

Cheap Repository.

SUNDAY READING.

THE
STORY

OF

JOSEPH & HIS BRETHREN.

In Four Parts.



SOLD BY HOWARD AND EVANS,

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THE
S T O R Y
OF
Joseph and his Brethren.

THE first part of Joseph's story, though both instructive and entertaining to all, is particularly so to children. I propose to tell the story nearly in the words of the Old Testament, but to make now and then a few remarks upon it.

Joseph was the son of good old Jacob. "Now Jacob," says the Scripture, "loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age: and he made him a coat of many colours. And when his brethren saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and could not speak peaceably unto him."

But was not this hatred of Joseph's Brethren against Joseph very wicked? It is true Jacob might be faulty in shewing so much partiality to one son above another, yet this was no excuse for the hatred which was felt by Joseph's Brethren. Methinks this hatred, though as yet it is only concealed in their breasts, will, by-and-by break out into some very wicked act or other. But let us go on with the story.

"And Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his Brethren: and they hated him yet the more."

This is doing worse and worse, and it shews that when hatred once begins, we know not where it will end.

"And Joseph said unto them, Hear, I pray you, this dream which I have dreamed: for behold we were binding sheaves in the field, and my sheaf arose and also stood upright, and behold your sheaves stood round about and made obeisance (or bowed down) to my sheaf."

Joseph seems to me to have told this dream thus publicly, through the openness of heart and simplicity ; it was a dream moreover which God sent, and God caused afterwards the thing signified by it to be fulfilled, as in due time we shall see.

“ And his Brethren said to him, shalt thou indeed reign over us? and they hated him yet the more for his dream, and now for his words.—And Joseph dreamed yet another dream, and told it to his Brethren, and said, “ Behold I have dreamed a dream more, and behold the Sun, and the Moon, and the Eleven Stars made obedience to me.” And he told it to his father and to his Brethren ; and his father rebuked him, and said to him, “ What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? shall I, and thy mother, and thy Brethren, indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth.”

Poor honest, simple old man, he little knew how his own interpretation of the dream was by-and-by to be exactly fulfilled, for so God has ordained.

“ And his Brethren envied him, but his father observed the saying.”

After this we read, that “ Joseph’s Brethren went to feed their father’s flock in Shechem ; and Jacob sent Joseph to them, saying, Go, I pray thee, see whether it be well with thy Brethren, and well with their flocks, and bring me word again. So he sent him, and Joseph came to Shechem ; but it happened that they and their flocks were gone forward beyond Shechem, even to Dothan. So Joseph went after his Brethren, and found them in Dothan. And when they saw him afar off, they said one to another, Behold, this Dreamer cometh ! come now therefore, and let us slay him, and cast him into some pit, and we will say some evil beast hath devoured him, and we will see what will become of his dreams.”

What a dreadful proposal ! what ! kill their own brother ! if they could agree to do this, I do not wonder at their agreeing also to tell a lie, in order to hide their crime—thus not the sin, but two sins were to be committed. But is it possible that all these eleven Brethren should join in putting Joseph to death ? Even among bad men, some are apt to be less bad than others : surely therefore, we may hope, that one or other of Joseph’s Brethren will be stopping short of the crime of murder.

It proved, as I think might very naturally be expected, that one of Joseph's Brethren, named Reuben, though he seems before to have joined in envying Joseph was afraid of joining in this most horrid crime.

When, therefore, "Reuben heard it, he delivered him out of their hands; and said, shed no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hands on him: this he said, that he might rid him out of their hands, and deliver him to his father's house. And it came to pass that when Joseph (who was at a distance while this conversation passed) was come unto his Brethren, they stripped Joseph of his coat, it being his coat of many colors."

What satisfaction would they feel while they were thus stripping him! This was the coat which Joseph's father had given him, because he was a favorite, and which reminded Joseph's Brethren of his advantage over them. They now thought themselves revenged upon him, and revenge, as they would say, is sweet. Many a joke, many a bitter and severe expression was uttered, no doubt, while they were stripping him: they had got him into their power, and they were resolved to shew that they were greater than he, instead of his being greater than they, as he pretended.

Now this sort of spirit in them was a most wicked thing; it was coupled with envy, and malice, and hatred; and was not far from carrying them on to an act of murder. And here let me warn all my young readers against indulging this same evil temper. Thus, for instance, if you should hear your teacher praise your school-fellow who stands near you, while he says not a word of praise to you, do not hate or envy your school-fellow on this account; or if you should see your parent give a reward to your brother or sister, for supposed good behaviour, do not be eager to think that you equally deserve a reward, and then hate or envy your brother or sister for being more favored than yourself, for this is to act in the same spirit with the Brethren of Joseph. So also if some other child should be drest as fine again as you are, and even as fine as Joseph himself, in his coat of many colours, yet do not do as Joseph's Brethren did. Do not feel any ill-will towards your brother, your sister, or play-fellow, for this reason. Do not long to strip the fine coat off of him, as Joseph's Brethren stripped the fine coat off of Joseph, but

endeavor to look upon his fine dress contentedly, and without envy, and without any desire to take it from him, and to put it on your own backs. This is one of the lessons that you ought to learn from the present story, which was not written in the Bible in order to entertain you only, and in order to teach you how to read, but in order to instruct you in your duty also. This passion of hatred and envy, if indulged when you are young, may lead to dreadful consequences when you are old. We shall presently shew you very plainly how in the case of Joseph's Brethren it led on to lying, and cruelty, and almost even to murder.

For "after they had stripped Joseph of his coat, they took him and cast him into a pit, and the pit was empty, and there was no water in it. And they sat down to eat bread."

How very hardened must these Brethren of Joseph have been! They went to their dinner after they had thrown Joseph into the pit just as if nothing had happened. Men who thus give way to their evil passions, are apt to be very cruel and hard-hearted also.

"And behold a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead with their camels, bearing spicery, and balm, and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt.

Now a new thought comes across one of Joseph's Brethren, who was named Judah, and who, though more blameable than Reuben, yet seems rather less so than some of the others.

"And Judah said unto his Brethren, what profit is it if we slay our brother and conceal his blood. Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh."

Oh Judah! Judah! if he is your brother and your flesh, why do you not deliver him altogether if you should send him back to his father's house, as Reuben wished to do; indeed you should never have thrown him into the pit, nor have joined in taking his coat of many colours from him. Nay, I will say further, you should never even have hated him and envied him, for by having once indulged that wicked hatred and envy against him in your hearts, you have all of you been led on, by one thing to another, until you hardly know how to stop. You dare not now send Joseph back to his father lest he should tell his father of your having torn from him his coat of many colours, and of your having also ill-treated him by

throwing him into a pit. Having ill-treated him thus far, you are tempted to ill-treat him still further, lest you should be found out. Joseph, therefore, now must, at any rate be got rid of, and not be suffered to get home. To kill him indeed is too bad, and yet if the only choice left you was either to kill him or to send him home, methinks there are some among you who would not scruple to kill him outright; for you had already agreed to leave him in the pit, where he would soon have perished with hunger: so that what you had resolved to do was little short of murder, though you may not have chosen to consider it as such.

It was owing to the good providence of God, and not to any good design in his brothers, that Joseph escaped being put to death. It pleased God, who orders all human events, to bring it to pass, that the merchants of Midian should draw near just at the time when Joseph's Brethren were in doubt what to do with him. This is what some may consider as chance, and a most lucky chance they might call it. Such kind of chances now and then happen to us all, but in fact they are providences. There is many narrow escapes for our lives experienced by us, which is entirely owing to God's goodness, though at the time we do not so consider it. How many have tumbled down when they have been children, and would have been killed if some arm had not been stretched out to save them! How many have fallen sick and would have died, if at the critical moment some particular medicine had not been given them! and how many have been cast away, and would have been drowned in the sea, if the same God who sent the Midianites to the relief of Joseph, had not sent some strange and unexpected ship or boat to the place where they were floating. It may here be remarked also, that many matters of importance turn on the smallest points. If these Midianites had not gone by on the very day, and the very hour of the day on which they did, Joseph (speaking after the manner of men) would probably have suffered death, and not one of those great events in his life, which are soon to be spoken of, could have happened. One of the chief things, which I wish my readers to learn from this history of Joseph, is the doctrine of a particular providence.

Judah having proposed to sell his brother to the Midianites instead of killing him or leaving him in the pit, as had been,

wickedly intended, "his Brethren were content. Then they drew and lifted up Joseph out of the pit, and sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver, and the Ishmaelites brought Joseph into Egypt." Now Egypt was a far country, to which when Joseph was carried, his Brethren concluded that they should hear no more of him.

"And Reuben returned into the pit, and behold Joseph was not in the pit, and he rent his clothes, and he went to his Brethren, and said, the child is not to be found, and I, whether shall I go."

Reuben had himself proposed the measure of putting Joseph into the pit, as a contrivance by which he meant to save his life, for he secretly intended to go afterwards to the pit, and to deliver him, but he was too late in executing his purpose.

"And they took Joseph's coat, and killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the coat in the blood; and they brought the coat of many colours to their father, and said, this have we found, know now whether it be thy son's coat or no."

What a bare-faced lie! but thus does one sin lead on to another. It is easy to see from this story of Joseph's Brethren, that when people resolve upon committing one sin, they are immediately tempted to commit another sin: and especially to commit the sin of lying in order to hide what they have been doing: they are also plunged from this time into a thousand straits and difficulties, and it is by adding sin to sin that they commonly try to get out. Reader, did you ever do something wrong, and then find yourself tempted to tell some lie, or play some artful trick to conceal it? Joseph's Brethren killed a kid, and then dipped Joseph's coat in the blood of it, and said to old Jacob, "this have we found." This is the very picture of what wicked children sometimes do. Having some sin to conceal, they invent a fine artful tale, which they tell to their masters and mistresses, or to their good old parents, who too readily believe it, and thus, perhaps, like Joseph's Brethren, they come off for the present unpunished. But soon, as in the case of Joseph's Brethren, their sin will be found out. For already God knows it. God saw them do this wicked deed, and God now hears them tell the tale by which they hid it. God waits, indeed, to see if they will repent, but by-and-by, perhaps, their sin shall be known to all the world, and shall not go unpunished. God saw from

the very first the secret envy rise up from the hearts of the Brethren of Joseph. God heard them when they sneered at Joseph, saying, "behold this dreamer cometh," and when they privately talked together of killing him. God saw them throw him into the pit, and cruelly leave him there. God saw them also when they were selling him to the Midianites. He had his eyes upon them while they were bargaining by the pit's side, and while they were counting over the twenty pieces of silver, which they afterwards put in their pockets. And God's presence were also in the midst of them; while they were killing the kid, and dipping Joseph's coat in the blood of it, and while they were saying to themselves, "surely now no one will ever know the thing we have been doing." That story, which these foolish men thought would never be known by any body, is now published in the book of scripture, that you and I, and all the world may be acquainted with it, and that we may draw the right instruction from it.

When poor old Jacob saw the coat, he immediately knew it, and said, "It is my son's coat, an evil beast hath devoured him: Joseph is without doubt rent in pieces. And Jacob rent his clothes and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him."

What a set of hypocritical comforters must these sons have been, and how many fresh lies must they have told when they were talking with their father.

"But Jacob refused to be comforted. And he said, for I will go down into the grave unto my son mourning. Thus did his father weep for him"

PART II.

JOSEPH IN PRISON.

HOW little do we know whether the things which befall us will turn out for our happiness or misery! If I was to be made a king to-morrow, I am not sure that it would not prove to my hurt; and if, on the contrary, I was to be sold to-morrow

for a slave, it is far from being clear that it might not be for my good; for God has all events under his direction: and he can bring strange things to pass just as he pleases.

Joseph (as we have already told you) was sold by his Brethren as a slave, to a company of Midianitish merchants. Now "the Midianites brought Joseph down to Egypt, and sold him to Potiphar, who was an officer, or captain of the guard, to king Pharaoh." Joseph fell, as it seems, into good hands; but the scriptures take care to inform us to what cause this was to be attributed; for there we read, that "the Lord was with Joseph:" hence it was that "he became a prosperous man; and he was taken into the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord made all that Joseph did to prosper in his hand."

What a great thing is it to have God's blessing with us in every thing we do! Some people are always talking of their good or bad luck; and, according to such persons, Joseph was merely a lucky person; he was lucky first, they would say, in getting so good a master, and still more lucky in finding every thing go well to which he set his hand; in fact, however, there is no such thing as luck, as we have observed before; and as we shall have occasion, again and again, to observe in telling this story. Let us learn therefore to thank God, and not to thank our stars, or to thank fortune, whenever we succeed in any thing; for whatever it be, we succeed only because the Lord is with us in that thing.

Joseph, by degrees, found much favour in his master's sight, that "he was made overseer of the house, and all that Potiphar had was put into his hands." Such was the confidence placed in him, that at last Potiphar seems to have done nothing for himself, but to have left it all to Joseph; for we read, that "he knew not ought that he had, save the bread that he did eat;" which is as much as to say, that he knew indeed what food was set before him at his own table, in order that he might eat it; but as to all the rest of his affairs, he knew nothing about them.

Now though Potiphar might be wrong in doing so little for himself, yet what an honour was it to Joseph to be thus completely trusted. I have known some common servants indeed in my days, who, by being very remarkable for their

faithfulness, have risen first to be upper servants, and then even to be stewards to their masters. Like Joseph they have set out with doing first one little thing well, and then another, and so they have gone on till they have had very large sums trusted to them, and have got into places of prodigious confidence; and if it were not for the number of servants who pretend to be very trusty when they are not so, the sort of case that I am speaking of would probably happen much oftener than it does.

“And it came to pass,” says, the scripture, “from the time that Potiphar had made Joseph overseer in his house, that the Lord blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake; and the blessing of the Lord was upon all that he had, both in the house, and in the field.”

What an encouragement is this to take good people into our family; for God, perhaps, may bless us for their sakes. Such a good man as Joseph is a blessing wherever he goes.

But now comes a new scene in the life of Joseph. His prosperity was great; but the greatest prosperity is sometimes suddenly interrupted. Potiphar had a very wicked wife, and “she cast her eyes” very criminally on Joseph. Joseph indeed was “a goodly person and well-favoured;” and this very goodliness, or beauty of his, proved a misfortune to him. How foolish then are those persons (whether young men or young women) who think, that to be handsome and well-looking, is one of the greatest blessings. It may turn out, perhaps, to be the greatest snare; it may prove the worst calamity that ever yet befel you, as happened in Joseph case.

It appears, that Potiphar’s wife, the wicked woman just now mentioned, “spake to Joseph day by day,” and tried repeatedly to seduce him; “but Joseph refused, and said unto his master’s wife, Behold, my master observeth not what I do with me in the house, and he hath committed all that he hath to my hand. There is none greater in this house than I, neither hath he kept back any thing from me, but thee, because thou art his wife. How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”

Here let us stop, in order, to consider one of the most striking parts of the character of Joseph. He is, in the strongest manner, tempted to sin by a wicked woman: he might also hope for her favor, if he consented: he had to dread her

wrath if he refused: every thing united to make the temptation strong; he was invited by her, not once only, but again and again; not publicly, so as to endanger a discovery, but quite secretly. By what means then did Joseph resist the temptation? He resisted it, partly by reflecting how ungenerous a thing towards his master it would be to yield, and partly also by saying to himself, as he also said to the woman, "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

Joseph knew that the eye of God was upon him at all times, and in all places; and I have no doubt that he had long acted under the influence of this knowledge. What was it that had made him such a faithful steward of his master's goods? It was his being aware that God could see the smallest dishonesty in him, and that God's eye was upon him even when his master's back was turned. And what was it that now made him resist another kind of temptation? It was the same principle of regard to Almighty God. This principle seems to have been very powerful in him, and also to have been always at hand. Joseph (I warrant you) was not used to pass days and hours together without thinking of God, as some people do. Had this been the case, I question whether he would not have yielded to one or other of his temptations.

And now let me request my readers to take a hint from Joseph, and to try themselves in the following manner. Say to yourselves, what am I in secret? What am I when no eye but that of God is upon me? When on the one hand some fellow-creature invites me to sin, when my own inclinations are on the same side, when a present opportunity offers, when there is no danger of discovery, so that my reputation may be safe, and when my worldly interest will not be hurt by the indulgence, but will rather be promoted by it; when, in short, against all these temptations which beset me, there is nothing to oppose but the fear of God in the heart, how then do I act? Is the fear of God so strong in me as to gain the victory? Am I able to conquer my temptations, however suited to my age, circumstances, and condition in life, by saying, as Joseph did, "How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" Now this is true religion. We are apt, many of us, to complain of the difficulties of religion, and to say, that we have not learning enough to

understand it; but, surely, that fear of God which has been spoken of is very easy be understood. I only wish it was as easy to be truly felt. Some there are who fancy themselves religious, because they attend at religious places of worship; because they understand well some religious doctrines; because they remember to have once experienced certain religious feelings, or because they have now a number of religious phrases always in their mouth. Let such persons also try their irreligion by the same test. Does it enable you to conquer your sins? When all things seem to unite on the side of sin, does your religion in any measure enable you to get the victory? Secret self-denial, secret conquest over ourselves, secret preference to God above all the world, secret consciousness of having been enabled, by God's grace, to overcome our temptations, and of having, like Joseph, stood firm to God and duty, in times of peculiar and repeated trials, these are some of the proofs of true religion; these are some of the best evidences of our being in a state of grace. I would value these evidences above any comfortable frames and feelings; and they are more in my opinion, than a thousand fancies, or impressions, that our salvation is sure. Reader, if you hope to stand undismayed before God on the great day of Judgment, try yourself by this test. We read but little in scripture of Joseph's religious opinions; (not that these are unimportant) we read nothing about the particular time and manner of his first becoming religious; we read not a word about the religious form of worship which he preferred, nor about the religious party that he followed, nor the religious name he bore; but we read, that he resisted hard temptations; and that both in his prosperity and his adversity he was faithful to his God: and we find also, as I shall presently shew you, that although his Brethren had used him very cruelly, yet he behaved very kindly and charitably towards them, and forgave them freely, and rejoiced over them to do them good. May my religion be like his; and may the clearer knowledge, which God hath given me, both of himself and of a Savior, make me the more earnest to do his will, and to walk worthy of that "vocation wherewith I am called."

But to return to the story—"And it came to pass about this time, that Joseph went into the house to do his business, and there was none of the men of the house there within."

And Potiphar's wife caught him by his garment, and he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out. And it came to pass, when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and was fled forth, that she called unto the men of her house, and spake unto them, saying, See, he hath brought in an Hebrew unto us to mock us; (or to offer an insult to us) and I cried with a loud voice, and it came to pass, when he heard that I lifted up my voice, and cried, that he left his garment with me, and fled, and got him out. And she laid up his garment by her until his lord came home; and they spake unto him according to the same words; and it came to pass, when his master heard the words of his wife, that his wrath was kindled. And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were bound; and he was there in prison."

What a change! instead of having the command of every thing in Potiphar's house, where he was looked up to, and respected, he is shut up in prison among thieves, and other wicked or suspected persons. And why was he thus shut up? For doing wrong! No? but for doing right. It now and then happens in this world, that a man suffers for fulfilling his duty. It is a mistake to suppose, that virtue here below is always its own reward. Reader, if you act ever so right, I cannot promise you that in this uncertain world you will be rewarded for it. Your conduct may chance to be misrepresented, or not sufficiently understood. Some enemy may injure you; some false and hollow friend, or lover, who is become offended, may turn against you. Some one, whose feelings, or whose interest you may have wounded, through your unbending virtue and integrity, may set himself up as your enemy, and may come and give false evidence against you, and may charge you, possibly, with the very sin to which that person himself has tried in vain to seduce you and from which, of all the sins in the world, you are happily the most clear. Let us learn from this part of the story of Joseph to look to God for his favour, and not to care so much, as we are apt to do, about our character with our fellow creatures. It is better to go to prison, like Joseph, for the sake of a good conscience, than to live in sin with Potiphar's wife, in the midst of a palace, even though we should contrive to live in credit also.

We before remarked, that when Joseph was sold as a slave to Potipher, and when his affairs seemed at the worst, yet "the Lord was with him, and blessed him, and gave him favor in the sight of Potipher his master." The same God who shewed favor in his former distress, shewed him the same favor now for when he had got into prison, we again read that "the Lord was with Joseph, and shewed him mercy, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners that were in the prison, and whatever they did there, he was the doer of it. The keeper of the prison looked not to any thing that was under his hands, because the Lord was with him, and that which he did the Lord made it to prosper."

"And it came to pass, after these things, that the butler of the king of Egypt, and his baker, had offended their lord the king of Egypt, and Pharaoh was wroth against them, and put them into the prison where Joseph was bound; and the captain of the guard charged Joseph with them; and they dreamed a dream, both of them, each on one night, and Joseph came in unto them in the morning, and looked upon them, and behold they were sad; and he asked them, Wherefore look ye so sadly to-day? And they said unto him, We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter of it. And Joseph said unto them, Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me them I pray you."

In ancient times it pleased God occasionally to send dreams, in order to make known future events; but let not any one therefore suppose, that by the help of dreams he can dive into futurity now. In the days of Joseph, men were in much darkness and ignorance concerning the true God. Jesus Christ had not appeared, the New Testament had not been written, nor as yet even the Old. Signs and wonders were therefore used, in order to prove that the God of Joseph was the true God. But now we no longer need signs and wonders, for the holy scriptures plainly declare him to us; and if any man should now follow his dreams, it is more than probable that in doing so he would be obliged to disregard scripture, and his own common sense also. It is worthy of remark, indeed, that soon after the law of Moses was given, (which fell far short of the revelation made to us by Jesus Christ) people were expressly warned to beware, lest by following some dreamer

of dreams, they should forsake that God who was now made known to them; for it is written, in the 13th chapter of Deuteronomy, "If there arise among you a dreamer of dreams, saying, Let us go after other Gods, and serve them, even though the sign or the wonder shall come to pass, yet thou shalt not go after that dreamer of dreams, for the Lord your God hereby proveth you to know whether you love the Lord your God," and will "serve him and cleave to him."

But to return to the history of Joseph. God, it seems, having special mercy for him, and having great designs in view, and having first sent two remarkable dreams to Joseph, now sent two other dreams to the chief butler and baker of king Pharaoh, who were in prison with him, and enables him to interpret them.

"And the chief butler told his dream to Joseph, and said to him, In my dream, behold a vine was before me, and in the vine were three branches, and it was as though it budded, and her blossom shot forth, and the clusters thereof brought forth ripe grapes; and Pharaoh's cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes and pressed them into Pharaoh's cup, and I gave the cup into Pharaoh's hand."

"And Joseph said unto him, This is the interpretation of it: the three branches are three days; yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head, and restore thee unto thy place; and thou shalt deliver Pharaoh's cup into his hand after the former manner when thou wast butler. But think on me when it shall be well with thee; and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house. For indeed, (added Joseph) I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into this dungeon."

"Now when the chief baker saw that the interpretation was good, he said unto Joseph, I also was in my dream, and behold I had three white baskets on my head, and in the uppermost basket there was all manner of baked meats for Pharaoh; and the birds did eat them out of the basket on my head." And Joseph answered and said, "This is the interpretation thereof: these three baskets are three days; yet within three days shall Pharaoh lift up thy head from off thee, and shall hang thee on a tree, and the birds shall eat thy flesh from off thee."

“ And it came to pass on the third day, which was Pharaoh’s birth-day, that he made a feast unto all his servants, and he restored the chief butler unto his butlership again, he gave the cup into Pharaoh’s hand; but he hanged the chief baker as Joseph had interpreted to them, yet did the chief butler remember Joseph.”

PART III.

JOSEPH DELIVERED OUT OF PRISON

AND INTERPRETING PHARAOH’S DREAM.

P OOR unhappy Joseph! we left him in prison, when we think he must have had a very anxious time, for who could tell whether it might not be his own turn next to be taken out and hanged as the chief baker was! and yet perhaps there might be some ray of hope that he might, like the chief butler, get out and go back to his office. All such hopes, however, soon vanished, for though Pharaoh’s birth-day came on which “ he made a feast to all his servants,” yet it proved no holiday to Joseph; and though “ the chief butler,” as we settled in his chief butlership again, and was giving the cup every day into king Pharaoh’s hand, “ yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph.”

Two whole years passed without any improvement in the poor prisoner’s condition: now, in all this time, it seems very strange that the chief butler should not have contrived to drop a word in his favor: for how wonderfully had Joseph foretold to the chief butler his restoration to office! how affecting too had he entreated to be remembered by him when the day of his prosperity should come! I cannot help here repeating the parting words of Joseph, for they are very remarkable: “ But think of me,” said he, “ when it shall be well with thee, and shew kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me to Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house: for, indeed, I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews, and here also I have done nothing that they should put me

into the dungeon.— Yet did not the chief butler remember Joseph.”

Ah! how just a picture is this of a great part of mankind! We are man^v of us apt, while we are faring well ourselves, to take no thought about those that are poor, and sick, and in prison. It pleases God now and then to let one or other of us rise up in the world, upon which we go away and forget all our old companions, some of whom, perhaps, most exceedingly need a helping hand from us; we are grown gay and merry, or busily engaged among our new friends, so that we quite forget our old ones; and then, as to any interest which we have got with the great, we feel so much in awe of those above us, we are so soft, and smooth, and civil, when we are in their presence; and so unwilling to say any thing which may possibly give offence, or which may chance to hurt our own interest, that we dare not speak a word in favor, even of the most injured character, but we dismiss him from our thoughts, just as the chief butler dismissed Joseph from his remembrance.

It came to pass, however, at the end of two full years, that King Pharaoh dreamed a dream—and behold there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine, and fat fleshed, and they fed in a meadow. And behold seven other kine came up after them ill-favored and lean-fleshed, and did eat up the seven well-favored and fat kine. And Pharaoh dreamed the second time, and behold seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk strong and good, And seven thin ears sprung up after them: And the seven thin ears devoured the seven strong full ears. And Pharaoh awoke and behold it was a dream.”

And now what is to be done? the king himself is troubled with a dream. And it came to pass,” says the scripture, “that in the morning the king’s spirit was troubled, and he called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof, and Pharaoh told them his dreams; but there was none that could interpret them to Pharaoh.” And no wonder, for it was the purpose of God to confound by this dream all the magicians of Egypt, in order that the king might be driven to ask an interpretation of it from Joseph. And then came the chief butler and spake unto Pharaoh saying, I do remember my faults this day; for Pharaoh was angry with his servants, and put me in ward in the captain of

the guard's house, both me and the chief baker; and we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he. And there was there with us a young Hebrew, servant of the captain of the guard, and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams. And it came to pass as he interpreted so it was: me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged."

What joyful intelligence was this to Pharaoh. Methinks I see his countenance brighten up at once upon it.

"Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon. And he shaved himself and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh."

When this great eastern king commands, not a moment is to be lost in obeying him. For two long years had Joseph been made to wait in prison for his deliverance, but Pharaoh would hardly wait two minutes before Joseph, whose appearance had become quite forlorn and wretched, must be brought before him shaved and dressed, and fit for the royal presence.

"And immediately Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it, and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it."

Pharaoh seems not yet to have understood by whose help it was that Joseph was enabled to interpret dreams. Joseph had no more skill in these matters than any other man, but he was the servant of God, and it pleased God, for his own purposes, to give to Joseph by miracle the power of interpreting the dream of Pharaoh. Accordingly Joseph answers Pharaoh by saying, "it is not in me, God shall give to Pharaoh an answer of peace." Thus Joseph takes none of the glory to himself, as a proud person would have been glad to do, but he gives it all to God, to whom alone it was due. Pharaoh then, in a very exact manner, relates his two dreams to Joseph.

"And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, the dream is one," that is to say, the two dreams signify one and the same thing, "and God hath shewed Pharaoh, by means of them, what he is about to do. The seven good kine are seven years, and so also the seven good ears of corn are seven years, the dream is one. And the seven thin and ill-favored kine that came up after them are seven years, and the seven empty ears of corn are also seven years, and these last signify seven years of

This, therefore, is the thing which God is about to do; behold there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt, and there shall arise after them seven years of famine. Now, therefore," continued Joseph, "let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt, and let him appoint officers, and let them gather together the food of the good years and lay it up in the cities, and it shall be for store against the seven years of famine, in order that the land may not perish. And the thing which Joseph said seemed good in the eyes of Pharaoh and of his servants, and Pharaoh said unto his servants, can we find any one equal to this Joseph, a man in whom the spirit of God is? And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, thou shalt therefore be over my house, according to thy word shall all my people be ruled; only on the throne will I be greater than thou: and Pharaoh took the ring from his hand, and put it on Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestments of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck, and made him to ride in the second chariot that he had, and they cried before him, bow the knee! and made him ruler over all the land of Egypt. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without me shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt." How wonderful was this exaltation of Joseph! he is now greater than ever he was. He had before been the first man in the house of Pharaoh's chief captain, but he is now the first man in the house of Pharaoh himself: he is greater than Pharaoh, his own former master; he is the first person next to Pharaoh in all the kingdom of Egypt. Let us not forget to admire the good providence of God in this. It was God that raised him from being a slave to the chief servant of Potiphar, and it was God that lifted him from being a prisoner, to be ruler over all Egypt.— It is the Lord (as the Psalmist says) that maketh rich, and lifteth up, and casteth down. He taketh the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the poor out of the mire, and may set him with the princes, even with the princes of the people." It is true, he sometimes afflicts even his most favored people; "He brings down (as it is said) their hearts with heaviness, they fall down and there is none to help them." He also suffers them "to be evil entreated through

tyrants." But at length he "brings them out of darkness and out of the shadow of death, and breaks their bonds in sunder."—"He leads them by a way which they know not, he makes darkness light before them, and crooked things straight," and thus "though heaviness may endure for a night, yet joy cometh in the morning."

"O praise the Lord then ye servants of his! O praise the name of the Lord! blessed be the name of the Lord, from this time forth for evermore! for he preserveth the way of his saints, and hath been ever mindful of his covenant." He saved Noah from the waters of the flood, he brought forth righteous Lot out of Sodom, he preserved Shadrach and his companions in the fiery furnace, and Daniel in the lion's den. He "delivered David his servant from the peril of the sword." "He shewed also his ways unto Moses, and his works unto the children of Israel." It was "He also that caused a dearth in the land of Egypt, and destroyed the provision of bread. But he sent a man before, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant, whose feet they hurt in the stocks: the iron entered into his soul—until the time came that his cause was heard. Then the king sent and delivered him; the prince of the people made him go free, he made him lord also of his house, and ruler of all his substance."

But let not any of my readers suppose, that Joseph is now to be admired merely for his greatness, and that the ring on his finger, and the fine vestment on his back, and the grand chariot in which he rode, were the chief things he was pleased with. Joseph was a great man undoubtedly, but he was no good as he was great, and, indeed, what is all earthly greatness unless goodness is joined with it? It is a great sin, in my opinion, to wish to be a prime minister or a king, for the mere honor of it, and I would rather be a poor laborer than be of some use in the world, then be the greatest monarch in Europe, unless I could do some special service by my greatness. Joseph proceeds directly to make himself very useful in his new station. "for he immediately went out from the presence of Pharaoh and travelled throughout the land, and in the seven plentiful years, the earth brought forth by heaps, and he gathered up all the food of the seven years, and the food of the field which was round about every city, he heaped it up in the same, and he gathered corn as the sand of the

... very much, until he left numbering. And after that seven years of plenteousness were ended, then the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said. And the people of Egypt cried unto Pharaoh for bread; and Pharaoh said unto them, Go unto Joseph, and Joseph opened the store-houses, and sold unto the Egyptians."

I am afraid that my readers have by this time almost forgot old Jacob, the father of Joseph, and his eleven sons, who were living with him in the land of Canaan, at some distance from Egypt. The famine of the last seven years was such as to be severely felt even in their country. "Then Jacob said unto his sons, (whose countenances were all cast down on the occasion,) Why do you look one upon another; behold I have heard that there is corn in Egypt. Get you down thither and buy for us from thence, that we may live and not die. And Joseph's ten Brethren went down accordingly to Egypt." But Benjamin, being now the father's favorite, was not suffered to go with them, for old Jacob said, "Peradventure some mischief will befall him."

"And when the sons of Jacob arrived, Joseph was the governor of the land, and he it was that sold to all the people. And Joseph's Brethren came and bowed themselves down before him with their faces towards the earth."

Oh! what a change of scene! These are the men, who, the last time they saw Joseph, had said of him, "Behold the dreamer cometh." They then put him into the pit, and had sold him for a slave, because he had foretold that these his brethren, and his parents, (who were signified by the sun, moon, and stars) should one day bow down before him. How wonderfully does God accomplish his own purposes! The very means which we take to defeat them, are sometimes made use of by God, in order to bring them about. Joseph's Brethren thought, that by selling him for a slave, they should prevent their ever having to bow down before him; and yet by this act of theirs, that very prophecy was brought to pass.

Let no one then presume to think that he can direct events in his own way; or, that he can, either by art or power, prevail against God, for "the counsel of the Lord, it shall stand, and he will bring it to pass." "The Lord taketh the wise in his own craftiness;" "he ordereth all things in

heaven above, and in the earth beneath." "Go to now, ye that say, to-day, or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain; whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow; for that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this or that."

Joseph's Brethren, while they were bowing down, did not know Joseph, for he made himself strange unto them, and spake roughly, saying,—“Ye are spies! to see the nakedness of the land you are come. And they said, Nay, my lord, but to buy food are we come. We are twelve Brethren from the land of Canaan; and behold the youngest is this day with our father and one is not. And Joseph said again, Ye are spies!” and then added he, “but hereby shall ye be proved, whether there be truth in you. One of you shall go and fetch his brother, while the rest shall be kept in prison. And he kept them all in ward three days.” Joseph, however, after this lets them depart, one only excepted; and he gives them corn in their bags to carry home, bidding them all to come again, and redeem the brother they had left behind, by bringing the next time, their youngest brother Benjamin. Now all this seems to have been done by Joseph, for the purpose of collecting every one of his brethren round him, before he would discover himself to them; and perhaps he was led to practice rather too much art, by his anxiety to see them gathered together.

Then said Joseph's Brethren one to another, “We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore behold also, his blood is required of us.”

Oh! how dreadful is a guilty conscience! It will cause our sins to haunt us, years after they have been committed. Now, have none of my readers ever felt the like kind of terror, in consequence of their having done something amiss? After the commission of a crime, did you never fancy, that every one you met, observed you; and that every common accident was a judgment of God upon you; and if any trouble happened to befall you a long time afterwards, have you not been apt immediately to imagine, that it had some connection with your former guilt? Sin does not always leave this sting behind it, for some people are quite hardened by their crimes never-

theless, it often does. If the sin be great and dreadful, if it be something particular and extraordinary, like the selling of a brother, or the thought of putting him to death, then, though years should pass away quietly, yet it is probable that conscience will awake and cry out against us at last. In the present case, it appears to me; that Joseph's Brethren had no clear ground to suppose that the trouble they dreaded, was caused by their having formerly sold their brother Joseph. They seem not to have argued very correctly on the occasion; "We saw," said they, "the anguish of his soul, and we would not hear, and therefore now is his blood about to be required of us."—But this was not a very sound way of reasoning, for it was not clear that his blood was now going to be required of them at all. It was not clear that any trouble whatever was about to happen to them; and, even if some trouble should happen to them, their having once sold their brother, might not be the cause, but guilt is fearful. A man that has some undiscovered crime within him, is apt to feel unreasonable frights and fears; his imagination becomes disturbed, he grows suspicious beyond all reason; he sees an enemy, perhaps, as Joseph's Brethren did, in his best friend, and the very things that are for him, if they happen to go awkwardly for a day or two, are thought to be most dreadfully against him. In short, a person, whose conscience has become burthened with some great sin, has often no comfort in his life, until he has fairly confessed it, and repented of it.

No sooner had Joseph's Brethren expressed their fright than Reuben lifts up his voice, and observed to them, how he had intreated them not to hurt their brother, and they would not hear. "Therefore, also," says he, "is his blood required of us." Here again we may discern, a picture of what often happens among those who have been partners in iniquity. When the time of trouble comes, then those who have had less hand in the guilt, begin to reproach the others for having been principals in the business. Like Reuben; they begin to justify themselves, and say: "Did I not tell you at the time to take care what you did, but you would not mind me, and therefore now you have brought down all this trouble on yourselves, and not on yourselves only, but on me also." Nothing is more common than for those who are all more or

less, joined in the same crime, to fall out and reproach one another for it afterwards.

Joseph overheard all this conversation among his Brethren, and he turned himself about from them, and wept, and returned to them again, and communed, (or had conversation, by means of an interpreter,) with them, and took from them Simeon, and bound him before their eyes. Joseph then commanded that their sacks should be laden with corn, and that every man's money should be restored into his sack, which being done they departed; and as one of them opened his sack to give his ass food at the inn, he espied the money, for behold it was in his sack's mouth. And when he told it his Brethren, all their hearts failed them: and they said one to another, "What is this that God hath done unto us." Here again, their disposition to take a fright seems to have shewn itself. I suppose they now thought that some judgment of God would fall upon them in their way home, on account of the same sin of selling Joseph.

And they came unto Jacob their father, and told him all that had befallen them, saying: "The man who is lord of the land spake roughly to us, and took us for spies; and we said unto him, We are true men; we are no spies, we be twelve Brethren." Methinks it would be some relief to Joseph's Brethren, to tell their father how harshly they had been spoken to, and how unjustly they had been suspected when they were in Egypt: for whenever a man has some great and real sin on his mind, he is glad to turn to any thing right, or innocent in his conduct, in which, nevertheless, he has been accused of sinning. Jacob's sons had used their father ill in selling Joseph, but they themselves had been used ill on the old man's account, when they went to buy corn for him in Egypt. It would be a comfort, therefore, to talk to him of what they had suffered for his sake, since it would seem to make amends in some measure for the ill which they were conscious of having done him.

Let us beware, however, of disguising our guilt, by dwelling on some smaller point, in which it may be true that we are innocent. To do so is one of the common shifts of wicked men, and there are none so wicked, as not to have some part of their conduct on which they can dwell with pleasure, and self-complacency.

But when Joseph's Brethren proceeded to explain to their father, how the lord of the country had commanded them to bring to him their brother Benjamin, and how he had detained Simeon as a pledge or hostage on his account; then Jacob, in the bitterness of his heart, exclaimed, "Me have ye bereaved of my children; Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away; all these things are against me." But Reuben now came up, and declared, that if Benjamin might but go with them, he would pledge the lives of his own two infant children, that Benjamin should be brought back in safety. "And Jacob said, my son shall not go down with you, for his brother Joseph is already dead; and if mischief befall Benjamin also by the way, then shall ye bring my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave."

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PART IV.

“**A**LL these things are against me,” said good old Jacob, when he was told of what had happened to his sons in Egypt; for we may remember that they had been obliged by Joseph to leave their brother Simeon behind them, and had even been required to bring Benjamin also. On hearing this old Jacob cried out, “Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take away Benjamin: all these things are against me.”

Ah! how little did Jacob know of the real nature of those events which were befalling him! The very things which he said were against him, in fact were making for him, for they led the way to the recovery of his son Joseph, who had been lost, and also to Jacob’s removal, with all his family into the plentiful land of Egypt. I do not wonder, indeed, that this poor old man, bowed down as he now was with age and infirmity, and deprived, as he had been, first of one dear son, and then of another, should be unwilling to let his present favorite Benjamin be carried off into Egypt.—And yet, what could he do? The famine now again grew very sore in the land, and at last, when all the corn from Egypt was eaten up, even Jacob himself is represented as asking his sons to go again and buy a little food.

“Then Judah spake unto him, saying, The man did solemnly protest unto us, ye shall not see my face, except your brother Benjamin be with you. Unless, therefore, thou send him, we will not go down into Egypt.” Then Jacob said unto his sons, “Why did ye tell the man that you had a brother?” And they answered, “The man did examine us closely about our kindred, and therefore we told him, for how should we know that he would bid us fetch our brother to him?” Then Judah said, very earnestly, “I pray you send the lad, that we may not all die, we and our little ones, and I will be surety for him.” And Jacob said, “If it must be so, do then as you desire. But take ye the best fruits in the land, balm, and honey, and spices, and myrrh, and nuts, and almonds; and take double money in your hands, and the

money that you brought back in your sack's mouths carry again; peradventure it was an oversight. Take also your brother with you, and God Almighty give you mercy before the man, that he may send away your other brother, and let Benjamin return also. If I must be bereaved of my children there is no help for it, I must be bereaved."

Thus did the sons of Jacob depart, all of them trembling with anxiety and fear, and using many precautions to avoid giving offence to the great person to whom they were going.

Now, this I may observe, is a picture of what sometimes happens to us. God is perhaps preparing to favor us with some great blessing, just as he was now about to favor the family of Jacob; but before he gives us possession of the blessing, he leads us through some dark and dreary path, and we fancy a great evil is coming upon us.—When, therefore, God is opening the way to these new mercies, we hang back, and say with good old Jacob, "All these things are against me." But though loth to move forward, yet what can we do? Some peril greater than that we had been dreading, awaits us, if we make more delay. With a heavy heart, with a complaining tongue, and with weeping eyes, we set forward in this path, which is, in fact, nevertheless, the path to our chief happiness. Thus do we often quarrel with our blessings. And this, I take it, is a common case; for what are all our complaints, but complaints against Providence; and do we not often murmur, even at those very dealings of Providence, which afterwards prove the most remarkable for our good?

Reader, look back to your past life; consider those seasons in it, when you have been forced by necessity, on some unpleasant business, or when you have been hindered in your pursuit of some favorite plan, or contradicted in your opinions or your wishes. Now and then perhaps your situation in life has seemed quite melancholy and desperate; misery has appeared to threaten you on every side, and you have had only a sad choice of evils, just like these sons of Jacob, who thought they had only to choose between a famine at home, and the more ill-usage in Egypt. And yet, has it not afterwards proved that God was blessing you, by means of those very things, which were thought at the time so terrible?

There are many persons, I am persuaded, who have even had their souls saved much in the same way in which this family of Jacob had their lives preserved. They have hung back and struggled hard for a while against those very things which have opened the way to their eternal salvation; they have been dragged from a life of sin and misery as unwillingly as ever Jacob's sons were dragged from Canaan, and brought into the fruitful land of Egypt. For, strange as it may sound, how unwilling are men to have their souls saved, how unwilling at least, to take those means which are absolutely necessary for it! How many servants, as well as apprentices, and others are there, who can hardly be persuaded to attend at public worship, or at least, to give their minds to it when they are there; and yet, is not this one of the means of salvation? They must be forced to church by the authority of their masters; or by some necessity, almost as urgent as that which drove the sons of Jacob from Canaan into Egypt! Again, how many children are there, who, though invited freely to a Sunday School, nevertheless hang back from going thither, as much as ever the sons of Jacob hung back from going into Egypt. Perhaps too, their parents have at the same time been as unwilling to part with them through some false fondness or other, as ever old Jacob was to part with his son Benjamin, though it proved afterwards to be the making of that whole family.

But let us return to the story. Joseph's Brethren set off from Canaan under a great fright, as I have already told you, and they took double money in their hand, and they carried Benjamin with them, and having come down to Egypt, they stood before Joseph. Now when Joseph saw them, and observed that Benjamin also was with them, he ordered a great dinner to be made ready, and he asked them to come to it. And Joseph's Brethren were afraid, on account of the money which they had carried off in their sacks, and they got near to Joseph's steward, and said to him, "O! Sir, we came down hither before to buy food, and it came to pass, that when we got to the inn, on our way home, we found every man's money in his sack's mouth, and therefore we have brought it back to you. We cannot tell who put it there, and we have now brought other money also, in order to

buy food. And the steward said, peace be to you, I had your money, and he brought Simeon out to them."

And when Joseph came home, they drew near, and offered him the present which they brought, and bowed themselves to the earth before him. And Joseph asked them of their welfare, and said, "Is your father well, the old man of whom you speak: is he yet alive? And they answered, Thy servant our father is in good health, he is yet alive; and they bowed down their heads again to the ground. And Joseph lifted up his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, and said, is this your younger brother, of whom you spake to me? and then turning to the lad, God (said he) be gracious unto thee."
—Joseph was now much moved, for "his bowels did yearn over his brother, and he sought to weep, and he entered his chamber, and wept there."

Religion does not deprive men (as some have imagined) of their natural affection and feeling, for Joseph was a religious man, and yet how did he overflow with kindness towards his Brethren. It is also remarked in the New Testament, of one greater than Joseph was, I mean of our Savior, on the occasion of the death of Lazarus, that "Jesus wept." Religion regulates, no doubt, all the natural feelings of men; but it does not destroy them.

Presently afterwards, the meat was set on the table, and Benjamin's mess was five times as great as any other, and they eat and drank together, and were cheerful.

Now when the dinner was over, Joseph, who was still unknown to his Brethren, commanded that "all their sacks should be filled with corn and that every one's money should again be put into his sack, and moreover, that a silver cup being Joseph's own cup, should together with the money, be put into the sack of Benjamin; and when the morning was come they all went away. And before they were got far from the city, Joseph sent his steward after them, who charged them with having stolen Joseph's cup out of his house. And they immediately denied the charge, and said vehemently, With whomsoever of us it is found, we will agree that he shall die, and that we will all of us be your slave or (bondmen;) and a search being made, behold the cup was found in Benjamin's sack. Then they rent their clothes for grief, and laded every man his ass, and returned to the city. And

Joseph said unto them, "What deed is this that ye have done? And Judah (the same who had promised Jacob that he would be surety for Benjamin) replied, "What shall we say unto my lord; God hath found out the iniquity of thy servants; Behold, we will now be bondmen to my lord. And Joseph said, "Not so: but he in whose hand the cup is found, (namely, Benjamin) he shall be my slave and servant. But as for you, get you all away to your father in peace."

What a situation had these sons of Jacob got into now! Could any thing be more melancholy and distressful! "O Jacob, Jacob!" they would say, "how shall we ever see thy face in peace, if we bring not Benjamin back with us. Well do we remember the words which did break forth from thee at parting with us. Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and now ye will take Benjamin from me."

There is one reflection to which I beg to call the minds of my readers in this place. Jacob's sons are now accused unjustly; they are brought into trouble through no fault of theirs; whereas, formerly, they had committed a great sin; I mean that of selling their brother Joseph; and had suffered no particular inconveniences from it.—They had not suffered when they did wrong, and yet now they suffer for doing right; for they certainly, as I should think, did right in going down to buy corn for themselves and their aged father, and even in bringing Benjamin with them, under all the circumstances of the case. Let us for a moment stop here, and put ourselves in the place of these sons of Jacob. They might now, methinks, be tempted to say, "Surely, there is no righteous governor of the world; for when we do right, we only suffer for it; and when we did wrong, we all escaped unpunished. We will not believe therefore in Providence: all things happen alike to all; this world is governed by chance; nay, and the chance is often in favor even of the wicked." To all such profane reasoning, if I had seen Joseph's Brethren at this moment of time, I would have answered, "Stop a little, I beseech you; do not decide so hastily, for, remember, your story is but half-over. By-and-by, perhaps, your innocence in the present matter will be cleared up, and, for ought you know, your former sin, though long since committed, may come to be found out."

Let us apply this remark to ourselves. We often seem to profit for a while by some bad thing that we have done, or at least we suffer no present punishment. Our fraud, our lying, or our acts of violence, succeeds for a certain time; and, perhaps, presently afterwards, we chance to get into trouble by doing something, which on the whole really seems to have been our duty. Do you never feel tempted to disbelieve in Providence on such occasions! If you are, I would say to you, as I just now observed, that I would have said to Joseph's Brethren, Wait a-while, I beseech you. Remember, your story is but half over. Do not decide till you observe the issue. See whether in the end you will not be sorry for every bad thing you have ever done, and glad of every thing which, through God's grace, you have been enabled to do aright; and even though this should not be the case now, it certainly will on the day of judgment.

Joseph discovers himself to his Brethren.

When Joseph had made this proposal of keeping Benjamin as his slave or servant, and of sending the other sons of Jacob home in peace to their father, Judah came forward, and related all that had passed in the old man's house when they were bringing Benjamin away. "My father said to us," observed Judah, "Behold I have had two sons, and the one went from me," meaning Joseph, "who is torn in pieces; and if ye take this also away, and mischief befall him, ye shall bring down my grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. Now, therefore," says Judah, "let me abide instead of the lad as a bondsman to my lord, and let the lad go up with his Brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, seeing that his life is wound up in the lad's life; and it shall come to pass, when he saith that the lad is not with us that he will die."

Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him, and he bid every stranger to go out. Then Joseph made himself known to his Brethren: and Joseph wept aloud, so that the Egyptians in the house overheard him. And Joseph said unto his Brethren, I am Joseph. Hath my father yet live? And his Brethren could not answer him for they were troubled at his presence."

No wonder that Joseph's Brethren were troubled at this speech. Oh! how bitter a thing is sin. It causes trouble at those moments which ought to be given up to joy. It spreads a gloom over our happiest hours; and while those who are not loaded with the same guilt, are giving way to the most delightful feelings, it makes the man who is burthened with his conscience to feel a double pang, to feel a pang, I mean, both on account of the sin itself, and also on account of his regret at being unable to join in the general joy that is going forward.

Joseph, nevertheless, comforts his Brethren. "Now therefore," says he, "be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, for God did send me before to preserve all your lives, so now, it was not you that sent me hither, but God." How freely does Joseph appear, by this speech, to forgive his Brethren! Here is no malice, no hatred, no spirit of revenge, no word even of reproof for all the evil they had endeavoured to do him; but the injured person is himself the comforter of those who had tried to injure him. Here, perhaps, some one may be ready to say: "True, Joseph did right to forgive his Brethren, for we are all bound to forgive them that trespass against us; methinks, however, he might as well have said something to them of their sin, for the sake of their own good." I answer, that there is a time for all things, and that this was not the time for Joseph to administer reproof. His Brethren were likely, just now, to be cast down, through overmuch sorrow, and the thing they needed, at this moment, was therefore comfort rather than reproof. Your people, who take all occasions to reprove, without regard to time, or place, or circumstances, though they may say they mean only to do good by it, are apt to be harsh people. They are only indulging their own spirit; and though they may persuade themselves that they are of a forgiving temper at bottom, in fact are not so much so as they think.

But I would observe further, that this extreme kindness of Joseph would, in my opinion, tend to affect the hearts of his Brethren more than the severest reproof. "What," they would now say to themselves, "have we sold for a slave a brother so kind, so generous, so excellent as this! How little did we know of him when we took upon us to sell him! How rashly did we judge concerning his true character, and

concerning his intention in those words which gave us so much offence! He was a better man than we, though we all talked so much against him and even thought him hardly fit to live." I would here beg all my readers to take care how they speak evil of persons without due knowledge of their character. Especially I would advise you to beware of judging any one, on account of his having said or done something which happens to wound your own pride, or to give pain merely to yourself. He may be a good man on the whole, even though he should have erred in this particular; and you may err more by the revenge you take for what he has said that is offensive to you, than he has done by saying it. Take heed, then, lest some day or other should come when the very person whom you are set against, shall have his character cleared before all the world, in spite of every thing you have said against him. Take heed, lest you should be proved to have been the greatest sinner of the two on that day when you shall each of you appear before God, and all his holy angels. O that we could all learn something of this kind, and affectionate, and forbearing temper of Joseph. He was as remarkable for it as he was for conquering those secret temptations which I before spoke of.

Joseph having discovered himself to his Brethren, is now impatient that they should go to their father; "Haste ye," says he, "and go up to my father, and say unto him, Thus saith thy son Joseph, God hath made me lord of all Egypt.— Come down, tarry not, and thou shalt dwell in the land of Goshen; and thou shalt be near unto me, thou and thy children, and thy children's children, and thy flocks and thy herds, and all that thou hast, and there will I nourish thee; for there are yet five years of famine to come. And Joseph fell on his brother Benjamin's neck and wept; and Benjamin wept on his neck. Moreover, he kissed all his Brethren, and wept upon them, and after that his Brethren talked with him. And the same hereof was heard in Pharaoh's house; and it pleased Pharaoh and his servants. And Pharaoh said, Bring your father and your household: take waggons out of the land of Egypt for your little ones, and for your wives, and bring your father and come. And they did so. And Joseph gave to each of them changes of raiment; and he sent to his father ten asses, laden with the good things of Egypt, and ten more

asses laden with corn and bread and meat for his father, by the way."

Accordingly, Jacob having been invited by his sons, and having also been encouraged by God in a dream, arrived in Egypt; and all the souls that went with him, besides his sons' wives, sixty and six.

"And Joseph made ready his chariot, and went to meet his father, and fell on his neck, and wept a long time. And Jacob said, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face, that thou art yet alive. And Joseph brought in Jacob his father, and set him before Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of my life been. And Jacob blessed Pharaoh. And Jacob lived in the land of Egypt seventeen years, and he died."

"Now when Joseph's Brethren saw that their father was dead, they said, Joseph will peradventure hate us, and will requite us for all the evil that we did unto him. And they sent a message to Joseph, saying, that their father before he died, commanded them to request of Joseph, that he would forgive their trespass against him. And Joseph wept to think that they should speak thus unto him. And Joseph said, Fear not. As for you, indeed, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it for good. Now, therefore, I will nourish you and your little ones. And he comforted them, and spake kindly unto them. And Joseph lived an hundred, and ten years. And he said to his Brethren, God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land into the land which he promised to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. And Joseph died."

Thus ends the history of Joseph. I have already observed, that one of the chief things to be learned from it is the doctrine of a particular Providence. "It was not you," as Joseph said very justly to his Brethren, "that sent me into Egypt; but it was God:" that is, it was not you only. Men, indeed, were the instruments, and men are accountable to God for every part of their own conduct just as much as if there was no Providence in the case. Still, however, though man may act as he pleases, yet God overrules all

things so as to bring about his own purposes. God, in this instance, had a plan in view. He made a promise to Abraham, the grandfather of Jacob, who was the father of Isaac, that from him the Saviour should come, for that "in his seed all the families of the earth should be blessed." In fulfilment of this promise, Isaac and Jacob were born. I should here remark, by the way, that to Jacob the name of Israel was given; so that when the scriptures speak of the Israelites, it is the same thing as if they said the children of Jacob. Of these there were twelve tribes, every one of the sons of Israel becoming the father of a whole tribe. These Israelites, after a time, were brought out from Egypt, having been very ill-treated there by king Pharaoh, and they became a great and famous people; for God wrought many miracles in the midst of them, and gave them the law of the ten commandments, and set up his worship among them, and separated them from the rest of the world, which continued in ignorance of God and of the scriptures. It was from these Israelites (or Jews, as they were afterwards called) that the promised Saviour came. And, blessed be God, this Saviour is not the Saviour of the Jews only, but he is now preached to us, "upon whom the ends of the world are come." How important then is the Story of Joseph in this view. It was a necessary link in the great chain of Providence, and this chain reaches from the beginning of the world even to the end of it. Nor is it with the life of Joseph only, that the providence of God concerns itself. Your life and mine, and all the various events of it, great and small, from our birth to our dying hour, are equally under the divine direction. The same God who sent the Ishmaelites to the pit's mouth, when Joseph was so near being left to perish there, the same God who gave Joseph favour in the sight of Potiphar his master, and who afterwards delivered him out of prison, and made him ruler over all Egypt, appoints also to us the bounds of our habitation, and orders our whole lot in life. If then, O Joseph, we are serving God, let us not fear to trust him; though we should fall occasionally into straits, as Joseph did, yet let us hope, when the end of our days shall come, and when the whole of our story shall be told, that we shall be able to trace the Lord's goodness and mercy even in the most afflictive circumstances of our lives, as we have now been tracing in the case of Joseph.

Nor let us wonder at the vast confusion and disorder which we sometimes see in the world in general. Let not our faith fail us, if now and then the wicked should seem every where to prosper, and the whole company of the righteous should come under adversity. The history of Joseph shews, that it is the plan of Providence sometimes to withdraw, in appearance, his protection and favour from his own servants, and to put off, to a future season, the evil day which is coming upon sinners. Soon however, the time will come, when all that has been crooked shall be made straight, and all that has been dark in Providence, shall be cleared up.

The story of Joseph, as we also observed, is but a small part of scripture; it fills but a few pages of that large and comprehensive volume, being connected, however, with events which go before, and with those which follow after; and just so, methinks, the history of this whole globe of ours is but like a single leaf in a great volume, and it cannot be fully understood until the dealings of God with all his various creatures shall be made known, until the whole book of his Providence shall be opened, and until all those events, both past and future, with which God's government of this world may be connected, shall be fully revealed. Let us wait, therefore, in the exercise of faith and hope, remembering, as the apostle says, that while we are here below, "We know but in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.—For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face. Now we know in part; but then shall we know, even as also we are known."

FINIS.