shishak is not called Pharaoh

(1 Kings xi. 40), but Melek Mizraim. He is the king who,

twenty years later, in the reign of Rehoboam, entered Jerusalem

and stripped the Temple and Palace of their treasures.1 The,

identity of this king with the protector of Jeroboam is con-

firmed by the Egyptian monuments, for in the great inscription

on the south wall of a temple at Carnak he is represented as

brandishing his victorious weapon over one hundred and thirty-

three conquered enemies, and dragging to the feet of the Theban

trinity the heads of thirty conquered nations, of which Judah

was one.2 To the protection of this king Jeroboam fled. Shi-

shake had not the same need as his predecessors for neighbouring

alliances, and the affinity of the Tanite king with Solomon would

alone be sufficient to make Shishak welcome a rival to the house of

David. Whether he imitated the conduct of the earlier Pharaoh

1 2 Chron. xii. 9; see Duncker, iii. 54, Osorkon is by some identified

with the king whom Asa defeated in 918 B.C.

2 Champollion's reading of "Judaha Melek" (king or kingdom of Judah)

over one of the bearded figures is however very doubtful. See Duncker, ii.

233. Only one hundred of the one hundred and thirty-three shields are

legible, and on these the name of Jerusalem is not found, though some

have believed that they identify Ajalon, Beth-Horon, Gibeon, Rimmon, &c.

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towards Hadad or not depends on the testimony of the Septua-

gint alone. There, among other suspicious circumstances, we

are told that he loved and honoured Jeroboam so greatly as to

give him in marriage Ano, the sister of his wife Thekemina,1 who

is represented as having been the mother of Abijah. However

that may be, Jeroboam seems to have remained in Egypt,

secure in the patronage of Pharaoh, and probably in communi-

cation with the party of discontent, till the death of Solomon

enabled him to return safely to Ephraim by the invitation of

his countrymen, and to head the revolt which established for

256 years the separate kingdom of Israel.

"The Israelite kingdom, reared into greatness by Solomon,"

says the modern Jewish historian," was like a world of magic

upbuilt by powerful genii. The magic vanished with his death.

He did not bequeath to his son his magic ring."2

There remain no further events or deeds to relate in the reign

of Solomon, for nothing further is recorded in Scripture respect-

ing him. He reigned forty years, not eighty, as Josephus in-

correctly says.3 He could not therefore have greatly exceeded

the age of sixty, and his old age was premature. There is

nothing incredible in the fact that Saul and David as well as

Solomon reigned forty years. The number may not he rigidly

exact, and, even if it were, the coincidence is easily paralleled. It

has been pointed out that three consecutive kings of Babylon

each reigned twenty-one years, and Claudius and his successor,

Nero, each reigned fourteen years.4 The story of his reign ends

with the formal conclusion that "Solomon slept with his fathers,

and was buried in the city of David his father; and Rehoboan

his son reigned in his stead."

It is very difficult to estimate the real character of Solomon,

because we have little recorded for us beyond outward facts. Of

the writings which pass under his name two are now declared

by the all but unanimous voice of modern criticism to belong to

a later age. We may, however, glance backwards for a moment

at the lesson of the records which have come down to us. His

1 The name Ano has no Egyptian affinities; nothing is known either of

her or of the Thispenes mentioned in 1 Kings xi. 19.

2 Grätz i. 366.

3 "Antiq. Jud." viii. 7, § 6. Perhaps Josephus read π for μ in his Greek

version, and hence makes him mount the throne at 14, and die at 94.

4 "Speaker's Commentary" on 1 Kings xi. 42.

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life, then, so far as its chief characteristics are preserved, falls

into three divisions.

i. In the first, which goes down to the commencement of his

reign, he is still, in the fullest sense, Jedidiah, the beloved of the

Lord, Ind worthy of his twofold destiny as monarch and builder

of the Temple. God seems to have showered upon him every

gift—princely beauty, quick intelligence, lofty aims, an under-

standing heart; to which He added the wisdom for government

which die young king desired. When in the midst of the re-

joicing multitude "Zadok the priest and Nathan the seer

anointed Solomon king," the scene seemed to the spectators as

rich in hope as when in our own country Archbishop Cranmer

and the Lord Protector Somerset placed the crown of England

—perhaps at much the same age—on the youthful brows of

Edward the Sixth; and in his coronation sermon the prelate urged

the boy-king "to reward virtue, to revenge sin, to justify the

innocent, to relieve the poor, to procure peace, and to execute

justice throughout his realms." Edward perhaps was *felix*

*opportunitate mortis*, but Solomon lived to disappoint bitterly

the hopes of his people.

ii. In the second stage of his history we see him in all, his

glory. We hear how he built the Temple, fragrant with precious

woods, glittering with precious metals and precious stones; how

he reared city after city, and palace after palace, each more

splendid than the last; how the cedars crashed down for him

on Lebanon, and the fleets brought treasures, things strange

and beautiful, from Tarshish and Ophir; how he hung his porti-

coes with golden shields; how his, revenues were replenished

with all manner of stores; holy he sat on his lion-guarded

throne of gold and ivory—

"That far outshone the wealth

Of Ormuz or of Ind, or where the East

Showers on her kings barbaric pearl and gold;"

how the Queen of Sheba came from the far East to visit him

with her spices and her camels, and she grew faint of heart as

she witnessed his magnificence.

But we feel, even while we read the story, that all this has but

little real significance for humanity. Men care more for one

golden dead, for one inspiring thought, than for—

"The retinue long of horses led,

And grooms besmeared with gold;"

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more for the lonely student who in his garret has deciphered but

one law of nature, or for the poet who has enriched the blood of

the world with one sweet song, than for any number of jewelled

sultans.

iii. And in the third stage of the history the glory vanishes.

There is sudden disenchantment. The gold has become dross,

the wine mixed with water. The good which Solomon had done

remains, but all that was selfish and personal in his aggrandize-

ment has dwindled into nothing. His ostentatious commerce

has proved an expensive failure; his political alliances a hollow

truce; his sinful luxury has but filmed a deep and sullen dis-

content. His shameful Harem has given him neither a real

home nor a true love. His foreign mercenaries shut him out

from his people's love. His forted labour caused misery and

disorder. He leaves behind him but one weak and worthless

son to dismember his kingdom and disgrace his name. The

consecrator of the Temple has become a shameless polytheist;

the splendid youth a weary old man; the well-beloved prince a

tyrant, scourging with whips an impatient people. The "Peace-

ful" is harassed by the petty raids of ignoble foes; the "Magnif-

cent" is laden with debts; the "Darling of the Lord" has built

shrines for Moloch and Astarte. Hiram of Tyre has turned in

disgust from an ungenerous recompence; a new Pharaoh of

Egypt gives shelter to his revolted servant. In another and

direr sense than after the vision which followed the thanksgiving

for his coronation, "And Solomon awoke and behold it was a

dream."1

Even if the Book of Ecclesiastes rests on no traditional data,

there is deep moral truth in its conception of the miserable and

cynical mood of sceptical despair which springs from sumptuous

despotism and selfish luxury. Solomon had lost the clue to the

meaning of life. His soul was sullied, his faith dimmed, his fervour

cold. Every trace of happiness and satisfaction had vanished

from his life. All is emptiness. David was surrounded by

warriors and prophets and great men; but Solomon stood horribly

alone, and in the dazzling glare of his tyranny there seemed no

room for any other eminence, whether of goodness or of wisdom;

in the flatterers who stood around his throne. His children seem

to have been nothing to him, and we do not even know whether

1 These three stages of Solomon's career are well marked in the famous

passage of the Book of Ecclesiasticus (xlvii. 12-21).

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they were many or few. His son does not emerge from the

shadow till the age (if the reading be correct) of forty-two and

even at that mature period of life showed himself foolish and

headstrong. How little could the gewgaws of gilded palace

and broidered robe and ivory throne give a moment's peace to

a man for whom everything had turned into, dust and ashes like

fairy gold! He might have said with Hyperion—

"O dreams of day and night

O spectres, busy in a cold cold gloom! . . .

E'en here unto my centre of repose

The shady visions come to domineer

Insult and blind and stifle up my pomp!"

"At first, before he married strange wives," says the Talmud,

"Solomon reigned over the angels—he sat on "the throne of the

Lord" (I Kings xxix. 23); then only over those below—"over all

the kingdoms" (1 Kings iv. 21); then only over Israel. (Eccles.

i. 12); then only over Jerusalem—"the words of then Preacher,

son of David, king in Jerusalem" (Eccles. i. 1). At last he

reigned *only over has stick*—as it is said, "And *this* was my

portion of my labour." For by the word "*this*" he meant,

said Rav, the staff which was his hand, and which was the

only possession left to him.

The Arabian legend is right which says that in the staff on

which he leaned was a worm secretly gnawing upon its centre.2

It was the worm of pride, of sensuality, of selfishness. And there

is a touch of insight, too, in the other legend of his death—how

he entered the Temple robed and crowned, and stood between

the pillars—

"Leaning upon his ebony staff,

Sealed with the sign of Pentegraph "—

and as he stood there in silence like a painted king, with his

long snowy hair and beard streaming over his robe of Tyrian

purple,

"And his face to the Oracle, where the hymn

Died under the wings of the Cherubim,"

suddenly the hand of God beckoned to him, and he died.

But though he was dead, yet, because of the Pentacle on his

1 Sanhedrin, f. 20. 2.

2 See Hottinger, "Hist. Orient." p. 66, ed. 1651.

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staff and ring, none ventured to approach; and he stood there

with the death-stare in his cold eyes, and priests and worshippers

streamed to and fro, but awed by his face and fame as he stood

there dead and magnificent, they dared not touch him, until, at

last, a little brown mouse ran out of a pillar and nibbled the

leather at the bottom of his staff, and flat on his face fell the

dead king in the dust, and out of the dust they picked a golden

crown.1 Dust and ashes—there ended all his glory. "I, the

Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem"—and then like a

death knell which shivers through the sere leaves of a church-

yard in autumn—the repeated burden, "Vanity of vanities,

saith the Preacher; all is vanity!"

There is a significant silence about him in the sacred

records. Except in the one reference by our Lord to his

glory, which was yet surpassed by the lilies of the field, there is

scarcely a single allusion to him either in the long centuries of

history, or in the Poets and Prophets of Israel, or by the

Apostles and Evangelists of Christ. Saul with his early meek-

ness and magnanimity, and his troubled soul, and his tragic

end—David in his heroism and his fall and his penitence—are

far more interesting and significant figures for mankind than

the brilliant builder and trafficker, who grew into an uxorious, a

ruined, and an apostate autocrat. The story of Solomon is the

story of one whose heart was perverted and his will enervated

by luxury and pride.

The life of David was like an April morning; it is thoroughly

human in its interests, in its struggles and sins. If the clouds

at times gathered very darkly over it, it constantly shows "the

clear shining after rain." His adventures when he was hunted

like a gazelle upon the mountains, his genial humour, the

yearnings of his spiritual emotion, the passionate depths of his

repentance, his chivalry, his crimes, his misfortunes, his contri-

tion, his recovery, after so deep a fall, of the clean heart and

the free spirit, make hint stand out vividly distinct from the

1 The legend is given in Qur'ân (xxxiv. 10, Chapter of Sebâ, Palmer's

translation, p. 151), where, however, "the reptile of the earth, which

gnaws the staff is a worm. Solomon, foreseeing that he would die before

the Temple was completed, had prayed that his death might not be dis-

covered till the demons had finished the tasks he had set them, "And

when he fell down it was made manifest to the ginns that, had they but

known the unseen, they need not have tarried in their shameful torment."

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sacred page, and give to his life a deeply instructive meaning

for all time. He moves as a man among men with kindly

heart even after the boy-shepherd has grown into the victorious

king; and the events of his life are mingled up with those of his

many followers and friends. But Solomon stands alone in his

cold intellectuality and imposing pomp—like a painted tyrant

or the figure of an idol in a gilded pageant—a king on whom

we gaze as on a spectacle, but whom it is impossible to love.

In his great picture in the Campo Santo at Florence, Orcagna

represents Solomon rising slowly and painfully out of his

sepulchre at the archangel's trumpet, ignorant whether to turn

to the right or to the left, uncertain whether his place is to he

among the saved or among the lost. Was his lot to be with

Jerusalem or the hill of scandal?—Is he to count as a servant

of the Lord Jehovah or a votary of Moloch fires and Ashtaroth

abominations? Supposing that he wrote the Book of Eccle-

siastes some have seen in it the gracious gleam of a late

recovery from his fall, and have believed that he, too, at least

"by one poor tear" of repentance won a pardoning grace. But

he could not have been the author of that book, nor does it

contain any expression either of shame or of penitence. But

discussions about the salvation of this or that man are futile.

God, not man, is the judge. It is strange that the Church writers

who have passed the judgment of hopeless damnation on no soul

but that of Judas, should only have doubted in two individual

instances about a final salvation. Those two are the cases of

Origen and of Solomon.1 If any Church writers could express

open doubts of the fate of Origen, a confessor, a martyr, a great

teacher, from boyhood upwards, an incomparable saint of God,

we need not attach much weight to the fact that some have also

doubted the fate of Solomon.2 The work may have been burned

yet the workman saved. If in Vathek he is doomed to sit in

the halls of Eblis, and as he groans and raises his arm towards

heaven, the Kaliph "discerns through his bosom, which was

transparent as crystal, his heart enveloped in flame;" on the

other hand, the great poet of the Divine Comedy was no lenient

judge, and he places the soul of Solomon in Paradise among

1 I find a discussion "De Salomonis damnatione" among the works of

Philippus, Abbas Bona: Spei, 1651.

2 Pfeiffer, "Dubin Vexata," p. 433; Buddeus, "Hist. Eccl." ii., 273.

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the souls of the greatest teachers. Alluding to the Canticles,

Dante sings in the "Paradiso"—

"The fifth light,

Goodliest of all, is by such love inspired

That all your world craves tidings of his doom:

Within, there is the lordly light, endowed

With sapience so profound, if truth he truth,

That with a ken of such wide amplitude

No second has arisen."1

And, again—

"He was a king who asked

For wisdom to the end he might be king

Sufficient."2

If his glory "involved the germ of a continuous decay," he yet

achieved a great work. He raised Israel for a time to the

height of its national aspirations, and showed the possibilities of

splendour and authority which it might attain. He stirred

the intellectual life of the Hebrews in new directions. He

quickened their sense of a national position while, at the same

time, he rendered them less narrow in their sympathies. He

organized the services of the Levites, and placed their position

on a secure basis. He enshrined their worship in a worthy and

permanent Temple. He drew the priesthood from obscure and

dubious local shrines to one recognized service.3 In his earlier

years of power he showed the ideal of a king ruling wisely and

firmly in the fear of God. He left his people stronger and

1 "La quinta luce ch e tra noi' piu bella,

Spira di tale amor, che tutto il mondo

Laggiu ne gola di saper novella.

Entro v' e l' alta mente, u' si profondo

Saver fu messo, the si it vero è vero,

A veder tanto non surse it secondo."

DANTE, "Paradiso," x. 109-114.

2 "Ch'ei fu Rè, the chiese senno

Acciocchè Rè sufficiente fosse."

*Ibid*., "Paradise," viii. 95.

3 The priests partly lived on the sacrifices, and therefore would be

naturally drawn to the Temple. The Book of Chronicles, which throughout

makes David the originator and Solomon the executor, says that the

organization of the priesthood was part of David's last commands

(1 Chron. xxiv.).

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richer in the possession of a well-fortified city; and he pro-

tected their land by towers and fortresses. If by his sins he

personally forfeited the promise of a long life, and of an undi-

vided kingdom—if his more selfish exactions ended in the deep

disaster of a national disruption,1 yet he had raised his people

in the scale of nations, had fixed the form of some of their most

necessary institutions, and had "awakened among them a

strong desire for deeper wisdom and higher art, which, during

the stormier ages which followed, never wholly died away, and

in some directions constantly developed itself with more and

more power and beauty."2 Had he done no other service

beyond the building of the Temple, he would still have in-

fluenced the religious life of his people down to its latest days.

It was to them a perpetual reminder and visible symbol of

God's presence and protection, a strong bulwark of all the

sacred traditions of their law, a witness to duty, an impulse to

historic study, an inspiration of sacred song.

His name has been bestowed upon hundreds of powerful

Eastern monarchs among whose people lingered the traditions

of his prosperity and magnificence. But it is a name to point

a moral even more than to adorn a tale. He fulfilled all, even

the darkest, of the prognostications with which the great

Samuel had vainly tried to warn a free nation when they

hankered after a king. He took their sons for his chariots and

horses and to be his runners; he made them toil to minister to

the luxury of his effeminate and overgrown household; he took

toll of their fields and vineyards; he subjected them to enforced

labours; he chastised them with whips under his heavy yoke;

and, after all, he did not go out before them to fight their

battles.3 He had given them some intellectual impulse, he had

left them some material advantages, but his work was far less

significant, his glory less real, his annals less interesting than

the tarnished work and glory and annals of his more heroic,

and more human father. He changed the true Israel into a

feeble simulacrum of Egypt—a pale reflex of Phœenicia. He

stands out to kings as a conspicuous warning against the way

in which they should not walk. He found a people free, he

left them enslaved; he found them unburdened, he left them

1 Hos. iii. 4; Isa. vii. 17; Zech. xi. 7-14.

2 Ewald, iii. 317.

3 1 Sam. viii. 11-22.

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oppressed; he found them simple, he left them luxurious; he

found them inclined to be faithful to one God, he left them

indifferent to the abominations of heathendom which they saw

practised under the very shadow of his palace and his shrine;

he found them occupying a unique position as providential

witnesses to one saving truth, he left them a nation like other

nations, only weaker in power and exhausted in resources.

"'Tis but the moral of all human tales;

'Tis but the same rehearsal of the past:

First freedom and then glory; when that fails,

Wealth, vice, corruption—barbarism at last."

Not Solomon, not even one of Solomon's descendants, but

ANOTHER of the line of his brother Nathan "was the true

Shelomoh, the Prince of Peace, the true Jedid-jah, the Beloved

of the Father,"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WISDOM OF SOLOMON, AND BOOKS ATTRIBUTED TO HIM.

Character of Solomon's wisdom—I. His interest in natural science—Ad-

miration—Similitudes — Legendary magical powers — Importation of

new forms of animal and vegetable life—2. Solomon as a poet—The

One Hundred and Twenty-seventh Psalm—The Seventy-second Psalm

—Changed intellectual tendency of his age—3. The Canticles—Date of

the Book—Probably written by a Northern Israelite—Some charac-

teristics of the book—Its allusions to an age of luxury—Its allusions

to nature—Difference of its tone from that of the Nature-Psalms—Not

on the surface a religious poem—Supposed outline of the poem as an

idyl of consecrated love—This view adopted by most modem critics—

The poem allegorized by Rabbis, Fathers, and Schoolmen—Real sub-

ject of it—Specimens of the allegoric interpretation—Not an epithala-

mium—Difficulties of believing it to be intentionally allegoric—The

allegoric application religiously tenable, though not to be regarded

as primary—The sanctification of love—Human love as a symbol of

Divine.

IN a brief passage of the Book of Kings we are told that "God

gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and

largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea-shore."1

By this "largeness of heart" is meant what we should call "a fine

and varied intelligence."2 His fame was spread through all

nations, and from all people and all kings of the earth men

came "to hear the wisdom of Solomon." The quick judgment

which decided difficult cases, the capacity for government, the

patronage of architecture, the readiness to admire the com-

merce, art, and science of the surrounding nations, and the skill

1 1 Kings iv. 29-3.1.

2 Ecclus. i. 19, "She pours forth skill and practical knowledge."

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in organization which the king displayed, are all meant to be

illustrations of this wisdom. But three more special illustrations

are furnished—namely, that he spake of trees from the cedar to

the hyssop, and of boasts, and birds, and insects, and fishes;

that he spake three thousand "proverbs;" and that "his songs

were a thousand and five."

Let us speak first of his interest in all branches of natural

history.

There is no trace of any scientific knowledge in those reputed

writings of Solomon which are canonical, but such knowledge

was traditionally ascribed to him. All that we see in the

Solomonic writings of Scripture is some interest in natural

phenomena, and a poetic admiration for the beauty of the outer

world. Few passages of description, for instance, are more

beautiful than those in Canticles which show a delighted

appreciation of the flowers and the green fields and budding

trees. In the Book of Wisdom we find the first—or almost the

first—traces in Semitic literature of the remarkable argument,

so common in later literature, that "by the greatness and beauty

of things created the Maker of them is relatively seen."1 Al-

though the name of God scarcely occurs in the Song of Songs,

we find in it a loving sense of "the beauty and the wonder and

the power" of the works of God. Take, for instance, the

famous description of spring—

"My beloved spike, and said unto me,

'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 ripened, her green figs,

And the vines are in blossom,

They give forth their fragrance.

Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.'"

If "in wonder all philosophy began, and in wonder it ends, and

admiration fills up the interspace," then in the loving enjoyment

of nature we see the first step to its scientific study, and to

"the climbing by these sunbeams to the Father of Lights."

Iris, in the Creek legend, is the daughter of Thaumas; in other

1 Wisd. xiii. 5.

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words, through the child of astonishment came the messages of

heaven.1

Josephus explains this "speaking of trees," and of all kinds

of beasts, fowls, and fishes, which is attributed to Solomon, as

though it meant "he spake a *parable* upon every sort of tree,2

and in like manner also about all sorts of living creatures."

In Proverbs and Ecclesiastes there are references to trees and

plants, but not in the way of drawing moral emblems from

them. Such parables, in the form of practical instruction, are

drawn from the ants, the locusts, the goats, the coneys, the

lizards, the growth of weeds; and there are allusions to the

habits of lions, bears, eagles, greyhounds, and serpents.3 Per-

haps in these we may see the earliest gleams of the more

accurate and systematic knowledge of later times. If, as Jose-

phus adds, Solomon "was not unacquainted with any of these

creatures, nor omitted inquiries about them, but described them

all like a philosopher, and demonstrated his exquisite knowledge

of their several properties,"4 the works in which such knowledge

was enshrined exist no longer. There is not the least trace of

that encyclopædic acquaintance with cosmogony, physiology,

hydrography, astronomy, botany, medicine, and philosophy

which is traditionally ascribed to Solomon by the Alexandrian

author of the Book of Wisdom.5

Nor again is there so much as a hint in Scripture of the

magic powers in which, according to Arabian legends, the great

king was wont to revel. Not a word is said about his ring, or

seal, or knowledge of the incommunicable name, or golden

table, or power of understanding the language of birds or

beasts. Josephus believed that "he had composed incantations

by which distempers are alleviated, and left behind hint the

manner of using exorcisms by which demons are driven away

so that they never return." He relates how in his own presence

and in that of the Emperor Vespasian and his staff, a Jew

named Eleazar, by means of a ring and a root mentioned by

1 Arist., "Metaph." i. 2, διὰ τὸ θαυμάζειν οι ανθρωποι καὶ νῦν καὶ τὸ

πρῶτον ηρξαντο φιλοσοφεῖν. Plat., "Theæt." § 32, εοικεν ο τὴν ’Ιριν

θαύμαντος εκγονον φήσας ου κακῶς γενεαλογεῖν.

2 There are parables" and comparisons from trees and plants in Judg.

ix. 14; 2 Kings xiv. 9; Ezek. xxxi. 3; Amos ii. 9.

3 Prov. vi. 6. xxiv. 30-34, xxx. 15, 19, 24-31.

4 "Antiq. viii. 2, § 6.

5 Wisd. vii. 17-21.

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Solomon, drew out a demon from the nostrils of one possessed;

and, still using the name of Solomon, compelled the demon, in

sign that he had departed, to upset a basin full of water, by

tthich"the skill and wisdom of Solomon was shown very

manifestly." Eleazar was doubtless one of the wandering exor-

cists of the same class as "the seven sons of one Sceva a Jew,"

and we need inquire no further into the question as to whether

he was a fanatic, or an impostor, or a mixture of both.

Yet we have one most interesting proof of that inquiring

spirit in which Solomon resembled Alexander the Great. If

Alexander was always eager to furnish information, and to

send specimens of natural history to Aristotle, so Solomon first

familiarized his people with apes, and peacocks, and sandal

wood, and other strange, beautiful, or precious productions of

foreign lands. Tradition further tells us that to him was due

the naturalization of the balsam-tree, which added a new article

of commerce to the revenues of Palestine, and was a source of

great wealth even ten centuries later. According to Josephus

the balsam was first introduced by the Queen of Sheba. It was

acclimatized in gardens at Jericho, and was very precious. It

early became an ankle of export and a medicinal drug.1 From

the fragrant gum, which distilled from incisions made in the

stem with sharp stones, a valuable unguent was made which

cured wounds.2 Pliny mentions it as peculiar to Palestine,3

and specimens of it were carried among the spoils of Titus in

his triumph after the fall of Jerusalem.

2. Of Solomon as a poet we are told that his songs were a

thousand and five, or, according to Josephus, five thousand.

Of these no certain specimen remains to us. Of Canticles we

will speak immediately, but may say at once that although it is

probably of ancient date there is not the least proof that the

king wrote it. The so-called "Psalter of Solomon" consisting

of eighteen Psalms is undoubtedly of late and even of Macca-

bean origin. It is a valueless cento of phrases, though it has

1 "Balm of Gilead," Jer. viii. 22, xlvi. 11; Ezek. xxvii. 17 (marg.,

*rosin*). But the assertion of Josephus is doubtful, for "balm" was son by

Jacob to Egypt (Gen. xliii. 11). The *opobalsamum* is still called in Arabic

*dseri* (Heb. *tzeri*).

2 Josephus, "Antiq." viii. 6, 46; xiv. 4, § 1; xv. 4, § 2.

3 Pliny, "H. N." xii. 54; xiii. 9.

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had the honour to find its way into one of the oldest and most

valuable uncial manuscripts of the New Testament—the great

Codex Alexandrinus. In the Book of Psalms, two—the Seventy-

second and the One Hundred and Twenty-seventh—are, in the

traditional titles, ascribed to Solomon.1 The Seventy-second is

that splendid Psalm—"Give the king thy judgments, oh Lord"—

which describes a righteous king ruling from sea to sea in un-

troubled prosperity. If it were either by Solomon himself or

due to the impulse he gave, as seems very probable, it shows

that though poetry may have lost something of the passionate

spontaneity which it displayed in the heart of David, it was

still capable of the noblest utterances. Psalm cxxvii.—"Except

the Lord build the house"—is one of the "Songs of Degrees,"

or as we should call them, "Pilgrim Songs"—"songs of the

goings up"— which were perhaps sung by the caravans of pil-

grims on their visits to Jerusalem at the yearly feasts. It is an

exquisite picture of domestic life in the days when marriage

was deemed a blessing left us from the ruins of Paradise, and

the multitude of children was regarded as a direct sign of the

favour of the Lord. The authorship is, however, quite un-

certain, and it may have been ascribed to Solomon only from

the mention of "God's beloved" (*y'dîdo*, "Jedidiah") in the

second verse; or from the belief that the "House" spoken of

meant the first Temple, whereas the reference is much less ex-

clusive.2 Besides these there is at least a possibility that the

first Psalm may have been composed by Solomon as an intro-

duction to the Psalms written in the previous reign, and formed

into a collection for the use of the Temple service.3 The

Second Psalm also accords well with the state of things in the

beginning of the reign of Solomon, and may have been com-

1 The title, "A Psalm for Solomon" is a literal rendering, but means (as

throughout the Psalter) "a Psalm *of* Solomon." The LXX. render it εις

Σαλωμών— to Solomon"; and not unnaturally, for it ends with the words,

"Ended are the Prayers *of David* the son of Jesse." But these words

probably closed one of the smaller collections of Psalms, as may he inferred

from the unusual addition, "the son of Jesse"; at any rate, it is not

certain that they belong to the Psalm itself.

2 See Perowne on the Psalms, ii. 378.

3 See Perowne, i. 106. One argument in favour of this view is that the

word for "*scorners*" occurs nowhere else in the Psalter, but frequently

in the earlier chapters of Proverbs.

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posed by or for him.1 The fact, however, that even tradition

assigns to him so small a share of the Psalter shows decisively

that the fresh outburst of lyric poetry which marked the reign

of David had partly exhausted itself and partly been diverted

into other channels. Ages so widely different in their charac-

teristics as those of David and Solomon could not possibly find

their full expression in the same poetic forms. The literary pro-

ductions of the age of Solomon were statelier, more artificial, less

absorbingly spiritual than those which had expressed the more

vivid and less restrained emotions of the rougher contemporaries

of his father. Two parts of the Book of Proverbs which are

believed to be Solomonic are mainly occupied with prudential and

earthly wisdom. The two other books attributed to him have

failed to awaken the passionate enthusiasm which all ages have

felt for the Book of Psalms. Until mysticism, both Rabbinic and

Scholastic, found in Canticles a field wherein to revel through

long volumes of sensuous imagery, it was looked on with consider-

able suspicion and not admitted into the canon without safe-

guard and dispute. If this was the fate of the Song which was

supposed to express the glowing emotions of Solomon's youth,

it was also the case with the Book which was supposed to utter

the despairing cynicism of his premature old age. The Book

of Ecclesiastes did not secure its place in the Hagiographa

without a struggle and a protest. Both hooks are of the highest

value, but are of uncertain meaning, and are perhaps less

*obviously* profitable for edification than any others in Holy

Writ.

3. It would be deeply interesting if we could believe that

Solomon was the author of the rich and poetic Song of Songs.2

The all but unanimous voice of anything which can be called

criticism decides against this supposition, and the unusual words

and idioms which occur in the Song, as well as its entire scope,

1 The Forty-fifth Psalm, which is certainly an epithalamium of some

royal espousals, his been referred by many to the marriage of Solomon

with the daughter of Pharaoh, or of Hiram. It is called a "song of

love," but is full of a deeply religious spirit, and points to higher fulfil-

ments in the person of an Ideal King.

2 The title "Song of Songs" means "most excellent song." It is one

of the forms of the Hebrew superlative, like "Holy of Holies," "Heaven of

Heavens," &c.

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must render his authorship more than doubtful.1 Neither the

title, nor the admission into the canon, nor the common belief

of long centuries add anything in favour of the hypothesis. To

insist on any of these arguments in the face of accumulated

proofs of their untrustworthiness is a mere anachronism. When,

however, some critics, and among them the Jewish historian

Grätz, would assign to Canticles a date no earlier than the third,

or even the second century before our era, they fail to prove

their point. Ewald, whose authority as a linguist and critic is

recognized, and whose teaching was the reverse of conservative,

decides without hesitation that the poem is an ancient one, and

perhaps not fifty years later than Solomon's reign. Grätz

adduces in opposition to this view a number of words which he

regards as Aramaic; but these words may have been northern

provincialisms, and they confirm the general inference, that the

poem was written shortly after the disruption of the kingdom,

by a subject of the house of Jeroboam. Thus, as Bishop Kaye

observes, words which are regarded as strangers in Apuleius and

Tertullian belong in reality to the age of Plautus. The prepon-

derance of modern opinion, founded on independent investiga-

tion, is in favour of the conclusion of Ewald. The general

vigour and purity of the Hebrew, the interest in the sights and

sounds of nature, the marked resemblance in thought and dic-

tion to passages in the Book of Proverbs, the acquaintance with

articles of foreign commerce, the mention of Pharaoh's chariots

in Palestine, the fact that Solomon is unsuccessful in his suit to

the chaste maiden, the absence of all allusion to the Temple

or its worship, the analogies which the book presents to the

work of the northern prophet Hosea, the mention of the Tower

of David as still hung with a thousand shields; the reference to

Heshbon, which in Isa. xv. 4 belongs not to Israel, but to Moab;

the mention of Lebanon, Hermon, Amana, and Shenir, with

their lions' dens and leopard-haunted groves;2 above all, the

allusion to Tirzah as a lovely capital side by side with Jeru-

salem, whereas Tirzah ceased to be the northern capital after

the reign of Omri3—these various indications may not be de-

1 Passages like i, 4, 3, 12; iii. 6-11; vii. 6; viii. 11, 12, would not be

natural on Solomon's own lips.

2 vii. 4; iv. 4, 3.

3 Cant. vi. 4. It was the capital between B.C. 975 and 924 (I Kings xiv.

17; xv. 21; xvi. 18). It is remarkable that, intentionally or otherwise, the

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cisive, but they suit well with the twofold hypothesis that the

poem belongs to the tenth century before Christ, and that it is

a specimen of the lost literary treasures of the Ten Tribes of

Israel. Perhaps the conjecture may be too bold, but if the

beautiful Shulamite had her prototype in Abishag, whom

Adonijah sought in marriage, and the mere mention of whose

name made Solomon flame into pitiless anger, then the

northern poet may conceivably have meant to point a silent

contrast between the mother of Solomon, who, though wedded

and rich, yielded with disgraceful facility to the temptations of

a guilty king, and the "fairest among women," the village

maiden, who inflexibly resisted a more innocent advance. The

Song may therefore be rightly regarded as Solomonic: that is,

as due to the impulse which Solomon gave, though it seems

in the highest degree improbable that it was composed by

Solomon himself.

Without attempting to enter fully into this Song of Songs,

we may well observe the characteristics which point to the

king's influence over the development of the Hebrews.

First, we may notice the many allusions to proud buildings

and royal luxury— to the Tower of David, with its thousand

golden bucklers;1 to the Tower of Lebanon,2 which overlooked

Damascus; to horses and chariots; to the splendour of Solo-

mon's palanquin, with its gold and silver and purple, and

embroidered carpets; to rings, studs of silver, and rows of

jewels; to myrrh, cinnamon, spikenard, and all sorts of pre-

cious spices; to palaces inlaid with ivory, to pillars of marble

in sockets of fine gold, to cedar wood, beryls, precious stones,

and ivory overlaid with sapphires.3

Next, the little song abounds in allusions to Nature. De-

litzsch counts in it the names of eighteen plants and thirteen

animals. Yet the descriptions of scenery do not resemble the

fresh and delightful simplicity of the Nature-Psalms. They

are sometimes so mingled up with other thoughts as to find

easier illustrations from the imagery of Arabian and Persian

poets than from that of Scripture. We read of gazelles feeding

among the lilies, of the henna-plants in the tropical vineyards

Greek translators avoid the mention of Tirzah, and render the word ευδοκιά

(Vulg. *Suravis*). In r Kings xiv. 17 they substitute Sarira for Tirzah. This

may have been due, as Dr. Ginsburg thinks, to southern jealousy.

1 iv. 4. 2 vii. 4. 3 i. 10, 11; v. 14, 15; iii.9-11; iv. 13, 14.

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of Engedi, of hills of myrrh and frankincense, of the south wind

laden with incense, of the intoxicating scent of the mandrakes

or "love-apples," of doves by the rivers of waters, of young

harts on the mountains of spices. But what is far more re-

markable than this is the spirit in which all these soft allusions

are bathed. In the Nature-Psalms, the bright and breezy land-

scape is only touched upon as a reason for praising God.

There the green pastures and still waters are the signs of His

shepherd-care for His people. There fire and hail, snow and

vapour, wind and storm do but fulfil God's words. But in Can-

ticles the grass is a couch for the lovers to lean upon, not an

emblem of mortality; and the artificial fishpools of Heshbon are

like maidens' eyes; and the cedars of Libanus are admired for

their shady boughs, not ostensibly because God had planted

them. The lilies and the flowers are not, as in the Sermon on

the Mount, proofs of God's loving tenderness, but comparisons

of physical loveliness. The lightning flashes, the winds blowing

from the north or south, the streams that run among the hills,

the strong mountains, and the grass that groweth upon them for

the use of man, are here only viewed and introduced as scenery

which bears on the central human passion.1 Psalm xlv. is

called "a song of loves," but in this the name of God occurs

four times in seven verses, whereas throughout the Song of

Solomon it occurs but once, and then merely as a kind of Hebrew

superlative.2

On the surface, therefore, this poem is not intentionally a

religious poem, but a very lovely song of innocent love.3 If

modern views of it are correct—and they are accepted by an

increasing number of the most eminent critics—it tells us in

dramatic form the story of how a pure love in humble life

triumphed over the splendid seductions of a royal wooer. The

speakers are sometimes the bride, sometimes her brothers,

sometimes the bridegroom, sometimes the princesses in the

palace of Jerusalem, sometimes a chorus of youths, friends

of the bridegroom.4 The form of it is an idyl rather than a

1 See the excellent remarks of Mr. Aglen's "Introduction to the Song

of Solomon"; Bishop Ellicott's Commentary, vol. iv. 385.

2 viii. 6, "A most vehement flame"; lit. "a flame of Jah."

3 This was the opinion of Bossuet, among others.

4 This was first suggested by Origen. When the bride speaks she uses

the feminine (i. 5). The shepherd lover is often distinguishable by his use

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drama, for it has no developed plot.1 A maiden of Shulam, or

Shunem, has given her whole heart to a young shepherd whom

she has seen while he feeds his flock among the lilies. One

day, as Solomon is making one of his royal progresses north-

ward, to some cool summer residence on the slopes of Lebanon,2

he sees the beautiful virgin, and takes her to Jerusalem, hoping

that amid the fascination of unaccustomed luxuries she may

forget her shepherd-lover, and become one of the royal harem.

But there, though all admire her matchless perfection, nothing

can win her heart, or induce her willingly to exchange her

humble home among the orchards and vineyards of the north

for the pleasures and blandishments of the great king.3 Mean-

while, the youth to whom she is betrothed has followed her to

the palace, and receives from her own lips the asurance of her

unalterable love.4 Feeling that he will not succeed in winning

her heart, Solomon magnanimously resigns her, in all her

simple innocence and virtue, to him whom she has chosen;

and the lovers, as they return together hand in hand, express in

the language of metaphor the happy conviction of their heads,

that the true love of one simple home is better than all the

costly but unblessed enjoyments of a king's seraglio.5

We cannot pretend that this outline of the meaning of the

poem, widely as it has been accepted, can be regarded as a

final datum of criticism. The poem is complex, the transitions

are abrupt, there are no indications to mark the different inter-

locutors,6 and many of the details are still of uncertain applica-

of pastoral language (i. 3, 4, 7; ii. 10-13; other speakers, by the

context and correct translation (which in some passages is far from easy).

1 The notion — perhaps partly suggested by the Latin title *Cantica*

Canticorum—that the Song of Songs has no real unity, but is, in fact.

only an anthology of love-poems, is now deservedly and universally aban-

doned. Gregory of Naziansus calls it "a bridal drama and song";

Patrick, "a pastoral eclogue"; Lowth, ''an epithalamium."

2 iv. 6-l1.

3 iii. 1-5. These various scenes, appeals. interchanges of speakers, &c.,

are entirely in accordance with the abrupt, passionate style of Eastern

songs. 4 v. 1-8.

5 viii. 1 7, 14. See Dr. Ginsburg, in Kitto's " Cyclop." iii. 870.

6 This source of difficulty is noticed by Thomas Aquinas: "Est in hoc

obscurissirnus iste liber, quia nullæ ibi commemorantur personæ, cum tamen

stylo quasi comico sit compositus" (quoted by Mr. Kingsburg in "Speaker's

Commentary," iv. 655).

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tion. Nevertheless, the notion that the Song really was what it

stems to be—a poem of pure affection, triumphant over all

temptations—is in obvious accordance with all its phenomena,

and furnishes a consistent and beautiful interpretation. Many

Christian expositors and thinkers of all schools have accepted

the theory of a primary and literal sense in one or other

of its numerous modifications. It was natural that in past

ages, when comparative literature was as yet undreamed of,

when Hebrew was only known to one expositor out of a

thousand, and when there was no such thing as a science of

historic and philological criticism, the poem—so inexplicable to

*a priori* theories of the nature of Revelation—should have been

interpreted in senses which seemed pious, though they involved

an immense anachronism and a total transference of the *primâ*

*facie* meaning. But methods of interpretation which were

possible and venial, which were even inevitable and praise-

worthy, in the times of the Fathers and Schoolmen, have long

become impossible to minds which have remained open to the

slow light of expanding revelation, which is the ever-renewed

teaching of the Holy Spirit of God. The sermons of St. Ber-

nard on the Song of Songs, though not wholly free from the

peril which must ever attend the use of sensuous imagery to

express spiritual truths had, in his day, their own beauty and

fitness. Yet if St. Bernard were now living, he, in the spirit

which believes that God's orthodoxy is the truth, might be the

first to reject the *relevance* of his comments to the text which he

is professing to illustrate; the first to reject as an arbitrary fancy

the reading into the poem of an advanced Christology; the first,

even, to feel that there is an intrinsic irreverence in attaching

unreal meanings to books which we profess to regard as sacred.

To those who have been forced to the conviction that the

writer had primarily no such meanings as those attributed to

him by Jerome or the Mediæval Church, there would be

something absolutely shocking in the application to Christ of

many passages written in the warm, physical, descriptive

language of Eastern passion. A criticism which calls itself

religious may denounce the abandonment of obsolete and

baseless traditions, but he who speaks deceitfully for God,

he who thinks to be orthodox by saying what he might know

to be untrue is as if he offered swine's flesh upon an idol

altar.

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If the view of modern expositors be correct, the central theme

of the book may be found in viii. 6, 7—

"O set me as a signet on thine heart,

A signet on thine arm!

For strong as Death is love,

Inflexible as Sheol is jealousy.

The flashes thereof are flashes of fire,

A very flame of the Lord;

Many waters cannot quench Love,

Neither can the floods drown it;

Though one should give his all away for love,

It (such purchased love) would be utterly condemned!"

Now if this be indeed the motive of the poem, so far from

being displeased at its *superficially* non-religious character, we

ought rather to be glad that the passion and poetry of pure love

find their sanction in Holy Writ. Esther is a sacred book, though

the name of God does not once occur in it; and Canticles a

sacred book, though, as in other idyls of all ages, God is not

directly referred to. For though unmentioned, God is essentially

presupposed, even as the bottom of the ocean must be pre-

supposed, though it is not seen. He is the Creator and Sanc-

tifier of that marriage " which is honourable in all, and the bed

undefiled." This kind of literature, common in all ages and

countries, is especially luxurious in the East, though scarcely in

a single instance, whether in the poetry of Persia, of India, or

of Arabia, is it found in a form which, while impassioned, is yet

so transparently pure as the Song of Solomon. It would have

been strange if no specimen of it were preserved in the sacred

records. The Hebrews needed a poem which, with all the glow

of genuine fervour, and all the rich imagery of description, is

devoted to the glorification of monogamy as superior to the

languid luxuries of a debasing polygamy, and to the exaltation

of love, in its most holy and natural form, over the seductive

glamour of wealth and power.

Seriously alarmed at the admission of the Book into the

Jewish canon, and so doubtful as to its influence, that they for-

bade the young to read it, some of the Rabbis were first induced

to get rid of their difficulty by obliterating altogether the natural

sense. In the Zohar, for instance—a cabbalistic book pro-

bably of mediæval origin—it is all referred to Israel. "I am

black, but comely," becomes the Jewish Church—black because

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of its depression, comely because of its devotion to the Law.

"The voice of the turtle is heard in our land," is regarded as an

announcement of the Coming Messiah. Allegoric interpretations

were regarded as pious, and in those days were not impossible.

They were introduced by Origen into the Christian Church.

From the fourth century onward they reigned with almost un-

disputed sway, and in monkish hands often assumed forms

which are the very reverse of pure or wholesome. "Thy teeth

are white"—that is, thy teachers are orthodox. "Stay me with

flagons"—that is, support me with the chalice of the Eucharist.

"Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet" (iv. 3): this refers to

the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds. In Jerome, "mountains

of myrrh" is explained to mean those who mortify their body;

and "flocks of Libanus" to mean troops of virgins. Such com-

ments are incomparably less absurd and less offensive than

many which might be quoted. For what are they intended? If —

they be meant for exegesis, they are unspeakably false; if they

be meant for edifying application, they are strangely needless

and painfully irrelevant. They may have their attractiveness

for a certain order of minds, but they will seem the very reverse

of pious or desirable to those who prefer truth to tradition, and

who believe that God loves a manly sincerity more than all

burnt-offerings and sacrifices. Innocent and virtuous happiness

is none so superabundant that we can spare the song devoted

to its enhancement, and the consecration of the affections

which are the basis of moral life and domestic love. Again, these

noble, moral meanings are entirely lost in that view which, while

accepting the poem as literal, represents it as an *epithalamium*

or the *espousals* of Solomon with the beautiful Abishag of

Shunem. A love which she could only share with (at the very

lowest) "sixty queens, and eighty concubines, and virgins with-

mt number" would be no true love at all, but a sensual passion,

opposite to and not in accordance with God's primeval institu-

tion; nor would there be any room for sweet rural delights in

the perfumed chambers and amid the gilded *ennui* of a palace

seraglio. The poem would then be reduced to a vapid allegory,

unsuited by its very structure and primary meaning for any

deeper or mystic sense.

Viewed in the more natural sense which we have indicated,

the Song of Songs becomes indeed sacred, and we have no

sympathy with the narrow views of the School of Shammai,

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who ventured to reject it as too mundane to be worthy of a

place in the sacred canon. We do not, indeed, agree with the

arbitrary dictum of R. Aqiba, followed by Origen, that "all the

Scriptures are holy, but *this sublime song is the Holy Of Holies*;"

for if the allegorical sense which he gave to it were its real

sense it would be strange indeed—not to dwell on numerous

other difficulties—that not the remotest hint of any such sense

is given in the poem itself; that both among the Rabbis and

the Fathers the early study of the book was discouraged lest

the sensuous character of some of the diction should have an

undesirable effect on the passions;1 that in Scripture itself the

book is not so much as once alluded to; that in the age to

which it belongs, there is not the remotest trace of the feelings

which would turn it into a sort of "Imitatio Christi"; and,

above all, that neither our Lord, nor St. Paul, nor St. John,

nor any apostle; once referred to it as illustrating in any way

the relations between God and Israel, or between Christ and

His Church. But I heartily agree with a modern commentator

in the view that this mystical sense may be true religiously,

though exegetically untenable. So long as it be not pushed to

the wild extravagances which occur in some of the mediæval

commentaries, we may well claim for the language of Canticles

the privilege which belongs to all inspired language, namely,

that it extends beyond the immediate occasion, and lends

itself to many germinal and far reaching developments. So far

we would leave room for the mystic application, and even

within reasonable limits for the allegorical, so long as it makes

no pretence whatever to be the literal meaning. Seeing that

the poem, with all its warmth of imagination, "might have

been," as Herder said, "written in Paradise," no harm could

arise from the secondary and homiletic transference of its

primary meaning to express analogous emotions in another

sphere. And yet will any honest man read over such passages

as iv. 2, 5, 9; vii. 8, 9, &c., and—bearing in mind, as he must

do, the terrible violations of taste and purity in sonic patristic

and mediæval writings which have arisen from the application

of such imagery to Christ—will he not admit that the irreve-

rence, if such it be, of recognizing the literal sense of the

poem in its pure morality is far less shocking than the

1 It was not used in the most ancient Lectionaries, nor is it in our own.

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irreverence of indiscriminately transferring to our love for

Christ the passionate expression of the love of lovers? The

*comparison* of the bride by some Jewish expositors to Israel,

and by some to Wisdom, was not unnatural; and though

the poem contains passages in which we shrink from accepting

he wholly unauthoritative headings to the chapters in our

Authorized Version, there is nothing objectionable, for those

who like it, in using the Song with modesty and reverence as

*illustrative* of the love of God to the soul of man.

If it be true, as a part of the Divine economy of the life of

man, that pure love is one of the most precious gifts of God to

man; that

"All thoughts, all passions, all delights,

Whatever stirs this mortal flame,

Are all but ministers of love,

And feed his sacred flame;"

if there is a glory in the triumph over dazzling temptations of

that womanhood which was so downtrodden in ancient and

heathen lands; if Christianity has sanctified and glorified the

love which leads to hallowed wedlock;—then we may well agree

with Niebuhr when he says that "there would be something

wanting in the Bible if there was not found there an expression

of the deepest and the strongest of all human feelings."1 In

this consecration of a supremely noble emotion many will see

the real significance of the Song of Songs; but the deepest,

most impassioned love of earth—love strong as death—may be

used without blame to furnish a symbol of the unspeakable

yearning of a soul which, as the hart panteth after the water-

brooks, so longeth for Thee, O God.2

1 This was in answer to a young pastor who asked him to explain why a

love song had been admitted into the canon (Renan, "La Cantique des

Cantiques," p. 147).

2 No one can read without sympathy the beautiful poem of the Bishop

of Derry on "An Old Volume of Sermons," in which he speaks with bitter

disdain of Renan's Essay on the Canticles, and rapturous approval of St.

Bernard's sermons. Surely the view which the bishop adopts is built on an

unreal basis. Emotion saintliness, what we regard as holy and divinely

spiritual, is one thing; philology, criticism, the plain facts of history and

literature, are another. St. Bernard was a saint thrilling with the most

Divine love for his Saviour, and Mons. Renan is a Parisian sceptic of the

nineteenth century. The thoughts of St. Bernard may be transcendently

more precious in the region of adoration and holiness than those of Mons.

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Renan, but that is no proof that his *interpretation* is truer. His exegesis,

like that which prevailed for a thousand years, was *as exegesis* founded on

principles radically untenable; but every aspiration and every emotion

to which he gives such eloquent utterance remains absolutely true, if not one

sentence of his "impassioned prose" was in any way relevant to the primary

meaning of the Song of Songs. Peace and purity and saintship are pos-

sessions incomparably more precious than all the knowledge in the world.

but they confer on no man a right to be regarded as a final authority in ques-

tions of criticism or interpretation. They belong to many a holy sot,

whose views in such matters are necessarily most ignorant and most

mistaken as regards every question except the broadest and simplest

facts of the gospel of Christ.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BOOK OF ECCLESIASTES.

Due to the general impulse given to Jewish thought by Solomon, though

it cannot have been written by him—The title Qoheleth—Conjec-

tures as to the date of the Book—"Elohim"—A struggle with per-

plexity and despondency—Outline of the Book: 1. The Prologue; 2.

The first section, personal experiences; 3. The second section;

The third section; 5. The fourth section; partial conclusion; 6. The

Epilogue —A general summary—Progressiveness of revelation—Doubts

of some of the Rabbis—Two general lessons—The emptiness of worldly

pleasure—The teaching of bitter experience.

IF Solomon's authorship of the Song of Songs must be regarded

as being in the highest degree dubious, it may now be looked

upon as a certain result of advancing knowledge that he was

not the author of Ecclesiastes. "If the Book of Qoheleth," says

Delitzsch, "be of old Solomonic origin, then there is no history

of the Hebrew language." And Dr. Ginsburg says, "We could

as easily believe that Chaucer is the author of 'Rasselas' as

that Solomon wrote Qoheleth." The past tense in Eccl.

alone seems to imply that Solomon was not the real author, nor

could he well have written iii. 16, iv. 6, v. 8, vii. 7, &c.1 The

doubts as to its authorship are as old as the days of Shammai in

the century before Christ, and there was a strong opposition

among the Jews even to the admission of its canonicity. At

the present day there is not a single eminent Rabbi who would

not follow Geiger and Grätz among his own countrymen,

and a host of Christian commentators from Luther and

Grotius down to Ewald and even Keil, in declaring that

1 See Plumptre, "Ecclesiastes," p. 21.

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whoever was the author Solomon could not have been. Those

who have the slightest acquaintance with ancient literature,

know that the adoption of a pseudonym involved no dis-

honest intention, and was indeed one of the most familiar of

literary expedients. The internal evidence deducible from the

tone of the Book—the condition of society which it implies, and

the traces which it contains of acquaintance with pessimism,

Sadduceeism, asceticism, and various phases of Greek specula-

tion—convince the majority of modern expositors that it is later

than the Exile, and was probably written in the third century

before Christ. We cannot, therefore, use it as a book of any

*historical* authority about Solomon. The Canticles, even

though not from his pen, may furnish us with some conception

of his songs which are no longer extant; but Ecclesiastes is

only a late and traditional, if not imaginary, representation of

his doubts and difficulties and of the philosophy, or at least the

restful conviction, to which they finally led him. It is, how-

ever, an entire mistake to represent the Book as an expression

of repentance. There is no trace of penitence in it. Yet the

Books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes are important specimens of

that "sapiential" literature—that phase of Hebrew thought

called "wisdom" (*khokma*)—which has been for ages asso-

ciated with the wise king's name.

Even the significance of the title—Qoheleth—is much dis-

puted. The word does not occur elsewhere in Scripture, and

was perhaps coined by the author himself. It has been under-

stood to mean "the gatherer of wisdom," or "the gatherer of

the people of God," or "the gathered re-united soul," or a

"moralist," or "an assembly." The Greek word Ecclesiastes

means "a summoner of assemblies," and the name " Preacher"

(Vulg. *conciliator*), is accepted as representing Qoheleth by the

Jewish Midrash Rabba. As it is supported not only by Luther

and other translators, but by the high linguistic authority of

Gesenius, Herzfeld, Knobel, Stuart, and others, it may be re-

garded as representing at least a fair approximation to the

meaning of the word, though perhaps it may be more closely

represented by "the debater" or "the ideal teacher of wisdom

speaking in the assembly."1

1 See Plumptre's " Ecclesiastes," p. 17; Zöckler, " Handb. d. Theol.

Wissensch." p. 161. When personified the feminine word is treated as

masculine, and means, perhaps, "The speaker in the assembly." But it

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As very few are now found to support the Solomonic author-

ship a wide scope for conjecture is left as to the date. How

completely uncertain is the decision may be shown by the fact

that the suggested dates differ from B.C. 975 to B.C. 10;1 but

those who will consult any good modern commentary, such as

the learned treatise of Dr. Ginsburg, or the very interesting one

of the Dean of Wells, or the lectures of the Dean of Westmin-

ster, will see abundant proofs of the modern tone of the book,

and of allusions to fact and traces of thought which are incon-

sistent with the position of Solomon,2 and cannot be attributed

to him without wild improbability.3 It has Aramaic words,

non-Semitic words, and words of late Hebrew. It was prob-

ably written after the Exile.4

The name of God is mentioned in this book twenty-seven

times. The writer does not abandon his belief though he leaves

it unreconciled with his perplexities. There is no great light

or warmth in its influence. It cannot be said that the pervading

thought of the main portion of the book is deeply religious or

very elevated. It is utterly unlike the cheerful holiness and

radiant confidence which breathes through the Forty-fourth and

many other Psalms. Of the Mosaic covenant there is scarcely

even a trace. God is simply Elohim, the Creator; the name

Jehovah, the Eternal of the Covenant, does not once occur.

God is never *near* to his apprehension, but far away. His tone

is wholly without enthusiasm. He warns against over-righteous-

ness and over-wisdom (vii. 16), as well as against over-wicked-

ness. The sentence might have come from the sermon of an

eighteenth-century bishop.

does not occur elsewhere in the Old Testament, and Aquila leaves it un-

translated. Feminine forms are sometimes used for offices, and even for

the names of men.

1 The latter date is suggested by Grätz, who, on precarious grounds,

refers it to the times of Herod the Great, and sees in it "in part a polemic

against the rising asceticism of the Essenes."

2 See iii. 16; iv. 1; v. 8; x. 7, &c.

3 For parallelisms to the Book of Malachi see Dr. Plumptre's notes on

Eccl. v. 1-6; for traces of Post-exilian thought the notes on iii. 19-21,

vii. 1-6, 16; and for apparent reference to Greek philosophy and literature

the notes on i. ii. 24, ii. 20, iii. 18, &c.

4 Delitzsch thinks that the pathetic allusion of vi. 3 is to Artaxerxes

Mnemon, who had 115 children and died at 94, and to his murdered suc-

cessor Artaxerxes Ochus.

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The advice which the writer gives, even when it has an Epi-

curean sound, is the outcome of despondency and gloom.

Emdæmonism seems to him better than ascetism, but it does

not satisfy him. Life is too short for it, sorrow too multiform,

death too alarming, pleasure itself too empty. There is a hesi-

tating half-heartedness even in his exhortations to moderate

and rational enjoyment. He is oppressed by the thought of

death, and perplexed by the burden and mystery of an unin-

telligible world. He has "swallowed all formulæ," and banished

all gracious illusions, and he faces life in its dreariest aspect,

though in moods inconsistent with each other. His thoughts

reflect the passing emotion, and it is hence difficult to frame them

into any harmonious system. His repeated "vanity of vanities"

sounds like a death-knell to the sort of sad cheerfulness which

he himself recommends. Of personal immortality he scarcely

dreams; his words rightly rendered give no clear promise of

any life beyond the grave.1

It is difficult to make an accurate analysis of the book and its

sections. Herder thought that he recognized two voices in it,

but believed, on the whole, that no connexion could be dis-

covered between its isolated records of experience. It has,

however, a Prologue (i. 1-11; an Epilogue (xii. 8-14); and

four main divisions.

1. The Prologue introduces the main theme of difficulty and

discussion, which is the supreme emptiness of life, the monotony

which accompanies, and the oblivion which awaits, its con-

stantly recurrent phenomena.

2. In the first section (i. 26) the writer, speaking in the

assumed person of King Solomon, details his experience of

futile efforts to reach happiness, knowledge, and what was

usually called wisdom. His endeavours were but "emptiness

and a striving after wind." They were ineffectual and unsatisfy-

ing (i. 12-18).

Then he tried laughter and mirth and pleasure, and the cheer

of wine; but that, too, was but madness and emptiness (ii. 1-3).

Next he tried luxury, art, magnificence, wealth, music, and

every form of indulgence, and he found that also entirely pro-

fitless (ii. 4-11). He turned to the contemplation of human

nature in its various phases of wisdom and folly, and though it

1 See iii. 21; vi. 6; ix. 2, 5, 6, 10; xi. 8; xii. 7.

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became clear to him "that wisdom exceedeth folly as far as light

exceedeth darkness" (12, 13), yet the weariness, the certainty

and the unknown issues of death, together with the necessity of

leaving all the results of his labour to one who might be a mere

fool, made him hate everything, and look on life itself as mere

"vanity and striving after wind," which reduces all the thoughts

of man to despair, making all his days sorrow, and his travail

grief, and even his nights unrestful (ii. 12-23), so that death

and nothingness seem better than life.1 And all this bitter ex-

perience drove him to the poor conclusion that the best thing

to do is calmly to eat and drink, and enjoy such pleasure as

God may allow us in this brief life. Righteousness, he sees,

does involve wisdom and joy; but to the sinner there is nothing

but useless travail; so that this also is "vanity and a striving

after wind" (ii. 24-26).

3. In the next section (iii. 9-vi. 7), the same fundamental

theme is again debated with variations. There is a time for

everything, and perhaps happiness may be found in the right

use of opportunity. It may be so. A sort of tranquil content-

ment is perhaps attainable (iii. 1-15), and certainly amid the

perplexities and perversities of human institutions there is

discernible a law of moral government, "a stream of tendency

that makes for righteousness." But then this thought is again

confronted by the awful universal fact of death, and man's

utter ignorance as to its issues. On the whole, then, there

seems no more satisfactory conclusion than that a man should

rejoice in his works and make the best of life as it is

(iii. 16-22).

And yet the conclusion is surrounded by sadness! Death, or

not to have been born at all, seemed better when he saw the

power of the oppressor and the comfortless tears of the op-

pressed (iv. 1-3). Labour too is envied if it succeeds, and

indolence is fatal. Peace and a moderate lot are best. Then

after furnishing us with some of the miscellaneous results of his

experience about the sadness of lonely wealth (7-12), and the

weariness of vicissitude, and the inefficacy of government (13-16),

he turns to religious considerations, and sees that when they

are free from superstition and hypocrisy they confirm the con-

clusions of his philosophy as to the emptiness of wealth, and the

1 See ii, 17; iv. 2, 3; vii. 1.

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wisdom of calm and moderate and self-controlled enjoyment

(v. 1-vi. 9).1

4. Once more he reviews, illustrates, enforces this result of

all that he had observed and felt. Virtue, the control of the

passions, a wise acceptance of all the blessings which Cod

vouchsafes to us, a chastened resignation in view of the strange

insoluble enigmas of life, obedience to just rule, a conviction

that, on the whole, it is better with the good man than with the

sinner, even in this life and amid obvious perturbations of the

moral order—these all lead once more to the old conclusion

that, after all, there "is no better thing under the sun than to

eat, and to drink, and to be merry"—in one word, to make the

best of life such as it is, and such as God has given it to us, in

spite of all its ignorance and emptiness (vi. 10-viii. 15). Thus

it is to this conviction that he again and again reverts.2

5. The problems of life seem so far to be insoluble, and there

still remains the dark shadow of death and oblivion (viii. 16-

ix. 6). Let us then work, and be as glad as it is permitted us to

be (ix. 7-10). Even so we cannot indeed escape the sad chances

of life (11, 12), nor is wisdom and service always rewarded

(13-16). Yet certain rules of wisdom remain, on the whole, un-

shaken, and by those we should guide our life however sad or

perplexing may be its external conditions (ix. 17-x. 20). But

the Preacher will enforce the conclusion to which he has now

so often been led. It is not good to dwell too much on pro-

blems which we cannot solve, or facts which we cannot alter.

Let us do our duty never forgetting the end of life. Something

will come of it, and that issue must be left in the hands of God,

Who alone knows what life means. The days of old age, the

days of sorrow, the days of sickness, the day of death are in-

evitably at hand. It must be confessed once more that all is a

1 Cheyne adopts different divisions—

1. Prologue—i. 1-11.

2. A biographical sketch—i. 12-iv.17.

3. Proverbial experiences—v. 1-vii. 14.

4. Personal experiences—vii. 15-ix. r2.

5. Various observations—ix. 13-x. 15.

6. Patting counsels—x. 16-xii. 8.

7. An epilogue added later by another hand—xii. 9-14.

But the arrangement is so difficult to decide that Bickell supposes an acci-

dental displacement of two leaves in some early manuscript.

2 ii. 24 ; iii. 12, 13, 22; v. 18; viii. 15; ix. 7-9; xi. 9, 10.

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thrice-repeated emptiness, yet the truth remains that it is best

to accept in the spirit of thankfulness, with humility, thought-

fulness, and the fear of God, such innocent happiness as

God may allow to us. There is no more to be said than this.

Life is vanity, but perhaps there may be some dim, mysterious,

unformulated hope in the thought that when the dust returns to

the earth, the spirit also returns to God who gave it (xi. 1-xii. 8).

6. The Book ends with a brief Epilogue (xii. 9-14), whether

added by the author himself, or, as some prefer to believe,1 by

another who admired the power and genius of the Book, but

saw that it was in form very unsystematic, and that the conclusion

was left after all in a vague and dubious form. If so, the author

of the epilogue desired to add to the treatise a religious, and

perfectly intelligible summary of all that was best in the one

main inference to which it led. That summary did not profess

to solve the terrible riddle of human life; but it said in tones of

consummate dignity—that though (as "the Qoheleth"2 con-

fesses), much might remain obscure, though books might be

endlessly multiplied, and study end only in weariness, yet one

rule stood sure, and was sufficient for the moral guidance of life

if not for its complete happiness or full illumination. "This is

the end of the matter; all hath been heard;3 fear God and keep

His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man." We

dare not live in sin, we dare not live at haphazard, we dare not

live as hypocrites. "For God shall bring every work into

judgment, with every hidden thing whether it he good or whether

it be evil."

Thus then vanity of vanities—the vanity of knowledge, of

1 Döderlein, Bertholdt, Umbreit, Knobel, De Jong, Krochmal, Geiger,

lost, Grätz, Renan, Kalisch, Nöldeke, Bickell, Cheyne.

2 xii. 9. Everywhere else the writer rails himself Qoheleth. Here alone

he is spoken of *ab extra* —"the Qoheleth." It is supposed, however, that

in vii. 27 the true reading should be "*amar haqqoleleth*," and that the

words are the marginal interpolation of sonic reader who dissented from

Qoheleth's low estimate of women. Cheyne. "Job and Solomon," p. 231,

n. Kuenen ("Religion of Israel," iii. 153-161) maintains the unity of the

Book.

3 Possibly the text is here corrupt, Klostermann (see Cheyne, "Job and

Solomon," i. 232), thought that the word "vanity" has dropped out, and

that the following clause is mutant to define in what sense it should be truly

said that "all is vanity;" or we may take it to mean, "Final results all

having been heard."

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riches, of pleasure, of fame, of injustice, oblivion, and oppres-

sion, of solitariness and mirth, of women and kings and courts,

the vanity of all human hopes, wishes, and attainments, and

speculations—is twenty times repeated in the burden of the

Book. The remedies it proposes bear no proportion either in

space or in efficacy to the multitude of disappointments on

which it dwells.

It may be said that its recommendation of virtue and

resigned enjoyment if a wise, is yet a very partial and im-

perfect, conclusion. The answer is that all revelation is progres-

sive, and that until Christ's resurrection brought life and

immortality to light, many Jews had but a vague belief in the

future. It was to them a dim hope, a splendid guess, not a

cardinal article of faith. Writing in troubled times, writing

perhaps amid deep personal gloom, and less as a philosopher

than as a practical guide, the writer gives the valuable testimony

of experience to the blessedness of a practical and attainable

end which may be made a stepping-stone to higher things. He

leads us at least to the truth that the Chief Good is not to be

found in wealth or in pleasure, or even in knowledge, but in

duty, in the fear of God, and the modest enjoyment of such

blessings as we have, while we leave the shadowed present and

the uncertain future in the hands of our Creator. He preaches

resignation, not fatalism; temperance, not asceticism; serene

humility, not ecstatic assurance.

The doubts about the acceptance of Ecclesiastes into the

sacred canon existed even among the Rabbis. In the tract

Shabbath we find the question, "Thou Solomon, where was thy

wisdom, and where was thy understanding? Not only do thy

words contradict those of thy father, but they contradict also

thine own. Thy father said, 'The dead praise not Thee, O

Lord;1 but thou sagest, 'Wherefore I praised the dead;' and

again, 'A living dog is better than a dead lion.'"2 The Book,

however, can be as little judged by isolated phrases as the Book

of Job.

It was the epilogue alone, as Jerome expressly tells us,3—with

1 Ps. cxv. 17.

2 Eccles. iv. 2, ix. 4. Shabbath f. 30. 1. The Rabbis contrast ii. 2

with viii. 15. and viii. 2, vii. Is with viii. 14, vii. 15.

3 It was in danger of obliteration for its assertion of the "vanity" of

God's creatures, and its praise of food, drink, and enjoyment; in other

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one or two passages which recent editors regard as possible

interpolations,1—which secured the tardy admission of the Book

into the Jewish canon. This was decided at the Synod of

Jamnia, A.D. 90, and the Jewish scholar Krochmal thinks that

the epilogue was then added to obviate any dangerous misuse

of the alternate pessimism and Epicureanism which marks the

oscillation of "the Preacher" between hopeless despondency

and submissive acquiescence. "Nothing is more certain," says

Cheyne, "than that the book was an *Antilegomenon* (of disputed

canonicity) in Palestine in the first century before Christ." The

Book had been accepted, but it was not till a second synod at

Jamnia in 118 that it was finally sanctioned.

It has made its deepest impression partly by the energy with

which it represents the emptiness of worldly pleasure, and partly

by the sense of conviction that we must learn, even by bitter

experience, if need be, that good is best. The first experience

is universal. The ancients symbolized it when they sang of the

feast of Phineus polluted by Harpy-talons and Harpy-wings.

For by the Harpies they meant, "the gusts of vexatious, fretful,

lawless passion, vain and overshadowing, discontented and

lamenting, meagre and insane—spirits of wasted energy, and

wandering desire, and unappeased famine and unsatisfied hope;

the pitiful, unconquerable coiling and uncoiling and self-involved

returns of some sickening famine and thirst at heart."

i. Vanity of vanities has been the universal epitaph of human

greatness. Need we do more than to refer to Tiberius, lord of

the world, and the gloomiest man who walked upon it; to

Septimius Severus saying, "*Omnia fui et nihil expedit*;" to Ab-

derrahman the Magnificent, recording that in all his splendid life

he could count but fourteen happy days; to Charles V., gloomy

and gluttonous in his retirement at Yuste; to Louis XIV., with

"the sense of pleasure extinguished in his heart," and taught, as

his wife said, by age and devotion, "the vanity of everything he

words, because of its mingled pessimism and hedonism; but "ex hoc uno

capitulo mernisse auctoritatem ut in divinorum numero eloquiorum pone-

retur" ("Præf. in Eccl." Opp. ii. 713, ed. Martianay).

1 xi. 6 b; xii. 1 a, 8 b. Luzzatto quotes in support of this Shabhath 7, 1.

Some add iii. 17. There is nothing to *prove* the supposition, but there is

nothing *a priori* impossible in it, for it is admitted by all alike that many

of the sacred books were more or less "edited" in the days of Ezra, and

possibly later.

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was formerly fond of?" Vanity of vanities are the first words of

the "Imitatio Christi," and the last of "Vanity Fair."

ii. Nor can the second truth over become trite; its signi-

ficance is inexhaustible, and it has to be learned afresh by

each new generation. It remains one of the certain facts of life

that happiness depends on ourselves and not on our outward

circumstances; that it is conditioned, not by what we have, but

by what we are; that—

"Our acts our angels are, or good or ill,

Our fatal shadows that walk by us still."

The Qoheleth records the bitter and varied experiences which

led him to rest on the broad foundation of these truths; and

these "confessions of an inquiring spirit," will for ever retain

their value and interest for sad and suffering men. But the

true solution of the perplexities which tormented the Hebrew

thinker, and the only real alleviation of the miseries about which

he complained have been furnished to us by that fuller revela-

tion in comparison of which the wisdom of the Preacher was

but rudimentary, and his knowledge only as the light of a star

which is lost in glory when the dayspring has arisen with

healing in its wings.1

Neither to Canticles nor to Qoheleth is there a single refer-

ence in the New Testament; to the Book of Proverbs there are

more than twelve.

1 "We may," says Dr. Salmon (Bishop Ellicott's Commentary), "set

aside one system of interpretation, although it found favour in the Christian

Church for centuries; that namely in which this Old Testament book was

made to teach New Testament doctrine from one end to the other, and the

most unlikely verses were forced to prophecy of Christ.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BOOK OF PROVERBS.

Solomonic proverbs— Three words—1. *Mashal*, "a parable"; Various

applications of the word—2. *Chîdâh*, "a riddle"; Enigmas in the

East; "Dark sayings" in the Proverbs— Prov. xxvi. 10-3. *M lêtzah*,

"a figure''—Outline of the Book: 1. The Introduction; A work of

moral guidance—2. The Wisdom section; How it differs from the rest

of the Book; Conceptions of "wisdom" among the Hebrews—3.

"The Proverbs of Solomon;" Their general structure; Their sub-

stance; Twofold beauty of tone: i. It is kindly; ii. It is religious—

Few traces of the national religion—4. "The words of the wise"—

5. Further "words of the wise"—6. Hezekiah's collection—7. Three

appendices: α. The words of Agur; β. The exhortation of Lemuel;

γ. The acrostic of the virtuous woman—General remarks: 1. Cosmo-

politan spirit —2. Had the Hebrews a philosophy? —3. Three phases

of thought about difficulties in the moral government of the world:

α. The era of general principles; β. The era of difficulties; γ. The

era of acquiescence; δ. The final eschatological conclusion —

Sapiential literature not Messianic, yet in one sense Christological-

5. Exaltation of morality—6. Frequent references to the Book in the

New Testament.

IN the Book of Proverbs, more probably by far than in the

other books attributed to Solomon, we may possess some of his

contributions to the thought of the world. "He spake three

thousand proverbs," says the historian of the Kings.1

1. The word which we render "proverb '' has a very wide

latitude in the Hebrew language. It is *mashal*, and comes from

a root which means) "to be like." In the English version it is

1 1 Kings iv. 32.

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rendered, "by-word," "parable;" and "proverb," but in its first

intention it signified, "a comparison."

Of these comparisons we have large numbers in the Book of

Proverbs. Such are the following:—

"As a jewel of gold in a swine's snout, so is a fair woman that

is without discretion" (xi. 22).

"As cold water to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far

country " (xxv. 25).

"As a bag of gems in a heap of stones so is he that giveth

honour to a fool" (xxvi. 8).

And since a careless, uninstructed person may wholly miss

the point of the comparison, and so render it inapplicable, we

are told that, "The legs of the lame are not equal; so is a

parable in the mouth of fools."

Sometimes the simile takes the form of a metaphor, as in the

"proverb" quoted by Ezekiel (xviii. 2), "The fathers have eaten

sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."

And sometimes it is expanded into a sort of allegory, as when

a lesson is derived from the condition of the sluggard's garden

(xxiv. 30-34).

The word *mashal* is applied in other books of Scripture to

poems like those of Balaam; or figurative harangues like those

of Ezekiel;1 or songs of triumph, or sarcasm, as in Micah (ii. 4),

Habakkuk (ii. 6), and Isaiah (xiv. 4).

But its commonest application was to brief sententious say-

ings like, "Wickedness proceedeth from the wicked " (I Sam.

xxiv. 13), and it is of such proverbs—the words of the wise, or

maxims into which are concentrated the long results of obser-

vation and experience — that a large part of the Book of

Proverbs consists.

2. In this Book are also to be found what the Hebrews called

"riddles," or "dark sayings." One of the avowed objects of the

Book was that the young especially "should understand a proverb

and a figure;2 the words of the wise and their dark sayings."

The Hebrew word rendered "dark sayings," and in other

passages "hard question," and "riddle," is *Chîdâh* (חִידָה).3

1 Numb. xxiii., xxiv.; Ezek. xvii. 2, xx. 47, xxiv. 3, &c.

2 Not "and the interpretation," as in the Authorized Version.

3 In 1 Kings x. I; 2 Chron. ix. 1, it is applied to the questions put to

Solomon by the Queen of Sheba; in Judg. xiv. 4 to Samson's riddle. See,

100, Ezek. xvii. 2; Ps. xlix. 4.

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It means, literally, "a knot."1 Of actual riddles we have no

trace in the Book of Proverbs, unless we regard those in the

thirtieth chapter as intended to be such. What are the four

small things on earth which are wise and clever? The answer

is the ants, the coneys, the locusts, the lizards; and the answer

is justified by keen observations on their natural instincts. What

three things are intolerable, and a fourth still more intolerable?

The answer is a slave in power, a fool full of meat, a hateful

woman when she is married, and a female slave who dispos-

sesses her mistress. What three things are insatiable, and a

fourth could never have enough? The answer is Sheol, and

the barren womb, and the parched earth, and fire. They are

offered in illustration of the saying, "The horseleach hath two

daughters crying, Give, give!"2

Enigmas, in the modern sense of the term, are hardly found

in the Book of Proverbs, but play some part in the story of

Solomon. The Septuagint translators say of the Queen of

Sheba, that "she came to try Solomon *with enigmas*;"3 and

Josephus quotes from two secular historians — Menander of

Ephesus and Dius—to confirm his story that Solomon chal-

lenged Hiram with riddles, for which he was to pay a large line

if he failed to answer them.4 There is an obvious pleasure in

such difficult and intricate sayings, and all Orientals have been

fond of them. There are collections of riddles in Persian and

Arabic, and they formed an occasional amusement at the ban-

quets of Greeks and Romans.

When, however, we find among the Proverbs, of which the

translation is generally easy, verses and phrases which admit of

many different interpretations, and different vowel-points, we

may probably recognize in them those "dark sayings" which

1 Compare the Latin *scirpus*. Md. Gell. "Noct. Att." xii. 6. We

have specimens of Greek riddles, &c. (γρῖφοι), in Athen., "Deipnos."

x. 69-83.

2 Prov. xxx. 15. St. Augustine calls this "an obscure allegory."

3 1 Kings x. 1, εν αινίγμασι.

josephus, Antiq." viii. 5, § 3. Dean Plumptre ("Dictionary of the

Bible," s.v. Solomon) mentions a curious mediaeval story as possibly founded

on the tradition of Hiram's victory over Solomon, by the aid of the boy

Abdemon. Solomon is then outwitted by a deformed dwarf named

Thorulf. The subject is handled by Wünsche, "Die Rätbselweisheit,"

1883.

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were purposely intended to exercise the ingenuity. As a speci-

men of these, we may mention Prov. xxvi. 10. In our Autho-

rized Version it is rendered, "The great *God* that formed all

*things* both rewardeth the fool, and rewardeth transgressors."

In the Revised Version it is—

"As an archer that woundeth all,

So is he that hireth the fool, and he that hircth them that pass by."

The margin again gives—

"A master-worker formeth all things;

But he that hireth the fool is as one that hireth them that pass by."

Rosenmüller renders it—

"The mighty man causes terror;

So does he who hires the foul and the transgressor."

Several great Hebrew scholars, like Gesenius, Hitzig, and

Umbreit, translate the words thus—

"Much produces all;1

But he who employs a fool is as one who employs passers-by."

Delitzsch again, altering the vowel-points, makes them mean-

"Much bringeth forth all,

But the hire of a fool, and his hirer, perish."

3. A third expression used in Prov. i. 6, to describe the contents

of the book, is *M'lêtzah*. It is rendered "an interpretation,"

but is rather "a figure"—something bent or oblique. It only

occurs elsewhere in Hab. ii. 6, where it is rendered, "a taunt-

ing proverb."

When we turn from the general contents of the Book of

Proverbs to its structure, we see at once that it falls into seven

parts: —

1. The Introduction—i. 1-7.

2. The Wisdom section—i. 8-ix. 18.

3. The collection of four hundred proverbs—x. 16.

4. "The words of the wise"—xxii. 17-xxiv. 23.

5. Another short collection of the words of the wise—xxiv.

23-34.

6. Hezekiah's collection of the proverbs of Solomon—xxv.-

xxix. 27.

1 *I.e*., The rich become richer.

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7. Three appendices.

α. The words of Agur.

β. The words of King Lemuel.

γ. The acrostic poem in praise of the virtuous woman.

Thus the Book shows on its surface that it is not homo-

geneous; but we may still regard it as probable that in its

collection of apophthegms we have preserved to us something

of the traditional wisdom of Solomon, and the form of literature

which derived its impulse from the era which he inaugurated.

I. The Introduction (i. 1-7) gives us the purport of the Book.

Proverbs had always been current among the Israelites,1 but

the collection that follows is intended as a manual of morals.

Practical ethics formed the chief sphere in which Hebrew wis-

dom worked. In its earlier phases it never dreamt of meddling

with logic or metaphysics, or any but the simplest theology.

The Book of Proverbs is marked out especially as a book for

young men, and it is far front impossible that as other fathers

have written volumes intended to instruct their children, so

Solomon, if he ever collected his proverbs, may have had in

view the training of his son Rehoboam, a training in which

he desired that ethical guidance should be accompanied by

practical prudence and intellectual insight.

2. The opening chapters (i. 8-ix. 18), which I have called

"the Wisdom section," can hardly have come front the hand of

Solomon. This section consists of fifteen didactic poems,

abounding in appeals of a teacher to his pupil whom he

addresses as "My son." They are a specimen of the *Mashal*

in its more developed and poetic form, and they differ widely

from the rest of the Book. They have peculiar words and

phrases and show the influence of the Book of Job. They

abound in warnings against impurity and violence,2 and they

remind us of the famous "Choice of Hercules" in their recurrent

antithesis between the voice of Wisdom and the voice of the

"strange woman" who is a type of the "*improba Siren*"—the

harlot Sense. It is in these chapters that we find the frequent men-

tion and personification of Wisdom which gave the name of "the

Wisdom literature" to such works as this, Ecclesiastes, the

1 Numb. xxi. 27; I Sam. xxiv. 13; 2 Sam. xx. 18.

2 The warnings against association with robbers (i. 10-19; ii. 12-15;

iv. 4-17) hardly accord with the peace and order which prevailed in the

days of Solomon.

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Wisdom of Solomon, and the Book of Ecclesiasticus.1 In this

section we have not so much the results of wisdom as exhorta-

tions to seek her diligently. "The key-note of the anthology

is nothing but experience; that of the introductory treatise is

Divine Teaching."2 In the later chapters Wisdom is creative,

but in these she contemplates herself. "There is that kind of

difference," says Mr. Davidson, "between these chapters and

those that follow as the difference between productivity and

criticism."

The conception of Wisdom among the Hebrews was singularly

wide, and the word itself was used, sometimes in a large and

sometimes in a more restricted sense. It is used *objectively*

of the Wisdom of God, and this Divine Wisdom is regarded

either as Intrinsic, as Emanating, or as Personified. It is also

used *subjectively* of Human Wisdom, and this is sometimes

spoken of in its theoretical and sometimes in its practical aspect.

Human wisdom in its *theoretic* aspect is what the fourth Book of

Maccabees calls "A knowledge of Divine and human affairs

and of their causes."3 It consists of all branches of historical,

scientific, artistic, thaumaturgic, and, above all, spiritual know-

ledge. In its *practical* aspect it consists of experience, a

skill in handicrafts, and, above all, in virtue. There is scarcely

one of these senses in which the word is not used in one or other

passage of the apocryphal Book of Wisdom. Hence the word

for wisdom is sometimes used in the plural (*Khokmoth*).4 In the

Book of Proverbs the first nine chapters are a glorification of

Divine Wisdom spoken of as a Person, and an exhortation

to seek her. In the latter chapters the wisdom spoken of is

sometimes spiritual, but consists more often in having learned

to apply the lessons of experience and to practise the laws of

virtue.

3. In the tenth chapter a new division begins with the title,

"The Proverbs of Solomon," and the character of the Book

changes from continuous exhortation to isolated precepts, con-

veyed, for the most part, in parallel or antithetic distichs.

They are arranged with scarcely a trace of connexion between

the consecutive verses except that here and there a few touch

1 Clement and other Fathers cite these books under the name of "All-

praised Wisdom"—η πανάρετος Σοφια.

2 Cheyne. "Job and Solomon," p. 156.

3 4 Macc. i. 16. 4 Prov. i. 20; ix. 11.

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on the same topic or contain the same prominent word.

Possibly the arrangement was sometimes due to the initial

letters. This section is probably the kernel of the Book and

its most ancient portion. The fact that not a few of these

proverbs occur with variations in the later collection shows

at once their vogue and their antiquity.

As regards their forms they differ widely from the poetic

strains of the psalmists and prophets, but they follow the

ordinary structure of all Hebrew poems in being based upon

parallelism. The parallelism is generally confined to a distich,

but is sometimes expanded into three (xxii. 29), four (xxv. 4, 5),

five (xxiii. 4, 5), six (xxiii. 1-6), seven (xxiii. 6-8), or eight lines

(xxiii. 22-25).1

i. The parallelism is sometimes synonymous or cognate, the

second line of the couplet merely varying and emphasizing the

first, as in iii. 22-24—

"So shall they be life unto thy soul,

And grace unto thy neck.

Then shalt thou walk in thy way securely,

And thy foot shall not stumble.

When thou liest down thou shalt not be afraid:

Yea, thou shalt lie clown, and thy sleep shall be sweet."

ii. Sometimes it is *antithetic*, the second line giving the reverse

side of the thought contained in the first, as in xxvii. 6, 7—

"Faithful are the wounds of a friend;

But deceitful the kisses of an enemy.

"The full soul loatheth an honeycomb,

But to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet."

This type of parallelism is the commonest, and it abounds in

chapters x.-xv.

iii. Sometimes, again, there is mere symmetry and bifurcation,

the parallelism being in the form or sound, and not in the

sense, as in—

"A gracious woman retaineth honour;

And violent men retain riches " (xi. 16).

1 Where the number of lines is *unequal*, it is nearly certain that a line

has sometimes dropped out; where the antithesis is meaningless the text

is probably corrupt (see xix. 7, LXX.)

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iv. In rarer instances the parallelism is introverted, the first

and last lines running parallel with each other with a pair of

parallels between, as in xxiii. 15, 16—

"My son, if thine heart be wise,

My heart also shall rejoice:

Yea, my reins shall rejoice

When thy lips speak right things:''1

Turning from the form to the substance we notice the

general character of the greater part of this gnomic poetry of

the Hebrews. A few of the Proverbs are little more than

prudential maxims to guide the intercourse of men with one

another; rules of trading and of behaviour such as the writer

had observed in Courts, or in commercial dealings, or in the

bazaars and streets of busy cities. Others are keen observa-

tions on common moral phenomena. He notices the dislike

to poor relations,2 the excuses of indolence, the miseries of ill-

assorted marriage,3 the error of spoiling children,4 the duty of

kindness to animals,5 the effects of despondency and cheerful-

ness,6 the loneliness of the human heart,7 the sickness of hope

deferred,8 the emptiness of unintelligent beauty,9 the curse of

greed,10 the cunning of bargainers,11 the glory of righteous age.12

He touches on hundreds of other little facts and trials and

alleviations of life. But the Hebrew gnomologist is far from

been merely utilitarian, for he constantly reveals that he is

thinking of something better than human rewards and earthly

sanctions.

The tone of his remarks has a twofold beauty—it is kindly

and it is religious.

i. It is *kindly*. Even when *the wise man* deals with sarcasm

(which is not often) his satire is never cynical, never bitter, brutal,

or indiscriminating. The heart of the wise man is a gentle heart,

and his satire is akin to charity. On the other hand, his sym-

pathies are as wide as human nature. He cares for man as man

and nothing which is human is alien from him. His view of

1 This collection of ancient gnomes may possibly be meant to consist

of five sections, each introduced by an exhortation to the young (xi.; xiii. I

xv. 20; xvii. 25; xix. 27). (Ewald).

2 xiv. 20.; xix. 7. 3 xxv. 24. 4 xxiii. 13. 5 xii. 10.

6 x. 2; xvii. 22. 7 xiv. 10. 8 xiii. 12. 9 xi. 22.

10 xi. 26. 11 xx. 14. 12 xvi. 31.

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life differs widely from that of Ecclesiastes. It is genial and

sunny, not gloomy and pessimistic.

ii. But there is a yet higher merit in these Proverbs, which

is that as they are almost exclusively moral, so they are animated

by a religious spirit.1 In short and pithy sentences the wise

man urges the duties of humility, of self-restraint, of kindness

to animals,2 of gentleness, of purity,3 of charity and forgiveness,4

of righteousness in all its forms. He dwells on justice and

veracity, and, above all, on love to man; but he does not give

his instructions as a cold and formal moralist. He refers every-

thing to God; he sees everything in the light of God. His

aims are not merely secular or self-interested, but he presents

even intellectual truths on their religious side, deducing them

constantly from man's relation to God, and seeing the source and

security of all wisdom in the fear of Jehovah. "One set of

terms does service to express both the intellectual and the moral

wisdom. The 'wise' man means the righteous' man, the fool'

is one who is godless. Intellectual terms that describe know-

ledge are also moral terms describing life." The practical

teaching of the Proverbs differs essentially from that of the Greek

and Latin gnomologists, not in its teaching, but in its sanctions.

Righteousness to the Hebrew is essentially the law of Jehovah.

He is the beginning, middle, and end of all morality, the Creator

and Ruler of all life. Blessing and curse depend exclusively on

conformity to, or disobedience of, His will. The rich and the

poor meet together—He made them. The seeing eye, the

hearing ear, are alike His.5 In one word, "Jehovah hath made

all things answering to their end."6 His eyes are in every place,

observing the evil and the good;7 a man's steps are from Him.8

Happy is he who observes His precepts.9 A little with the fear

of Jehovah is better than great treasure;10 and victory comes

from Him.11

This pious spirit, this derivation of all things from Jehovah,

the Covenant God of Israel, is the more remarkable because in

other respects the sage of Israel has few distinctive traces of the

national religion. Much as he speaks of the "fear of the Lord "

he has scarcely an allusion to the ceremonial laws and the ideal

hopes or aspirations of his own people. It is in this respect

1 See xxii. 19-21. 2 xii. l0. 3 xvii. 9; xx. 9. 4 xx. 22.

5 xx. 12. 6 xvi. 4. 7 xv. 3. 8 xx. 21.

9 xxix. 18. 10 xv. 16. 11 xxi. 31.

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that the literature which had its root in the era of Solomon is so

distinctive in its character. We do not find in it the glowing

impassioned devotion, the intense personal joys and sorrows of

the sweet Psalmists of Israel. It barely even alludes to the im-

mense structure of sacerdotalism with its imposing ritual and

multitudinous observances. It has none of the burning pa-

triotism of the Prophets. Not only the whole circle of prophetic

ideas1 which clustered round the names of Judah and Ephraim

and Mount Sion, but also the whole circle of Mosaic institutions,

and the whole circle of emotions which breathe through the

lyric poetry of the Hebrews are alien from the Proverbs of the

wise. The Wisdom literature, as represented by the Book of

Proverbs, is general, not particularistic; human, not national.

4. The fourth section (xxii. 17-xxiv. 23) is another little antho-

logy of the "words of the wise." It is quite different from the

long section which has preceded it. The teaching is more con-

secutive, the form less symmetrical, the style less antithetic. In

topics and in method it more nearly resembles the first section,

being the instruction given by the wise man to "my son."2

5. The fifth brief section (xxiv. 23-34) is also introduced by a

new heading—"These things also belong to the wise," meaning

perhaps that they were not attributed directly to Solomon. As it

develops and emphasizes sonic of the previous maxims, it has

been ingeniously conjectured that it may have been meant as a

sort of epilogue to the Book in the form in which it was current

before it received the additions made to it in the reign of

liezekiah.3

6. The sixth section of the Book (xxv.-xxix. 27) is prefaced by

the interesting notice, "These are also proverbs of Solomon,

which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out."4 It re-

sembles in general character and in many of its expressions and

topics the long third section.5 The Septuagint characterizes

them as "enigmatic" (αδιάκριτοι), or perhaps "miscellaneous."

1 See A. B. Davidson in "The Expositor," vol. xi. p. 384.

2 Notice the touches of keen insight in xxiii. 1-3 ; and the vivid lines on

the curse of drunkenness (xxiii. 29-35); and the indignation against

wrongful arrest (xxiv. 11, 12).

3 In the "Speaker's Commentary," iv. p. 517.

4 LXX., εξεγράψαντο.

5 With the exception of the unusual exhortation to agriculture (xxvii.

23-27).

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The political allusions do not suit the age of Solomon,1 but the

insight displayed is worthy of his wisdom,2 and the imagery is

often strikingly beautiful.3

7. Then follow the three appendices, which have a very

marked character of their own, and belong in all probability to

a much later age.

α. The first of these (xxx.) is headed by the problematic title

"The words of Agur the son of Jakeh, even the prophecy: the

man spake unto Ithiel, even unto Ithiel and Ucal,” for which

the Greek version substitutes an entirely different verse. Some

of the first Hebrew scholars translate it (with alterations of some

of the vowel points), "The words of Agur the son of Jakeh of

Massa,4 I have wearied myself, O God, I have wearied myself,

O God, and have made an end (of the search)." To elucidate

the extreme perplexities of the passage does not belong to our

subject, nor is anything known about Agur; but the "prophecy"

or "burden " of Massa—if the phrase be rightly so rendered—

has peculiarities which are observable at a glance—especially

some similarities to the Book of Job, and the grouping of

curious natural observations into threes and fours—a literary

form which was common among the late Rabbis.

β. The second appendix is attributed to an unknown king,

Lemuel, "the prophecy that his mother taught him;" or as some

Hebraists render it, "The words of Lemuel, king of Massa,

which his mother taught him." If Massa be indeed the name

of a place in Arabia inhabited by the descendants of the Massa

mentioned in Gen. xxv. 14 among the sons of Ishmael, then

perhaps Lemuel was a brother of Agur. Nothing, however, is

known about him, and as the name means "unto God,"5 it has

been understood by some of the Fathers to be another name for

Solomon,6 and by Ewald to represent the ideal king, the king

who is true to God. It is a brief lesson of chastity and temper-

ance addressed to kings, but the Aramaic forms and the un-

classical Hebrew show that it is of late origin.

1 xxix. 2; xxviii. 2, 3, 12, 13, 16, 28.

2 See especially xxv. 20; xxvii. 2. 6, 10, 14.

3 See xxv. 11, 13; xxvi. 23; xxvii. 8, 17.

4 For *hammassa* Grätz would read *hammoshel*, "the proverb writer."

Jerome.

5 Comp. Lael. Numb. iii. 24.

6 "Solomon was called by six names—Solomon. Jedidiab, Qoheleth. Son

of Jakeh, Agur, and Lemuel" ("Aboth. d' Rabbi Nathan," c. xxxix.).

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γ. The third appendix (xxxi. 10-31) is the immortal picture of

the virtuous woman. It is an acrostic poem, arranged alpha-

betically by the initial Hebrew letters of the verses. In this

respect it resembles nine of the Psalms,1 and the first four

chapters of Lamentations. It has been assumed rather than

actually proved, that the acrostic form of poetry only arose in

Hebrew literature at a late period, and not earlier than the

seventh century before Christ. However this may be, nothing

could have been more fitly chosen to end the Book of Proverbs

than a poem which so far from speaking of women as Qoheleth

does, with despondent cynicism, assigns to the virtuous wife a

noble position in the social order, and points to a happy and

holy marriage as the crown of a pure youth which has resisted

sensual temptations. It is interesting to observe how much

nobler is the ideal of the writer than that of Pericles. The great

Athenian thought that a woman's chief glory was to be known

neither for good nor for evil;2 the sage places his ideal of woman-

hood in noble energy.

Such, then, is the structure, and such are the general contents,

of the Book which certainly owes its impulse to Solomon, and

in all probability enshrines some of his famous three thousand

proverbs. It only remains to point out four features of great

interest for the study of the book.

1. In the first place, it is cosmopolitan. A large part of

Hebrew literature is intensely national, and even fanatically

exclusive. It is not so with this Book. It recognizes in morality

a common ground of consideration for all mankind. Its ethical

system is adapted to the needs of human nature in general.

"The word 'Israel' does not occur once; the name 'man'

(Adam) thirty-three times."3

2. It has often been disputed whether the Hebrews could be

said to have a philosophy or not. The answer must, of course,

depend very much on what conception we attach to the word

philosophy. It is certain that every nation above the savage

condition must have attempted in some way or other to solve

the problem of existence; and wherever we find such an attempt

1 Ps. xxv., xxxiv., xxxvii., cxi., cxii., cxix., cxlv., and (partially) ix.

and x.

2 Thuc. ii. 45, καὶ ῆς αν επ’ ελάχιστον αρετῆς πέρι η ψόγου εν τοῖς αρσεσι

κλεός η.

3 Cheync, "Job and Solomon," p. 119.

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we have at least the rudiments of a philosophy. There is, how-

ever, this great distinction between Hebrew philosophy and that

of other nations, that the Hebrews from the earliest days pos-

sessed a revelation. The whole tenor of their thought was

influenced by the fact that it began with the acknowledgment

of one God. It argued from the Being of a God downwards to

earthly phenomena. It consisted in the recognition of a Divine

Providence, and the co-ordination of that truth with the many

apparent disturbances of the moral order, the many perplexities

introduced into an ideal scheme by the intrusion of sin and

sorrow, by the apparent triumph of the wicked, and the apparent

misery of the just.

3. In the attempt to meet this difficulty the Hebrew intellect

passed through three marked though not always consecutive

stages.

α. First of all in the simplest and most elementary conditions

of society when there was general peace and prosperity, and

men had not begun to be too introspective, the wise acquiesced

in the broad general principles which they were content to

accept as practically exceptionless, that under the righteous

rule of a Universal Providence "the righteous shall be recom-

pensed *in the earth*, much more the wicked and the sinner."1

This is the view prevalent in *the era of generalizations*, in which

no note is taken of apparent violations of the general rule.

β. Deeper thought, wider experience, more attentive obser-

vation, inaugurates *the era of difficulties*. If the hand of God

be in history, if He is the sole agent in all human occurrences,

how happens it that the wicked are often in such prosperity, and

come into no such misfortune as do other folk, even the right-

eous? In this era a more elaborate theodicæa becomes

necessary to

"Assert eternal Providence

And justify the ways of God to man."

Qoheleth flatly denies the old orthodox assertions of Job's

friends, and declares that the righteous perish in spite of right-

eousness, and the wicked live long in spite of wickedness.2

There was no solution for the problem except the conviction

deepened by worship and the sense of God's presence, that, in

1 Prov. xi. 3x. 2 Eccl. vii. 15.

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some way or other before death, or in the hour of death itself,

the wrong was righted; or that, at any rate, the difficulty *had* a

solution in the mind of an Almighty Father even if it were

beyond the power of man to understand. Four of the Psalms—

the Thirty-seventh, Thirty-ninth, Forty-ninth, and Seventy-

third—contain deeply interesting discussions of this source of

doubt; but the most splendid monument of the mental struggle

which it excited is the Book of Job.

γ. Finally, after centuries of national calamity and defeat and

exile, in which the ideal "*Jashar*"—the Upright—the chosen of

God—the righteous nation—was trampled under the feet of

heathen enemies, and plunged into irretrievable ruin and oppres-

sion, there came the era of acquiescence. It is represented by

the Book of Ecclesiastes. Any real attempt to solve the prob-

lems which seemed to controvert the general principle of God's

righteous government is abandoned as impossible. It is tacitly

conceded that the "philosophy" of the two earlier periods is

shipwrecked on the rocks of actual fact. The righteous, so far

as earth is concerned, are to all appearance forsaken, and his

seed do beg their bread; so that the Divine order exists as some

perfect theory which comes into violent collision with observed

realities. This wrong is not always redressed in this life. Job

may die upon his dung hill with his fortunes unrestored and his

leprosy unhealed. The green bay-tree of the wicked man's

prosperity may not be cut down at all during his life, and he

may die peacefully with children's faces round his bed. Nothing

therefore remained but to accept the inevitable fact, and to make

the best of life as it is, leaving everything else in the hands of

God, and still acting on the conviction that good is best, and

that we shall gain all that life has to gain by being true to the

best we know.

The Book of Proverbs belongs in the main to the era of prin-

ciples, and that is one proof of the antiquity of the greater part

of its contents. It seems to be older than the Book of Job, and

to be the product of an epoch wholly different from that of the

Book of Ecclesiastes, which springs from the epoch of acquie-

scence. Obviously the true and full solution is partly spiritual,

partly eschatological. Of the spiritual solution we find sufficient

glimpses both in the Book of Proverbs and in the Psalms. The

wise man and the Psalmist alike felt that in the presence of

God, and in conscious communion with Him, was a peace and

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blessedness which were more than sufficient to atone for the

sorrows of the just, even if they did not explain them.1

δ. The eschatological solution in its full certainty was as yet but

dimly dreamed of.2 Not even to the Psalmists, or the Wise, or

the Prophets, was there a distinct revelation of that world be-

yond the grave, where the balances of human injustice shall be

redressed, and where two words, "Come," and "Depart," shall

decide all earthly questions and all controversies for ever. It

was Christ, not Moses, not Solomon, not Isaiah, who brought

life and immortality to light.3

4. A fourth most interesting fact about the Book of Proverbs

and the "sapiential" literature in general, is this:—that though

in one sense it is not Messianic, though its centre of gravity is

by no means that burning conviction of a Coming Deliverer,

which inspires the Prophets; it yet contains an element dis-

tinctly Christological. Wisdom—wisdom which has almost

passed out of an abstraction or a mere poetic personification—

is conceived by them as a sort of self-existent entity, as repre-

senting God in His immediate relation to mankind. The Wis-

dom of the Sapiential Books was gradually developed into the

Word (*Logos*) of Philo, and in all that Philo says of the Logos

as God with men we see that he is, as it were, knocking at the

very gates of Truth. St. John did not shrink from adopting the

name "the Logos" as a title of the Divine Redeemer, whether

he derived it directly from Philo or from the Palestinian

"Memra." Our Lord Himself speaks of the "Wisdom of

God"4 upbraiding men with the murder of God's prophets;

and St. Paul tells us that Christ is " the Wisdom of God." s

1 Ps. lxxiii. 23.

2 We read the belief in immortality into such passages as x. 25, xi. 4,

but very little consideration shows that they are too vague and general to

bear this weight of meaning. In xii. 28 we read, "In the way of righteousness

there is life, and in the pathway thereof there is no death," or "is im-

mortality" but the sense is quite uncertain. The Vulgate has "iter

antem devium ducit ad mortem;" and the LXX., οδοὶ δε μνησικάκων εις

θάνατον; and a slight change in the Hebrew gives "but an abominable way

leads unto death." In xiv. 32, "the righteous hath hope in his death"

may he "the righteous taketh refuge in his integrity" as in the LXX. and

the Peshito.

3 On the three "eras" of Hebrew thought see the suggestive papers in

"The Expositor" (vols. xi., xii.) to which I have already referred.

4 Luke xi. 49. 5 I Cor. L 24, 30.

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5. And thus, fifthly, the Book of Proverbs, though so much of

it seems to consist of what has been absurdly called "cold

morality "is akin to the noblest parts of the Old Testament.

For mere formalism the sage has the same contempt as the

most indignant of the seers." The sacrifice of the wicked is

abomination to the Lord,"1 and "how much more when he

bringeth it with a wicked mind."2 "To do justice and judg-

ment is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice."3 Burnt-

offerings arc in themselves wholly inefficacious, for "by mercy

and truth iniquity is purged, and by the fear of the Lord men

depart from evil."4 If the morality of "the wise" is not touched

by the profound emotion of the Psalmists, it rises far superior to

the worthless triviality of a Pharisaic externalism.

6. Lastly, there are few books of which the phraseology and

thoughts have left a deeper impression than the Book of Pro-

verbs upon the language of the New Testament. Though its

prevailing tone is ethical rather than spiritual, though many of

its maxims arc ostensibly prudential, though it knows nothing

of rites and ceremonies, though it passes without notice the

Messianic hope; yet so transcendent is the duty and importance

of ordinary righteousness, of common morality, that the Book

is constantly referred to in the Gospel-preaching of His servants

who said, "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall

enter into the kingdom of heaven; but He that doeth the will of

my Father which is in heaven."5

1 xv. 8. 2 xxi. 27. 3 xxi. 3. 4 xvi. 6.

5 See references to the Book of Proverbs in Luke xiv. 10; John iii. 13;

Gal. vi. 7; 2 Cor. vi. 10, ix. 7; Heb. xii. 5, 6, 13; James iv. 6, 14. 16;

I Peter ii. 17, iv. 18; 2 Peter ii. 22.

CHAPTER XVI.

LEGENDS OF SOLOMON.

Predominance of Solomon in legend—Knowledge ascribed to Him—I. The

Talmud: i. Solomon, the demon Ashmodai, and the worm Shamir;

ii. Solomon, Naama, and the ring; iii. The Haggada, Solomon and

the demons—II. Legends in the Qunin—i. His power—ii. His early

judgment—iii. The magic wind; the steeds; the hoopoe; Balkis,

Queen of Sheba—III. Ethiopian legend—IV. The Angel of Death.

THE existence of so many and such strange and widely-spread

legends respecting Solomon is a proof of the extent to which

his greatness haunted the imaginations of Eastern peoples. If

his name is passed over with so few allusions in the sacred

literature, which refers so incessantly to the house of David,

the proportion is reversed in the domains of fable and tradition.

There Solomon is pre-eminent, and David is for the most part

ignored.

We have already seen that he was credited with that branch

of wisdom which was identified with thaumaturgy. He was

supposed to know the language of birds and animals,1 and to

be skilled in all the hidden powers of roots and herbs.2 Besides

this the, pentagram on his seal, and his knowledge of the In-

communicable Name was believed to endow hint with power

over the demons.

"To him were known—so Hagar's offspring tell—

The powerful vigil and the starry spell,

1 Hillel was supposed to have the same knowledge (Sopherim, xvi. 9).

2 The popular name "Solomon's Seal" of the beautiful and interesting

plant the Convallaria.

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The midnight call, hell's shadowy legions tread,

And sounds that wake the slumbers of the dead.

Hence all his might, for who could these oppose?

And Tadmor thus, and Syrian Baalbec rose."

i. The chief legend respecting Solomon in the Talmud is a

long one, and may probably suffice as a specimen. I have a

little softened down some of its more glaring irrelevances and

crudities, and would only introduce it with the passing caution

that in these Jewish writings many of the stories may have had

no higher object than to amuse the weary pupils of the Rabbis,

but others had in them deeper meanings than those that meet

the ear, and some of them—as is in part the case with the one

which follows—were the distorted outcome of the extraordinary,

but recognized methods of Rabbinic exegesis.

The starting-point of the Talmudic legend is the verse which

tells us that "there was neither hammer, nor axe, nor any tool

of iron heard in the house when it was in building."1

"How am I to build the Temple without iron tools?" asked

Solomon of the Rabbis.

"Why not use the worm Shamîr?" they replied. "Moses

used it in engraving the names of the Twelve Tribes of Israel on

the precious stones of the Urim and Thummim." He had been

reduced to the same perplexity when he had been ordered to

engrave their names" according to the engravings of a signet."2

He wrote the letters with ink on one side, put the worm Shamir

on the opposite side, and the letters sank spontaneously into the

stones.

"But where is the worm Shamir to be found?" asked the

King.

"You must," they replied, "extort the secret from the male

and female demons if they know it."

We must pause in the story to observe that the notion of

Solomon's mastery over the male and female demons was de-

duced from Eccles. ii. 8, where we are told that Solomon "gat

him men-singers and women-singers, the delights of the sons of

men, as *shiddah veshaiddoth*." In the Authorized Version those

words are rendered "*musical instruments, and that of all sorts*."

The Vulgate renders them "cups"; the Septuagint and Syriac,

cup-bearers, male and female." The Revised Version has,

1 1 Kings vi. 7. 2 Exod. xxviii. 20.

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"concubines." Some of the Rabbis rendered it, "chariots for

lords and for ladies;" but the Babylonian Talmud makes it

mean, "male and female demons."

Accordingly Solomon summoned a male and female demon,

and put them to the torture to force them to tell where he could

procure the worm Shamir.

But the demons could not tell him. The utmost that could

be forced from them was that, though they did not know, yet

perhaps Ashmodai, the king of the demons, knew.

"And where is Ashmodai to be found?" asked the king.

"He lives," said the Shid and the Shiddeth, "on a mountain,

where he has dug a pit, which he tills with water, covers it with

a stone, and seals it with his seal. Daily he ascends to the

Heavenly Academy, and then descends to the Schools of the

Rabbis. On returning he examines the seal to see if any one

has tampered with his well, and when he finds it untouched, he

drinks the water, re-seals the well, and departs."

On receiving this information Solomon despatched Benaiah

to the haunt of Ashmodai with a fleece of wool, some wine-skins,

and a chain and ring engraved with the Holy Name. Benaiah

drained the water from the well of Ashmodai into another,

plugged the duct with a fleece, filled the demon's well with

wine, and mounted a tree to watch the result.

Ashmodai returned, found the seal undisturbed, raised the

stone, and found his well full of wine. For a time he would

not drink it, "for," said he, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink

is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise."1

After a time however he became thirsty, drank, and slept.

Then Benaiah slipped down from his tree, and chained him

with the magic chain. When Ashmodai awoke he would have

torn it off, but he dared not when Benaiah said, "The name of

thy Master is upon thee."

We will omit, as irrelevant to our narrative, the curious ad-

ventures which befell the demon while he meekly followed the

Captain of the Bodyguard into the presence of Solomon.

Arrived at Jerusalem, he was left three days in uncertainty, till

Solomon summoned him into his presence. No sooner had he

entered the hall than, marking off six feet of ground with his

staff, he said to the king, "When thou diest this much earth is

1 Prov. xx. I.

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all that you shall possess, yet not content with having conquered

the world, you have got me also into your power."

"I want nothing of thee," answered the king; "but I am

building the Temple, and I wish to be told where I can find

the worm Shamîr."

"I do not possess the Shamîr," said the demon. " It belongs

to the Prince of the Sea, and he never parts with it except to

the *Duchiphas* or Lapwing, who makes an oath to return it

safely."1

"And what does the lapwing do with it?" asked Solomon.

"He takes it," said Ashmodai, "to a rocky hill, which, by its

means, he splits asunder. Into the clefts he drops seeds of plants

and trees, and thus the place becomes green and habitable."

Accordingly Solomon sent and searched for the nest of the

lapwing, and finding that it contained a young brood, he had

it covered with a glass, so that the bird might see its young,

but be unable to get at them. Off flew the lapwing, obtained

the Shamir from the Prince of the Sea, and dropped it on the

the glass. Then Solomon's messenger raised a loud shout, and

the terrified bird flew away. The messenger seized the Shamir,

and the bird in despair killed itself. By means of this insect;

and with the enforced service of Ashmodai, whom he kept im-

prisoned, Solomon built the Temple.

One day when they were alone together the king asked the

demon, "Wherein consisted their superiority to man?"

"Take this chain off my neck, and give me thy signet-ring,"

said Ashmodai, "and I will show thee."

The king undid the chain, and handed the ring to his

captive, who instantly assumed colossal size, swallowed up

Solomon, and cast him forth four hundred miles away. The

demon then assumed his guise and ruled in his name.

Meanwhile Solomon was bereft of everything, and exclaimed,

"What profit hath a man of all his labour?2 This (this

staff) is my sole portion of all my labour." With the staff

Solomon went begging from door to door with the piteous

words, "I, the Preacher, was king over Israel in Jerusalem."3

1 So rendered by our Authorized Version in Lev. xi. 19. In the Targum

this bird is called Nagger Tura, "the Mountain Splitter."

2 Eccles. i. 3;

3 Eccles. i. 12. It is some rude distortion of this story which is found in

Bede, "De Salomone," quoted by Pineda.

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The Sanhedrin met to consult who this could be, and argued

that it he were mad he would hardly go on repeating the same

words. They asked Benaiah "whether the king had lately sent

for him?"

"No," said Benaiah, "not for forty days."

They inquired if the supposed king ever visited his

harem?

"Yes," was the answer.

"Then, look at his feet," said the Sanhedrin; "if he has feet

like those of a fowl, he is a demon."

"He always comes in stockings," was the answer.

Confirmed in their suspicions, the Sanhedrin sent the real

Solomon into his palace, armed with chain and ring.

On seeing him Ashmodai shrieked and fled; but Solomon

always remained in great terror of him, and this is the reason

why in the Song of Songs (iii. 7, 8) in the description of Solo-

mon's palanquin, it is said to be guarded by sixty valiant men

with swords "*because of fear in the night*."

Ashmodai is the demon who plays so large a part in the

Book of Tobit—

"with the fishy fume

That drove him, though enamoured, from the spouse

Of Tobit's son, and with a vengeance sent

From Media post to Egypt there fast-bound."2

As for the worm Shamir there seems to be some reasons for

believing that we trace it in the Greek σμίρις, and the English

*emery*; so that the legend may be an early proof of the use of

*corundum* for the purpose of polishing and drilling holes in

hard precious stones.

2. In one version of the foregoing legend there occurs an

episode relating to the period of Solomon's wanderings. It is

that while he was thus deprived of his kingdom, he came to a

place called Mash Kemim, where he was appointed head cook

in the palace of Ana Hamm, the king of Ammon. While he

was thus employed, Natuna, the king's daughter, fell in love

with him, and determined to fly with him to a distant land. One

day as she was preparing a fish for dinner she found a ring in

1 This story is related at full length in Gittin, f. 68, 1, 2. See Hershon,

"Talmud. Miscell." pp. 96, ff. Genesis, pp. 189, ff.

2 "Paradise Lost," iv. 170.

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its belly. This turned out to be the very ring which the king

of the demons had flung into the sea, and by means of it the

king recovered his father's throne.1 This story of a fish and a

ring occurs in the legend of Polycrates of Samos, and in that of

Kentigern, which is the origin of the fish and ring on the

arms of the city of Glasgow.

3. In the Haggada—the legendary and allegorical lore of

Rabbinic teaching—Solomon sometimes stands as a mere

emblem of wisdom. Thus we read:

"The demons owe their birth to four nocturnal spectres

named Lilith, Naama, Aguereth, and Mahala. Each of these

four spectres rules during one season of the year, and they

assemble themselves on Mount Nishpah. They direct their

flight from the east towards the north, and Solomon rules them

all, and makes use of them at his pleasure."

This is nothing but an ethical myth of the way in which man

is injured by the attacks of vice.

Lilith, a winged spectre of night, which injures children

especially, is Ignorance.

Naama is Sensuality.

Aguereth is Doubt and Error.

Mahala is Superstition.

They meet on Mount Nishpah which is near the mountains

of Darkness.

Solomon, the representative of human wisdom and self-con-

trol, is able to conquer and suppress them.2

II. Turning from the Talmud to the Qur'an, we find Solomon

made the theme for these legends, and others of Arabian origin

yet more wild.

There we find that all his evil thaumaturgy was due not to

himself but to the tricks of demons (ginns) who stole his ring

and assumed his shape. "It was not Solomon who misbelieved,

but the devils who misbelieved, teaching men sorcery."3

1 Emck. Hammelech, 1. 14, 4. Hershon, "Talmud. Miscell." f. 160.

Also in the Yalqut on I Kings.

2 Sec Eisenmerger, "Entd. Jud." ii. 418. Schwab's " Berakhoth,"

p. xxviii. (Comp. Jer. xiii. x6.)

3 Qur'ân ii. 93. Chapter of the Heifer. This wonderful ring, says the

Persian poet E'madi, is only a symbol of Solomon's wisdom. In one Tal-

mudic story, also alluded to in the Qur'ân, Solomon conquers the King of

Sidon, and takes captive his daughter Gerâdeh, who becomes his favourite

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"The legend of Solomon," says Professor Palmer, "his seal

inscribed with the holy name by which he could control all the

powers of nature, his carpet or throne that used to be trans-

ported with him on the wind wherever he pleased, his power

over the ginns, and his knowledge of the language of birds and

beasts, are commonplaces in Arabic writings."1

The following are some of the allusions to him in the sacred

book of Islam.

i. "And to Solomon were subjected the winds blowing

stormily to him at his bidding to the land which we have

blessed—for all things did he know; and some devils to dive

for him," namely, to fish up pearls and treasures from the depths

of the sea, "and to do other works besides."2

ii. In the Chapter of the Prophets3 we are told that on one

occasion some sheep strolled into a neighbour's field and in-

jured it. The owner appealed to David, who adjudged that the

sheep were forfeited to him. Solomon, however, who was then

only eleven years old, stood by his father, and suggested that

the owner of the field should only have the produce of the flock,

and only till the shepherd should have restored the field to

its former condition. And this judgment was approved by

David.

iii. The ginns who were subjected to Solomon are male and

female, good and bad. The bad ginns are generally called

*Ifrît*. They all live on Mount Qaf.

But the story which is most often alluded to by Mohamed is

introduced as follows in the Chapter of Seba (Qur'ân, xxxiv. 10):

"To Solomon we gave the wind: its morning journey was a

month, and its evening journey was a month."

This obedient wind was given to Solomon in reward for an

queen. But she and her maidens are in such constant anguish at the death

of her father, that Solomon ordered the devils to make an image of him.

It is made, and the Sidonian ladies worship it. To punish Solomon for

his encouraging idolatry, the demon Sakhar is permitted to steal his ring,

by assuming his form, and getting it from his concubine, Atnánah, to whom

he sometimes entrusted it. This is alluded to in words, "And we did try

Solomon, and threw upon his throne a *form*. Then he turned repentant,

and said, My Lord, pardon me, and grant me a kingdom that is not

seemly (or any after me" (Qur'an, xxxviii. 34).

1 Sacred Books of the East, Qur'an, ii. 52.

2 Qur'ân, xxi. 80.

3 Qur'ân, xxi. 79.

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act of piety which I will narrate in the words of the Qur'ân as

they are expanded by the various Arabic commentaries.1

Solomon was once passing in review his thousand mares

between the hours of the noon and evening prayer. Only nine

hundred had passed him at the time of evening prayer, and in

his eagerness he forgot the hour. When he remembered it he

was stricken with remorse, and immediately began to slaughter

the horses as a sacrifice to Allah.2

Allah, in reward for his faithfulness, gave him the wind, soft

and strong and pleasant, to wait on him and transport him in a

moment where he would, as he sat on his throne or carpet. As

a reward for the same piety the ginns became his servants, "and

made for him what he pleased of chambers and images, and

dishes like troughs, and firm pots."3 This, says Al Moussali,

"is to illustrate that man never yields anything to God in this

world, without receiving something much better in return."

iv. In the Chapter of the Ant this magic means of locomotion

becomes very prominent.

With his hosts of ginns, and men, and birds, Solomon came to

the Valley of the Ants, and three miles off he hears the queen

of the Ants say, "O ye ants, go into your dwellings that

Solomon and his hosts crush you not."

And he laughed, smiling at her speech, and said, "O Lord,

excite me to be thankful."

And he reviewed the birds, and said, "How is it that I see

not the hoopoe? I will surely torment him."

The hoopoe was very needful to him, for the bird was always

able to show him water under the earth, whenever he needed it

for his ablutions. Led by the hoopoe the demons took the

water away and Solomon could not perform these ablutions.

So he punished the hoopoe by plucking out its feathers and

tail, and casting it in the sun so that it might stiffer from thirst.

The bird afterwards appeared before him and was forgiven.4

1 See Palmer's translation of the Qur'an, in the Sacred Books of the

East, and Lane's Selections with interwoven Commentary, pp. 232 ff.

2 He said, "Verily I have loved the love of good things better than the

remembrance of my Lord, until (the sun) was bidden behind the veil.

Bring them (the mares) back to me. And he began to sever their legs and

necks" (Qur'ân, xxxviii. 34, Chapter of Sebâ).

3 Ibid. xxxiv. 10., Chapter of Sebâ. D. Herbelot, "Bibl. Orient." iii. 332.

4 An exquisite form of this legend about Solomon and the hoopoe may

be found narrated in Curzon's "Monasteries of the Levant."

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Then the hoopoe told him about Balkis, queen of Sebâ, and

her throne of gold and silver and pearl and rubies and chrysolite.

Coming to Sebâ he saw Balkis and her people worshipping the

sun, and gave the hoopoe a letter to take to her, bidding her to

worship God. With the advice of her people she goes to visit

Solomon. She sends a present before her of a thousand boys

and girls, five hundred bricks of gold, a jewelled crown, musk,

ambergris, an undrilled pearl, and an onyx drilled with a

crooked hole. "If he be a mere king," she says, "he will accept

them—if a prophet, he will not." Solomon does not accept

them, but shows his wisdom by drilling the pearl and threading

the onyx (with the worm Shamîr). Then a ginn, or according

to others his Vizier Asaph, at his order, and in the glance of an

eye, conveys to him the throne of the Queen of Sheba, which she

finds ready for her at her arrival.

"And it was said unto her, Enter the court; and when she

saw it, she reckoned it to be an abyss of water, and she un-

covered her legs. Said he, Verily it is a court paved with

glass. Said she, My Lord, verily I have wronged myself,

but I am resigned with Solomon to God, the Lord of the

world."

Then Solomon married Balkis. The Arabs say that she was

his concubine; the Ethiopians that she was his wife, and that

their son was diligently trained in the Law and helped in his

kingdom by the choicest elders of Israel.1

III. Turning from Jewish, Ethiopian, Arabic legends, we find

that even among the Persians Solomon plays a great part. He

is the hero of the Suleiman-Nameh, attributed to Firdusi, and is

confounded with Djemschid, the Lord of the Genii. They point

to his great throne built by the genii at Persepolis—the Tahkt-

i-Suleiman —and tell how in one day he breakfasted at Persepolis,

dined at Baalbek, and supped at Jerusalem.2

IV. We may end with one more legend which in various forms

is still found in the East.3

One day Solomon was standing with his chief vizier on the

summit of the Temple, which was approached by many steps.

And as they gazed around, the vizier caught sight of the dusky

1 See Ludolf, " Mist. Æthiop." ii. 3, 4.

2 See Chard in, D'Herbelot, Ouseley.

3 See for other legends D'Herbelot, " Bibl. Orient." iii. 335. Hettinger

"Hist. Orient." 97. Weill, "Bibl. Legenden." 223-279.

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figure of one who had approached to the foot of the ascending

stair, and who, as he did so, threw one glance upwards, and

then, with his eyes on the ground, began slowly to mount.

The vizier was terrified, for in that one glance he had

recognized the awful features of Azrael, the Angel of Death.

In his terror he said to Solomon, "O king, the Angel of

Death has looked at me; lend me thy magic carpet that I may

escape him."

Solomon allowed the vizier to use the magic carpet, and

standing on it he instantly wished that he should be conveyed

to the steepest and farthest summit of Mount Caucasus.

And thither he was carried as on the wings of the wind. And

the Angel of Death slowly ascended the Temple, and when he

had reached the summit, he said to Solomon, "O king, I glanced

upward for a moment at that man, thy vizier, because, being

commanded to take his soul on the steepest and farthest summit

of Caucasus, I saw him here with thee on the Temple roof."

The king bowed himself and said, "Angel! he awaits thee

on the top of Caucasus."

"Such the faint echo of departed days

Still sound Arabia's legendary lays;

And thus their fabling bards delight to tell

How lovely were thy tents, O Israel."

THE END.