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THE

PLANTS AND TREES

OF

SCRIPTURE.

"God scarce had said, when the bare earth—till then
Desert and bare, unsightly, unadorn'd—
Brought forth the tender grass, whose verdure clad
The universal face with pleasant green;
Then herbs of every leaf, that sudden flower'd,
Opening their various colours, and made gay
Her bosom, smelling sweet.
Last
Rose, as in dance, the stately trees, and spread
Their branches, hung with copious fruit, or gemm'd
Their blossoms."

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PREFACE.

In the following pages a few substances have been introduced, which, like the spikenard and the cinnamon, are rather vegetable products than, strictly speaking, Plants of Scripture. The prominent place which these occupy in the Sacred Writings, as well as their immediate connexion with the subject of the volume, has induced the author to include them. Some of the less distinctly ascertained vegetable productions, as the *stacte* and *onycha*, have, on account of the limited nature of the work, been

left unnoticed; while some other natural products, which may or may not be plants, as the *bdellium* and *dove's dung*, are not placed in this list of the Plants of Scripture.

CONTENTS.

PLANTS AND TREES

OF

SCRIPTURE.

CHAPTER I.

GRASS, HERBS, ETC.

"God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth: and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind: and God saw that it was good," Gen. i. 11, 12. Thus the Almighty word spake into existence the vast vegetable kingdom, and called from chaos a world of order and beauty. No need was there of long years to perfect his wondrous work. Man must study and toil ere even the smallest of his productions can attain its limited perfection; but God spake and it was done, he commanded and it stood fast, and the evening and the morning of the third day, as they dawned

or closed, witnessed the rapid clothing of earth in its verdant dress, and heard the approving words of Jehovah, when, beholding it, he declared it to be good.

It was in its matured state that every plant now uprose into life and beauty. Its seed was in itself, and though it grew not as yet, till God caused the rain to fall upon the earth, and created man to till the ground, still there went up a mist from the earth, which watered the whole face of the ground, and preserved its freshness; so that when man, for whose sake it had been formed, came into being, he found it greener and lovelier, and arranged in more resplendent colouring, than we, in this fallen world, can imagine. The corn probably waved on the hills, the vine clustered over the fig tree, which was yielding its own fruits, and the emerald hue of the meads was varied doubtless by flowers more beautiful than those which still spring by thousands on hill and dale, gladdening the senses, and cheering the spirit of man by their odours.

"Spring robed the vales. With what a flood of light
She held her revels in that sunny clime,
The flower-sown turf, like bossy velvet bright,
The blossomed trees exulting in their prime!"

Yes, the wide world is still beautiful—it is still a garden of God; but it is probably a faint shadow of the world when it was first created, and no earthly garden now can compare with the lustre of the garden of Eden.

Our first parents must have gazed on the

green earth with intense feelings of innocent delight. With intellects instructed by Jehovah, though untaught by experience, they must have felt all the love of novelty with which the young child looks on nature, added to the sublime contemplation of the world and its great Creator, for which they were fitted from the moment when God breathed into them the breath of life, and they became living souls. The fruits and the green herb were given them for meat, and were to be kept in order, by that moderate exertion which should have served but to vary the leisure of their existence; and to be in a garden, to dress it and to keep it, was the happy lot ordained for them, till sin spread its baleful influence, alike on the heart of man and the face of nature, withering the purity of the soul, and the outward beauty of the earth.

As Pliny observed, many centuries since, no colour is more pleasant to the eye than green, and a great enjoyment is borne into the mind as the eye looks on the grass and green leaves —an enjoyment the more appreciated by him who has travelled over deserts in the scorching season, and marked their sterile brown tint, varied only as it softened into the purple or azure of the distant horizon. And how universal is the "grass and the green herb!" Even the wide deserts of the east are, in most cases, covered during the winter and spring with a rich and tender grass, and the most desolate and arid wastes have still their oases—"the pastures of the wilderness," of which the psalmist

speaks, when he says of them that "the little hills rejoice on every side:" and the green places shout for joy, yea also sing, Psa. lxv. 9–13, as God makes the earth soft with showers, and blesses the springing thereof. Lofty mountains, whose tops are covered with snow, have their valleys and pastures of loveliest verdure, and "the herbs of the mountains are gathered" in their own secluded dwelling-places.

The Hebrews were accustomed to describe under two heads the whole vegetable kingdom. All were included in the trees and grass, or, as some render it, herbage. In the latter division, herbs and flowers, whose stems die away in winter, found their place. Thus we find our Saviour speaking of the "lilies of the field" as the "grass of the field," Matt. vi. 30. On the other hand, small shrubs and creeping plants with woody stems, were called trees, in the popular language of the east, and we find the vine classed with the lofty cedars, and the wide-spread fig tree among the trees, in the expressive parable which Jotham indignantly uttered to the men of Shechem, Judges ix. 7–15. In the account given of the creation, however, by Moses, we have the vegetable kingdom divided into three classes; and the herb fully ripened, "yielding seed, whose seed was in itself," is distinguished from the short sprouting young grass, which, in ancient times, was thought to bear no seed.

The poetry of the Holy Scriptures, abundant as it is in reference to all objects of nature, is so

peculiarly rich in its allusions to trees, and herbs, and flowers, that Michaelis has observed it might almost be termed botanical poetry. Plants are alluded to in nearly three hundred places in the sacred volume. Those passages in which grass affords some comparison are many and expressive. Now the doctrine of God, entering and refreshing the heart of man, is described "as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass," Deut. xxxii. 2; and the grass of the field, and the green herb, which grows in the morning, and in the evening is cut down and withered, is a familiar allusion to the shortness of man's life. The green herb and the grass on the house-top, withered the sooner, because of their elevated situation, form a suitable and beautiful figure, to express the transient nature of worldly prosperity; and the great fruitfulness and abundant growth of the grass suggested it to the psalmist as an image, when he declared that "they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth;" while the doctrine of the resurrection of the body, and that too of a more glorious, a spiritual body, is taught by a reference, made by St. Paul, to one of the grasses, the wheat of the corn-field, 1 Cor. xv. 37.

The grass of eastern countries is better fitted than that of our own lands for some of the comparisons of Scripture. Though often so luxuriant as to reach the saddle of the rider who traverses the grassy plains, yet it withers often almost before it grows up. In no eastern land is it made into hay, for by the time it has

arrived at maturity its juices are already so dried as to make it unnecessary to spread it to the sun, as we do in our fields; but its sudden scorching renders the dried grass less nutritious than that gradually made into hay. It is cut down either while green or dried, and the fresh pasturages of the wilderness, with their soft green herbage, are sought by the Arabs of the east, who lead their horses thither in the season. In some places, the long dry grass is burned down, in order to enable the animals to reach the young green shoots, sprouting up under it. Burchell saw this done on the deserts of Africa. Speaking of the rising grass just sprouting out its green leaves, he says, "that on lands where the dried herbage had been cleared, many extensive patches had the beautiful verdure of a field of wheat; while in places where the cattle had not been led, the green blades were hidden by the old withered grass; a circumstance which gave to the plains a more pale and arid appearance, than if the yearly crop had been grazed down as in Europe."

In the description of the summer season, which Solomon gives in the book of Proverbs, as well as in the prophecy of the desolation of Moab, uttered by Isaiah, our translators have incorrectly rendered the original Hebrew word by hay, "For the waters of Nimrim shall be desolate: for the hay is withered away, the grass faileth, there is no green thing," says the prophet, Isa. xv. 6. Dr. Taylor, in his fragments appended to Calmet's Dictionary, remarking on the im-

propriety of this translation, adds, that it should be given thus: "So that the tender risings of the grass are withered, the tender buddings of the grass are entirely ruined; green it was not; that is, it never came to greenness."

The passage in the book of Proverbs is rendered far more expresive by the more correct translation: "The hay appeareth, and the tender grass showeth itself, and herbs of the mountains are gathered," are the words of our version, Prov. xxvii. 25. The author before quoted would thus render it: "The tender risings of the grass are in motion, and the buddings of grass appear, and the tufts of grass (proceeding from the same root) collect themselves together, and by their union begin to clothe the mountain-tops with pleasing verdure."

CHAPTER II.

THORNS AND THISTLES.

Unto Adam God said, "Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life, thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field," Gen. iii. 17, 18. This sad transition in the inspired relation from the account of the garden in which grew "every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food," and from among whose groves Adam talked with his Maker, as

"a man talketh with his friend," to the thorn and thistle, the toil and sorrow, is equally painful and rapid. Sin soon blighted all that was holiest and loveliest, and the moral and material world alike suffered. The first transgressors soon wept under the woe entailed upon their race, and crime and death came to prove the loss of innocence and the power of the curse, when the voice of a brother's blood cried from the ground.

It is of little use to speculate on the details of the curse pronounced on vegetation. We may ask but none can reply, Were there briers and thorns in the earth at its creation, or did they now invest the plants for the first time? We have no reason, however, to believe that any subsequent creation has taken place since that period when God made this world from nothing. We see now how cultivation will alter in some degree the nature of plants. There were probably thorns and thistles in paradise, but they were few in number; when, however, God cursed the soil, the thorny plants spread and became more thorny, and a wildness of growth probably took the place of the ordered and neat arrangement in which the plants first grew in the field, till the briers became so numerous as often to mock the toil of the husbandman, who, "in the sweat of his brow," labours to exterminate them.

As the thorn and thistle were denounced on the whole earth, and not only on that land which was the seat of paradise, so in every

country we see plainly, that wild plants would soon overrun the face of the earth, did not the labourer prevent it. In warmer regions, thorny plants are far more numerous, and growing as they do to the greatest perfection on neglected and dreary wastes, they are well fitted as expressions of desolation and of God's displeasure; while the thistle, though a mark of a good soil, is, when abundant, a proof too that the lands are not yielding the valued fruits of the earth, but are given up to waste. It is, however, especially interesting to remark the growth of the thorn and thistle in Palestine. Fallen as the whole world is, that once beautiful country now in many places presents regions covered so thickly with thorns, that we can but be reminded that it is a land more especially suffering from the wrath of God. Thistles of great magnitude abound there. The Talmudical writers speak of the abundance which in their days grew in a valley not far from Bethlehem; and lord Lindsay saw thistles in many parts of the Holy Land, rivalling in magnitude those of his beloved Scotland. Between Nazareth and Tiberias, Dr. Clarke found the earth covered with such immense tracts of thistles, that a complete collection of them would be a valuable acquisition to botany. He saw one kind of wild thistle, or rather wild artichoke, with a purple head, rising to the height of five or six feet. Other travellers have described the thistles, in the lands about Mount Tabor, as having purple

fragrant flowers, bearing often twelve or fifteen heads, with stems eight feet in height. Some recent travellers, as they took their course among these luxuriant weeds, were reminded by the quantity of thistle down which was floating in the air of that passage of the prophet Isaiah, in which the seer describes the Almighty as chasing the nations, while they should "flee far off," and should be chased "like a rolling thing before the whirlwind," which the margin of our Bibles renders "the thistle down before the whirlwind," Isa. xvii. 13. In many places throughout the country, immense patches of gaily coloured thistles give, in the distance, the appearance of lands cultivated with some tall and showy flowers.

In the passage of Scripture now particularly under notice, the words of the curse apparently signify the growth of thorny plants in general. In many parts of Scripture, we read of briers and thorns, and commentators have found very great difficulty in identifying the plants intended, when some specific thorn is mentioned as occurring in the scenes of Scripture narrative. One of the most thorny and frequent plants in Palestine is that now called by the Arabs by the name of *nabka*, which grows in great abundance on the hill of Jerusalem. It is the *Zizyphus spina Christi* of botanists, and its name of Christ's thorn arises from the tradition that its branches formed the crown of thorns platted by the Roman soldiers in mockery of our Saviour. The thorns on these boughs are

numerous, and sharp, and strong, often an inch in length. Its pliant stems render the tradition probable; and Dr. Royle observes, that, as the leaves resemble ivy, and are of a deep glossy green, perhaps the enemies of the Lord, in selecting a plant resembling that with which the Roman emperors and generals were crowned, wished to affix a calumny to the punishment.

But besides the thorny zizyphus, various acacia trees grow on the desert lands of Syria, and many of them have immense thorns. Burchell mentions one species, which he found in Africa, which he approached with the intention of cutting off a piece as a specimen, though the Hottentots, who well knew the plant, had cautioned him of its nature. He no sooner came near it than a twig caught his sleeve, and he became entangled beyond the power of release, without tearing every part of his clothes, and two of his men had to disentangle him by cutting the branches with a hatchet. Some species of hawthorn are common in Palestine, and the spiny rest harrow is thought to be meant by a word occurring in many passages of Scripture. Other species of zizyphus, besides the Christ's thorn, are abundant in the east, choking up every path, and preventing all cultivation; and the prickly capsules of the plant called caltrops (*Tribulus terrestris*) run into the feet of man or animals, who tread the barren soils of eastern lands. Without, however, pretending to give a list of the thorns of Arabia and Syria, we may quote general

accounts of the prevalence of the thorn and the thistle on the land once so highly favoured of Jehovah. "For hours together," say Bonar and M'Cheyne, "we travelled through fields of weeds and briers and thorns, such as we never saw anywhere else." On the hills of Judah Dr. Keith found the surface so entangled with thorns, that it was impossible to make his way through them. "We felt the same," add these writers, "in traversing the vast plain of Esdraelon, (once the valley of Jezreel,) the greater part of which is covered over with almost impenetrable thickets of weeds, thorns, briers, and thistles. Some time after, when sailing up the Bosphorus, conversing with a gentleman whom we had met in Palestine, we asked him if he had climbed Mount Tabor to obtain the delightful view from its summit. His answer was, 'No; why should I climb Mount Tabor, to see a country of thorns?' He was thus an unintentional witness to the truth of God's word. 'Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city,'" Isa. xxxii. 13.

But the curse pronounced by God was mitigated. Judgment was tempered with mercy. The Saviour of the world has come to "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself," and death shall have no more power on those who take the salvation so freely offered to all. As man is renewed by that Almighty Spirit which is bestowed by the exalted Redeemer on all true

believers, and thus made fit for the enjoyment of God, so the earth itself shall, in process of time, lose all traces of the curse, and become a fit habitation for the "children of the Highest."

CHAPTER III.

THE OLIVE TREE.

"THE dove came in to him in the evening; and, lo, in her mouth was an olive leaf plucked off: so Noah knew that the waters were abated from off the earth," Gen. viii. 11. We have in this passage the earliest allusion to a tree more frequently named than any other in the sacred writings, and which, above all others, is general in the scenery of Palestine—that land which Moses described as "a land of oil olive, and honey," Deut. viii. 8.

It was probably from the circumstance connected with the olive leaf in this early season of the world's history, that it has, in subsequent ages, been regarded as an emblem of peace; for now it came to tell that the wrath of God to a sinful world was stayed; and the tradition of the Greeks, that a dove first brought the olive into their land, and carried its branch to the temple of Epirus, was but a legendary variation from the fact recorded in Scripture.

The olive (*Olea Europæa*) is indigenous to

Syria, as well as to the south of Europe, and some parts of Africa; and is now, as it ever was, cultivated largely in the Holy Land. When growing in numbers it adds much to the beauty of the scenery; and the dark green leaves, as they turn up "their silver lining to the light," and float gently before the breeze, are very beautiful. The mountains lie about Jerusalem as they did of old. "Judah's olive hills" yet smile from afar, and the whitened soil of the Mount of Olives is varied by the olive tree scattered over the sides, and reaching to its utmost ridge. On these hill sides David went up, "weeping as he went." Here our Saviour resorted with his disciples; and over this mountain they returned from gazing on the ascension of their Lord, when "a cloud received him out of their sight," Acts i. 9. The Christian traveller treads this spot with deep feeling. Second only in interest to Mount Calvary, its dark trees suggest sublime and devout thoughts to him who loves the Saviour of whom they remind him. "This," says Lamartine, "was the Mount of Olives; and these were the olive trees themselves—old witnesses written of on earth and in heaven; watered by Divine tears, by sweat of blood, and so many other tears, shed since that night, which rendered them so sacred."

Nor is this poetical writer the only one who deems that the olives of Gethsemane, at the foot of the mount, are the very trees which shadowed the holy band of old. The olive is remarkable

for its longevity, so much so, that a proverb is common in Italy—"If you wish to leave a lasting inheritance to your children's children, plant an olive;" and several olives are growing still, near Terni, in Italy, which are believed to have existed in the days of Pliny. Bové measured the trees on the mount of the Scripture scenes. He states them to be nine or ten yards high, and the circumference of some of them to measure six yards. He believes them to be two thousand years old. Chateaubriand ingeniously infers the identity of some of the olives in the garden of Gethsemane, with those which of old gave it its expressive name of "the garden of the oil press." "They are," says this writer, "at least as old as the times of the eastern empire, as is demonstrated by the following circumstance: In Turkey, every olive tree found standing by the Mussulmans, when they conquered Asia, pays one medina to the treasury; while each of those planted since the conquest is taxed half its produce. The eight olives of which we are speaking are charged only eight medinas."

The garden of Gethsemane! What Christian would be unwilling to linger there, thinking on the Saviour who, when he trod its site, uttered those words of anguish, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death!" Living words of love, which preceded the great work of love—the atonement made by his final suffering. It is while reading the description of scenes like these that we see the intense evil of sin—that

nothing short of Christ's death could ransom us from its curse. It was the weight of man's sin and sorrow which thus bowed down the heart of the Redeemer. And yet, which of us has ever mourned, with this deep grief, for our transgressions or sinful nature? Many are content with the strange satisfaction that they are no worse than others; and thus they go on, regardless alike of sin and its consequences, till the closing hour of life, or even, it may be, till the dawn of eternity, reveals to their souls the awful fact that they are under condemnation, for that they have lived without Christ in the world. But, blessed be God, while we can yet utter the prayer of faith for salvation, a loving Redeemer is ready to hear it, and, as our great Intercessor, to present it before the throne of the Father of our spirits.

Great changes have come over the Holy Land. Since it has been trodden under the foot of the Gentiles, the palm trees have languished and gradually disappeared; the cedars of Lebanon have become fewer, but God still clothes the Mount of Olives with the trees which shall serve to mark that peculiar spot. "It is a curious and interesting fact," says Carne, "that during a period of little more than two thousand years, Hebrews, Assyrians, Romans, Moslems, and Christians, have been successively in possession of the rocky mountains of Palestine, yet the olive tree still asserts its paternal soil, and is found there at this day."

The leaves of the olive are similar to those

of the willow tree, but of darker green, and white on their under surfaces, and sweet delicate flowers enliven the boughs in spring time. Travellers remark that there is something strongly indicative of health and vigour in the fresh green appearance of a flourishing olive tree, especially when the sun is reflected on the verdant leaves of a mass of the trees growing together, so that it is not merely the evergreen nature of the foliage, but the healthy and vigorous appearance of the tree, which suggested it as a figure to the inspired writers. "The Lord called thy name, A green olive tree, fair, and of a goodly fruit," said the prophet Jeremiah, chap. xi. 16; and "his beauty shall be as the olive tree," was one of the comparisons to which Hosea likened Israel, in those glorious days when he shall return and rest under the shadow of the wing of Jehovah, chap. xiv. 6.

Olive oil is still used in Western Asia for all the purposes to which we should apply butter or animal fat, and both in Spain and Italy it is the butter of the country. The Greeks and Romans used it in the libations poured out to their "strange gods;" and the Jews valued the olive oil for the sacred service of the temple. The boughs of the tree mingled with others to make the booths at the feast of tabernacles, and the hard wood, still used in Italy for a variety of purposes, was employed by the builders of ancient Israel in constructing Solomon's temple, 1 Kings vi. 23. The olive berries

were eaten as fruit, and in some parts of France are, with bread, still a common meal of the peasant. Some species of olive require the fruits to be first steeped in hot water, to remove the bitterness. So valuable did the Athenians consider the olive tree, that they regarded its culture as a religious duty, and consecrated it to Minerva; and it is mentioned by Homer and almost all ancient authors.

CHAPTER IV.

THE VINE.

"NOAH began to be an husbandman, and he planted a vineyard," Gen. ix. 20. The early history of the vine is involved in so much obscurity that, like corn, its native land can hardly be said to be known. Canaan was declared by the great Hebrew legislator to be "a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates," yet it seems doubtful if the vine was a native of Syria. Its early culture there is, however, stated, and wine was one of the offerings brought forth by "Melchizedek king of Salem," "the priest of the most high God," after Abram had obtained his memorable victory, Gen. xiv. 18. The spies brought the bunch of grapes from Canaan as a proof of its fertility, and there is no doubt that immediately after the waters of the general

deluge had removed from the face of the earth, this plant was trained and reared by the hand of man.

The early culture of the vine in Egypt is proved by the paintings on the tombs of that land, where the different processes of wine-making are fully portrayed, and appear to be far more extended than the simple practice of squeezing the juice from the grape, which appears to have been adopted by the chief butler of Pharaoh. Though no wine is now made in Egypt, yet the plant is still abundantly cultivated on the sandy soils, where its growth is rapid and luxuriant, and the fragrance of the Egyptian grape is still remarkable. Nor are the leaves considered useless. One of the dishes most commonly to be seen at the table of the rich Egyptian, consists of a number of balls of hashed meat, wrapped in young vine leaves, and these leaves are so much in demand, that they are often purchased at a higher price than the grapes themselves.

In Palestine, the culture of the vine in the present day is confined to some districts, and indeed that land, once made richer by the vine-dresser and the husbandman, now shows everywhere the want of the steady persevering toil of the agriculturist, and reminds us of the declaration of the psalmist, "He turneth a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." Yet the size and richness of flavour of the grape of the Holy Land is still unsurpassed, and the strong

and sweet wine of Lebanon maintains its ancient reputation, and the neighbourhood of Hebron, near which was the celebrated Eshcol, is still adorned with the luxuriant vine, while often the vine climbs around the fig tree, and thus they together afford that shade which led to a proverbial expression of peace and tranquillity, represented by every man sitting under his own vine and fig tree.

The references to the vine in Scripture are too numerous to be here introduced. From the days of Jacob to those of our Saviour, prophets, patriarchs, and psalmists, all employed it as a figure in their writings. "The fruitful vine," and "the vine brought out of Egypt," were emblems of the Jewish people, and the lord of the vineyard was the subject of one of our Saviour's parables, while he compared himself to that true Vine of which his disciples are said to be the branches.

CHAPTER V.

THE TEREBINTH, OR TURPENTINE TREE, ELM, AND TEIL TREE.

"ABRAM removed his tent, and came and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the Lord," Gen. xiii. 18. Dr. Boothroyd thus adopts from the Syriac the latter part of this verse—"dwelt

at the turpentine tree of Mamre, which was by Hebron." In some other parts of Scripture, the Hebrew word is translated "tree" only; and elsewhere it is rendered "oak," as in Isaiah, where its translators have given it, "as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves," chap. vi. 13. Dr. Kitto says, that in the passage in which Abram is said to have gone "through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh," Gen. xii. 6, it should be, "unto the terebinth tree of Moreh."

The terebinth tree (*Pistacia terebinthus*) is a large and strong tree, so general in Palestine, as to be one of the most striking objects of its scenery, and one under whose shadow the patriarch would have been likely to have pitched his tent. The tent under the terebinth tree became a scene of great interest. It was beneath its canopy that the patriarch, not being "forgetful to entertain strangers," entertained the Lord himself, and two attendant angels. It was an example of that hospitality which was afterwards referred to, and enjoined by the holy apostles. Not Abraham alone has found a blessing in its observance—

> "Many, amid this world of cares,
> Have sate with angels unawares;"

and the cup of cold water, or the refreshment or shelter given to the servants of the Lord, in later ages, in the name of Christ, has found its immediate reward in the answered supplications which holy men have uttered from beneath the

roof where, as wayfaring men, they "tarried for a night."

An old tradition, related by Josephus, says that this interesting tree was still living in his time; and a venerable terebinth, which was said to be as old as the world itself, and which grew near Mamre, was shown as the scene of the meeting of Abram with his heavenly messengers. Later traditions were connected with this tree, which became the scene of pilgrimages, and subsequently of most unholy revelry. It was accidentally destroyed by fire in A.D. 1640.

There is no doubt that the valley of Elah, where David went down when Saul and his army were encamped there, and where, with the smooth stones from the brook, he slew the great Goliath, (1 Sam. xvii. 19,) received its name from the terebinth trees growing on the spot. Dr. Robinson considers this valley to lie on the road between Jerusalem and Gaza, and remarks that the largest terebinth tree which he ever saw in the Holy Land stands near it.

The terebinth is remarkable for its great longevity. Its leaves are small, and shaped much like those of the olive, but varied in colour with red and purple. The fruits are smaller than cherries, of a deep reddish purple, while large excrescences, the size of a chesnut, and of a purple, or green, or white tint, are found among the leaves. The trunk of the tree yields the celebrated Cyprus turpentine, which is very pure and transparent, and has an odour like citron. It is procured by making incisions

in the bark during the month of July. Stones are placed beneath these incisions, on which the balsam or turpentine drops, and having become hardened during the night, it is removed at sunrise. To render it pure, it is again dissolved in the sun, and strained. This substance is very expensive, on account of the small quantity yielded by the trees. Loudon remarks, that four large trees, sixty years old, only gave two pounds, nine ounces, and six drachms. In some parts of the Greek isles, however, a somewhat larger quantity is procured from the trees. It does not appear that the natives of Palestine obtain this product from the turpentine tree, but it is much valued for its shadow and picturesque beauty. It is common, also, in Asia Minor, in the south of Europe, and the north of Africa. It is generally about twenty feet high, and often higher. Another species of terebinth produces the gum mastic of commerce.

In Hosea iv. 13, the word given as "elm" in our version should be rendered "terebinth tree." So also the "teil tree" of Isaiah, (chap. vi. 13,) is properly the turpentine tree, though our translation, by the "teil," intended the lime or linden tree.

CHAPTER VI.

LENTILES.

"And Esau said to Jacob, Feed me, I pray thee, with that same red pottage; for I am faint. . . . . Then Jacob gave Esau bread and pottage of lentiles," Gen. xxv. 30, 34. And thus, "for a morsel of meat," Esau "sold his birthright!" The "profaneness" of his conduct, which is alluded to by St. Paul, seems to consist in this: the priestly function, as well as the secular property, formed the privilege of birthright; and had Esau appreciated this as he ought, he would not, for a momentary gratification, have parted with a privilege to which, as the eldest son, he was entitled. But Esau was the child of impulse, and he bore its punishment in his subsequent loss.

The lentile, (*Ervum lens*,) from which the pottage was made that formed the temptation to the wearied huntsman, is the smallest leguminous plant which is cultivated. It is rarely more than a foot and a half in height, of a trailing, prostrate habit, and kept upright only by clinging by its tendrils to its neighbour plants. It has small, purple, pea-shaped flowers, and is somewhat similar to the tare, but yields a smaller quantity of grain. It is still cultivated in Palestine, and to a great extent, not only in the east in general, but also in some countries on the continent of Europe. Several kinds are sown in the fields of France and Germany,

where the seeds sell for about twice the price of peas. They are chiefly used in these countries for haricots and soups. In the markets of Syria, as well as in Egypt, lentiles are commonly sold ready for use. Burckhardt says of them, that a mixture of equal portions of rice and lentiles, over which butter is poured, forms a favourite preparation of the middle classes of Arabia, and is often their only dish at supper. "I found," says this writer, "in every part of the Hedjaz, that the Bedouins, when travelling, carried no other provision than rice, lentiles, butter, and dates."

Rosenmüller says, that the pottage made from the lentile was called red, because the easterns call red that which is, strictly speaking, a yellow brown; as we speak of red leaves or red kine. Lentile pulse has, in all times, been called red, for Pliny speaks of an Egyptian variety, which grew on the red sands near the pyramids, and remarking that the lentile prefers a red soil, asks if the pulse may not have derived its reddish colour from the soil on which it grows. Travellers in the east, who have eaten of this frequent dish, describe it as of a reddish chocolate colour, when boiled for use.

On the spot near the cave of Hebron, where Mohammedan tradition relates that Abraham and his family lie buried, and which is said to have been the place where Jacob purchased the hereditary rights of his brother, D'Arvieux found a large building erected. At the entrance of this building was a kitchen. Here a quantity of

soup was daily prepared from various kinds of pulse, but especially from lentiles, and a party of dervishes distributed from its gates these messes of pottage to the poor and the traveller. This practice was intended to keep in remembrance the fact recorded in Scripture.

The use of lentiles is not, in the east, confined to boiling as soup. Bread of a tolerably good kind is made of lentiles and barley, while, in some parts of Egypt, especially in the country towards the cataracts of the Nile, scarcely any other bread is in common use, as corn is little cultivated in the southern extremity of that land.

CHAPTER VII.

THE OAK.

"DEBORAH Rebekah's nurse died, and she was buried beneath Beth-el under an oak: and the name of it was called Allon-bachuth," Gen. xxxv. 8. There is something very touching in this slight and simple record of the death of the aged nurse, when the pilgrim family were on their way to Canaan. The old servant of the household, the nurse of that mother whose partiality for her son, though unjust, would yet naturally endear her memory, was buried under an oak tree, which most likely received its name of "oak of weeping" from this incident.

But the oak of Palestine is not the same giant tree which spreads its gnarled boughs wide over the grassy plains of England's parks

and meadows, giving its stout timbers to frame the goodly ships, and serving as a natural link, between the times of old England in past days, and the time which is passing now; and which having shadowed one generation after another, will live to shadow generations yet unborn. Several species of oak, however, adorn the hills of Syria, and the forests of evergreen oak of Canaan cover the hills, and reach to their very summits. But the climate of Syria is too warm for the oak to flourish much in its valleys, and it is chiefly found on hills and mountains; and though in masses its dark green boughs are beautiful to look upon, yet the individual oak has not the stately appearance of our monarch of the woods.

In many places of Palestine, the country has all the rich appearance of park scenery, from the numerous forests of evergreen oaks with which it is varied. Low shrubs of the evergreen oak group over the hills of Hebron, but it is on the hills of Bashan, memorable in Scripture description as producing "the oaks of Bashan," that the oak is still most luxuriant and plentiful, and Burckhardt rejoiced in the welcome shadow cast by the thick oaks of Bashan and Gilead. It may be that Isaiah had sat on the same spot, and had it pictured in the mental vision, when he declared the inspired prophecy: "For the day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up; and he shall be brought low: and upon all the cedars of

Lebanon, that are high and lifted up, and upon all the oaks of Bashan," chap. ii. 12, 13. Zechariah, too, in the powerful imagery by which he describes the destruction of Jerusalem, alluded to the superiority of these trees, when he calls upon the fir tree, the cedar, and the oaks of Bashan, to lament, "for the forest of the vintage had come down," chap. xi. 2.

Two Hebrew words have by our translators been rendered oak, but one has been plainly proved to refer to the terebinth tree. The word *allon*, however, is doubtless the oak. Dr. Royle mentions five species of oak as common in Palestine, though, as he remarks, the frequent mention of the oak in our version of the Scriptures, would lead to the inference that this tree was far more abundant in the scenery of Palestine than it really is. The evergreen oak (*Quercus ilex*) is found in western Asia, and is also a well-known tree of southern Europe. It is commonly called the holly, or holme oak. The French term it *Chêne verd*, and the wood of this handsome and slow-growing tree is said to be equal to that of our sturdy British oak, the *Quercus robur* of botanists. The sweet nut of this tree, and some other kinds of evergreen oaks, is flavoured like an almond, and was perhaps one of the fruits of the oak which the classic writers describe as forming the food of the primitive inhabitants of Greece, and rendering them stout and strong. The holly-leaved Montpelier oak (*Quercus gramuntia*) is, by some botanists, considered as merely a

variety of the holme oak ; but there is considerable difference in its appearance, owing to its wider spreading boughs.

The hairy-cupped oak (*Quercus crinata*) is less common in Palestine than either of the last named species. The great prickly-cupped oak (*Quercus Ægilops*) often meets the eye of the traveller who gazes on the hills of Judah. It is literally called the goat's-beard oak, because the long shaggy lichens, so common on its trunk, give it a shaggy appearance ; and it is also termed the Valonia oak by many travellers. The Kermes oak (*Quercus coccifera*) alone remains to be noticed of the ascertained oaks of Palestine, but probably other species will be marked by future botanists. This is remarkable as furnishing food to the Kermes, (*Coccus ilicis*,) a small insect which is found in quantities on its boughs, and which was the only substance used in dying scarlet, from the period of the disuse of the celebrated scarlet of Scripture, obtained from the shell-fish of Tyre, and which furnished the Tyrian purple of the Romans, until the introduction of the insect dye of the cochineal from America. The Kermes oak is a bushy low evergreen, and the insects, though now in little use for dying in England, are still employed by the natives of the Levant, the people of Barbary, and of other countries. On the Sierra Morena, wide tracts of this shrub cover the heights ; and many of the people of Murcia procure their whole livelihood by gathering the Kermes for dyers.

CHAPTER VIII.

ALMONDS, PISTACHIO, AND HAZEL.

ISRAEL said unto his sons, "Take of the best fruits in the land in your vessels, and carry down the man a present, a little balm, and a little honey, spices, and myrrh, nuts, and almonds," Gen. xliii. 11. Almonds were not common in Egypt as they were in Syria, and it is doubtful whether they were ever cultivated there at all. In Palestine, as well as in other parts of Syria, the almond tree (*Amygdalus communis*) was, and still is, very abundant. It grows wild, and is cultivated too in the gardens. Its beauty in the neighbourhood of Sidon has attracted the attention of travellers. Carne says of the gardens there, which extend to some distance about the town, that they produce great quantities of fruit, of which exports are made, and enumerates the almonds among the mulberry, pomegranate, and lemon trees, which are very abundant. In the town of Nablous, the ancient Sychem, its beautiful blossoms grow among the graceful palm trees and the wide-spreading figs; on Mount Carmel it smiles in beauty, and many a spot rendered interesting by its association with scenes of Scriptural narrative, is gay, in early spring, with its rose-clad boughs, and fragrant with its gentle odour.

Three hundred years before the birth of our Saviour, Theophrastus had written of the early flowering of the almond, and said that it was the only tree of Greece which blossomed before the leaves appear; and very early in the history of the world its bloom had suggested its Hebrew name of *shaked*, which might be rendered to make haste, to awake early; thus giving to the eastern tree a name alike poetic and expressive, and rendering it a very fit emblem for the prophet Jeremiah, when he called the attention of the people of Israel to the tree, and thence inferred the speedy fulfilment of God's word, Jer. i. 11. Nor was its early bloom, its flowering, even while winter seemed present, and while all around was naked and barren, forgotten, probably, by Solomon, when he compared it to the hoary hairs of age. In Palestine, the road-sides are made beautiful by its flowers during the month of February.

The fruit of the almond tree was much valued in the east, and it furnished also a very pleasant oil, valuable in lands where the use of oil was so general. It was probably simply on account of its form that it was chosen as a model for the carved work of the tabernacle, the bowls for whose service were commanded to be made like unto almonds, with a "knop and a flower in one branch," Exod. xxv. 33.

When Israel yielded, on one occasion, to the murmurings to which that rebellious people seem to have been so prone, God silenced them by the miraculous budding of Aaron's rod,

which also brought forth almonds, and long did the flowery fertile staff lie by the ark of the testimony, a witness at once of Israel's faithlessness and Jehovah's power.

The nuts, which, in the passage at the opening of this chapter, are named with the almonds, have, by various commentators, been translated pine-nuts, dates, or walnuts ; but Dr. Royle, and other writers, considered that the pistachio-nuts, so much in request as a fruit in the east, are here intended. The pistachio tree, (*Pistacia vera*,) though pretty general throughout Syria, and found wild in Palestine, is rare in Egypt. The nuts, which are in modern times imported to India from Afghanistan, are eaten with sweetmeats, or are fried with pepper and salt, and make a grateful dish at the eastern dessert. They are also exported from various parts of Syria into Europe. The nut has a light-coloured woody shell, and the kernel, which is green even when ripe, is of a sweet and delicate flavour, much relished in all the places where the pistachio-nut tree is found. This tree is sometimes thirty feet high, in a dry soil. The word rendered hazel, in Gen. xxx. 37, should be translated almond.

CHAPTER IX.

BITTER HERBS.

"THEY shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it," Exod. xii. 8. In this manner God commanded the congregation of Israel, while yet in Egypt, to eat the lamb of the passover, that solemn type of the Lamb of God, afterwards slain for the sins of the world: and at the re-institution of the passover in the wilderness of Sinai, we find these directions repeated, Num. ix. 11.

It is not possible now to determine exactly what plants were meant by the bitter herbs. Five sorts of plants are stated in the Mishna, either or all of which might be eaten by the ancient Jews on this occasion. Wild lettuce, endive, a plant which is by some thought to be horehound, or the young tops of horse-radish, or a species of thistle; another, which is by some called a nettle, and a fifth, which is thought to be the bitter coriander. Both the endive and lettuce are, when unblanched, of an intense bitter. The learned rabbi, Aben Ezra, states that some bitter herbs were always eaten by the Jews with their food, and that they eat some of them with every mouthful of bread or meat, just as the bitter gourds are now constantly eaten with food in India.

The idea that the endive was especially

meant as the bitter herbs, is the most ancient and the most general. This plant, called by the Arabs chikouryeh, is much eaten in Egypt. Pliny remarked on its importance to the Egyptians, and it is well known that in modern days chicory, or plants of a similar nature, form half the food of the common people of that land. As Rosenmüller observes, the endive has certainly the oldest authorities in its favour, as the most ancient Greek Alexandrian translations put endives. Dr. Geddes, who regards the endive as the bitter herbs of Scripture, remarks that the Jews of Alexandria, who translated the Pentateuch, could not be ignorant of what herbs were eaten with the paschal lamb in their days. In addition to the plants named, the centaury, a red flower common in Great Britain, is thought by some writers to be intended, as the young stems of this plant are eaten in the east, during the months of February and March, and are truly "bitter herbs" in their nature.

CHAPTER X.

CINNAMON AND CASSIA.

"The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take thou also unto thee principal spices, of pure myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet cinnamon half so much, even two hundred and

fifty shekels, and of sweet calamus two hundred and fifty shekels," Exod. xxx. 22, 23. The cinnamon tree is not a native of Palestine, but there is no doubt that the substance here referred to is the spice called by this name in modern times. By what means the Hebrews procured this spice from a far country is unknown. Some writers think that the cinnamon tree grows also in some part of Arabia or Africa; others believe that trade with India is of a more ancient date than it is generally considered to have been.

The cinnamon laurel (*Laurus kinnamomum*) is largely cultivated in Ceylon. It is a low-growing tree, with a smooth ash-coloured bark, and wide-spreading boughs, and is rendered very picturesque, both by its form and the variety of tint given to its bright green leaves by their white under-surface. The young shoots, too, have a scarlet crimson hue, and their bark is often speckled with deep green and orange-coloured spots. The leaves are sometimes eight or nine inches in length, and two in width. The flowers have no beauty, and it is rather remarkable that a tree possessing so odorous a bark, as well to entitle it to the name of "sweet cinnamon," should, when in bloom, emit a fœtid and disgusting odour, said to resemble that of newly-sawn bones. The fruit, which is about the size of an olive, is very insipid. Besides the plantations of cinnamon in Ceylon, the tree grows also wild in that island, and in other parts of the world. It

is also indigenous in Sumatra, Borneo, and the Malabar coast; and is cultivated in the West Indies and other tropical countries. The cinnamon of commerce is the inner bark of the tree, and is peeled off the trees in the valley when they are about four or five years old; but trees on hilly regions require to grow some years longer before they can be thus stripped. The finest cinnamon is procured from the young branches; and incisions are made, lengthwise, in the bark, on both sides of the shoot, by inserting the peeling-knife just under the surface. The cinnamon is then removed in the form of a hollow cylinder, and the sticks are tied together in bundles, weighing about a pound each, and thus exported. There are several kinds of cinnamon, varying much in the sweetness of their flavour, some kinds having a coarse and strong taste. The oil of cinnamon is chiefly made in Ceylon, by placing the smaller broken pieces of the bark in sea-water for some hours, when the oil is procured by distillation.

The flavour of the cinnamon is the test of its excellence, and, in former days, medical men were employed by the British government to taste the Ceylon spice; but this custom is now discontinued, for the frequent chewing of the cinnamon so excoriated the mouths of the tasters, that the practice could not be continued by one person for more than two days successively. The cinnamon bark is astringent and tonic, but its chief medical use is in disguising

the flavour of nauseous drugs. Of its domestic uses nothing need here be said. The ancient Hebrews appear to have regarded it as a deliciously fragrant substance, and it was undoubtedly very costly and precious.

The cassia is said to be the bark of a tree of Ceylon, the Malabar coast, and other parts of India and the adjacent isles. It is the cassia tree, (*Kinnamomum cassia*,) and its bark is far inferior in flavour to the cinnamon, but so resembles it as to be often purchased for the true species. This substance is, however, by some writers, considered to be only the coarse bark of the cinnamon laurel. The principal city of Kwang-se, a province of China, has a name, which literally imports cassia forest, owing to the large groves of the cassia tree which grow around it.

The ripe berries of the cinnamon tree yield a soft oily substance, which, in Ceylon, is used as an application to bruises.

CHAPTER XI.

RYE.

"THE wheat and rye were not smitten: for they were not grown up," Exod. ix. 32. The word rendered "rye," in this part of Scripture, is elsewhere rendered "fitches;" and commentators have found much difficulty in

ascertaining exactly the plant intended, though it doubtless refers to one of the cultivated grains of Egypt and Syria. From this passage we learn that it was planted with wheat and barley in Egypt; and, in Isaiah, we find that it was also cultivated in Palestine, Isa. xxviii. 25. The prophet Ezekiel was directed to take it, with beans and barley, lentiles and millet, and make bread; but, in this passage, our translators have rendered the original word by "fitches." Rye is a plant fitted for cultivation in cold countries only, and unknown, or almost so, in Egypt. It is therefore generally believed, that the spelt is intended, especially as this plant is known to have furnished food to the ancient Egyptians, and some people of Syria; but some further investigation of the modern agriculture of these countries will probably throw more light on the matter.

The spelt (*Triticum spelta*) is a species of wheat distinct from the common wheat, having a stouter stem and strong spikes of grain. The bread made of its flour is very inferior to that made of common wheat, but spelt is very generally grown in the south of France, and many parts of Switzerland and Germany. In the southern districts of the latter country it is preferred to any other kind of grain. Its chief recommendation is, that it will thrive well on almost any soil, and yield a crop on lands unfit for other wheat. In Spain, where barley is scarce, it is given to horses, but the ancients greatly preferred it to barley in making bread.

CHAPTER XII.

THE POMEGRANATE.

"BENEATH, upon the hem of it, (the robe,) thou shalt make pomegranates of blue, and of purple, and of scarlet, round about the hem thereof; and bells of gold between them round about," Exod. xxviii. 33. We find throughout Scripture those numerous references to the pomegranate, (*Punica granatum*,) which the frequency of this plant in the Holy Land might lead us to expect. Nor are modern travellers in Palestine less pleased with its shade than Saul might have been, when he sat beneath the pomegranate tree when he tarried in Migron of Gibeah, 1 Sam. xiv. 2. Lord Lindsay often mentions the pomegranate trees of Palestine as objects of beauty, and speaks of their delicious groves near Cana of Galilee, where our Lord performed his first miracle. He quotes an Arabian writer, who, speaking of these and other plants near Szalt, supposed to be the scene of the murder of St. John the Baptist, says, "There are many gardens, and great over the whole earth is the fame of its pomegranates." Dr. Olin was delighted with the trees in the gardens near Shechem; and Bonar and M'Cheyne describe the village of Karieh, near Sharon, as literally embosomed amongst fig trees, olives, and pomegranates, with a solitary palm tree rising above the

clustered groups. "The pomegranates," say these writers, "were in full bloom, and the scarlet flowers shone brilliantly from among its dark green leaves." Indeed, throughout Palestine, as well as other parts of Asia, the bright blossoms or the crimson, apple-like fruits, are very beautiful, and render the tree, which is in form something like a hawthorn, a very attractive object. When growing wild, the pomegranate tree is thorny, but culture deprives it of the thorns.

It is not easy to determine why the fruit of the pomegranate was selected by God as the fitting ornament of the priestly robe. Growing wild in their own land, and cultivated largely in the orchards and gardens, the ancient Hebrews were very familiar with its appearance, so much so that Moses described Canaan as a land of pomegranates. Its figurative design as a symbol of sacred things is less obvious than that of the olive or the myrtle, yet it is probable that its appropriation to the garment of the priest was symbolical. In very early ages, the pomegranate came to be regarded in the east as a sacred plant. Many commentators are of opinion, that the idolatrous temple called the house of Rimmon, in Assyria, was devoted to the worship of the pomegranate, Rimmon being the Hebrew word for that plant. Others think with Rosenmüller, that the word thus used in that place signified rather "the exalted," and probably referred to the temple of the sun. There is, however, no doubt that

the pomegranate was, in very early periods of the world, symbolical of fertility, its large number of seeds rendering it particularly suitable for this, and, by a further extension of the figure, it seemed significant of a great multitude. In Egypt, the people held the pomegranate sacred; in Persia, it adorned the head of the sceptre. In Rhodes, the blossom of this plant mingled with the arms of the Rhodians; and an ancient image of Jupiter, as described by Achilles Tertius, bore a pomegranate in its hand. In the temple of Solomon, it surrounded the chapiters of the pillars, and garnished the hem of the vestment of the priest. Scott regards it and the bells which were placed with the pomegranates, as typifying "the glad tidings which Christ is anointed to preach, and the fragrant fruits of his priesthood which he confers upon his church."

The beauty of the delicate crimson fruit when it first opens, led to several comparisons in the Song of Solomon. "As a piece of pomegranate are thy cheeks," said the poetic writer, when praising the beauty of the bride. "Just," says Dr. Taylor, "as we, in our land, compare a beautiful cheek to a peach." The flowers too are represented as forming the bridal wreath at the marriage feast, and "the pleasant fruits" of the garden of pomegranates are, in this part of Scripture, spoken of with praise.

The fruit of the pomegranate attains, in its native climates, a luxurious sweetness, and is much valued in hot climates; the pulpy

grains of the fruit also are eaten, sprinkled with sugar; and, when well dried, the grains are used in confectionary. Dr. Kitto observes, that the pomegranate is, in eastern countries, used for most of the purposes for which we select the lemon. "The spiced wine of pomegranates" is still made by expressing the fruit; and the sherbets valued by the Moslems, who do not drink wine, are often indebted for their flavour to its juices. Though the pomegranate was not originally a wild plant of Egypt, yet that it was early cultivated there we learn from the complaints of the Israelites, who, on comparing the wide wilderness of Sinai with the land they had quitted, said, "it is no place of figs, or of vines, or pomegranates." Burckhardt describes it now in that land as of middling quality. The pomegranate grows wild in southern Europe. It was cultivated by the Romans, who called it the graine apple, (*Pomum granatum*,) which is the origin of our English name. It is mentioned by the earliest poets as the Carthaginian apple; and the physicians of ancient Greece and Rome esteemed it for its medicinal virtues.

CHAPTER XIII.

CORIANDER.

"THE manna was as coriander seed, and the colour thereof as the colour of bdellium," Num. xi. 7. It is yet undetermined whether the bdellium of Scripture was a stone or a plant, but the rendering of coriander, in our version, has been very generally received as correct. The coriander (*Coriandrum sativum*) was used by the ancients both as a condiment and medicine, and is frequently mentioned by the Talmudical writers. It is an umbelliferous plant, which, though probably originally a native of the east, has, by long culture, become naturalized in our land, and is reckoned among our wild plants, being often found in our fields. It is also grown in British gardens; and on some lands of Essex it is sown for purposes of commerce. The leaves are very aromatic, and are used for soups. They are also prepared as comfits by the confectioners, and much used by apothecaries to disguise the flavour of medicines. Black puddings and currie powder are flavoured with them, and the distillers use them in large quantities. In former times, a favourite liquor was made by steeping them in wine; and the seeds, afterwards dried, and thus rendered milder, were eaten with various dishes. Coriander is used as a spice by the Arabs, and is much relished in Egypt and India.

CHAPTER XIV.

CUCUMBERS, MELONS, LEEKS, ONIONS, AND GARLIC.

"The children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlic," Num. xi. 4, 5. Alas! for repining Israel. God had, with a strong hand, brought them out of the house of bondage. He had dried the Red Sea for their footsteps, and guided their way by the fire and the cloud. He had sent water from the rock, and had sweetened, too, the bitter waters for their refreshment. He had given them manna from heaven, so that "man did eat angels' food," yet now they forgot all past mercies, and unthankfully exclaimed, There is nothing but this manna before our eyes. They remembered only the pleasant fruits of Egypt, and thought not of its bitter bondage. And who is there that is sinless in this respect? How many of us, whom God has guided thus far, are still distrustful of His providence, and ready to murmur at present dispensations! To how many might the words of Solomon be applied—"Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this!"

The various plants which in this verse are

gathered together, formed the common diet of Egypt, so that the Israelites, though fed and treated as slaves, could yet procure them like the Egyptians; and they had become attached to this food in preference to any other. Dr. Kitto mentions, that in the year 1218, when Damietta was besieged, many of the more delicate of the Egyptians pined away and died, for want of the garlic, onions, fish, birds, fruits, and herbs, to which they had been accustomed, though they were well supplied with corn.

The cucumber (*Cucumis sativus*) was cultivated very extensively in ancient Egypt, and is still very general there, its succulent nature enabling it to resist the drought of sandy plains, while it flourishes well in the richer soils watered by the Nile. The Hebrews, when settled in their own goodly land, cultivated there the food which they had prized in Egypt. Thus we find the prophet Isaiah, when mourning over the desolation of Jerusalem, saying, "The daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers:" and still the cucumber plantation, uninclosed by hedges, attracts the travellers' eye as he wanders over the plains of Palestine; and still the cottage is raised there, that they who pass by the road may be prevented from gathering the ripening vegetable.

The cucumber of Egypt is said to differ from ours in size, colour, and firmness, being smaller, and often whiter. It grows best in Kahira, after the inundation of the Nile. Its

superiority in flavour, as well as the pleasure derived in hot lands from a juicy vegetable, may account for the preference which the inhabitants of the east have for this production—a preference, however, which is partaken by the Russians and Tahtars, who esteem the cucumber, when salted, above all dishes.

The melon, (*Cucumis melo*,) as well as the water-melon, (*Cucurbita citrullus*,) are probably included in the fruits mentioned in our version. The large yellow fruit of the former is frequent at the English table, and is cultivated in America as a culinary vegetable. It is a native plant of Egypt, the Levant, and South America. It will flourish both on dry and moist soils, and several varieties appear to have been cultivated in Egypt from remotest times, and to have formed a common article of diet. It grows to a large size in hot countries, and if eaten in moderate quantities is wholesome, but its coldness renders it unsafe to eat a large portion at a time. Hasselquist says of it, "It chilled my stomach like a bit of ice." One species of melon (*Cucumis chate*) is prized in Egypt above all others. It is sometimes cultivated in Britain, and is regarded as the most wholesome species, and the one from which delicate persons have least to fear. A pleasant drink is prepared from its juices, and the Europeans resident in Egypt, as well as the Egyptians themselves, esteem it the best. Hasselquist calls it the "Queen of Cucumbers."

The water-melon, called by the Germans,

Wassermelone, and by the French, *Pastéque*, is distinguished from the other edible species of melon by its cut leaves, but in other respects it is very similar. The fruit in the warm countries of Asia, Europe, and Africa, is often two feet in length, globular and smooth, its interior being a white icy-looking substance, streaked with dark red tints, and containing black seeds. In some parts of South America it is of an immense size, and Humboldt mentions that in the peninsula of Araya, where the country is often for fifteen months destitute of rain, and where so juicy a fruit is very valuable, that water-melons are often to be seen, weighing from fifty to seventy pounds each. It is eaten very largely in Egypt during its season. It serves the Egyptians for food, drink, and medicine, and is indeed the only remedy used by the poorer people in fevers. A softer and more common kind is preferred for this use, and when this is so ripe as almost to be decaying, the juice is expressed, and being mingled with sugar is drunk copiously. This fruit is naturally very tempting to Europeans in the hot climate where it grows, and many suffer from eating too freely of it during the heat of the day. Hasselquist observing on its use in Egypt, says, "It is eaten in abundance by the richer sort of people;" and adds, "that the common sort of people scarcely eat anything but these fruits, and account this season the best time of the year, as they are obliged to put up with a less pleasant diet during the other seasons."

The water-melon is cultivated in Palestine, and some of the best are said to be grown on the plains near Mount Carmel. "We are acquainted with no author," says Dr. Kitto, "who mentions a very common use to which the seeds of the water-melon are applied. They are salted and roasted dry, in which shape they are sold in the bazaars, and form a strong but not very delicate relish, of which some people are very fond." This writer adds, that in Palestine melons are cultivated in the low plains of the coast, and of the Ghor; nor are they neglected even in the high plains of the Haouran.

But we must leave the cucumber tribe, and proceed to consider the other plants named in the verse. The common leek, (*Allium porrum,*) so well known for its uses in our kitchen, and for the favour it finds with the Welshman, was highly valued by the Romans. The plant is much cultivated in Scotland, and the favourite dish of our monarch James I., of cock-a-leekie, has not lost its repute in the northern part of our island. The leek still forms a favourite diet with the orientals, as in the days of the Israelites, and is as common an article of Egyptian diet as it is known to have been two thousand years before the time of our Saviour. Both the onion and the leek grow wild on the deserts of Cairo. The Turks say they are a delicacy fit for paradise. The leek is cut up into small pieces, and eaten as a seasoning to meat in modern Egypt.

The onion (*Allium cepa*) is no less prized than

the leek. The opinion of Hasselquist on this root is often quoted, and is confirmed by all travellers in Egypt. "Whoever," says that writer, "has tasted onions in Egypt, must allow that none can be had better in any part of the universe. Here, they are sweet; in other countries, they are nauseous and strong. Here, they are soft; whereas, in the northern and other parts, they are hard, and their coats are so compact that they are difficult of digestion. Hence they cannot in any place be eaten with less prejudice and more satisfaction than in Egypt." This traveller considered that the onion soup of that land was one of the best dishes he ever tasted. The onions are cut into four pieces, baked and eaten, and some of the poorest people live almost entirely on them, while the richer classes eat them thus cooked with roasted meat. They are sold in the markets at very low prices both baked and raw. That great reverence was paid to the onion by the ancient Egyptians there seems little doubt. They are said by Pliny to have sworn by these plants, and they were accused of worshipping some species as gods. The fondness for the onion tribe, as an article of food, seems universal in the east. At Bernou very large plantations of onions are cultivated, and they are general too in Palestine. About Samaria, the onions are so numerous and so sweet, that they rival those of Egypt.

The common shallot of our kitchen-garden, (*Allium ascalonicum*,) which received its specific

name from having been brought from Ascalon, is considered to be the garlic of Egypt, and a variety of the plant commonly cultivated in that land is familiarly known as "Egyptian garlic." The use of garlic was so great in ancient times in that country, that Pliny mentions it as one of the articles on which a large sum of money was spent, to furnish food for the builders of the pyramids. The Talmud says, that the Jews season many kinds of meat with garlic, and it is still a favourite seasoning with that people, whose habits in all countries still retain some traces of their oriental origin. The dish of garlic is a highly valued food of modern Egypt, and travellers in that land, when invited to share in the hospitality of an Egyptian host, mention that it is one most frequently offered. Garlic appears to be a very wholesome plant, and in Kamtschatka it is prized not only as food, but as a medicine, and steeped in water is mixed with cabbage and other vegetables, and eaten cold. The Kamtschatdales consider it a sure remedy against those eruptive complaints to which their poor food renders them liable; and fear these disorders no longer, when spring disperses the snow from their plains, and the green shoots of the garlic rise above the earth.

CHAPTER XV.

WHEAT.

"THE Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey," Deut. viii. 7, 8. It was a beautiful description of their ancient land, which Moses here gave to the Israelites. We find the wheat and the barley named distinctly, and these grains, as well as peas, beans, lentiles, cummin, and several other plants, are often included under the general word corn, so frequently named in Scripture. The wheat, however, always stood the foremost, as it does with us. In the Holy Land it was both luxuriant and general, and it was in Egypt and Syria the most common kind of grain. Not only was wheaten and barley bread the general food of the people of Palestine, but ears of corn, gathered while green, and dried, then slightly parched or boiled, were, and still are, a common dish throughout the east.

In his route between Sardis and Acre, Hasselquist observed a herdsman at his dinner, and saw that his meal consisted of half ripened ears of corn, which he roasted at the fire. Ears of corn, thus prepared, were ordered by God to be presented as a tribute of praise.

"Thou shalt offer for the meat offering of thy firstfruits green ears of corn dried by the fire, even corn beaten out of full ears," said the law of Israel, Lev. ii. 14. Parched corn, when fully ripe, as well as parched pulse, was eaten then as now in the east, and corn, first boiled and then bruised in a mill, and separated from the husk, is afterwards dried in the sun by the people of Western Asia, and is in constant use. The meal of this corn, mixed with honey, butter, and spice, is said by Dr. Kitto to be in much request, while he describes a mixture of the flour with water as forming a cool drink, most refreshing in those hot climates.

Egypt was also, from the earliest ages, celebrated for her corn, and we find Joseph's brethren going thither to fetch it, when corn was scarce in Canaan. Its abundance in the former land originated the old English proverb expressive of plenty, and we still say, "There is corn in Egypt," when we have enough and to spare of any article. For no plant was Egypt more celebrated than for wheat. Rome and Constantinople once regarded that country as an inexhaustible granary. In the present day, Arabia brings her corn out of Egypt, and the caravans which leave Upper Egypt for Cosseir, a port on the Red Sea, are freighted with wheat, which is thence transported to Jidda. It needs but little culture, for the Egyptian has scarcely more to do than to scatter its seed upon the soil.

The two species called summer and winter

wheat were cultivated in Palestine, and the Egyptian wheat is known even to the present day as being the most prolific of wheats. When the Egyptians, ignorant of the resurrection of the body, sought to make that body eternal by embalming it, grains of wheat were often placed with the corpse of the departed, and some of these seeds taken out of the mummy case have been placed in the soil. The long ages which have passed by have not injured the vitality of the wheat; and corn gathered in by hands which ministered probably to the wants of the Pharaohs, has sprung up in the English garden, and is now bearing its seven-fold fruits.

CHAPTER XVI.

FLAX.

"SHE (Rahab) had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof," Josh. ii. 6. This practice of preparing the flax, either by alternate steeping and drying, or by the natural process of dewy morn and shining noon, is still common in the east. Rae Wilson, in describing the roofs of Damascus, says that they are flat like a terrace, spread over with a kind of plaster, made firm with a roller. He adds, that several domestic offices

are performed upon them, such as the drying linen and flax. The words in the text literally signify "flax of the wood," that is, undressed flax, with its woody fibres.

Still earlier than the period just referred to, we find linen garments named as worn by the Hebrews. The first mention of them is in Leviticus, where the woollen or linen garment of the leper is ordered to be burned in the fire, Lev. xiii. 47–52. From frequent intimation of holy writ, we learn too that flax was among the earliest cultivated plants of Egypt and Palestine. The Talmud and the Rabbinical tracts abound with comments concerning the sowing and gathering of this plant, as well as on the method of dressing and afterwards manufacturing it. It is in Egypt, however, that flax under cultivation first meets our attention, when we read of the plant as smitten by the terrific plague of hail. It is said in the passages relating to it, "that the flax and the barley were smitten: for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was bolled," or in blossom, Exod. ix. 31. Many ancient writers also speak of its early cultivation in the land of the Nile, while old Egyptian paintings represent, in uncouth forms, the processes of dressing and preparing it for use. From that day to this, the spring has seen the Egyptian field blue with its flowers, and it is still among the chief products of the Delta. Not only is a sufficient quantity grown to supply linen garments to all the people of the land, but immense quantities are exported.

It is very evident that the Israelites, as well as the people of other ancient nations, valued very highly the fine linen of Egypt, above that which was manufactured in Syria. From the praises bestowed upon it by ancient writers, it was long supposed to be of remarkably delicate texture, but the wrappings of the mummies show that this was not the case, for as their embalmed dead were most probably persons of distinction, we may reasonably infer that the finest linen cloth would be used in enfolding them ; yet these cloths are coarse, and it is probable that the "fine linen of Egypt" was far inferior to that which in modern days issues from the looms of Europe.

The flax is cultivated now very generally in the civilized parts of the world. In our own land it is also a wild flower. It has a pale blue blossom, seated on a slender stem, about a foot high, with small lanceolate leaves of a pale green colour. Several species are cultivated. The two most generally sown are the perennial flax, (*Linum perenne*,) and the common flax, (*Linum usitatissimum*.)

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BRAMBLE.

"THEN said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye

anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon," Judges ix. 14, 15. It does not appear that the common plant of our wayside, the bramble, (*Rubus fruticosus*,) which winds its long sprays about the English hedges, is the plant here intended by the original word, in this first parable of the Bible. The bramble, though found in several places in Palestine, is by no means general there. One other species of the true bramble, and which is one of the few plants described as belonging peculiarly to Palestine, is called "the holy bramble," because it is the product of the Holy Land alone. Nor is the raspberry, or any plant of the bramble or rubus tribe, known to grow wild on Judah's hills or plains, save one other, which is by some writers considered as merely a variety of the holy bramble. But many mountains and forests of Palestine have yet been unexplored by botanists, and species, hitherto undiscovered there, may yet be found in the floras of those regions.

The fact of the infrequency of the bramble would suggest that Jotham, in his spirited and popular appeal, alluded to another plant. And when he bade the men of Shechem hearken unto him, that God might hearken unto them, it is not unlikely that he pointed to the common zizyphus, (*Zizyphus vulgaris*,) which grows wild throughout Palestine and Syria in great abundance. This plant is a middling-sized

tree, allied to the buckthorn tribe, and is a thorny plant. It is as common in China and Japan as in Palestine, and appears to have been brought into Europe in the reign of Augustus Cæsar, and is cultivated in Spain and Italy, where its fruit is eaten fresh, or dried as a sweetmeat. This fruit is a kind of berry, containing in its centre a two-seeded nut; and its fleshy substance is, when ripe, of a saffron colour, and of the form and size of an olive. The tree bears a great abundance of these berries, which are much relished by the people of the lands where it flourishes; and thus it seems to have some pretension to be classed with the fig tree and the vine, as fitted to become the "king of the trees." The fact that the bramble is described as saying, "Let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon," renders the zizyphus very appropriate, as its wood is singularly combustible.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE TAMARISK.

"Now Saul abode in Gibeah under a tree in Ramah, having his spear in his hand, and all his servants were standing about him," 1 Sam. xxii. 6. Dr. Boothroyd renders this passage in his version, "And Saul abode under a tama-

risk tree" — a reading very generally approved by oriental scholars, as the Hebrew word here translated "tree," is the same as that which denotes a species of tamarisk, very common in Western Asia, and the similarity of its name in the eastern countries where it grows to the Hebrew *eshel* of Scripture is remarkable. This tree is thought, also, by commentators, to be that which the patriarch Abraham set, when it is said he planted a grove at Beersheba, and called there on the name of the Lord. Its pleasant shadow fitted it well for the out-door court of Saul, or for the temple of the father of the faithful; and from beneath its boughs, perhaps, arose the devout thanksgivings, and the compassionate intercessions offered by Abraham, while yet the morning sun had scarcely tinged its branches, or when the long shadows made by the receding orb were gradually mingling with the wide-spreading shadow of advancing night. Perchance, when Isaac strolled forth into the fields, to meditate at eventide, he lingered beneath the tamarisk planted by his father's hand, and communed in secret with the God of his spirit—

> **"The groves were God's first temples. Ere man learned**
> **To hew the shaft, and lay the architrave,**
> **And spread the roof above them: ere he framed**
> **The lofty vault, to gather and roll back**
> **The sound of anthems; in the darkling wood,**
> **Amidst the cool and silence, he knelt down,**
> **And offered to the Mightiest, solemn thanks**
> **And supplication."**

The eastern tamarisk, (*Tamarix orientalis*,) as well as the species of tamarisk generally, are

known to the Arabs by the name of *asul.* In some parts of the east it is called *ithel* or *atel,* and the Egyptians term it *athlé.* It often attains the height of twenty feet, and is one of the largest and most elegant species of the beautiful tamarisk tribe, all of which are graceful, either as trees or shrubs. The species which grows wild on our sea-shores is sufficiently like the eastern kind to give a good idea of it; and the cypress-like boughs of this plant, (*Tamarix gallica,*) with their light green foliage, and young shoots tipped with red, render it a great ornament in the usually barren lands about our coast. It is, as well as the eastern species, very common throughout Palestine. In travelling in that interesting country, the tamarisk bough offers frequently to the traveller a sight of verdure, and a promise of shadow; and growing well on the driest deserts, is often more especially welcome. Beersheba, where Abraham planted it, is still a region much subject to droughts, which would render the culture of some trees impracticable. On the extreme part of the desert of Shur—the scene where Hagar wandered with her outcast child—the stunted bushes of the tamarisk grow in abundance; and some travellers have remarked, that it was probably under one of these bushes that the desponding mother cast the child of her blighted hope. Burckhardt observes of this plant, "The tarfa, or tamarisk trees, delight particularly in sand, and in the driest season, when all vegetation around them

is withered, never lose their verdure. It is one of the most common products of the Arabian desert, from the Euphrates to Mecca, and is also frequent in the Nubian desert." Our own tamarisk is never found wild, but on sandy or rocky soils, though it will grow well in the inland garden.

The tamarisk is valued in the east for many purposes besides its shadow. The Arabs about Medina plant it in gardens for the hard timber which it furnishes for buildings, and for the excellent charcoal yielded by the burnt wood. Its young leaves, too, are a favourite food of the camel. Sheep seem to relish this food; for sir J. E. Smith, speaking of the profusion of the French tamarisk about the shores at Boulogne, observed, that these animals so greatly preferred it to any other herbage, that they never touched any vegetable while it remained. In Egypt, the eastern tamarisks are as large as oaks, and are so abundant that there is not a village of Lower Egypt but has its groves of these graceful trees. No tree large enough to furnish fire-wood, or timber for building, or mechanical purpose, can be at all termed common in that land, except the tamarisk; hence the Egyptians have a proverb, that the world would go badly with them if *athlés* were to fail; nor is there any tree more frequent throughout Arabia. A solitary tamarisk tree now stands among the ruins of Babylon, on that spot where the "beauty of the Chaldee's excellency," the "lady of kingdoms," once said in

the pride of her heart, " I am, and none beside me." Rich saw it there, and described it as a species of *lignum vitæ*, and supposing, as Heeren had done, that the lovely tree was of a kind not indigenous to the land, he thought it was a remnant of the beautiful gardens planted by Nebuchadnezzar for the delight of his Median queen. Other travellers, however, have seen that it is a tamarisk tree, a plant very common on the saline soil of the desert lands which lie around the ancient Babylonia. The Mohammedans have a tradition of this solitary tree, that Ali tied his horse to it at the battle of Hilleh, and they reverence it on this account.

The tamarisk is one of the plants which has long been supposed by some travellers to produce the manna. The true manna-bearing species (*Tamarix mannifera*) is said to grow only near Mount Sinai, near the scene on which the Israelites were miraculously fed. Other trees, yielding a sweet exhalation, have shared with the manna tamarisk in their claim, but from no intimation of Scripture could it be justly inferred, that the manna was procured from a plant, or that it was any other than the Scripture affirms it to be, " bread from heaven." We read that " when the dew that lay was gone up, behold, upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist not what it

was," Exod. xvi. 14, 15. Many learned commentators think that the words rendered "it is manna," are, in fact, the asking of a question, and signify, What is it? to which the great lawgiver replies, "This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat."

The French tamarisk is very similar to the manna-bearing species, and, indeed, is often thought to be merely a variety of that plant. A very small portion only of manna is yielded by the trees, which is carefully collected by the Bedouins, who regard it as a luxury, and consume the greater portion themselves, retaining only a small quantity, some of which is exported to Cairo, and the remainder sent to the monks of Mount Sinai, who affirm that it is the identical manna. Dr. Kitto remarks, that it is far easier to believe that the immense quantity of manna consumed by the Israelites, during these forty years of wandering in the wilderness, was supplied miraculously, than to imagine the mighty forests of tamarisks which would have been needed to afford the Hebrews subsistence for only a single week. Indeed, in many cases, in which endeavours are made to prove that the miracles of Holy Scripture are but the mere result of the operation of the laws of nature, one cannot fail to observe, that greater difficulties occur than were presented by the Scriptural account. Oh, when will proud man be content to receive the word of God in the spirit of a little child!

The substance called manna is found in

small globules on the branches of the tamarisk, and is caused by the puncture of an insect.

CHAPTER XIX.

BEANS.

"BARZILLAI the Gileadite of Rogelim, brought beds, and basons, and earthen vessels, and wheat, and barley, and flour, and parched corn, and beans, and lentiles, and parched pulse," 2 Sam. xvii. 27, 28. The valuable present brought by the hand of the affectionate Barzillai, the friend whom God had given to David in his hour of need, was exactly of the description which a modern oriental would offer on a similar occasion. Little is known of the extent of the culture of the bean in modern Palestine, but the ancient Hebrews, and the Egyptians, both ancient and modern, have used it as a common article of diet. The bean (*Vicia faba*) is said to grow wild in Persia, but this statement is doubtful. It has, from early ages, been cultivated as an esculent vegetable, as far eastward as China and Japan, and in the north of Africa. The ancient Greeks and Romans used it as food. Pliny mentions it as extensively used in his day. It has no doubt been cultivated in our island from the earliest ages of Britain, though we eat the fresh bean only. Burckhardt mentions, that the

shores of the Nile are fragrant with the sweet perfume of the bean-fields, and that the bean-sellers of Egypt are at an early hour in the streets vending the boiled bean, which, eaten either alone, or stewed with garlic, is the favourite breakfast of the Egyptians and Arabs. Shaw said, that, in his day, the boiled beans formed the principal food of persons of all classes in that country. This vegetable is also still cultivated in Syria, and the stalks of the bean are cut down with a scythe, and bruised, and given for food to cattle.

Several varieties of the bean are cultivated. They have all white flowers, pencilled with lilac streaks, and marked with a black spot. This latter hue was thought by ancient writers to be the mark of sorrow on the bean, on account of the evils it caused; but the nature of the prejudice which the ancients entertained against this plant is not understood in modern times.

CHAPTER XX.

BARLEY.

THE "officers provided victual for king Solomon, and for all that came unto king Solomon's table, every man in his month: they lacked nothing. Barley also and straw for the horses and dromedaries brought they unto the place where the officers were, every man accord-

ing to his charge," 1 Kings iv. 27, 28. The earliest mention of the barley (*Hordeum*) is as cultured in Egypt, and smitten by God when the hail-storm was sent on the land of the hard-hearted Pharaoh. We read that the barley was then in the ear, ripening in the older days, as it does now in that country, a month earlier than the wheat, which the Scripture states at this season not to have grown up, Exod. ix. 31; that is, the green blade was but just above the ground, and was, consequently, spared from the injury which the storm brought on the more forward spring crops.

Barley is still cultivated very extensively in Egypt; and Burckhardt remarks, that its green ears, boiled and served up with milk, are frequently eaten there. The modern Egyptians also prepare an intoxicating liquor from barley, which is much relished by the lower order of the people. Mention is frequently made of the culture of barley in the land of the Hebrews. In the verse at the head of this chapter, we find that it was provided for the horses of the royal establishment. Ruth went out to glean in the barley harvest, and the prophet Isaiah enumerates among the objects of agriculture the "principal wheat," and "the appointed barley," Isa. xxviii. 25.

But, though barley was the sole food of horses, and was used also for cattle, yet barley-bread was, as it is now, the common food of the poorer people of Palestine. The Israelite of

Gideon's army, in his dream, saw the cake of barley-bread falling into the host of Midian, and smiting the tent—an emblem of the sword of the warrior, destined to smite the Midianitish host, Judges vii. 13; and one of the miracles of our Saviour was wrought on the five barley-loaves and two small fishes, with which he fed five thousand people. Travellers in the Holy Land now partake of the barley-cake, and M'Cheyne and Bonar often mention the culture of this grain. Speaking of the neighbourhood of Gaza, these travellers say, "Emerging from the pleasant groves of olives, the country opens upon a fine plain. In the fields, all the operations of harvest seem to be going on at the same time. Some were cutting down the barley, for it was the time of barley harvest, with a reaping-hook, not unlike our own, but all of iron, and longer in the handle and smaller in the hook. Others were gathering that which was cut down into sheaves. Many were gleaning, and some were employed in carrying home what had been cut or gathered. The barley on the plain seemed good, but the crop amazingly thin, and the rank weeds so abundant, that asses and other cattle were feeding on that part of the field that had been newly cut."

In another spot, the travellers found a fulfilment of prophecy in the barley-field. "Approaching nearer to the brow of the hill of Zion," say they, "we found ourselves in the middle of a large field of barley. The crop was very thin and the stalks very small, but no sight could be

more interesting to us. We plucked some of the ears to carry home with us, as proofs addressed to the eye, that God has fulfilled his true and faithful word, 'Therefore shall Zion for your sake be ploughed as a field,' Mic. iii. 12. The palaces, the towers, the whole mass of warlike defences, have given way before the word of the Lord, and a crop of barley waves to the passing breeze, instead of the banner of war."

Owing to its culture in the early ages of the world, the native country of barley is unknown. A long-standing tradition of the Egyptians asserts, that a knowledge of the art of rearing it was given to their ancestors by their goddess Isis, who found it wild on the earth. Similar traditions are attached to the introduction of many of those plants, which, like the cocoa-nut, the date, and the wheat, have afforded sustenance to the people of various lands; and they, doubtless, sometimes preserve the name and memory of an intelligent person, who in some way promoted or improved the agriculture in its earliest days, and so was remembered with reverence, from generation to generation, till the tendency to exalt superior mental power, induced men to regard him as a divinity. Many travellers have fancied that they have discovered the native places of its growth, but the fact that the seed of the cultivated barley, when scattered by the way-sides, produces such seeds only as will not germinate, seems an indication that the plant is not truly wild.

No grain which has been cultivated by man equals it in the extent of climate under which it will flourish, as it will bear heat and drought better than any, and attain its maturity so speedily, that it requires only that shorter summer of northern latitudes which would not be sufficient to ripen the wheat. Barley was cultivated by the Greeks and Romans. The former people called beer barley-wine; and the gladiators were called *hordiarii*, from feeding on this grain. In our land it is sown in spring, and often as early as January.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE HYSSOP.

"He (Solomon) spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon, even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall," 1 Kings iv. 33. It would be an interesting employment could we read the record made by the wise man of the trees and plants of his native land, and it would solve many difficulties, which after much examination of the subject, still remain, in identifying the plants of Scripture. But pleasing and improving as it might have been, God had in his holy word a far higher end than the communication of scientific knowledge. The Bible was designed for the labouring poor, as much as for men of learning and leisure; if it had

included information on every subject it must have been far too large to be practically available; and we may apply to it the observation of the apostle John, respecting the "things which Jesus did," that if they should be written every one, "the world itself could not contain the books that should be written."

On inquiring of the modern druggist or herbalist for the hyssop, we have presented to us a neat, fragrant, labiate plant thus called. It is the *Hyssopus officinalis* of the botanist; its Latin and English names having been both formed of the Hebrew word *esobh*. We read that the hyssop of Scripture was used in the purification of leprosy, and David said, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean." The ancient Greek and Roman writers meant by hyssop the plant thus called in modern times, and they considered that it possessed valuable cleansing properties, nor is its repute quite extinct in modern days. That this plant was the hyssop of Scripture, is, however, very unlikely. It is not found growing on the walls of Palestine, though wild on barren and dry spots of that land. The same objection may be made to the species of rosemary, mint, thyme, or marjoram, which have, by various authors, been regarded as the hyssop. Rosenmüller, however, considers it to be a species of the latter herb, which he describes as an aromatic plant with white flowers, called by the Germans *dosten* or *wolgemuth*, and the Arabs, *tatur*.

This is about a foot high, with woolly leaves, suited for receiving the "the blood of sprinkling" in the offering of the tabernacle, and well adapted for shaking it off. But in addition to the reason above named, another objection applies to the smaller plants, as the thyme and mint. These low-growing plants are incapable of furnishing a stick or a branch long enough to account for its use, as described in the narrative of Christ's crucifixion. In the statement given by St. John, we find, "Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth." In the passage in which St. Matthew and St. Mark describe the same scene, it is said, that the sponge filled with vinegar was put upon a reed or stick. It has been concluded by most commentators that the stick must be that of the hyssop. "And thus," says Dr. Harris, "the bitter was added to the sour, the gall to the vinegar." Rosenmüller, however, considers that this aromatic plant, as well as the vinegar, were both offered as a relief to the faintness which our Lord must have experienced. He thinks that both hyssop and vinegar were placed upon a reed.

The opinion of Dr. Kitto is, that the hyssop of the Old and New Testaments is probably a species of the shrub called *phytolacca.* Several of these plants are of American origin, but some kinds are found in the east. This plant combines two of the requisite conditions; its ashes yield a great quantity of soda, and its

stem would be of sufficient length for its use at the crucifixion. So detergent are its properties, that this writer states, that in America a species of this plant was formerly used by the Indian females for soap.

Dr. Royle, however, has recently devoted to this subject a most learned and diligent investigation, and he considers that he has proved the caper plant (*Capparis spinosa*) to be the hyssop of Scripture. He regards the plant claiming to be the hyssop as requiring these several conditions: and that it should be found in all the places where it is in Scripture mentioned as growing, or in use. Now we find it named in Lower Egypt, when Moses commanded the children of Israel to use it to sprinkle the blood of the lamb upon the lintel and the door-post, that the destroying angel might pass them by, Exod. xii. 22. It is named, too, as used in the ceremonial cleansing of the leper, when the Hebrews were wandering in the wilderness of Sinai, Lev. xiv. 6. In the passage at the commencement of this paper, it is spoken of as growing on the wall, and would suggest that the walls around Jerusalem would probably present the plant to the eye of the royal naturalist, or at least that the rocks or walls of Palestine should own it as their appropriate plant. As the psalmist alludes to its cleansing properties, it should be detergent, and length of branch is needful to complete the description. Dr. Royle proves that the caper bush has been found by travellers in Lower Egypt, on Mount

Sinai, and most plentifully around the ruins of the Holy City. All writers describe it as trailing peculiarly over walls or banks, like the bramble.

Dr. Royle adds, that from the time of Hippocrates the caper plant was considered to possess the implied cleansing properties: that Pliny remarks that it was useful in curing a disease, nearly allied to the leprosy—the very complaint for which it was ordered by God to be used in purification. The bush, in a warm climate, would furnish a stick long enough to support the sponge offered to the Saviour; while the fact that the caper buds, and indeed every part of the caper plant, were in ancient times preserved in vinegar, would explain the presence, on the spot, of a vessel filled with vinegar. And thus, the solution not rendered absolutely certain, is assuredly divested of difficulties attending the consideration of any of the plants previously named as the hyssop.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE ALMUG TREE.

"THE navy also of Hiram, that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of almug trees, and precious stones. And the king made of the almug trees pillars for the house of the Lord, and for the king's

house, harps also and psalteries for singers: there came no such almug trees, nor were seen unto this day," 1 Kings x. 11, 12. It has been suggested by Dr. Kitto, that a species of pine (*Pinus deodara*) of India is the almug tree of Scripture. Its wood is very fragrant, and so hard that it might well be used for harps and psalteries, and pillars for the temple.

The almug tree is, however, by other writers considered to be the tree which produces the sandal wood of the east, (*Santalum.*) The yellow and white sandal woods are the products of two species, but the kind which is by far the more generally used is the wood of the white sandal tree, (*Santalum album,*) which is a native of the mountains on the Malabar coast, and the isles of the Indian Archipelago. It is a low tree, much resembling the privet. The blossoms are, upon first expansion, of a pale yellow, and afterwards become of a rusty purple colour, but they have no fragrance. Its wood has been valued in the east from the earliest times for its delicious odour, and is still so costly, that the owner of a sandal tree has seldom patience to let it grow to its full size before he cuts its down. When allowed to reach its full height, it is often twenty or thirty feet. It is used both in India and China for sacrifices to the idols, and is also made into necklaces, fans, boxes, and other elegant articles. It is very durable, for the insect tribe are unable to exist in its strong perfume; and the love of fragrant odours, which the Hebrews shared largely with other

eastern people, would induce them to appropriate this sweet-smelling wood to the harps and psalteries, on which were to be sounded the loud notes which should lead the voices of Israel in the praise of Jehovah. The Chinese still use this wood for musical instruments; and, in many parts of the east, it is powdered and mingled with water for sprinkling over visitors. The sandal oil, which the Hindoos use in their superstitious ceremonies, is either obtained from shavings of sandal wood, or is perfumed by them; and the Brahminical priests make a paste of the powder, with which they impress the mark on the forehead that distinguishes their god Vishnoo. The sandal wood is still used in the east for buildings.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE BROOM.

"He (Elijah) went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers," 1 Kings xix. 4. It was in a moment of bitterness of spirit that Elijah addressed this mournful prayer to God. At such a time, even the heart of the faithful servant of God failed him, and notwithstanding the mercies of

his past life, he feared to trust his God with the present and the future. But the Hearer and Answerer of prayer forgave his frail servant, and passing by his momentary distrust, sent, in mercy, his angel to cheer him, while, in the wide desert of Sinai, he lay sleeping under the shadow of a tree.

Commentators seem generally to be agreed, that the tree which sheltered the prophet was not the juniper, but the broom. The Hebrew word *rothem* occurs four times in the Scriptures, and is, in our version, always rendered "juniper," though, in some other versions, it is translated by various other names of plants. Rosenmüller remarks, that the Hebrew word corresponds with the Arabic, *ratam*, which is a kind of broom, called by the Spaniards *retama*. This appears to be the *Genista monosperma* of botanists, called also by some, *Spartium monospermum*. It is a beautiful shrub, covered with small, white, butterfly-shaped flowers, of sweet fragrance, growing most plentifully upon the shores of Spain, where it gives shelter to animals. Virgil speaks of the herdsmen as reclining beneath the shadow of the broom. Its light and graceful boughs would seem scarcely sufficiently covered to exclude the rays of the sun; yet, when it grows to a large size and good height, it gives shade enough to render it truly valuable, on lands where shade is none, and which are so desert, that for miles nothing save the broom, and the creeping branches of the restharrow, enliven

the dreary landscape. Dr. Kitto quotes lord Lindsay's account of the *rattam*, or broom, with a white flower, delicately streaked with purple, beneath whose shadow he rested; and remarks, that it is a valuable, because undesigned, coincidence, that in travelling to the very same Mount of Horeb, the prophet Elijah rested, as did lord Lindsay, under a *rattam* shrub. Large tracts of country are covered with the green branches of this plant, in the deserts south of Palestine, as well as in other parts of Syria. Recent travellers speak of a species of broom, seen wild in the ravines among the hills of Galilee; and the yellow broom, a well-known native of Palestine, gleams from the waysides in profusion, in the vallevs which lie among her mountains.

Job makes mention of the juniper, or rather broom-roots, as cut up for food by the destitute, and none but those who were ready to perish with hunger could overcome their bitter flavour. David, when speaking of the evils of "lying lips, and a deceitful tongue," likens them to "sharp arrows," and "coals of juniper," Psa. cxx. 4. The scarcity of wood in these arid lands, where broom often grows, renders it customary to use it as fuel, and the wood is said to burn with greater power than any other. Jerome united with the writers of the Talmud in the belief that the wood of the broom was that to which the psalmist alluded, and some commentators have thought that the peculiarly loud or crackling noise made by the broom

wood while burning, served also as a figure for the loud and unjust assertions of the calumniators of the righteous man. Rosenmüller, in remarking on this subject, quotes an Arab proverb, respecting a tree called gadha, the wood of which has the property of glimmering for a long time when burning. The Arab, when pained by some corroding grief, caused by another, says, "He has laid gadha coals in my heart."

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE WILD GOURD AND WILD VINE.

"ONE went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine, and gathered thereof wild gourds his lap full, and came and shred them into the pot of pottage: for they knew them not. So they poured out for the men to eat. And it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out, and said, O thou man of God, there is death in the pot. And they could not eat thereof," 2 Kings iv. 39, 40. There was a dearth in Gilgal at this time. Yet the "sons of the prophets" had gathered around their master, listening with reverence to his hallowed lessons. For their meal, he ordered his servant to prepare some humble food. No garden offered its tribute, and the servant wandered into the fields, in all

probability to gather the fruit of the egg plant, or of some similar wild vine. The large, fleshy berries of this plant, much resembling an egg, may often be seen lying among its foliage, in the warm regions of Asia; and they form a common article of diet, both in the East and West Indies, where they are eaten, boiled or stewed, in the present day. But the servant mistook the plant, and brought for the repast some bitter or poisonous fruit.

The globe cucumber (*Cucumis prophetarum*) was long considered to be the wild gourd which became the subject of Elisha's miracle; but the small size of this plant renders it unlikely. There is little doubt that the gourd gathered from the field was either the *Coloquentida*, the colocynth plant, or the squirting cucumber. Each of them has a most bitter taste, and, if taken in any quantity, would be highly dangerous; but the idea prevalent among the Hebrews, that intensely bitter plants were always deleterious, might at once account for the agonized exclamation, "O man of God, there is death in the pot!"

The colocynth, (*Cucumis colocynthus*,) as well as the prophet's gourd and squirting cucumber, are found in abundance in Syria, and especially in the deserts. Dr. Kitto says of the former, "In the desert parts of Syria, Egypt, and Arabia, and on the banks of the river Tigris and Euphrates, its tendrils run over vast tracts of ground, offering a prodigious number of gourds, which are crushed under foot by camels,

horses, and men. In winter, we have seen the extent of many miles covered with the connecting tendrils and dry gourds of the preceding season, the latter exhibiting precisely the same appearance as in our shops, and when crushed with a crackling noise beneath the feet, discharging, in the form of a light powder, the valuable drug which it contains." It is a very powerful medicine; and the use of this powder in domestic purposes, for keeping moths from woollen clothing, is well known.

The other plant, which may probably have been the wild gourd, is the squirting cucumber, (*Momordica elaterium*,) and is often found in our gardens. It has a large root and thick rough trailing stems, so as to be truly a wild vine on the sandy soils of Asia and Southern Europe. Its rough leaves are seated on very long stalks, and its fruit is like a small cucumber, of a greyish green colour, and covered with prickles. When quite ripe, it severs itself from its stalk, and throws out its seed and white juice with great force, and to a considerable distance, through the aperture in the spot where the footstalk was inserted. It is extremely bitter in flavour, and was regarded by the ancients as a valuable medicine.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE SYCOMORE TREE.

"OVER the olive trees and the sycomore trees that were in the low plains was Baal-hanan the Gederite," 1 Chron. xxvii. 28. That the sycomore or mulberry fig tree, (*Ficus sycomorus*,) was one of the most valuable fruit-trees of ancient Canaan, is apparent from its culture having thus been provided for by the monarch of Israel. It is, as the verse quoted would import, a tree especially of the level lands of Palestine, as it will not bear the more inclement seasons of the mountainous regions. The psalmist alludes to its being injured by cold, when, speaking of God's wrath against the Egyptians, he says, "He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycomore trees with frost," Psa. lxxviii. 47; and, indeed, the very fact of its flourishing in Egypt would mark it as a tree of the level rather than the high lands. This tree is still extensively planted by the high-road near villages of Egypt, and grows well by the sea-coast. The Arabs call it *djummeiz*, and plant it as much for its shadow as its fruit.

Of the frequent growth of the sycomore in the valleys of the Holy Land, we gather some notion, when we find it said of Solomon, that he made the cedars to be as the sycomore trees that are in the vale for abundance. Palestine is no longer a land of trees, for all the trees of

the field are withered away, because joy is withered away from among the sons of men. Yet travellers still speak of these trees as occurring in various parts, especially in the plains along the Mediterranean, where verdant sycomores, with gnarled trunks, and branches spreading towards the east, are conspicuous features of the landscape, and probably they are the offspring of some which Solomon planted in these very vales. It was among the boughs of a sycomore, growing by the way-side, that Zaccheus climbed to see Jesus, and few trees could be better fitted for his purpose, for its branches spread out so far, that he might safely extend his whole length upon them, and listen to the words of instruction spoken by our Saviour. The village of Jericho, by which this sycomore grew, is now a comparatively desolate spot; but monkish legends still point to a tree which is said to be that in which Zaccheus climbed, and the traveller looks in astonishment when he sees that the tree to which his attention is directed is not a sycomore but a palm, which he is gravely assured is the identical sycomore of the New Testament narrative.

The sycomore is a large tree, spreading so widely that its head is said to be often forty yards in diameter. Its boughs are twisted and gnarled, and covered with broadly ovate leaves, so much resembling those of the mulberry, as to give this plant the name of the mulberry fig tree. It is not at all like the tree which we term sycomore, which is the plane tree. The

figs do not grow upon the young branches, but come out in clusters on the trunk and old limbs, and are remarkably sweet. No flowers precede them, but, as Solomon observes, when the flowers of other vegetables expand, "the fig tree putteth forth her fruit." The wood is by some writers considered to be that of which the Egyptians made their mummy-cases. It is now used in Egypt and Palestine for fuel only.

The prophet Amos, in referring to the humble condition from which God called him, says, "I was an herdman, and a gatherer of sycomore fruit," chap. vii. 14; but our translators, unacquainted with the agricultural practices of the east, have given an incorrect rendering in the word "gatherer." Amos was doubtless employed in making those incisions in the fruit which Hasselquist saw made in Egypt during his travels. It is customary for the cultivators of this fig, as soon as it is about an inch in size, to pare or scrape off a part at the centre point. Unless this cutting is performed, the fruit secretes a quantity of watery juice, and will not ripen. Pliny, as well as other ancient writers, refer to this practice in their times.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE MALLOW.

The patriarch speaks of those "who cut up mallows by the bushes, and juniper roots for their meat," Job xxx. 4. The mallow, as well as many other mucilaginous herbs nearly allied to it, is well known as affording food to the people of the east, and the old writer Biddulph, who, in the year 1600, travelled from Aleppo to Jerusalem, is often quoted in confirmation of this fact. He came to a village called Lacmine, and says, "After the showre, while our horses were preparing, we walked into the fields neere unto the church, and saw many poore people gathering mallows and three-leaved grass, and asked them what they did with it, and they answered that it was all their food, and that they boiled it, and did eate it. Then we tooke pitie on them, and gave them bread, which they received very joyfully, and blessed God that there was bread in the world, and said they had not seen bread the space of many months." These poor people seem to have been in a state of poverty, as great as those whom Job describes as collecting the same plants for food, when they were driven in ignominy from among men. The mallow, however, is eaten in the east, as it was in Rome and Greece, by the rich, as well as the poor, and is cultivated very extensively in the beautiful gardens of Rozetta, in Egypt, and

boiled with meat, forms one of the most common culinary vegetables of the Egyptians.

The Hebrew word here rendered mallow, occurs but in this one passage of Scripture, and seeming to denote a plant of a saltish taste, it is not generally thought to mean the mallow. The eastern deserts are truly "salt lands;" they abound in saline particles, so as sometimes to glitter in the sun by their incrustations of salt; and, consequently, they produce a quantity of succulent and saltish, or bitterish plants, such as we find on our sea-shores. Different species of orache, saltwort, or goosefoot, all occasionally eaten as food, have been supposed to be the mallow of Job. Dr. Kitto thinks it may be the fig-marygold, (*Mesembryanthemum*,) some species of which are covered even in dryest soils with crystals, which look like salt. One species, as he observes, is in frequent use as food among the Hottentots. Burchell says of this kind, the Hottentot fig, that it spreads over the desert in large patches, and produces abundantly in all seasons a fruit of the size of a small fig, which, when perfectly ripe, is of a very pleasant acid taste. He adds, that the outer covering of this fig must be removed, as it is at all times of a saltish flavour, and the fruit itself, when unripe, is saline and austere. It is eaten commonly by the Hottentots, and made by the Dutch colonists into a sweetmeat. All the species of this plant are succulent, and may abound in those wildernesses of Arabia to which Job describes his scoffers as having retreated in their disgrace.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE COCKLE.

"LET thistles grow instead of wheat, and cockle instead of barley," Job xxxi. 40. The original word here translated cockle, is rendered in another passage "wild grapes." Thus says Isaiah, the Lord "planted it with the choicest vine, . . and also made a wine-press therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes," chap. v. 2. The Chaldee version renders the word, noxious herbs; the Septuagint, blackberry bush. Some writers have considered it to be the poppy, the dwarf elder, or the white aconite, which last is very common in Syria. Hasselquist suggested that the plant intended by the prophet Isaiah might be the hoary nightshade (*Solanum incanum.*) This is a common weed in Palestine and Egypt. Dr. Royle agrees with Hasselquist in the propriety of this rendering. "The berry," remarks this writer, "resembles the grape in form, though narcotic and poisonous. The name given by the Arabs, signifying, wolf grape, is expressive of its properties." It grows also in vineyards, and resembles a vine. Dr. Royle adds, that either this plant or the black nightshade will suit the passage of Job equally well.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE BAY TREE.

"I HAVE seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found," Psa. xxxvii. 35, 36. David was not the only one among the Old Testament saints who had wondered much that the ungodly should flourish. Asaph marvelled too at the prosperity of the wicked, but both came to the same conclusion: "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright," said the former, "for the *end* of that man is peace:" and Asaph went up to the sanctuary of God, and "then," says he, "understood I their end. Surely Thou didst set them in slippery places . . . How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment!" Psa. lxxiii. 17–19. It is eternity which shall show the real welfare of man. Now the sinner may be as the flourishing tree, but if he seek not Christ, the stricken bough, the smitten flower, the withered grass, are but faint emblems of the desolation which shall be.

It was, in all probability, on account of the never-changing greenness of the bay tree, as well as for the pleasant and spicy fragrance of its leaves, that the psalmist selected this tree as an emblem of prosperity. The very same causes induced the Greeks and Romans to prize it, and to adorn with it the brow of the

priest and hero of antiquity. It perfumed also the sacrifices on the pagan altar, and was borne in the hand as a mark of triumph ; while the crown of bay leaves has ever been deemed the appropriate wreath for genius. And as David looked on the green and fragrant tree, unnipped by winter cold or storm, it would seem natural that his mind should recur to some who seemed to live in unchanging prosperity, and to whom God permitted an uninterrupted season of wealth.

In this passage only do we find the bay tree named in Scripture ; nor does it appear ever to have been a tree so common in Palestine as to lead to a frequent reference. It is scarcely known as a plant of the Holy Land, although, in some parts of Syria, which are the scenes of Scripture events, as on the road between Acre and Sidon, it flourishes well.

The bay tree (*Laurus nobilis*) was the Daphne of the Greeks, and flourishes chiefly in southern Europe. Linnæus gave to this species of laurel the specific name *nobilis*, because of its consecration to priests, poets, and heroes. In Martin Luther's translation, it is rendered laurel, in the comparison made by the psalmist. This plant is more often a shrub than a tree, as it is so prolific in suckers and low shoots ; but in Italy, as well as in Syria, it is often from twenty to thirty feet in height, and sometimes is sixty feet high, its dark olive green leaves rendering it a picturesque object. The leaves are used both in England and on the continent of

Europe to flavour various dishes; and its berries, leaves, roots, and bark, have long been employed medicinally.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE CEDAR OF LEBANON.

"He (the righteous) shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon," Psa. xcii. 12. The cedar tree and cedar wood, mentioned so frequently in the Scriptures, have been objects of much discussion among learned men. The Hebrew word *eres* which is translated in our version by cedars, probably refers not to one species only of the pine tribe, but, in the less definite classification of ancient times, includes several. The first place in which cedar is mentioned is in that passage of the ancient Jewish law, when, in cleansing the leper, Moses was ordered to make an offering of "two birds, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop," Lev. xiv. 4, 6. Yet the people of Israel were then in the desert, and the lofty tree which crowned the heights of Lebanon never struck its roots in the sandy regions of that almost treeless waste, neither did it grow on Egyptian soil. The juniper tree grows plentifully in the rocks and crevices of Sinai; and many writers think that this formed the cedar wood which was commanded to be used, and of the boards of which, in later ages,

the altar in the temple of Solomon was formed. Some think the tree used was the common fir tree; and the fact that the wood of the cedar of Lebanon really yields a very inferior timber, renders it most likely that in a building destined, like Solomon's Temple, to last for ages, some more durable wood should be selected; while the great value attached to the wood of the cedar, by the inspired writers, is not at all applicable to that particular species of pine known to us as the cedar of Lebanon.

In the passage at the head of this chapter there is, however, little doubt that reference is made to the cedar (*Pinus cedrus*) itself. David had looked on the goodly cedar, as Moses had done before on "that great mountain, even Lebanon." He drew his images from the idea formed in his mind by the contemplation of the actual scene. The cedar is a tree especially magnificent; nor is it, as it once was deemed, of slower growth than other forest trees. Its singularly bold branches extend far from the stem, and form an umbrageous covert, which may be described as consisting of several flat layers of green boughs. The tree is from fifty to eighty feet in height.

Of the vast forest of cedars which once formed the glory of Lebanon a few now remain,

> "And Lebanon, yet sternly green,
> Throws, when the evening sun declines,
> Its cedar shades, in lengthening lines."

We may trace, from the accounts of travellers during a succession of centuries, the gradual

decay of the trees of the olden times. Younger cedars, however, the growth of centuries, but still young compared with the ancient grove, are yet to be found on the heights of Lebanon, and spreading their branches in a wild and irregular manner, are said to contrast remarkably with the repose of aspect of the older monarchs of the grove.

> "These lofty trees
> Wave not less proudly that their ancestors
> Moulder beneath them."

As professor Martyn observes, however, it is possible that the whole of Palestine does not possess more cedar trees than we could number in the parks, and lawns, and plantations of England.

The cedars of the mountains, whose age and appearance warrant the belief that they are the very cedars which were looked on by the psalmists and patriarchs, were, in 1550, about twenty-eight in number. In 1574, twenty-four living and two decayed trees only were to be seen. In 1745, there were but fifteen. Twelve were recently counted by lord Lindsay, who observes that the air was quite perfumed with their odour, "the smell of Lebanon," so celebrated by the pen of inspiration. This writer, speaking of these trees, remarks that he and his companions halted under one of the largest of them, inscribed on one side with the name of Lamartine, and on the other with that of Laborde. He found the grove composed of several generations of cedars, all growing pro-

miscuously together, the second-rate cedars magnificent enough to form a noble wood, even had the older dynasty become extinct.

"One of them," says lord Lindsay, "by no means the largest, measures nineteen feet and a quarter in circumference; and in repeated instances, two, three, or four large trunks spring from a single root, but they have a fresher appearance than the patriarchs, and straighter stems—straight as young palm trees. Of the giants, there are seven standing very near each other, all on the same hill; three more, a little further on, nearly in a line with them; and in a second walk of discovery, I had the pleasure of detecting two others, low down on the northern edge of the grove. Twelve, therefore, is all, of which the ninth from the south is the smallest, but even that bears tokens of antiquity coeval with its brethren. Lamartine's tree is forty-nine feet in circumference, and the largest of my two on the southern slope is sixty-three feet, following the sinuosities of the bark. And thus," adds this writer, "the trees which God had planted remain living witnesses to faithful men of that glory of Lebanon—Lebanon, the emblem of the righteous—which departed from her when Israel rejected Christ, her vines drooping, her trees few 'that a little child may number them,' she stands blighted."

The old cedar trees are protected with great care, and are accounted sacred, and termed saints by the Maronites of Lebanon, ecclesiastical censure awaiting any who should injure

them. Beneath their shadow the patriarch holds yearly a solemn mass on the day of the feast of transfiguration, and the people of Eden, Beschierai, and Kandbin, and of the vales and villages which lie around, go up in groups to the spot, and offer their sacrifices on a stone altar under this fragrant canopy of boughs. As might be expected, many superstitious legends have been attached to these trees. It is said by the people of Lebanon that they cannot be counted, and strange tales are told of Turkish herdsmen, who gathered their flocks on these hills, and who, venturing to fell one of the trees, were smitten to death on the spot. Many Arab huts are clustered very high up on these lofty mountains; and these, as well as the elevated sites of some of the monasteries which lie in the secluded regions, remind the traveller of that expression of holy writ, "O inhabitant of Lebanon, that makest thy nest in the cedars."

CHAPTER XXX.

THE PALM TREE.

"THE righteous shall flourish like the palm tree," Psa. xcii. 12. The date palm (*Phœnix dactylifera*) is undoubtedly the palm tree of Scripture. It is a lofty tree, on whose rugged trunk hang the remains of the withered

leaves, once bright and green. The upright nature of the stem of this palm probably induced the psalmist to regard it as a fit emblem of the righteous man, and the Hebrew of the palm, *tamar*, is thought by some scholars to signify straight or erect. The Mohammedans represent their prophet to have used a similar image to that of the psalmist. In one of his sayings, Mohammed declared of the "virtuous and generous man, he stands erect before his lord; in every action, he follows the impulse received from above, and his whole life is devoted to the welfare of his fellow-creatures."

The summit of the date palm is crowned with waving leaves, often six or eight feet in length, and from among them hang the clusters of dates—the fruit so valuable to many oriental people. Every part of the tree is prized, and so numerous are the uses to which it is applied, that many pages might be devoted to describing them. The large leaves cover the roofs and sides of dwellings, and give an additional screen to the reed fence; and the common articles of domestic use, the mats, the baskets, and in many cases the dishes, are made of them. In Egypt, the large leaves are used as fly-flaps to scare off the numerous flies, which, in that land, so beset the resident, that an Englishman is ready to believe that Egypt is still suffering from one of its ancient plagues. Small bunches of the palm leaves are used in the houses of the Egyptians to cleanse

the sofas and furniture from dust. The lesser boughs are used for fences and bird-cages, and the large trunks sometimes form the timber of slight buildings, while excellent ropes are made from the web-like integument which hangs among the boughs.

But, above all, the date palm is valued in the lands where it grows, for its abundant and nutritious fruits, on which tribes of people of Arabia and Africa subsist almost entirely. The Arab, as he listens to the tales of other lands, which tell of luxury and civilization, when informed that they have no date trees, feels nothing but pity for their people, and wonders how they can exist. He gathers in his dates with rejoicings, such as in other lands attend the harvest and the vintage; and a gloom overspreads the faces of the Arabs, if there is a prospect of a poor crop of dates. The sweetest dates in the world grow at Medina, one of the celebrated cities of pilgrimage. The palms there are not so tall as in Egypt, but the fruit is superior. They are scattered about, growing wild in the plains, yet every tree has its owner, and more than a hundred sorts of date tree, some of which grow in no other land, are said to be found there. It is not surprising that Arab superstition imputes the origin of that which bears the sweetest fruit to Mohammed. Their prophet is said by them to have put a stone in the earth, which in a few minutes rose up a fruitful tree. Another species is said to have bowed, and saluted Mohammed as he

passed; and one kind was esteemed by him so highly, that he advised the Arabs to eat of its dates every day before breakfast. This species is often carried away from Medina by the pilgrims. In so many ways are these fruits dressed for food, that the Arabs have a saying, that "a good housewife will daily furnish her lord for a month, with a dish of dates differently dressed."

The kernel of the date is, in the east, ground down, or soaked in water for several days, and used as food for camels, cows, and sheep. Burckhardt says, that they are more nutritious than barley; that there are shops in the cities of Arabia where nothing is sold but the date kernels; and that the beggars are continually employed, in the main streets, in gathering up those which may have been thrown away. These kernels are also polished and cut into beads, for rosaries. Dr. E. D. Clarke mentions, that when he was at Jerusalem, his rooms were crowded with Jews and Armenians, bringing for sale strings of beads, made either of date-stones, or of a very hard kind of wood. This writer observes, that the practice of carrying strings of beads, which prevails so universally in the east among persons of rank, was in use long before the Christian era. The people of Barbary use date-stones for the same purpose.

The spirituous liquor, called areka, is procured by piercing the spathe which holds the flowers of the date tree, when a sweet liquor, of

the consistence of syrup, exudes from it. This is supposed to be intended in some passages of Scripture, in which "strong drink" is mentioned. Herodotus, speaking of the palm, which he says was in his time very common in Assyria, remarked, that it produced bread, wine, and honey; and the ancient Jews understood by honey, not only the substance gathered by the bee, but also the syrup or juice of the date or other trees. "Strong drink shall be bitter to them that drink it," said the prophet Isaiah, (chap. xxiv. 9,) as he saw, in prophetic vision, the sorrows of Judah; and this passage is translated by bishop Lowth, "The palm-wine shall be bitter." This palm-wine is not, when fresh, of an intoxicating quality, being, previously to fermentation, an agreeable and wholesome syrup.

The ancient Jericho is distinguished as the city of the palm trees; and, no doubt, the tall groves of this stately and elegant tree once waved above it; for, desolate and wretched as is its present appearance, on its site still linger a few remains of the palms. The Tadmor of the wilderness, which Solomon built, and which received from the Romans the name of Palmyra, was in both instances thus distinguished on account of its groves of palm trees. So characteristic of the scenery of the ancient Canaan was once the oriental palm, that the coins of the Roman conquerors of Judæa bore the inscription of a weeping female, sitting beneath a palm tree, thus fulfilling the prophecy

against Judæa, that "she, being desolate," should "sit upon the ground."

But the palm, as well as the other fruitful trees, are passed away from the comparatively blighted land of the ancient Hebrews. A single palm, here and there only, remains to attest the truth of the description given of that country by ancient writers, as a land of palm trees :—

"E'en now, perchance, by its tall trunk is sitting
Some outcast wanderer of the promised land,
Across whose mournful breast is dimly flitting
Remembrance of the glorious and the grand.

"And now before his view the temple shines,
A 'mount of snow' upon the sacred hill;
And on his cheek plays, as the sun declines,
The cool breeze, wandering from Siloa's rill."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE WILLOW.

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof," Psa. cxxxvii. 1, 2. The affecting situation of the people of Israel, in the early period of their captivity, is so vividly portrayed in this poetic psalm, that the sight of the willow as it overhangs some of our clear streams, often recalls to the mind the woes of God's ancient people. For their sins

God had removed them from their own goodly land—the land of the vine, and the olive, and the pomegranate—and now they were strangers in the proud Babylonia. By its rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates, they sat and mourned; but the burden of their lament was not so much their temporal desolation—it was not merely that they were exiles from the homes of their childhood, and the graves of their fathers—but they wept as they remembered Zion, trodden down by the Gentiles. The Lord's song was no longer sung to the harps of his temple, and how should they sing it in a strange land? Israel is now scattered further and wider, and Babylon is fallen, and her magnificent palaces become a heap of ruins, yet the Tigris and Euphrates still flow on in silence, as they have flowed since God first created the world. Nor are the natural features of the landscape altered, for the willow bough still hangs over their waters, and overtops the low shrubs which are reflected on the smooth and shining surface.

Several species of willow grow in Palestine and other parts of Syria, but that which, according to popular tradition, was the ornament of the ancient streams of Babylon, is the tree long known to botanists as the *Salix Babylonica*. This plant grows wild in many parts of Persia, and is common in China, where it appears to be greatly admired, as it is a frequent object in the painted landscapes which we receive from that country. It adorns, too, the rivers of Egypt, but it is not a native of

European soil. Its introduction here is ascribed to our English poet, Pope, though more probably it was brought hither by Tournefort. That the weeping willow was the tree on which Israel placed their unstrung harps is, however, very doubtful. The grey osiers and various kinds of willow which still fringe the Tigris and Euphrates, mingle with a species of poplar very general by their waters, but no weeping willow dips into these streams; nor, indeed, is it met with in any part of Babylonia. Reference is doubtless made in Scripture to several species of willow tree. Job, speaking of behemoth, says, "the shady trees cover him with their shadows; the willows of the brook compass him about," Job xl. 22; and the reference here is probably to the shores of the Nile, the waters of Sihor, that move softly, where many willows still give their grey tint to the scenery. Isaiah speaks of the "willows by the water-courses," Isa. xliv. 4, as fit emblems for the children of godly parents, who shall rise up in vigour and beauty; and it is a figure which in Judæa, as well as our own land, would be well understood, for it is by the stream side that the willow tree is most frequently found, and where it best flourishes. The botanical name of the genus, *Salix*, is taken from two Celtic words, "*sal*," "near," and "*lis*," "water."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE FIR TREE, CYPRESS, AND GOPHER WOOD.

"THE trees of the Lord are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted; where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house," Psa. civ. 16, 17. This reference to the fir tree occurs in the midst of a beautiful picture, drawn by the psalmist, of the bounty of God and the glory of His power in the works of nature. He lived at a very different period from that in which we look abroad, upon the wide green earth, yet, in these details of natural luxuriance and loveliness, we see just such a description as a modern poet might have framed. And as David marked all this, what was his conclusion? "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praises to my God while I have my being. My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord." And oh! how many, in after times, have gone forth with hearts full of care, to look on the natural world, and have come back singing the praises of God, as they learned lessons of gladness and thankfulness from contemplating the trees of the forests, and the grassy hills, and the streams among the mountains, and the voices of the birds!

As the Scotch fir grows in the Holy Land, and the Aleppo pine is found in the neighbourhood of Palestine, one or both of these are by many considered to be the fir tree alluded to;

and the oriental and Corsican pines, as well as some others, have been thought to be included in the fir trees of Scripture. There is no doubt that several species of fir were cultivated in the Holy Land, and an expression respecting the green fir has induced commentators to consider the stone pine (*Pinus pinea*) as intended, at least, in that particular verse, "I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found." These are words of the prophet Hosea, (chap. xiv. 8,) and as the stone pine produces an edible and sweet nut, often used by confectioners, this is thought to be applicable to the comparison of the prophet.

There are, however, some learned writers on Scripture botany, who think that no species of fir is meant in the passages in which our translators have so rendered it. In the Syriac, and some other versions, it has been translated "cypress;" and it seems probable that the cypress of the Scripture writers included not only that tree, but also the savine, a species of juniper, which nearly resembles it. Another Hebrew word is rendered "cypress," in Isaiah, where the prophet says, "He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak," Isa. xliv. 14; but the word is generally thought to signify merely an evergreen tree. In the Apocrypha, the cypress is evidently intended, when the high priest is said to be "as a fair olive tree, budding forth fruit, and as a cypress tree, which groweth up to the clouds," Ecclesiasticus l. 10.

The cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*) received its name from the Isle of Cyprus, where it forms a striking feature of the vegetation, and it is indeed a common timber tree in several parts of the Levant. It is to be met with throughout Syria, and is also a tree of Palestine. Its appearance is familiar to us, from its frequent occurrence in the pictures of Mohammedan cemeteries, where its tall, dark, poplar-like form casts its gloomy shadow above the tombs. It is often fifty or sixty feet high, and its evergreen nature induced the ancients to carry it in funeral processions, as significant of the eternity of the spirit of man. The wood of the cypress tree is thought to be the gopher wood, used by Noah in building the ark. On this subject, however, there can be little ground for forming any conclusion. It was of old renowned for its durability. The ancient Egyptians used it for the coffins of the mummies, and the modern Greeks, also, choose this hard and odorous wood for their coffins. The doors of St. Peter's church, at Rome, are made of cypress wood; and the eleven hundred years which have passed since they were erected, have left them yet undecayed. Pliny speaks of the statue of Jupiter, in the Capitol, which had been formed six hundred years before, and which, in his days, showed no traces of decay. The Romans were very fond of the cypress tree, and it was planted in ancient Rome, as it is in modern Italy, around the villa and on the garden ground.

The Greeks certainly, and probably also the Scripture writers, included the savine tree (*Juniperus sabina*) in the general name indicating "cypress," and the resemblance of the two trees is very apparent. This tree grows in England, but does not produce its seeds in our climate. It is a tree also of the Holy Land. Its wood, like that of the cypress, is very hard and durable.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE CAPER PLANT.

"ALSO when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets," Eccles. xii. 5. This verse forms part of the description which Solomon gives of the peculiarities of old age; and its pathos and poetic beauty must be acknowledged by every reader of sensibility. The inspired penman seems yielding to the strongest emotions of tenderness, as he depicts the few years which precede man's going to his long home—the years when strength itself is but labour and sorrow.

To the English reader the allusion to the caper bush in this verse is not apparent; but

the word "desire" is translated in the Septuagint and Vulgate as the caper, and it is also by Rosenmüller, Dr. Royle, and many eminent scholars, thought to allude to this plant, while the rabbinical writers refer the Hebrew word either to berries in general, or to those of the caper bush. Its being rendered by some natural object seems more in accordance with the highly figurative nature of the whole description, where the almond tree stands significant of the grey hairs, and the grasshopper is emblematical of the lesser troubles of daily life, and that "which is high," is expressive of the difficulties which the fears of age would magnify and shrink from.

Several species of caper bush are found in warm climates, and are common in Asia, northern Africa, and southern Europe. In Palestine, the common caper (*Capparis spinosa*) is very general, and, growing in profusion about the hills around Jerusalem, it could not fail to be a familiar object to the Hebrew king and poet. Its flowers, too, are very beautiful. They are large and white; but the large stamens, with threads of purple, tipped with yellow, vary the snowy petals. The plant sometimes grows upright, but more generally spreads itself over the ground or wall, like a vine. Rauwolf mentions having found the plant in the gardens near Bagdad, of the height of a tree, while it grows abundantly in the neighbourhood of Aleppo, covering masses of stones, or branching out from the crevices of rocks or walls. In the

countries near the Mediterranean, it is like the ivy, about ancient ruins; and Pliny described it as being set and sown in stony plains. It was well known to the ancient Greek and Arabic writers, and its berries were much valued. The young flower-buds, pickled in vinegar, were used by the ancients, as they are by us, as a condiment to meat. The caper bush is now cultivated in Sicily, in orchards; and near Toulon its prickly branches mingle in the plantation with the vine and olive. About Paris, numerous walls are covered with the trailing shoots. In Italy, the young fruits, as well as the flowers, are used for the pickle; and the gathering of these products of the caper bush forms a daily occupation to many of the Italian peasantry during nearly half the year, as the flower produces a continual succession of blooms during the long summer. The caper buds, when gathered, are put into salt and vinegar, and, as soon as the season is over, they are sorted, the smallest and greenest being considered as the best. In this state, this pickle may be kept for four or five years.

The peculiar suitableness of this plant for a description of old age, is owing both to the structure of the caper fruit, and to its stimulating nature, exciting, as it does, both hunger and thirst, and strengthening the appetite, which in old age has become languid and enfeebled. Several of the caper tribe bear their fruit on very long stalks, so that the pendant position which many fruits assume in ripening

becomes very obvious in them. The over-ripe pod is thus well-fitted, as Rosenmüller observes, for a comparison to the veteran who has reached the end of his days, and must daily expect to fall into his grave. Like the "shock of corn, fully ripe," to which the Scripture elsewhere compares the aged man, it has borne its fruits, and must soon be gathered into the garner. Happy if those fruits have been fruits of love, and works of faith!

The Arabs call the caper plant *kaber*, or *kibbur*. It is known in Italy by the name of *capriolo*, and in France as *le caprier*. About ten species are cultivated in the English garden, and it is thought by botanists that the plant might be gradually naturalized in this country, by being raised from seeds from several successive generations. Loudon mentions a plant of the common caper, which grew for nearly a century against the wall of Camden House, Kensington. It produced every year its showy blossoms, in great abundance, but the young shoots were frequently killed by the winter frosts.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE LILY.

"I AM the Rose of Sharon, and the Lily of the valleys," Cant. ii. 1. Both by its beauty, and the exalted place among flowers which

the lily gains by the comparison in this verse, it has always been deemed an appropriate emblem of purity and spotless innocence. The old paintings of the virgin Mary represent her as holding in her hand the tall white lily of our gardens. Sometimes, too, in the ancient pictures of the Annunciation, we find it placed in the hand of the archangel, where it denotes the advent of the Messiah. Its appearance on paintings of this kind is doubtless often owing to its mention in the verse at the head of this chapter, but Dr. E. D. Clarke states another fact which renders it peculiarly appropriate in the pictures of the virgin Mary. "The word Nazareth, in Hebrew," says this writer, "signifies a flower; and Jerome, who mentions this circumstance, considers it to be the cause of the allusion made to a flower in the prophecies concerning Christ. Hence the cause wherefore, in ancient paintings used for illuminating missals, the rose or the lily, separately or combined, accompanied pictures of the virgin. In old engravings, particularly those of Albert Durer, the virgin is rarely represented unaccompanied by a lily." This writer adds, that hence too may be traced the origin of those singular paintings, connected with the history of our Saviour, which are encircled with a wreath of flowers, added, apparently, not so much for ornament, as for some religious emblem.

The great beauty of the large white lily of our gardens (*Lilium candidum*) would, in

the earlier ages, naturally lead to its selection as the lily of the Scripture; but it is by no means ascertained that this is a native flower of Palestine, though cultivated on the roofs of houses and in gardens in Syria. Dr. Kitto considers the lily of the Old Testament, referred to in the Canticles and also in the description of the carved work—the lily-work in Solomon's temple, to be the same flower as that to which our Saviour pointed when he wished to encourage the faith of his disciples, by pointing to the care which he had for the "lily of the field." This writer considers it probable that both passages refer to the yellow amaryllis, called now by botanists *Oporanthus luteus*, which, covering as it does whole vales of Palestine, and blooming very late in the year, when most of the flowers have passed away, might well suggest the remark that God cared for them even in winter hours. Its luxuriance would also make it an appropriate emblem for the prophet, when he said of Israel, that he should "grow as the lily." This flower is of the shape and colour of the crocus, and as Dr. Kitto considers that the Hebrew word of the Old Testament indicates a plant in which the number six predominates, and this has six stamens and six petals, he considers this as rendering it the more probable.

Many writers have translated the lily of the Canticles by violet, jasmine, and some other flowers; but Dr. Royle believes that the lily of the Old and that of the New Testament are two

distinct plants, and he thinks the former to be the lotus lily of the Nile (*Nymphæa lotus.*) This would account for the circumstance that five times in the Canticles, in which the lily is mentioned, reference is made to "feeding among lilies," as the seeds, roots, and stalks of this flower are common articles of Egyptian diet; and this author considers that the frequent reference to this flower in this part of Scripture, may be that the Song of Solomon was written as has been supposed on the occasion of his marriage with an Egyptian princess. Few flowers can equal the Egyptian lotus in beauty. Its form is like that of a rose, and it once floated in profusion on the waters of the Nile, though now it is rare on that ancient river. It is still, however, much admired by the Egyptians, and the ladies wear it as a head-dress. The seeds are eaten roasted, or are ground into flour for bread. Its form rendered it a suitable adornment for the pillars and brazen sea made by Hiram of molten brass, for king Solomon.

The lily of the New Testament, which was the subject of the allusion of our Saviour when he tenderly compassioned the weakness of faith of his disciples, has been thought to be the tulip, as that flower grows abundantly in Palestine, and its colours would outshine even the tints of the robes of eastern royalty. In the month of January, it is one of the most conspicuous flowers of the Holy Land. The beauty of the tulips in the plain of Sharon, as well as

about Joppa, has attracted the notice of British travellers. There seems, however, every reason to conclude, from some information recently acquired, that the Chalcedonian, or Martagon lily, (*Lilium Chalcedonicum*,) formerly called the lily of Byzantium, is the lily of the field. Dr. Bowring says on this subject, in a letter, part of which was quoted in the "Gardener's Chronicle," "I cannot describe to you, with botanical accuracy, the lily of Palestine. I heard it called by the title of *Lilia Syriaca*, and I imagine, under this title, its botanical characteristics may be hunted out. Its colour is a brilliant red, its size about half that of the common tiger lily. The white lily I do not remember to have seen in any part of Syria. It was in April and May that I first observed my flower, and it was most abundant in the district of Galilee, where it and the rhododendron, which grew in rich abundance round the paths, most strongly excited my attention." As Galilee is named as the spot where this was abundant, it seems highly probable that this flower may be the lily of the New Testament, and some of our best modern authors on the subject concur in thinking that it is so. The flower is in our gardens commonly called Turk's cap.

CHAPTER XXXV.

CAMPHIRE, OR HENNA.

"Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits; camphire, with spikenard," Cant. iv. 13. The word rendered camphire in our version, was by the rabbinical writers universally believed to be the *kupros* of the Greeks, the *al-hinna* of eastern countries, and modern research has confirmed their opinion. From the earliest ages, the henna plant (*Lawsonia inermis*) has been very highly valued in eastern lands. The leaves are something like those of the myrtle, or rather the privet, and the plant was long called in England Egyptian privet. The flowers are white, and grow in clusters, and so powerful are they, that though delightful in the eastern garden, their frequent use in decking saloons becomes quite oppressive to Europeans. The eastern ladies take to the bath large bouquets of these flowers, and consider a nosegay of the henna flower as one of the most elegant gifts which they can make to a friend. So prized are these nosegays by the Egyptian ladies, that they are jealous and offended at seeing them used by Jewish or European women.

The custom of using a dye prepared from the henna for colouring the hands and soles of the feet, and for staining the nails, is universal throughout the east, from the Mediterranean to the Ganges. In some countries, the hair and

beards of the men are also dyed with this material, and the manes and tails of horses are rendered of a rusty orange tinge by its application. The women of Egypt would as soon think of dispensing with their veils as with the henna dye. The very poorest female in the land would shrink from appearing with feet or nails in their natural condition. The habit of avoiding walking, as much as possible, as well as the constant use of friction, renders the skin of their feet almost as soft as that of the hands. The powdered leaves diluted with water is the substance applied, and the bright tint on the soles of the feet needs renewing but once in a fortnight, while the dye on the nails is said to be permanent for years.

The fact that the nails of the mummies are tinged with this dye proves the great antiquity of its use, and Dr. Harris considers it probable, that the expression "to pare the nails," used in the Jewish law, signifies "adorn the nails," and refers it to the practice of staining the tips of the fingers with henna, Deut. xxi. 12.

The gardens about Rosetta are rendered delightful by the clusters of the henna flowers, such as charmed the inspired writer, when he wrote of the clusters of camphire in the vineyards, or rather gardens of Engedi. Burckhardt admired the numerous henna trees that grew at the Wady Fatme, about a day's journey from Mecca, which rendered this resting-place of the pilgrims a most odoriferous retreat. The henna of this valley is prized so highly that

this traveller mentions that it is sold to the pilgrims, who carry it home as a present to their female relatives.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

SAFFRON.

"SPIKENARD and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices," Cant. iv. 14. It is not possible to read the Holy Scriptures without observing how great was the esteem in which perfumes were held by the ancient Hebrews, and how profusely they used them. The holy anointing oil was made of cinnamon and cassia, and sweet calamus, mingled with the oil of the olive for the service of the sanctuary, and must have diffused a strong and grateful odour. This perfume was kept solely for the rites of religion, but costly and fragrant essences for domestic use were also early procured by the Israelites from the Phœnicians, and the "art of the apothecary," of which we read, even while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, consisted in mingling and preparing the various substances, employed either as articles of luxury, or in the service of God. It is among the perfumed substances enumerated by Solomon that we first read of the saffron. In the later ages, when our Saviour

dwelt among men, we find perfumes no less valued, when the alabaster box was broken, or rather unsealed, and its odour filled the room, and when costly spices were taken by holy women to "the place where the Lord lay."

Either the flower itself, or the drug procured from it, is called saffron. The plant grows wild in every country of the east, and is also largely cultivated, both there and in southern Europe. It is the purple crocus flower (*Crocus sativus*) which blooms in our gardens, and sometimes too on our meadow-lands, in the autumnal months; and the drug is made of its dried stigmas.

The ancients strewed the saffron over their theatres and saloons, and mingled its flavour with the wine. It is still extensively used in the east in cookery, and valued not only as a perfume but also as a medicine. Sir John Chardin remarked on its use, in his day, and Forbes mentions it as employed in wedding ceremonies of India. Chardin also speaks of the saffron at a wedding ceremony, at which he was present in Golconda, where perfumes were lavished on every guest as he arrived. "They sprinkled them," says this writer, "upon those who were clad in white; but gave them into the hands of those who wore coloured raiment, because their garments would have been spoiled by throwing it over them, which was done in the following manner: they threw over the body a bottle of rose-water, tinted with saffron, in such a manner that the clothes would have

been stained with it. I was thus perfumed with saffron in many great houses of this country, and in many other places. This attention and honour is a universal custom among the women who have the means of obtaining this luxury."

Asia appears to be the native country of the saffron crocus, though some affirm it to be indigenous to several parts of Europe. As professor Martyn observes, it certainly first attained its high repute as a medicine in the countries of the east, a reputation almost lost in Europe, except in the lands near the Mediterranean. The Arabic name of the flower is *zafran*, and from this we derived its various European names. The Spaniards call it *azafran*, the French and Germans *saffran*, and the Italians *zafrano*, while to the Moors it is known by the name of *safra*.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE MANDRAKE.

"THE mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits," Cant. vii. 13. The mandrake has been long a subject of discussion. Some writers have thought that the original word signified merely flowers, or few flowers, while the citron, the mushroom, and other plants, have been considered as the plant intended. The mandrake (*Atropa mandragora*)

belongs to a family of plants which contain the most deadly poisons, and the plant is itself very deleterious. Hasselquist found it in abundance in a vale near Nazareth. It also grows in the village of St. John, among the mountains, about six miles from Jerusalem. The root is large and fleshy, and commonly forked, and from some fancied resemblance to the human form, as well as from its poisonous qualities, it was said to possess animal feeling, and to shriek if disturbed or torn up from the earth. It has long hairy sharp-pointed leaves, forming a dark green tuft, from the midst of which arise whitish flowers, streaked with dingy purple. The fruit, which is of the size of a small apple, is deliciously fragrant, though the flowers and leaves have a most disgusting odour.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE RUSH BULRUSH.

"Woe to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia: that sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters," Isa. xviii. 1, 2. This passage, with three others contained in Scripture, evidently refer to the paper-reed (*Cyperus papyrus.*) The ark in which the infant Moses lay among the sedges of the Nile, termed in our version the ark of bulrushes, was made of

this plant. Isaiah also refers to it, in foretelling the glorious change to come on the church of God, when "the parched ground shall become a pool," and "in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes," Isa. xxxv. 7; and Job, alluding to the papyrus, asks, "Can the rush grow up without mire?" Job. viii. 11. The paper-reeds by the brooks, of which Isaiah afterwards makes mention, refer to sedges in general, and the original word is rendered in the Septuagint green river plants, Isa. xix. 7.

The papyrus has a thick triangular stem, about three feet high, and Bruce observes that one of its angles constantly opposed the current, as if to elude the force of the waves. The leaves are long and grass-like, and green spikes of flowers crown its summit. It is a common plant in Egypt, Abyssinia, and Syria. The ancients mention it as growing abundantly in the shallow parts of the Nile, and it was found on every part of the shores, fertilized by the river. An ancient writer describes it as presenting forests without branches, thickets without leaves, and as being the ornament of the marshes. And what is the description of modern writers? "Scarcely any of those reeds for which the Nile was once famous are now to be found upon its banks. The lotus in particular has disappeared, so that it is nearly unknown, and the papyrus is very rare." * The words of Isaiah are these,

* Bonar and M'Cheyne.

"The waters shall fail from the sea, and the rivers shall be wasted and dried up." This has literally taken place. In the days of the prophet there were seven mouths of the Nile; there are now only two. But he further predicts, 'They shall turn the rivers [that is, the canals] far away; and the brooks of defence shall be emptied and dried up: the reeds and flags shall wither. The paper reeds by the brooks, by the mouth of the brooks, and every thing sown by the brooks, shall wither, be driven away, and be no more.' These words have come to pass, while, at the same time, it is interesting to remark, that Egypt is as famous for its melons and cucumbers, its leeks, and onions, and garlic, as it was in the days of Moses."

From the earliest ages of Egypt, the papyrus was used for many purposes, especially that of the manufacture of paper. Herodotus mentions paper made from it, as having been an article of commerce long before his time. He calls it byblos; this was also the Egyptian name of the paper-reed; and it is supposed that from this the Greek word *biblion*, book, was derived. "The byblos," says Herodotus, "annually springs up after it is plucked from the marshes, and the top is cut off and converted to a different use from the other part." He adds, that the lower part of the plant was sold as an eatable commodity, and that the priests wore shoes made of byblos, and the boats of Egypt had sails manufactured from it; while the

priest read to the people from a roll of byblos, the list of the names of their kings.

When Egypt was possessed by the Greeks, the plant was very largely used for paper, and it was for many centuries an important article of commerce. At that period, although linen, parchment, and other materials were in use, yet the papyrus paper was greatly preferred; and this paper was employed in Italy until the eleventh or twelfth century, when cotton paper superseded it. No traveller of modern days has given a fuller account of the paper reed than that furnished by Bruce. The paper made by the ancients was formed of the pellicle found between the bark and fleshy part of the thicker portion of the stem, and the pieces were united together till they became of the proper size, when they were pressed and dried in the sun. "I have," says Bruce, "a large and very perfect manuscript in my possession, which was dug up at Thebes; the boards are of papyrus root, covered first with coarser pieces of the paper, and then with leather, in the same manner in which it would be done now. It is a book one would call a small folio, and I apprehend that the shape of the book, when papyrus was employed, was always of the same form as those of the moderns." This manuscript was written on both sides, with a deep black ink, and apparently traced with a reed.

Some of the papyrus manuscripts found in the swathings of the mummies are perfectly legible, and are interesting, as being the oldest

written records of any language now understood. Bruce afterwards observes, that the Abyssinians still make boats of reeds, like the old Egyptian boats, which are to be seen engraven on the monuments. Besides these uses, the papyrus reed had others among the ancients. The tassel-like flower at the summit of the stem was used to adorn the temple and crown the statues of their gods, and was worn as a coronal by illustrious men. The root, or woody part of the plant, was chewed, as it still is in Abyssinia, its sweet juice being like that of the liquorice. The dearth of timber trees in Egypt rendered the woody part useful for fuel, and it contributed to the bindings of books, the cordage and matting of common use. Bruce saw this plant growing on the shores of the ancient river Jordan, and adds, that it flourished also near the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE NETTLE.

"I WENT by the field of the slothful, . . . and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof," Prov. xxiv. 30, 31. "And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof," Isa. xxxiv. 13. Both these texts in our version contain allusions to the nettle, but this translation is given to two distinct Hebrew words. Dr. Royle thinks that the weed which overran

the field of the slothful, was probably the charlock, or some other common plant. This he conjectures especially from the passage in Job, where the patriarch describes the former condition of those who now insulted him. "They were driven forth from among men; . . . among the bushes they brayed; under the nettles they were gathered together," Job. xxx. 5, 7; and as the professor observes, the nettles are not plants by the side, or under the shadow of which men would repose. In Isaiah, however, the translation is thought to be correct, though the camomile, the thistle, the thorn, or the caper plant, has by various writers been adduced as the right rendering.

In these days, as in the ancient times of Palestine, the nettle springs up by the ruined fortress or deserted palace, and presents a true picture of desolation. Our common nettle (*Urtica dioica*) grows wild as plentifully in many parts of Asia as in our native land.

CHAPTER XL.

CUMMIN.

"Doth the ploughman plough all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his ground? When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat and the appointed barley and the rye in their place? For his God doth instruct

him to discretion, and doth teach him," Isa. xxviii. 24–26. It is not often that the seedsman, as he casts the grain into the ground, remembers that his God teaches him to discretion. He believes, perhaps, that human skill has its origin in the human mind. Yet God gave that mind the power of forethought and of reflection, and of adaptation, and all that can make human labour profitable.

The cummin (*Cuminum cyminum*) is an annual plant, of the umbelliferous tribe, and is not unlike the common fennel, though smaller and less branched. The flowers are white or reddish, and grow in clusters. It is mentioned not only in the Old, but also in the New Testament, where, with the mint and anise, it gave occasion to the reproof given by our Saviour to the Pharisees. It grows wild in Egypt and throughout Syria, but is still cultivated as we see that it was by the ancient Hebrews, who planted it in their fields at a period long before the captivity. The seeds are powerfully aromatic and pungent.

CHAPTER XLI.

FITCHES.

"The fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart-wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches

are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod," Isa. xxviii. 27. The Hebrew word rendered by "fitches," occurs only in this portion of Scripture. Our translators, in giving it as "fitches," intended some plant of the vetch tribe; fitches, or fetches, being the old English word for vetches. Some of the old versions render the word by "peas," and some commentators think that the seeds of the black poppy are intended; but it is most generally believed that the fennel flower (*Nigella sativa*) produces the seeds referred to. The nigella is very common in English gardens. Its leaves are deeply cut into numerous thread-like segments, and the white flower, tinged with blue, seems almost veiled by the leaflets around it. It is a native of the east, as well as several parts of Europe, and is extensively cultivated in Egypt, Persia, and India. Pliny said of the gith, or nigella, that in his time it was used in bake-houses, and afforded a grateful seasoning for bread. Its pungency is equal to pepper, and it was a seasoning of dishes long before that spice was known. It was called also nutmeg-flower, by old English writers.

A French writer, speaking of the uses of these seeds in modern Egypt, says, that a sort of loaf or cake, finer than the common bread, is made in the large cities, and that it is covered with these seeds, which are procured from upper Egypt. It is called by the Arabs "black seed," or "blessed seed." These seeds impart to the loaves a flavour which is aromatic,

and not unpleasant to European taste, and they are said to render the bread wholesome and stimulating to the appetite.

It is remarkable that the cummin and the fitches are still gathered in the same way as that which the prophet describes. Were a wheel passed over these plants, they would be bruised, and their valuable and carminative oil would be wasted; but they are in the east, as well as in Malta, commonly beaten out with a staff or rod.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE ROSE.

"THE wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose," Isa. xxxv. 1. When we consider the great value always attached to the rose in the east, that it is the favourite flower where flowers are most dearly prized, it seems surprising that the Scriptural writers should have referred to it so little. Two allusions only to this flower are made in our authorized version, if we except some in the Apocrypha, which will be alluded to hereafter. The interesting comparison in the verse which heads this chapter, and the no less important one in which our Lord is compared to the Rose of Sharon, are the only two places in which the rose is named in our English version.

The mere English reader is surprised to find, that even here many learned men consider that the rose is not actually referred to. Some versions, as that of the Septuagint and of Luther, render the rose of Sharon as a flower, not giving Sharon as a name, regarding its meaning as "a flower of the field." Dr. Kitto, who has no doubt but that the actual rose is intended by the original Scripture, remarks in the "Pictorial Bible," that if the word be simply rendered "flower," the rose would be implied, as this is according to the usage in the east. "Thus," he observes, "the Persian word *gul* describes a flower in general, and a rose *par excellence;* and the Arabic term *ward* is employed in the same acceptation."

In days when investigations of this nature were rare, and when men had little encouragement to advance opinions contrary to those usually received, the rose of Sharon was affirmed to be a true rose. The old writers, whose feet had never traversed these plains, probably described it as they considered such a rose should be, and it was said to be a rose, redder, more beautiful, and much larger than ordinary roses, wearing its deep red colour as a memorial of the blood shed by Him of whom it was the type. Neither this, nor any other rose, however, now adorns the plain of Sharon, but instead of this, large clumps of the rose-flowering cistus, with pale rose-coloured or white petals, attract the eye of the modern traveller, and are by many good writers supposed to be the flowers alluded to in the Canticles. The shape of this beauti-

ful blossom is much like that of the brier-rose, but it needs the woody, prickly stem, and the shrubby growth, to render it a true rose.

Many valuable authorities might be cited, as considering the word in both the passages of our version to refer to some plant growing from a bulb. By them the original word is thought necessarily to imply this; hence the asphodel, the meadow-saffron, and the narcissus, all flowers highly esteemed among oriental nations, have been adduced as the flower intended. The great beauty of the oriental narcissus, and its abundance in Palestine, and especially in the plains of Sharon, where Chateaubriand remarked it flowering in great profusion, seem to render this the most probable of the bulbous plants, if, indeed, it be a necessary inference that it is a flower of this nature.

The rose of the Apocryphal books has been very generally admitted to be the rose so prized in eastern lands. "I was exalted like a palm tree in Engaddi, and as a rose plant in Jericho," is a comparison found in the book of Ecclesiasticus xxiv. 14; and again, in the Book of Wisdom, it is said, "Let us crown ourselves with roses before they be withered."

Although the rose grows wild in Palestine and Syria generally, yet the climate does not seem peculiarly adapted to it, nor is it either so general or so flourishing as the poets who have written of Syria's roses might lead us to infer.

Dr. Kitto observes of the roses, in his "Pictorial Palestine," "The principal species in this country are the white garden rose, the hundred-leaved, or damask rose, the yellow rose, and the evergreen rose. The Syrian origin of the damask rose is indicated by its name, which refers it to Damascus. In the gardens of that city roses are still much cultivated. Munro says, that in size they are inferior to our damask rose, and less perfect in form; but that the colour and odour are far more rich. The only variety which exists is a white rose, which appears to belong to the same species, differing only in colour. The same traveller found in the valley of Baalbec a creeping rose, of a bright yellow colour, in full bloom, about the end of May. About the same time, on advancing towards Rama and Joppa, from Jerusalem, the hills are found to a considerable extent covered with white and pink roses. Burckhardt was struck with the number of wild rose trees he found growing among the ruins of Bosra, beyond Jordan, and the same traveller informs us that roses are cultivated with much success in the gardens of mount Sinai." Bonar and M'Cheyne noticed the profusion of wild roses on the hills of Galilee.

For various reasons, Dr. Royle considers that the flower mentioned, even in the Apocrypha, is not the true rose. The rose does not grow near Jericho, it is not a spring flower, nor is it abundant near streams, which, from the several allusions in the Apocryphal books, it might be

supposed to be. He suggests that the oleander, or rose laurel, (*Nerium oleander*,) is the flower of these books. So abundant in Palestine is the oleander, that it is mentioned by every traveller fond of flowers, as one of the greatest ornaments of the scenery. The Latin name of this plant infers its growth in damp places, and the streams of the Holy Land present groves and thickets of its tall stems, thickly clustered with its rose-like blossoms, and dark, narrow, firm, evergreen leaves. Lord Lindsay was struck with their loveliness. "The road," he says, "ran close under Mount Carmel, along the banks of the river Kishon, a rocky path, winding through oleanders in full bloom, reeds and wild flowers of every hue, the birds singing sweetly, the wood-pigeon cooing, and the temperature as fresh and mild as May in England." It clusters in great profusion by the sea of Galilee, where our Saviour, when wearied with the sight of man's sins, would sometimes withdraw himself to commune with his God and our God, Mark iii. 7. Its placid waters still glide through these lovely flowers, and the lake is still as beautiful as when the rabbies said of it, that "God had loved that sea above all other seas." From its frequency by rivers, the oleander seems very appropriate to the comparison, "as a rose growing by the brook of the field," which we find as one of the similes of the Apocrypha.

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE SHITTAH TREE.

"I WILL plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle, and the oil tree," Isa. xli. 19. The wood of the shittah tree (the shittim) is early mentioned in the sacred writings, when the children of Israel were bidden to make an offering for the building of that tabernacle which was to shadow forth God's glory while they wandered in the desert of Sinai. The shittim wood was also among the products which Moses was to accept from the man who gave willingly with his heart, for it was then, as it is now, the willing mind made the gift acceptable in the eyes of God.

There is little doubt but that the shittim wood was the product either of one or more species of the acacia tree, and it is thought probable that the *Acacia gummifera*, or the *Acacia seyel*, produced it, as they both grew abundantly in that dreary wilderness where for forty years the Israelites remained.

The acacia trees are essentially trees of the desert, and by far the largest and most common trees of the wilderness of Arabia Petræa. So, too, on the dry sandy wastes of Africa, they abound and thrive. Burchell remarks of some clumps of them, "The minute leaves of these trees admitted as much sun through them as they threw shadow; and, although their situation was deep in the grove, there was a light-

ness of colouring in the scene, as beautiful as it was remarkable; and the ground, undulating with hillocks of whitish sand, increased that airy effect. Each tree was composed of a great number of stems, but very rarely of a single trunk. Many were decaying from age, and their dead branches, half cracked off, dropped their tops to the ground. This manner of decaying is almost peculiar to the acacias, and is perhaps occasioned by the greater durability of the bark, while the wood is destroyed by insects." It was, perhaps, such a grove of these airy, feathery trees which gave its name to the valley of Shittim, of which the prophet Joel predicted, that it should one day be watered with the waters of the fountain from the house of the Lord, Joel iii. 18.

The Arabs of the desert burn the acacia wood for fuel, and collect food for their cattle of its delicate foliage and fragrant flowers. The Hottentots use the bark of the acacias for cordage and mats, and two species afford very valuable medicines, while the gum arabic is the product of these trees, the *Acacia vera* of botanists.

The very sweet fragrance of the acacia tree seems to give a peculiar appropriateness to its selection by the prophet, in the passage at the commencement of this chapter, where, with the odorous myrtle, it stands significant of the delight and glory awaiting the church of God. The acacia seyel, most generally believed to furnish the shittim wood, is twenty or twenty-five feet high.

CHAPTER XLIV.

THE PINE TREE.

"I WILL set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together," Isa. xli. 19. Very great difficulty occurs in fixing the true meaning of the original word, which is here translated "pine tree;" but Dr. Kitto considers that if any species of pine is really intended, it is the silver fir tree, (*Pinus pinea.*)

The silver fir is a tall, upright, and majestic-looking tree. The upper surface of its leaves is of a bright green, and on the under surface two white lines run parallel with the middle vein, which, giving a silvery look to the foliage when turned up, originated its name. Its timber is less valuable than that of some other species of pine, but it is by far the most prolific in resinous matter of the pine tribe. The Tahtars consider the presence of these trees as a sure indication of water; and, if this be correct, it would be very suitable for the comparison of the prophet, as in the preceding verse he had described the Lord as saying, "I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water."

CHAPTER XLV.

THE MYRTLE.

"INSTEAD of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the

myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off," Isa. lv. 13. Consolatory as was the promise of God to ancient Israel, when a brighter future was to dawn on days of sorrow, not less so is it now to the true Israel of God. We look on the darkness of heathen lands, and on the wilful darkness of many in lands called Christian, and the heart sighs for those better days, prefigured by the prophets as days when "instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree."

The myrtle (*Myrtus communis*) is throughout the Scriptures emblematic of peace and joy. The angel of the Lord spake to Zechariah, as he stood among the myrtle trees, when he reassured him with "good words and comfortable words," Zech. i. 13. And the mountain solitude, among which the myrtles often flourish, and the banks of the secluded rivers of Palestine, where this tree flowers so freely, and casts so graceful a shadow, were well calculated to awaken in his spirit emotions of love and peace, and to stand as an emblem of spiritual rest and tranquillity. A recent traveller thus notices the flowers which grew by the waysides in his journey from Beyrout to Galilee: "Our road lay nearly south, through a grove of vines, with mulberry gardens on all sides. Pleasant wild flowers adorned our path, the oleander in full bloom skirted the banks of the small streams which we crossed; and often also our own modest white rose appeared among the fragrant myrtles of the hedges."

Little difficulty has arisen as to the rendering of the myrtle in our version, and it is by the Jewish writers universally considered as correct. It seems to have been a favourite plant throughout the east from early periods, and was prized by the Hebrews, from those days when they gathered its boughs, with many others, and brought them to shadow their outdoor dwellings at the feast of tabernacles, when all the Israelites sat beneath the thick-leaved trees, or in the booths erected on the flat roofs of their houses, and called upon the widow, and the fatherless, and the stranger, to put away their sorrows and rejoice before the Lord. The myrtle tree is one which was directed by Nehemiah to be gathered for these occasions, when desiring a renewal of Israel's ancient laws and customs, he told the people to "fetch olive branches, and pine branches, and myrtle branches, etc. . . to make booths, as it is written," chap. viii. 15. And still do the Jews, though strangers in their own land, gather the myrtle from the valleys among the hills of Lebanon, and by the rivers of Galilee. Among the ancient Jews, the myrtle was symbolical not of peace only but of justice. Dr. Harris quotes a remark of the Chaldee Targum, on the name of Esther, which is said by the rabbinical writers to be composed of two words, signifying a fresh myrtle. Hadassah, the original name of Esther, is very similar to the Hebrew word translated myrtle. Thus the Targum says, "They call her Hadassah, because she was

just, and those that are just are compared to myrtles." The berries of this plant were used as spices.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE BOX TREE AND ASHUR WOOD.

"THE glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious," Isa. lx. 13. In predicting the coming glory of Zion, the prophet assembles as figures the goodly trees of the mountain of Lebanon, which are to enliven the desert and to build the temple of the Lord. The box (*Buxus sempervirens*) grows to perfection on the chalky mountainous soils, and might, therefore, well be classed with the pine and fir, and the cone-bearing family of trees, which now, as in distant days, form the glory of Lebanon. The box is wild and very abundant in many countries of Asia, especially in Persia and on Mount Caucasus, where it attains a great size. It is often sixteen feet high, but the trunk is always comparatively slender. It a very hardy tree, and its leaves evergreen; it is merely a dwarf kind of the plant which is so often seen in our gardens,

"Where roams the box along the crisped paths."

The timber of the tree kind is very valuable, especially for purposes in which hardness is

required, and the blocks for wood-engraving are made wholly of box-wood. The tree was cultivated by the Romans for the hard wood, which they inlaid with ivory, for cabinet work. Pliny says that no animal will touch its seeds, and Gmelin affirms that it is rejected by the camel. It is well known to Asiatics. Its wood is thought to be the ashur wood of Scripture, mentioned by Ezekiel, "Of the oaks of Bashan have they made thine oars; the company of Ashurites have made thy benches of ivory," chap. xxvii. 6.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE ASH TREE.

"He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it," Isa. xliv. 14. The word rendered ash by our translators occurs but once in Scripture, and it is not considered to be the right translation of the original word. In the Greek Septuagint, and in the Latin Vulgate, the Hebrew is given "pine tree," and some versions render it by cedar. This is, however, one of the plants of Scripture, of which nothing like certainty has been ascertained. The manna ash (*Ornus europœa*) is cultivated in Syria, but it is not known to be indigenous to the land.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

BALM OF GILEAD AND SPICES.

"My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices," Cant. vi. 2. "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" Jer. viii. 22. The balm of Gilead, in this and other passages, is thought by many commentators to represent the Saviour; the healing efficacy of Christ's atonement being symbolized by the virtues which this plant afforded. And well might the prophet of olden or modern times ask, in wondering inquiry, "Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" But worldly counsel and worldly pleasure are often sought by him whose heart is wounded; and few are ready to sit beneath the shadow of the "Plant of Renown," and take of that healing balm, which our Lord purchased by his death.

The balm of the Scripture writers is, by some commentators, believed to be the balsam, which is the produce of the balsam tree, (*Amyris opobalsum*,) and the word which in the Canticles is translated spices, as well as the spice offered by the Israelites for the service of the tabernacle, Exod. xxxv. 28, is, with still more certainty, thought to be this balsam also. No record of old or modern times mentions the balsam tree as having grown wild, or been planted in Gilead; hence it has been inferred,

that the balsam or balm was also produced from some other tree. From the fact that Jacob's sons carried down the balm as a present, when they went into Egypt, we may infer the estimation in which this substance was held, and the oldest uninspired writers mention balsam as of great value.

Pliny said of it, "But to all other odours whatever the balsam is preferred, produced in no other part but the land of Judæa, and even then in two gardens only, belonging to the king; one no more than twenty acres, the other still smaller." Other early writers affirm that it was found in one valley of Judæa, and Josephus mentions that it was cultivated near Jericho. It is from this historian that we receive the common tradition, that the balsam plant was carried by the queen of Sheba into Judæa, when she brought to the king gold and precious stones, and of spices very great store; and as the balsam tree is undoubtedly a native of Arabia, as well as the opposite coast of Africa, both of which have been said to be the land from whence the munificent princess arrived, the tradition is not improbable. The tree was at all times, doubtless, rare in Palestine, and has long ceased from the land, nor is it likely it was cultivated there as early as the time of Jacob; it seems, therefore, doubtful whether the balm mentioned in that text, as well as by the prophet Jeremiah, was the celebrated balsam of after times. The mastic has, by some writers, therefore been supposed to

be the balm of Scripture, and Dr. Royle suggests that it may be the oil of the *zackum*, or Jericho plum tree, which is considered a most salutary and healing balm.

The Arabs have a tradition that Cleopatra introduced the balsam tree into Egypt, and planted it in the ancient garden of Heliopolis, now called Mataria; a garden which was expatiated upon very largely by old Arab, as well as Christian travellers. The ancient writers attached great value to the balm of this orchard, or garden, and were very anxious to have a small quantity of it to place in the water used at baptisms. The balm of Mataria was also used at the coronation of sovereigns, throughout Europe. Lord Lindsay quotes a passage from sir John Mandeville's account of the trees of this "field of balsam," which he asserts "would not bear fruit anywhere else, nor even there, unless under the culture of Christians." The garden was, in those days, said to be quite perfumed by the balsam trees, but their gradual diminution in number is recorded, "whether through carelessness of the gardener, through fraud or envy of the Jews, or through religion or piety being offended, no one can tell." In our less superstitious days, the first reason will seem sufficient. Certain it is, that after many decreases, one solitary balm tree alone remained, and this perished in 1615, in consequence of an inundation of the Nile.

The substance produced by the balm tree is called *opobalsum*, or balsam of Mecca, the latter

name being given because of the trees near that city. Burckhardt says that Szafra and Beder are the only places in the Hedjaz where the balsam of Mecca, or balesan, can be procured in a pure state. The tree from which it is collected grows in the neighbouring mountains, and is called by the Arabs *beshen*. This traveller did not see the tree, but was informed that it was from ten to fifteen feet in height.

The balm or balsam is as highly valued in the east, as it was in the days of Scripture events, and in the early ages of the Christian era, when it was said to be an infallible specific for more than fifty diseases. Burckhardt mentions, that the Arabians still regard it as a tonic, and that the richer class of pilgrims put a drop of the balesan into the first cup of coffee which they drink in the morning.

CHAPTER XLIX.

WORMWOOD.

"BECAUSE they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein;—therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink," Jer. ix. 13, 15. The wormwood and the gall are emblems of moral bitterness and deep sorrow, and may well express the condition of those

who have departed from their God. The common wormwood of our waste lands is of so powerfully bitter a flavour, that it is a good type of the whole wormwood tribe. This species, however, is not the wormwood of Scripture, as it does not grow wild in Palestine.

Three species of wormwood grow in the waste places of the Holy Land. The species known in our gardens as the southernwood, (*Artemisia abrotanum*,) which rarely bears flowers in this country, is in Syria a larger shrub, decked with branches of yellow nodding blossoms. The kind called by botanists *Artemisia Romana*, with a far less disagreeable bitterness, has been found on Mount Tabor. But the species most likely to be intended by the Scripture writers is the Judæan wormwood, (*Artemisia Judaica*,) which grows near Bethlehem. It is very bitter, and its young tops furnish the wormwood of commerce. As the Hebrews considered bitter plants to be poisonous, the "root of wormwood," and "the wormwood and the gall," would offer to them a most emphatic figure.

CHAPTER L.

HEATH.

"He shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but shall inhabit the parched places of the wilderness, in

a salt land and not inhabited," Jer. xvii. 6. Our translators, in rendering the Hebrew word in the text by *heath*, seem to have been guided by what appeared to them to be the most likely plant of uninhabitable places. Heath is, however, very rare in Syria, and there is little doubt that the juniper is intended by the inspired penman.

The juniper is a common plant of Palestine. It grows even to the very summit of Mount Hor, and from being often found on high mountains and rocks, inaccessible to all save the bounding gazelle, it seems very suitable for another expression of the prophet, where he says, when foretelling the cry of destruction which shall be heard against Moab, "Flee, save your lives, and be like the heath (the juniper) in the wilderness." Professor Robinson makes frequent mention of the juniper in the Holy Land, and Dr. Kitto names three species as growing there. These are the common savine, the Phœnician, and the brown-berried juniper. The first of these, though often cultivated in our country, yields neither flowers nor seeds in the English gardens. Professor Pallas found this plant growing in great abundance in the *Chersonesus Taurica*, and says that its trunk is there often a foot and a half in diameter. It is not unlike the cypress in appearance, but has a most unpleasant odour. The Phœnician juniper is also a tall pyramidal tree, attaining in its native lands the height of twenty feet; and the wood of the

brown-berried species is so hard and durable, that many writers believe this plant to yield the cedar wood of Scripture.

CHAPTER LI.

MILLET.

"TAKE thou also unto thee wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentiles, and millet, and fitches, and put them in one vessel, and make thee bread thereof," Ezek. iv. 9. In this enumeration of the plants cultivated for food, we find the species of grains, which even to the present day form the chief objects of the agriculture of Palestine and other eastern lands. Most of these plants are named frequently in Scripture, but this is the only passage in which the millet is mentioned.

The common millet (*Panicum miliaceum*) is occasionally sown in this country for feeding poultry, as well as for the uses in cookery to which rice would be applied. A large quantity of millet is, however, imported into England from the shores of the Mediterranean. The seeds of the panicum millet are the smallest of any of the grasses which are cultivated for the food of man; and each stalk produces so many grains, that the name of *miliaceum* is said to have been significant of its thousand seeds. Pliny says its name, *panicum*, was given on

account of its panicle of flowers; but other writers derive it from *panis*, from its use in making bread. A species of millet, called by the French *grand millet*, is much cultivated in Arabia and Asia Minor. Large fields of it are to be seen in Palestine, where, as in Egypt, it is called *dhura*. It is a strong plant, and bears a heavy crop. It is often roasted and eaten, one stalk sometimes furnishing a meal to a family of Palestine. It has, by some writers, been thought to be the parched corn which Boaz gave to Ruth, and which David carried to his brethren. In our West Indian colonies, it is called guinea corn. In Egypt, it commonly grows to the height of six feet; and Burckhardt saw it in Nubia sixteen or twenty feet high. It is very plentifully sown in the fields near Ascalon.

CHAPTER LII.

EBONY.

"THE men of Dedan were thy merchants; many isles were the merchandise of thine hand: they brought thee for a present horns of ivory and ebony," Ezek. xxvii. 15. The ebony is thus stated to have been among the objects of merchandise of ancient Tyre—the city "whose merchants were princes," and which was "lifted up because of its riches;" but this is the only

part of Scripture in which this wood is named. The ebony appears to be the heart wood of one or more species of the tree called date plum. Several kinds of this tree produce a wood which turns black as it grows old, but the real ebony is generally considered to be furnished by the smooth date plum tree (*Diospyrus ebenum.*) This, in the island of Ceylon, is a magnificent forest tree, with a lofty but slender stem, spotted with white. The different kinds of *Diospyrus* are found in the countries of the south-eastern parts of Asia, and the adjoining islands, as well as in the various parts of Africa and in Jamaica.

The fruit of several species of this tree is very good; some very like a cherry or small plum, others as large as a peach, while a Japanese species has a fruit like an apricot. The European species common in Italy (*Diospyrus lotus*) bears a fruit much resembling the date, and is almost as sweet as that luscious fruit. This is supposed to be the fruit which, in the ancient romances, was said to rival the fabulous waters of Lethe, in its power of causing forgetfulness of the past. The botanical name is taken from a Greek word, and signifies fruit of Jove, or the heavenly fruit. But all these fruits require to be mellowed even to decay, like our medlars, before they lose the harsh and austere flavour which they have while unripe.

The wood of the ebony was much valued by the ancients, and employed by them for furni-

ture, and a variety of purposes. In Ceylon, the best of the furniture is made of this wood, and some very beautiful ebony chairs and cabinets are sometimes seen in England. The prophet mentions the ivory and ebony in connexion, and they were probably used together by the Hebrews, as ebony was among the ancients, frequently inlaid with ivory, with which it contrasts beautifully.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE CHESNUT, OR PLANE TREE.

"THUS was he fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches: for his root was by great waters. The cedars in the garden of God could not hide him: the fir trees were not like his boughs, and the chesnut trees were not like his branches; nor any tree in the garden of God was like unto him in his beauty," Ezek. xxxi. 7, 8. The lofty trees which decked the scenes of the Scripture narrative were often selected by the inspired writers as images of power and protection, and of men who occupied some lofty position among mankind. In the passage of sublime poetry from which these verses were taken, several trees suggested to the inspired prophet the figures which formed a description of the once exalted and proud Assyria; and the cedar of Lebanon, of a

"high stature and a shadowing shroud"—how expressive is it of the power and influence of a mighty monarch! while, beneath its boughs, the "beasts of the field" were said to "hide themselves."

The word chesnut, in the text, should doubtless have been translated, as it was in all the ancient versions, the plane tree. This tree (*Platanus orientalis*) is the celebrated chenar sung of in the songs of the Persian poets, and the tree which the Greeks and Romans valued so highly for its wide-spreading shadow. Of this tree the ancients planted groves around their dwellings, for they thought no other afforded so good a shade; and its mass of foliage was a pleasant and impenetrable screen in the sunshine. Its name, taken from the Greek, signifies ample, or broad. The Greeks valued it so highly as to pour wine on its roots instead of water. Virgil descants on

"The wide-spreading airy planes,"

and Plato delighted in a lofty plane tree, beneath which a stream of water flowed. Homer, too, describes the sacrifice by the fountain—

"'Twas when the plane tree spread its shade around."

The modern Hindoos share with the ancients in their veneration of this tree; and its broad canopy still shelters many an eastern group; its groves yet surround the temples of superstitious worship, and thicken by the palace of the prince or noble.

The great beauty of the plane tree in Assyria has been remarked by travellers in modern days, and rich groves of its massy foliage, and individual trees, of a size remarkable even in the lands of the east, render the figure of the prophet as appropriate now, in that country, as when it was first employed.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE POPLAR AND MULBERRY TREES.

"THEY sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and elms, because the shadow thereof is good," Hos. iv. 13. Some commentators have thought that the word rendered poplar should have been storax tree, but the black poplar, the aspen, and the Lombardy poplar, are all found in Palestine, and some species are very common there; and that the true poplar is intended, both in this as well as other passages of Scripture, seems to be still the most general opinion.

The white poplar (*Populus alba*) is given in the Septuagint, as the translation of the plant named by the prophet Hosea. It is said to be so common about Damascus, that, uniting with the black poplar, it forms quite a forest. Carne mentions the poplar in the gardens near Sidon,

along with the ilex, the palm, and the sycomore, and a variety of flowers and vegetables.

The white poplar is one of the most valuable of the poplar trees, and has a very picturesque effect on the scenery, owing to the white colour of the under surface of its leaves, which contrasts with the peculiarly dark green hue of the upper part. Like the leaves of the poplars generally, these seem constantly moving with the wind, and hence the name of the tree is said to have been given, because, like the populace, it was naturally restless; but the custom among the Romans of decorating public places with groves of this tree, on which account it was called the tree of the people, is a more likely origin of its botanical name. The shadow which it gives renders it very suitable for the reference of the text, and, in common with the black poplar, it possesses one peculiarity which adds to its appropriateness. Its young buds emit, during the spring, a sweet balsamic odour, and yield, on bruising, a resinous substance, which, when extracted by spirit, has a fragrant odour, like the storax buds. The people of Israel are charged by the prophet with burning incense among these trees, for, alas! Ephraim had joined himself to idols, and the smoke of his sacrifices ascended from the groves and high places. Here then was the incense ready for the censer, and the fragrant gums yielded by the works of his creation, were burned in dishonour of their great Creator. This resin is now used medicinally.

The beautiful trembling aspen (*Populus tremula*) is an ornament of the wild scenery of the Holy Land, and will thrive well in almost any soil or situation. The Lombardy poplar is rare, but the black poplar (*Populus nigra*) casts its tall shadow over many a spot endeared by sacred recollections, and its lofty ash-coloured trunk is surmounted by a handsome pyramid of green.

There are some passages in our version of Scripture in which the mulberry tree is mentioned, which Dr. Royle considers should be referred to a species of poplar. Thus David was ordered by God, in answer to his prayer for direction, to move forwards when he should hear "the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees," 2 Sam. v. 24. This writer remarks, that as no leaves are more easily stirred than those of the poplars, the rustling of the leaves might easily be made by a slight wind, or even by the rapid movement of a large body of men, when attacked in flank, or when unprepared. He considers the tree to be probably the species of poplar called by the Arabs *bak*, or the fly or gnat tree; a name it receives from its silky seeds, which, when escaping from the capsules, float like insects on the breeze.

The Hebrew word in this and the other passage rendered mulberry is *baca*, and our translators have, in the psalm of David, left the same word in its Hebrew form, where it stands significant of a place, the valley of Baca, the Vale of Weeping. And to which of

us is it not a figure of a scene of sorrow, of a place where the Israelites passed as they went up to the holy temple? It was thought to be the valley of El Bekaa. Celsius remarks of the valley of Baca, that it is "rugged and embarrassed with bushes and stones, which could not be passed through without labour and tears." With peace and joy, however, the holy men of Israel seem to have gone through it, looking beyond the difficulties of the way, and with trustful, hopeful spirit, contemplating the end of their journey, that type of a "rest which remaineth for the people of God;" and thus, "passing through the valley of Baca, made it a well," Psa. lxxxiv. 6.

A variety of plants has been adduced as having given to the valley of Baca its name. Parkhurst and others think that the large shrub which the Arabs call *baca* is meant. This yields an odoriferous gum, which drops from it like tears; and, as the literal meaning of *baca* is "weeping," there seems some probability for the opinion; for the same reason, the weeping willow has been supposed to grow in these spots, where the psalmist declares the rain also filled the pools, and thus made the streams by whose side it might flourish. The mulberry, the pear tree, and the poplar, have been adduced, but Dr. Royle's arguments in favour of the last tree are very satisfactory.

CHAPTER LV.

THE HEMLOCK.

"THEY have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field," Hosea x. 4. The hemlock may often be found in our land among the furrows of the field. It is frequent both there and on the hedgebank; and its dried, hollow stems, called by villagers *kecksies*, often rattle in the autumnal winds. The common hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) is the species general in our fields; it was the hemlock of the ancient Greeks, and is a well-known poison. Its leaves are refused by all animals, except the sheep, and no insect will touch it; yet the thrush thrives well upon its seeds, and, poisonous as it is, it has been much valued as a medicine. The most learned of the rabbins considered that the hemlock was the plant intended by the prophet, yet it is scarcely so common in Syria as to render this very probable. In other places, the word is translated "gall;" thus, it is given in that pathetic lament of the prophet, "Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall," Lam. iii. 19; and from the frequent mention of these words in Scripture, the passage is thought to be a proverbial expression. Moses speaks, in his song, of "the grapes of gall;" hence a species of nightshade was thought to be the plant referred to; but this plant,

though common in Syria, is not bitter. It seems impossible now to fix the exact meaning of the text, and some commentators believe that the original word, translated "hemlock," is probably used as a general name for any plant of an exceedingly bitter nature.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE APPLE TREE AND CITRON.

"THE vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered: because joy is withered away from the sons of men," Joel i. 12. A traveller, familiar with the natural productions of the Holy Land, would be surprised to find the apple enumerated with the pomegranate and the palm, and the other fruit trees, once so characteristic of the "field of Palestine." The apple tree is not frequent in Syria, and the apples which that country produces are small and of little flavour. Dr. Kitto has remarked, that apples are not found in lands sufficiently warm, or too warm, to produce in perfection the fruit of the vine. This traveller says, that he nowhere in western Asia saw an apple which an Englishman would praise, except in one place, called Gumitch, among the mountains of the Black Sea. Apple trees, however

are cultivated at Sidon, and also in various parts of Palestine, and the best are obtained on the cooler regions of Mount Lebanon. Damascus, too, is celebrated throughout Syria for its apples, and the Arabs of Mount Carmel procure them both from that land and from Rhodes. These apples are purchased at a high price.

The most frequent mention of the apple in our version is in the Song of Solomon, where it is praised as the chief of trees, of sweet fruit, and pleasant shadow; while so highly does Solomon appear to value the fruit, that, in his Proverbs, he has compared "the word fitly spoken" to "apples of gold in pictures of silver," Prov. xxv. 11. There is no doubt that the apple of Scripture is the citron, (*Citrus medica;*) the citron belongs to the orange tribe, and is by far the handsomest plant in a tribe remarkable for the beauty and fragrance both of its flower and fruit. It is very generally believed to be the Median, Assyrian, or Persian apple of the Greeks. It was very highly prized by the ancients, and the old Jewish historian, Josephus, makes mention of the citron. This word might include the whole of the citron or orange family, but as oranges and lemons were not grown in Palestine in those early ages, it was, doubtless, the citron of which Josephus speaks.

The description of the apple tree, as a noble tree, would well apply to the citron, which is a peculiarly majestic plant; and when covered with its shining fragrant leaves, and its rose-

coloured flowers, is singularly beautiful. Solomon called its fruits "apples of gold," and its large lemon-like fruits are of a rich yellow hue. In another passage, its odour seems to be alluded to as a restorative by those ready to faint, Cant. ii. 5; and so delicious is the fragrance of the citron, that it is commonly carried by eastern ladies in their hands, and used as Europeans would use a smelling-bottle. The citron trees are evergreen, and laden at once with flowers and fruits. Some of the finest citrons are eight inches long. They have a spongy rind, and a sub-acid pulp, and the leaves are thickly studded with glands, containing the oil which yields the pleasant odour. In China, these fruits are placed in porcelain dishes, and set on tables, to perfume the apartments. It is a popular belief that some species of the citron was the fruit gathered by Eve in the garden of Eden, and commonly spoken of as the apple, though without any reason for so calling it. The shaddock (*Citrus decumana*) is sold in the shops in London under the name of the forbidden fruit.

It is thought by some writers that the "goodly trees" which the Israelites were directed to gather for the feast of tabernacles, were citron trees, Lev. xxiii. 40. There is no proof that these trees were known to the Israelites in the desert, yet it is rather remarkable that citrons were used at the feast of the tabernacles, in the time of Josephus, and that to the present day the Jews continue to use either the fruit,

or a sweetmeat made from it, at their festival. M'Cheyne and Bonar found this to be the case among the Jews of Moldavia: "We took up," say they, "our lodging at an inn, not far from the river-side, kept by a Jew, who had erected a booth before his door of the willows that grow by the river-side, the next evening being the beginning of the feast of tabernacles. He afterwards showed us his palm branch, called *lulab*, and his fine fruit, called *ezrach*, supposed to be the 'fruit of a goodly tree,' spoken of in the law. It is a fruit like a lemon, and grows to maturity only once in three years. It is brought from Italy and from the Holy Land, and sometimes more than a hundred dollars are paid to obtain one for the feast. This man had paid four rubles for his, a sum equal to one pound sterling. The Karaites are not so particular. They use an orange or any fine fruit. This man had also slips of myrtle wrapped in the leaf of the palm."

CHAPTER LVII.

JONAH'S GOURD.

"THE Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd. But God prepared a worm when the morning

rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered," Jonah iv. 6, 7. The delights of the shadow of this plant, in the wilderness, were great indeed to the mourning prophet, and the suddenness of its decay spoke a reproof to him, when in the moment of bitter feeling he was willing that many should perish, rather than that he should appear as nothing in the eyes of his fellow-men. Perhaps no one in the whole list of Scripture plants has excited such warm and furious discussions as the gourd of Jonah. With a violence which now seems absurd and strange, the early fathers of the church disputed respecting it; and not content with denouncing on those who differed the excommunication of the church, and the wrath of God, these theologians fought with each other, and brought blows and ungodly clamour to the consideration of the word of God. Jerome affirmed that the ivy lent its shelter to the mourning prophet, though he did so against his own judgment, and evidently yielded to the prejudices of the age. Augustine maintained that the gourd was the true rendering. Our translators were probably guided to their choice of the gourd chiefly by the consideration of the rapid growth of this tribe of plants in the desert, but the marginal reading of our Bible gives the plant as the *Palma Christi.*

The learned Dr. Harris thus renders the verse of the prophet, that we read, "which came up in a night, and perished in a night:" "Son of the night it was, and as a son of the night

it died," which would be an expressive figure of the rapid growth and decay of the plant, without limiting its existence to a few hours. It seems to us, however, that its rapid growth need not affect any opinion which might be formed as to what was the actual plant intended. Its appearance on that particular occasion was the result of a miracle, and we can no more determine how it was effected, than we can explain how, in after times, five barley loaves and two small fishes sufficed for the meal of five thousand persons. The God who spoke a world into being could bid a lofty tree in one moment to arise, and cast a goodly shadow over his servant.

There is little doubt that the castor oil tree, or *Palma Christi*, (*Ricinus communis*,) was the plant of Jonah. This is, in our gardens, an herbaceous annual, but is in hot climates a magnificent tree, lasting several years, and affording by its numerous broad palmate leaves an abundance of shadow. It is remarkable in the east for attaining its size very rapidly. Mr. Ramsay, who accompanied lord Lindsay, describes its appearance near Egypt, where the tree is very abundant. He says, "A very beautiful plant, which we saw a good deal of to-day in the fields, is the castor oil tree. I never saw such a diversity of appearances in one plant at the same time; two totally different flowers on the same stalk, one red, the other white; berries, buds, and fruits, something like horse-chesnuts, but more delicate."

This writer adds, "that the young leaves also were of a deep purple, and the old ones of bright green, thus beautifully variegating the foliage with the vernal and autumnal tint of our seasons."

The castor oil, which is the product of this tree, is a well-known medicine, and there is no doubt that it is referred to by the ancient Greeks and Romans, as well as by Arabic writers. The Jews too used it extensively in their religious rites, and it is mentioned among the five kinds of oil which rabbinical tradition sanctions as to be employed for ceremonial purposes. It is remarkable, however, that neither the ancient Hebrews, nor the modern inhabitants of Syria, seem to have used it as a medicine. The Chinese employ it in cookery.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE FIG TREE.

"ALTHOUGH the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation," Hab. iii. 17, 18. Thus did the ancient prophet honour God, and shall the disciple of Christ tremble at the loss of worldly

prosperity? Alas! it is so difficult to remember that the body is but the shrine of the immortal spirit, and that the path of this life is but the narrow way, whose gate is to open upon life eternal. It is not always when surrounded by worldly prosperity that we rejoice most in the Lord—that we rejoice in him only. The praise of a loving heart, and the praise of a holy life, are witnessed often amid sickness, and poverty, and bereavement. Then it is that the blessed truth, "I know that my Redeemer liveth," comes home to the heart with power, and rising above worldly cares, though living amid them, the song of faith and gratitude soars high and clear. It is not always in the home of plenty and worldly prosperity that the joy in the Lord is the most fervent. It is not when the footstep bounds to the healthy beatings of the heart, and the glad spirit echoes to the lark's loud singing, that the thoughts are always most occupied on eternal things. But when the time of sorrow comes, when the fields yield no meat, and the flock is cut off from the fold, when all that we loved and clung to are taken away, how blessed is the consolation that Christ liveth for ever, the Unchangeable! Could we ever, in this life, fully estimate our own sinfulness, and the full value of Christ's sacrifice, surely our lives would, for this blessing only, be one continued song of praise. And when earthly blessings vanished one by one from us, we should not only say with the psalmist, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth because thou didst it;"

or with Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord;" but catching the fervour of the apostle Paul, and being full of love to Christ, we should sing, "I glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience hope; and hope maketh not ashamed."

In the beautiful expression of faith in the lovingkindness of God, first cited, the prophet speaks of the fig tree as a plant of great importance to the people of Israel. The fig tree of Scripture (*Ficus carica*) is frequently mentioned in holy writ, from the days when man first fell, till those when the promised Messiah came to redeem the fallen. So copious is the shadow of this beautiful tree, that it is still planted in the courts of the eastern houses, and its shade is said to be fresher and cooler than that given by a tent. The traveller in the Holy Land rejoices even now, when the cry of the Arab, "*Tacht-el-teen*," under the fig tree, invites him to repose, as ancient Israel did, in the day of prosperity, beneath its boughs; and as the noon-day sun shines on the hot earth, he can well appreciate the figure, when Israel and Judah were said to dwell safely, "every man under his vine and under his fig tree;" and, as he eats of its fresh or dried fruits, he wonders not that, in a land in which fruits form so large a portion of daily food, the failure of the fig tree should be named by the prophet as a calamity of the people. The fig was brought, with

other fruits, by the spies from the land of Eshcol, ere Canaan was yet possessed by the ancient Hebrew; and still the fig trees cast their shadow in Eshcol, and are almost the only remains of its former natural luxuriance and beauty.

The flowers of the fig tree are contained within the fig itself, and thus the fruit shoots forth from the boughs, unpreceded by the usual blossom. It was this shooting forth of the fruits to which our Saviour referred, when he told his disciples, that by this they knew that summer was nigh. The fig tree which grew by the wayside was also the witness of our Lord's power in one of his miracles—a miracle at which Jewish writers have cavilled, but which presents no real difficulty. St. Mark says of the Saviour, "And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find any thing thereon: and when he came to it, he found nothing but leaves; for the time of figs was not yet," chap. xi. 13. But why, say the Jewish writers, did Christ expect to find figs, if the season had not arrived? The fruit of the fig tree appears before the leaves, and therefore, when the tree was seen from a distance, covered with its foliage, it might naturally be expected that some ripening figs were among their shadow, though "the time of figs was not yet." This event happened at the period of the passover, and June is the time when the summer fig is ripe, but in early seasons a few figs are often ripening in March and

April. Our Saviour, however, found none, and thus the tree was barren, and was a fit image of the outward profession of holiness made by the Pharisees, who brought not forth the fruits of righteousness. Nor can we wonder if He who created the world, chose to bid a fig tree stand in a withered condition, as an emblem of the worthlessness of a fruitless profession of religion. But, besides this, the fig tree produces three crops of figs in the year; and often, when the summer fig is just shooting forth, some ripe winter figs linger on the branches, half hidden by the thickened foliage of the advancing spring.

Figs are used medicinally in the east, and are commonly employed as a remedy, in the same way in which Isaiah applied them to heal the malady of king Hezekiah, 2 Kings xx. 7. It is the summer crop of figs which are preserved for use; and these, when dried, are kept hung on strings. Baskets, dishes, and umbrellas are made of the fig leaves, sown together.

CHAPTER LIX.

MYRRH.

"When they (the wise men) were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped

him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh," Matt. ii. 11. From various passages of Scripture, as well as from modern practices of the east, we know that presents of fruits, vegetables, and resins, were commonly offered to earthly monarchs. This gift of these valued substances, made by the wise men to the infant Saviour, must be regarded as an expression of their recognition of Him as the Sovereign of earth, while they fell down and worshipped him as they opened them before him.

The myrrh is a gum resin which exudes from a tree of the east, growing both in Arabia and some parts of Africa. The repute in which this drug was held by the ancients is scarcely lessened in modern times, in oriental countries. It is highly valued as an aromatic substance and perfume, and is considered of the greatest use for medicinal purposes. The Egyptians burned it in their temples, and embalmed their dead with this and similar odours; and the ancient Greeks and Romans made much use of it. We have reference to its use among the Hebrews, in embalming the body, where we find that Nicodemus, who in the lifetime of Jesus feared to acknowledge him as his Lord, yet grew bolder at his death, and brought the immense quantity of a hundred pounds' weight of myrrh and aloes, to place in the sepulchre of the Saviour. It appears to have

been among the earliest articles of ancient commerce.

The myrrh is the resinous gum of a small tree, called the myrrh tree (*Balsamodendron myrrha.*) It grows in Abyssinia and Arabia Felix, where it is scattered among the thorny acacias and euphorbias, which form the brush-wood of the country. It has a number of thorns on its boughs, and both bark and wood are singularly odoriferous. Its leaves grow in threes, and its fruit is an oval plum; but its flowers are as yet unknown to botanists. When the myrrh first exudes from the tree, it is a soft clear substance, which drops on the stones beneath the branches. It flows, more or less, during the whole year, but is most copious in the hottest season; the natives of Abyssinia collect it in small kid skins, and export the myrrh, when hardened, to India and Arabia.

The flavour of myrrh is bitter, and it is not palatable to Europeans generally. There was a period, however, when myrrh was greatly esteemed as a medicine in Europe, and that eccentric writer, Von Helmont, believed, that if by any means myrrh could be fully dissolved in the liquids of the human frame that man would be immortal.

Whatever may be the modern opinion of the odour of myrrh, the ancient Hebrews evidently regarded it as highly agreeable. "All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia," said the sweet singer of Israel, in that beautiful psalm, in which he spoke of the "things

touching the king," and declared the Messiah to be "fairer than the children of men," Psa. xlv. 8. And Solomon delighted in the sweet-smelling myrrh, and mentions that substance and aloes, "with all the chief spices." Several kinds of myrrh appear to have been in ancient use, and it is probable that some were more aromatic than others. Some authors think that myrrh is produced by another spice of the *balsamodendron*.

CHAPTER LX.

THE REED, RUSH, AND SWEET CANE.

"As they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?" Matt. xi. 7. There is something very touching in the circumstances connected with this interview of the disciples of John with the Saviour. John was now in prison, and in that mental depression caused by the injustice to which he was subjected, he had almost feared, after all the evidence which he had of Christ's power, that he had made some mistake. The Old Testament dispensation promised temporal blessings to the servants of God, and would the true Messiah leave his faithful servant to die in a dungeon? Yet he knew that Jesus had been declared at his

baptism to be "the Son of God." His works bore testimony to His power and goodness, and he sent his disciples to reassure both them and himself. "Art thou He that should come, or do we look for another?"

The reed, or reed-like grass, which seems intended by the original word, offered an apt emblem of a frail and mortal being. Easily agitated by every changing wind, the light panicle, which surmounts its slender stalk, is an appropriate figure of the spirit of man, swayed hither and thither by contending emotions. Other comparisons of the Scriptures, suggested by the same plant, are equally forcible. When the Assyrian warrior reviled Hezekiah, he said, "Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that trust on him," 2 Kings xviii. 21. And who would lean upon a reed, the broken splinters of which would inflict a painful wound? The broken reed often brought anguish to the early Christians, for Rosenmüller remarks, that one of the torments applied to make them renounce their Saviour, was that of driving pieces of reed under the nails of their hands and feet.

Another comparison to the reed, giving a description of the Saviour's ministry, has often afforded consolation to the sorrowing mind. Isaiah said of the coming Messiah, "The bruised reed shall he not break;" for the mission of

that blessed Saviour was not with the stern voice of him, who

> ——"In rough garments clad, and locust fed,
> Cried to the sinful multitude, and claimed
> Fruits of repentance, with the lifted scourge
> Of terror and reproof. A milder Guide
> With gentle tones doth teach the listening throng.
> Benignant pity moved Him, as he saw
> The shepherdless and poor. He knew to touch
> The springs of every nature. The high lôre
> Of Heaven—he humbled to the simplest child,
> And in the guise of parable, allured
> The sluggish mind to follow truth and live."

In some passages of Scripture, we find the reed or cane mentioned as an instrument of writing. Thus when the apostle John says, "I will not with ink and pen write unto thee," (3 John 13,) it should be rendered with ink and reed, for the pith or marrow being extracted, the reed was first moistened, and then hardened in the sun, and was cut into a common writing implement. Reeds were also used as light walking sticks, when they were not required for the purpose of giving support to the walker.

In many passages of Scripture in which the words rush and reed are employed, the sense is general, and may include a variety of similar plants. In others, the sedges which grow by the sides of rivers and streams seem especially intended. In many parts of the Old Testament, the reeds by the waters are referred to, as in that announcement of the prophet, "The Lord shall smite Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water," 1 Kings xiv. 15. So again, Job, in describing Behemoth, says, "He lieth under the shady trees, in the covert of the reed, and fens.

The shady trees cover him with their shadow the willows of the brook compass him about," chap. xl. 21, 22.

The cane plants (*Arundo donax*, and *Arundo phragmites*) are thought to be the reeds of the Scriptures. They are common in Asia, and in the south of Europe. These plants have stout hollow stems, they are commonly six feet high, and on marshy lands in the tropics are sometimes fifteen feet in height. They are used in the countries where they grow for poles in vineyards, fishing-rods, and a variety of purposes. Their flowers yield a dye, and their roots contain sugar. The Red Sea was long supposed to have received its name of *Yam suph*, or Sea of Reeds, from the ancients, on account of the quantity of reeds which grow on its shores; but Bruce, and more recent travellers, have found this sea quite free from the sedgy mass which they expected to find there. It has been suggested that the Red Sea of our version should be the Sea of Corals, for trees of coral spread their white and firm branches all over the bottom of the sea, and resemble the plants which vegetate on the land. They often rise ten fathoms above the water.

We find the sweet calamus, or "reed of fragrance," named as one of the substances of which the holy anointing oil was to be composed, and as the "sweet cane from a far country," Jer. vi. 20, and the sweet cane of the sacrifices, Isa. xliii. 24. This is thought to be the aromatic calamus (*Calamus aromaticus*) of

India ; some writers considering that India and Egypt had commercial relations, as early as the time of the Pharaohs, and that then the Indian cane would be a costly product which would be brought into Palestine from a far country.

CHAPTER LXI.

TARES.

"THE kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat," Matt. xiii. 24, 25. Martin Luther renders this passage, "The enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat." The original word *zizanion*, is not found in any Greek author, but the fact that a weed exists, called by the Spaniards *zizanion*, and by the Arabs *siwan*, and which appears to be the darnel, has induced modern translators to render the Greek by darnel, (*Lolium temulentum.*) This rendering receives confirmation from the fact, that until the corn is in the ear, the darnel is so much like it as to be easily mistaken, and it appears that the husbandman did not discern the presence of the weed until the blade had sprung up, and brought forth fruit. This grass is very frequent in Palestine, and throughout Syria. Volney says of it, "The peasants of these countries, lest they

should lose a single grain of the corn, do not cleanse away the seeds of the weeds from it, and often leave the rye-grass, in Arabic called *siwan*, amongst it, which stuns people, and makes them giddy for some hours;" so that the servants of the modern eastern householder would still have the same direction as that given of old, to have the weeds, "lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn." Just so would the servants do now, for the custom is very general of drawing up the darnel with the hand, during the harvest time, and tying it up in separate bundles.

The darnel is often called ray, or rye grass, in our country, the former name being a corruption of the French name, *Fausse ivraie*. Our old poets called it darnel:—

"Her fallow leas,
The darnel, hemlock, and rank fumitory
Doth root upon: while that the coulter rusts
That should deracinate such savagery."

The darnel grows in all countries of Europe, and is the only deleterious plant of all the grass tribe. Its effects are said to be intoxicating to men and animals, and in some cases fatal. An instance is recorded of a farmer in France, who died in consequence of having persevered in eating bread made of darnel

flour. His wife and servant, who refused, after a time, to continue eating it, were affected with illness from the smaller portion which they had taken.

CHAPTER LXII.

MUSTARD.

"THE kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof," Matt. xiii. 31, 32. Many of our commentators consider the mustard plant of Scripture to be the eastern mustard, (*Sinapis orientalis*,) a plant very similar to the common charlock of our fields. This plant, in the more favourable climate of Palestine, attains a considerable size. It is, however, an annual, and having a stem which dies away in winter, it is scarcely permanent enough, or woody enough, to be called a tree. The Bible, however, is not intended as a treatise of natural history, and its descriptions are, therefore, popular rather than scientific, so that any plant large enough to reach a man's head, and having spreading branches, might be familiarly called a tree. Dr. Kitto, in his "Pictorial Bible," cites an extract from Travels in

Chili, by Alonzo de Avallo, "Mustard, turnips, mint, trefoil, and other plants," says this writer, "which I see are cultivated in Europe, do all grow wild in Chili, without serving to the use of life at all, otherwise than by cattle feeding on them. The mustard tree thrives so rapidly that it is as big as one's arm, and so high and thick, that it looks like a tree. I have travelled many leagues through mustard groves, which were taller than horse and man, and the birds built their nests there, as the gospel mentions." We have, too, the recent assertion of lord Claude Hamilton, who saw, in Upper Egypt, a mustard tree, higher than he could reach, and its stem as thick as a man's arm. The allusion to the seed as the smallest among seeds, appears to have been a proverbial expression for any small object; and we have no more need to look for its literal truth, than we are to infer from the pathetic lament of David, over Jonathan, that the Hebrew warrior was really "swifter than an eagle, and stronger than a lion."

There are learned men, however, who think that the sinapis is not the mustard tree of Scripture. Mention is made in the Talmudical writings of a mustard tree, under the name of chardal, and a tree called khardal, yielding mustard, has been found growing abundantly on the banks of the Jordan, near the sea of Tiberias, and also near Jerusalem. Dr. Royle, who has largely investigated this subject, is fully of opinion that this is the mustard tree of

Scripture. This has a very small seed, containing the pungent substance. Its boughs would well support the nests of the fowls of the air, and by the shores of Galilee, where our Saviour compared the plant to the kingdom of heaven, it grows so plentifully, that He and his hearers might have been looking on it at the time of the comparison. The bark of this tree is acrid, and raises blisters upon the skin; a decoction of it is used as a medicine, and its berries are said to be edible. It is the *Salvadora persica* of botanists.

CHAPTER LXIII.

ANISE.

"Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone," Matt. xxiii. 23. The word here rendered anise should undoubtedly have been dill. The dill (*Anethum graveolens*) is a plant containing an aromatic seed, and like the cummin and coriander belongs to the umbelliferous order of plants. It somewhat resembles the fennel, and has yellow flowers. The common dill is an annual, and is a weed in the cornfields of Spain, and of other countries of southern

Europe, as well as of Egypt. It is sometimes grown in England, but it does not thrive well in our climate, and large quantities of its aromatic seeds are yearly imported from the south of France. The seeds are used in carminative medicines, and for various other purposes, and both by the eastern nations and the Cossacks, just as we should select the caraway.

The dill was, in the Talmud, made subject to tithe both in its green and ripe states, and both as a herb and seed. It was, therefore, doubtless prized as a herb by the Jews, as it still is in some oriental countries, for its warm and stimulating properties.

CHAPTER LXIV.

THE SPIKENARD PLANT.

"BEING in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head," Mark xiv. 3. This touching expression of the love and tenderness which Mary bore to her Lord, and which was so well received by him, can be more fully appreciated, when we consider the costliness of the gift. The apostle John, in his narrative, records the complaint of the artful Judas against this waste, that the ointment

might have been sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor; but Mary judged the matter, under the better influence of a loving spirit, and felt that no gift was too precious to be given to Him who had left the world of glory to redeem the lost. When Mary broke the box, or rather the seal of the alabaster vessel, "the house was filled with the odour of the ointment." So sweet was this fragrance, and so much esteemed, that Horace mentions of the spikenard, "that a small onyx box full, was equal in value to a large vessel of wine." The evangelist speaks of it as "costly and very precious," and its costliness, both among the ancient Hebrews, and the Greeks and Romans, was doubtless chiefly owing to its having been procured from some country lying far from either Rome or Palestine.

It was not until a recent period that any satisfactory information was obtained respecting the plant which furnished the spikenard of the Scriptures. Sir William Jones, Dr. Royle, and others, versed in the natural productions and language of the east, have bestowed much research on the subject. Some older writers thought that they had discovered the spikenard plant in the tall nardus grass which waves over the plains of Persia, and which, as the horses of an army trode over it, exhaled the most delicious and powerful fragrance; and more than one species of fragrant reed has been selected by others, as the spikenard plant of ancient times. There is no doubt, however, that the true plant

is that species of Valerian, sometimes called *Valeriana jatamansi*, and by most botanists now termed *Nardostachys jatamansi*.

The spikenard valerian grows on the cold and dry pastures of the mountains of India, and is yearly brought thence to the plains of that country, where it forms a considerable article of commerce. The Arabs compare this plant to the tail of an ermine, nor is the spikenard sold by the London druggists unlike the tail of an animal. This appearance is said, by Dr. Royle, to be produced in consequence of the "woody fibres and its footstalk not being decomposed in the cold and comparativly dry climate where they are produced, as they remain and form a protection to the plant, from the severity of the cold," giving it this shaggy appearance.

The Hebrews and Romans used the fragrant ointment of this plant at the burial of their dead, and Mary brought it among other sweet ingredients to embalm the body of Jesus. It was commonly imported in boxes of alabaster, and when the master of a house received his guests, he not only crowned them with flowers, but broke the seal which prevented the perfume from escaping, and anointed them with spikenard. Many fragrant essences and unguents are still made of the *jatamansi* in the east.

CHAPTER LXV.

MINT.

"Ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God," Luke xi. 42. There have been, in all times, men who are willing to offer God an outward service; men who, while they make to themselves a law stricter than that of holy writ, yet withhold that homage of the heart, and neglect that spiritual holiness, without which God cannot accept their service. "Love is the fulfilling of the law," and it was against the form of godliness without the power that our Saviour uttered his indignant reproof.

The rue and mint and "all manner of herbs," which, being cultivated as food by the Jews, became liable to tithe, were under no such obligation by the law of Moses. This the Jews themselves distinctly recognised, as it was a common saying among them, that the tithing of corn was from the law, but the tithing of herbs from the rabbins. Seeds and fruits were appointed to be paid by Moses. God, as the sovereign of the earth, demanded it of his peculiar people, and even an over-scrupulousness in paying these tithes, would not have been blamed by our Saviour, had not the Scribes and Pharisees omitted the weightier matters of the law. These, said our Lord, ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. But the

Jews had already learned to value the traditions of men above the commands of God.

The two species of mint which were probably cultivated in Palestine were our wild mint, (*Mentha sylvestris*,) and our corn-field mint, (*Mentha arvensis*;) the former is still planted commonly at Aleppo. The warm flavour of the mint is well known, and it is useful in modern days in medicinal preparations. Among the ancient Hebrews, however, as well as by the Greeks and Romans, it was in far more general use than with us. A great number of dishes were flavoured by it; and Rosenmüller remarks, that in the cookery book of the Roman Apicius, the green, as well as the preserved, mint are alluded to on almost every page; and that Dioscorides names it as having been used as a stomachic. The Hebrew synagogues were also strewed with its fragrant leaves.

CHAPTER LXVI.

RUE.

"Ye tithe mint and rue," Luke xi. 42. The Talmudical law respecting plants was, according to Rosenmüller, that "everything eatable, and which is taken care of, cultivated, and nursed in gardens, or in ploughed fields, and which has its growth in the earth, is subject to tithes." This writer adds, that the rue was declared free

of tithe, because, though a kitchen herb, it was not originally cultivated in the garden; but he infers from its mention by our Saviour, that in his later days it had become an object of culture.

The rue (*Ruta graveolens*) was, most probably, used by the Jews, as it was by the ancients, both for seasoning dishes and as a medicine. It has a bitter flavour, and its properties are stimulant, and so powerful, that an injudicious use of rue, internally, has been attended by most dangerous results. The fresh leaves will, when applied to the skin, produce a blister; and the skin is, indeed, sometimes blistered by only handling the plant carelessly. The rue, with its sea-green leaves and yellow flowers, still lingers in the cottage garden, and is valued in villages as a tonic; but, to English taste, its introduction at the table would be very offensive. The whole surface is covered with glands, containing the volatile oil in which the odour exists. It was known as a medicine as early as the time of Hippocrates, and is still used by medical practitioners. It is the "herb of grace" of the old herbalists. "Certes," says Pliny; "we find that in old time rue was in some great account, and especial reckoning above other herbs;" and this naturalist held the notion, that it prospered nowhere so well as under a fig tree. The dust on the anthers of the flowers, termed by botanists pollen, if it reach the eye, produces inflammation.

Dr. Kitto observes of the rue that it grows

spontaneously in Palestine, especially on mountains, and it is mentioned as one of the vegetable products both of Carmel and Tabor.

CHAPTER LXVII.

THE CAROB TREE.

"And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him," Luke xv. 15, 16. These words occur in the affecting narrative by which our Saviour illustrated the folly of the sinner, and the love and mercy of God. In no other part of Scripture is reference made to the vegetable substance here translated husks, but there is no doubt that these are the pods of the carob tree.

The carob tree (*Ceratonia siliqua*) is very common in Palestine, and throughout Syria and Egypt. It also grows abundantly in all the countries near the Mediterranean. In the Isle of Malta, rendered dreary by the white soil, and the absence of any luxuriant vegetation, the carob is often the only tree which enlivens the scene. Sir J. E. Smith, who remarks its abundance in the clefts of the rocks on the road to Genoa, describes its general appearance as resembling that of the apple tree,

with a rich and evergreen foliage. The tree bears an immense number of flat brown pods, six or eight inches in length, which, though extremely sour in their unripe state, are, when ripe, full of a sweet dark-coloured syrup, like honey. So numerous are they, that one tree will often produce eight or nine hundred weight of these pods.

The pods of the carob tree form a common article of diet in those lands where it grows wild. The Arabs eat them, and consider their flavour like that of manna, and the early Greek writers mention them as food. The Mussulmans mix them with liquorice root, dried grapes, or other fruits, and make them into sherbets. The poor peasants of Spain, too, feed upon them, but their chief use, as it was in the days of the prodigal, is to feed swine and cattle, and this tree is frequently named in the Talmud as supplying the ordinary food of animals. In southern Europe, the pods are very generally given to horses, and they are known to have formed the principal sustenance of the horses of the British cavalry during the war of 1811 and 1812. Vessels laden with them are, in the present day, sent from Palestine to Alexandria, and thence across the Mediterranean to Constantinople, at which city they are commonly sold in shops, while in Egypt decoctions are made of the fruit, and vended about the streets like the ptisans of Paris. They may sometimes be purchased of the London fruiterers, and the sweet pulp which they con-

tain is often used as sugar in preserving fruit. They are imported from Spain by the name of *algaroba* beans, the name being made by prefixing the article *al* to the Arabic name of the tree, which is *kharroub*, and from which, also, our English name for the plant is derived.

The dry shell, or husk, in which the seeds and syrup are inclosed, is curved like a sickle. They have little nutriment, and none but those who could procure no other food would feed upon them.

The carob tree is often called the locust tree, and St. John's bread, from the old notion that the locusts, on which the Baptist fed, were the seeds of this tree and the pulpy matter which they contained, the honey of the wilderness. The tree certainly abounds in the wilderness where St. John preached repentance, but there is no reason to think that the locust was a vegetable substance, though the discussion of this point was once conducted with considerable vehemence.

CHAPTER LXVIII.

THE SYCAMINE TREE.

"THE Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should

obey you," Luke xvii. 6. There is little doubt that the sycamine of Scripture is the mulberry tree, (*Morus nigra,*) and our Saviour was probably looking at the time he spoke at one of those old and sturdy trees, which stood by the wayside, or in one of the gardens of Palestine. The white mulberry (*Morus alba*) is most extensively cultivated by the Druses, on the mountains of Lebanon. Jowett observes, "The country is here as remarkable for the innumerable multitudes of its mulberry trees, as Egypt is for its palm trees." During the chief part of the year, these mulberry trees clothe the prospect in every direction with a most delightful verdure, as they are not cultivated for fruit, but for their leaves, from which a great quantity of silk-worms are reared."

But besides their culture for the silkworm, mulberry trees are planted in Palestine, both for their shade and fruits. In our country, attempts were made to obtain the produce of the silk-worm, and many old mulberry trees in the gardens around the metropolis are the remains of those planted in the time of James I., for the purpose of making this experiment, the success of which was prevented by the variableness of our summer climate. Some venerable trees in these spots seem so strongly rooted, and so sturdily built, that it would require great effort to uproot them from the soil, and they might well serve for such an allusion as that made by our Saviour.

On the rock of Ophel, at the entrance of the valley of Hinnom, not far from Jerusalem, stands an old mulberry tree, which is said to mark the place where Manasseh caused the prophet Isaiah to be sawn asunder.

CHAPTER LXIX.

ALOES.

"THERE came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury," John xix. 39, 40. The fragrant aloes of Scripture must not be confounded with the substance termed aloes by our British druggists. That drug is the thickened juice of a species of aloe plant, and the common kind is too bitter and nauseous to have an agreeable odour, though, when fresh flowing from the plant the socotrine aloe is said to yield a pleasant perfume.

There seems no doubt that the aloes of Scripture was the sweet-scented, woody, resinous substance, which is the inside of the trunk of one or more species of the *agallochum* tribe of trees, growing in India and other parts of Asia. The trees especially considered to yield the aloes, are, by botanists, termed *aquilaria agal*

locha, and *aquilaria ovata*. This substance is still esteemed in the east for its perfume, and for its cordial properties, and it has in England been used as a medicine in rheumatic affections. It was probably mingled with the myrrh, when wrapped in among the burying clothes; and the immense quantity of these substances bought by Nicodemus, shows how profuse was the quantity of fragrant essences used at the burials of the ancient Jews.

CHAPTER LXX.

THYINE WOOD.

"THE merchandise of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and of pearls, and fine linen, and purple, and silk, and scarlet, and all thyine wood, and all manner vessels of ivory, and all manner vessels of most precious wood, and of brass, and iron, and marble," Rev. xviii. 12. It is not surprising that the thyine wood should be mentioned as among the most valuable articles of merchandise of that great Babylon, when we consider the estimation in which it was held by the Romans. By that people it was called citron wood, and it is mentioned as a costly material, by most ancient authors. It suited well the taste of the polished Greek, and the refined oriental, for its delicate and balsamic fragrance perfumed the apartment of which it

composed the furniture. The most choice tables, as well as the bowls, and a variety of domestic utensils, were carved out of the thyine or citron wood, and it was also used in buildings. The ancient name of *thya*, which was given to the genus of trees, one of which furnished the wood, was derived from the Greek word to sacrifice; because the smoke of its perfumed wood often ascended from the Greek altar, when the pagan deity was worshipped, and spiritual darkness, triumphing even in intellectual light, proved the truth of that declaration of the apostle, "the world by wisdom knew not God."

The thyine wood is yielded by a species of *Arbor vitæ* tree, called by modern botanists *Callitris quadrivalvis*, but by Linnæus, *Thuja articulata*. It is a very large tree, affording excellent timber, which, owing to its resinous property, is little liable to decay, and is also uninjured by insects. This plant is said to yield the inflammable, resinous, and acrid substance called gum-sandarach, which was, until lately, believed to be furnished by a species of juniper. The tree is a native of Mount Atlas, and other hills of Africa, where it grows to an immense size.

The plants and trees of scripture

Religious Tract Society