

ELNATHAN.

A ROMANCE.

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ELNATHAN;
OR,
THE AGES OF MAN.

An Historical Romance.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY A PHILOSOPHER.

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts,
His acts being seven ages. SHAKESPEARE.

VOL. I.

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BOOK I.

VOL. I.

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Of Man, his Conception, and Birth.

WHERE the Tigris and Euphrates roll their fertilizing waters, even in the land where tradition has placed the garden of Eden, lived, under the reign of the second Nebuchadnezzar, the renowned Abessalom. The torrents at one time sent from Heaven to deluge the terrestrial globe, appeared to have respected this happy spot.

It would seem as if they had but skimmed the surface, nor taken ought of its pristine beauty. Removed from the tumult of cities, here the sage dwelt in peace, and adored the true God. With the fondest

care, he endeavoured to perpetuate amongst a people, of whom he was the revered patriarch, the early usages of the earth; and to this end frequently offered up thanksgivings to the Almighty, in the same form, and accompanied by like sacrifices, as did the virtuous Abel. His justice, benevolence, and hospitality, were alike administered with a grace the most dignified and touching.

In his four-and-twentieth year he became the husband of his cousin Noëma. In her was united every attraction, capable to charm and awe. But, alas! twenty years elapsed, and no fruit was sent to crown an union so fair. In consequence, tears of sorrow would fill the eyes of this otherwise happy couple, and chase away those indulged by mutual tenderness.

Noëma, hopeless of becoming a mother, constantly sought consolation in the exercise of piety; but the fruitfulness of her flocks afforded a bitter contrast to her childless state, and to the increase of
wealth

wealth it occasioned, she grew every day more indifferent.

It was during some moments of painful reflection, that, looking accidentally aside, she perceived near her, an ewe of uncommon size and beauty, while close beside it was laid a lamb white as the driven snow. It presently arose, nimbly pressed the ground, and the next moment claimed nourishment from its mother, who appeared to regard it with the utmost tenderness.

“ Ah !” cried Noëma, “ here is an offering worthy of the Most High;” and immediately seizing the lamb, she carried it to her husband, then occupied in pruning some of the trees of their garden, beseeching he would prepare to immolate it. Immediately Abessalom erects an altar, by means of some scattered stones and branches of flowering shrubs, and lays upon it the lamb. As the sacrifice was completed, the victim cast on Noëma a piteous look, which she was

still bewailing, when the clouds opened, and a ball of fire descended on the altar—the victim is consumed, and appears to ascend as a lambent flame to Heaven, while gradually the light of day is withdrawn, and almost total darkness surrounds the dwelling of Abessalom and Noëma.

Lost in wonder they proceed to enter their habitation, when their surprise is anew excited, by the appearance of two strangers on the threshold. One was habited in a garment of white, which swept the ground; his air was mild and dignified, on his lips played an affectionate smile, and he held in his hand a lighted torch. In a voice gentle and distinct, he demanded an asylum, and offered as a recompence, a blessing of peace. The other stranger was arrayed in a vest of gaudy texture, and his aspect betrayed a character haughty and imperious. He endeavoured, however, to correct this impression, by a complaisant tone of voice—he

he smiled not, though apparently anxious to exhibit unwonted joy; his expressions were hurried and eloquent. His right hand was ornamented with the brightest jewels, while his left grasped a dagger, that he concealed beneath his garment. He demanded of Abessalom an asylum also, and in return offered him a considerable sum of money, in his opinion preferable to an empty blessing. The travellers equally struggled for admittance; at the same time each refused to enter, was the other admitted. Upon which Abessalom, without hesitation, offered his hand to him who proffered the simplest recompence. The rejected traveller had pierced him to the heart, but the accepted stranger offered a defence, by thrusting his torch into the face of his rival, who instantly fled, uttering horrid cries. The friendly torch still served to illumine the dwelling of Abessalom, and the peaceful stranger having partook of

a frugal meal, quickly after disappeared, bestowing a blessing on his hosts.

Abessalom and Noëma were surprised and affected by these successive miracles. They could not in truth account for them; yet did their conclusion predict no less than the immediate and favourable interposition of Heaven. Noëma ceased not to reflect; and thus the various conjectures she rapidly imparted to her husband of the prodigies they had witnessed, and what might thence be augured, concluded not till the night was far advanced, when, tired of repeating and giving ear, they at length abandoned themselves to the sweets of repose.

But the course of the stars, so constantly observed by the Chaldeans, had scarcely marked the fourth hour of morning, when Noëma, starting up in a transport of joy, interrupted by broken sighs, cried aloud, "Abessalom, my dear Abessalom, heard you not that celestial voice, whose echo reaches the furthestmost recess of my heart?"

heart? You answer not—let me then repeat to you the dream that has visited me—Methought I was on the spot where yesterday we made our burnt-offering. I there raised my thoughts to heaven, and cried aloud, ‘Almighty God! encompass me if thou wilt, even with that flame which consumed our sacrifice, but first suffer me to leave on earth some living trace of my existence! if upon this earth which thou hast destined to mortals, I can only, by a solitary being, resound thy praises, am I not deprived of the most glorious privilege of wedded love, that of bringing forth a creature, who would love and adore thee even as myself? Hear me, succour me, I beseech thee!’ Ah! my beloved, how can I best describe to you what followed! The stars seemed to recede, the azure vault was parted, and there suddenly appeared seated on a brilliant throne, a female form of angelic beauty; she directed her looks towards me, and addressed me in a voice

melodious beyond what we have ever heard; 'The wisdom of Abessalom,' she uttered, 'and thy constant piety, Noëria, merits that thou shouldst bear the name of mother; but in obtaining this endearing title, remember that the maternal state is rather an ocean of solicitude than an abundant source of pleasures. Learn, that from the moment thy offspring is engendered in thy bosom, even till the moment when death will return him to the foot of the Most High, he will be placed between dangers and pleasures, between the charms of virtue and the seductions of vice. Oziel*, who yesterday shared thy hospitality, shall be his angel of peace, and shall support him with a strength divine; but Galgal†, the spirit of darkness, whose offers thy husband rejected, will be equally present to thy son, and will use every effort to lure him along precipices. This child shall be free—let him

* Or the aid of God.

† Or Revolution.

them choose; and let all thy cares, thy lessons, thy examples, tend to direct his freedom aright. I have said—and thou shalt be a mother.’ The phantom disappeared, and the heavens instantly closed; but there remained diffused over my whole being a sensation of satisfaction, of joy ineffable, and which methought thou, Abessalom, shared equally—at this moment I awoke.”

“A mother then shalt thou be!” cried Abessalom; “with rapture do I hail the presage!” Again sleep closed the eyelids of him and his beloved.

And now the existence of Noëma assumed a new colouring. The sun’s vivid beams had, no doubt, in the course of seven lustres, shadowed her complexion; yet hitherto the activity of youth animated her form, and spread the colouring of health over her cheeks. Gradually her countenance became pale, and her looks, though ever tempered by modesty, assumed new fire. Dreams, hitherto rare

to her, now crowded her imagination, during the uneasy moments of slumber: yet pleasure dwelt with her and Abessalom; he watched over her with unremitting care, and was ever ready to give a favourable interpretation to her dreams. Noëma, too, began to regard her flocks with complacency, unmingled with feelings of envy or regret.

Four months had nearly elapsed since the first prediction she had received, and which every thing announced would truly be fulfilled, when report proclaimed that the general Enac*, jealous of the distinguished favours bestowed by the great king on Somer†, governor of the provinces, waged war, and was advancing, even to the peaceful retreat of Abessalom. Honour, fidelity, his own safety (or rather that of his beloved Noëma, whose destinies he wished not to be counteracted), prompted Abessalom to fly to

* Or giant.

† Or guardian.

arms, and join such of his people as were anxious to defend the legitimate rights of their chief.

But who can paint the anguish of that moment which separated this adoring couple ! Let him who for the first time anticipates the name of father, let her, the partner of his life, who acknowledges that within her bosom lives the pledge of their mutual tenderness, trace, if it is possible, all that such a moment contained of bitter and overwhelming !

Noëma's grief swells even to bursting, and is only relieved by a flood of tears. Abessalom weeps not—he casts a fixed look full of tenderness on Noëma; he raises his hands and eyes to Heaven, and rushes from her side. Once more he returns, clasps her to his heart, and in a stifled voice exclaims “ God is just, and I will return to thee ! ”

However, the troops under the guidance of Enac advanced rapidly ; no fortress then appeared to impede their progress.

Abessalom

Abessalom flew like lightning towards his just and brave companions, he breathed into them courage and intrepidity. With unaccountable celerity he caused trees to be levelled; and the banks of the Euphrates furnishing abundance of sand, as also mud of a glutinous quality, vast entrenchments to oppose the progress of the enemy were in one day raised. A band of Enac's troops, blinded by success and presumption, scarcely attended to the obstacles now opposed to them. They quickly directed their javelins against the fort which art and zeal united, had established with a promptitude almost supernatural. The besieged sheltered themselves behind their entrenchments, and thus rendered the cloud of darts unavailing; while they seized the moment in which their enemies were employed, in charging their bows anon to fling destruction upon them. Foaming with rage, the troops of Enac again renew the charge, and again their arrows are spent
against

against the newly-raised wall, which they next endeavoured, by several attacks, to cause a breach in; but every where they were foiled by the foresight of Abessalom, and the valour of his soldiers. Of the misguided assailants, numbers received death within their tents; others took to flight, and were pursued into marshes and defiles, where they perished, the wild impetuosity of their general having prevented him from securing a safe retreat, in case of failure.

This rebellious chief, however, collecting the remains of his scattered army, placed himself at the entrance of a wood, from whence he commenced a furious attack upon Abessalom, as he returned from pursuing the fugitives. The combat was desperate, and blood streamed on each side, when Enac suddenly determined on a truce. His soldiers rested on their arms, he advanced before them, in front of where Abessalom commanded.

“Nor is it right,” said he, “that so
many

many brave men should perish, either in my cause or in that of the coward you defend; approach, therefore, Abessalom, and let it be seen, through our single bravery, which of us is most worthy to obtain victory."

"A rebel," replied Abessalom, "thou wouldst be unworthy to compare with him who is loyal to his king and submissive to his governor, were it not that I glory in the opportunity of chastising thy insolence—yes, I will prove to thee, if possible, that the wicked cannot conquer. Oh! God of my fathers, God of my Noëma! deign to protect me!" added Abessalom, and with a firm step advanced to meet the chief.

The helmet of Enac was crowned by a dragon's mane, on his shield was engraved an idol, the object of his heathen worship. The helmet of Abessalom was overshadowed by a tress of his Noëma's golden locks, and the name of God alone traced on his shield.

The furious Enac presents his lance against his adversary, who remains firm and unmoved—it is shivered to atoms, while the point of Abessalom's is also blunted by the buckler of the barbarian. These weapons are discarded, and the combatants seize upon their scimitars. The anxious spectators are dazzled by their glitter, they follow their evolutions, and at every clash which resounds, each side trembles for the fate of their general. Such is the ascendant possessed by the just, that Abessalom is satisfied simply to parry the blows of his rival. With firmness unconquerable, he continues his defence against the arm that would pierce or strike him. His wisdom and coolness prevail; he resists every effort of Enac, whose wearied arm at length drops by his side; then, and then only, does Abessalom aim a stroke, that mingles his opposer with the dust. Cries of joy and admiration resounded; the followers of Enac, perceiving their chief slain, submitted

mitted to Abessalom, and promised faithfully to return to their duty. On three conditions only would he grant their pardon—that they should first join with him in offering a sacrifice to the true God; secondly, that they should repair and lay their arms at the feet of Somer, in whose cause he had conquered, and who would transmit the homage to his king; lastly, that the standard of the enemy should become his (Abessalom's), as the reward of victory. The conditions were accepted with gratitude, and a victim immediately laid upon the altar.

What were the sufferings of Noëma during this memorable day! but valour is deified by the fair; and she only is truly great, who, after shedding a few tears at the moment her beloved enters the path of glory and of danger, thinks but of sharing the laurel that is to adorn his brow, or commemorate his death!

The wife of Abessalom was removed only a short distance from the scene of action:

action: she beheld the glitter of arms; the sound of instruments that stifled the cries, and raised the courage of the wounded, re-echoed in her ear. At length silence succeeded, and her anxiety becoming insupportable, she followed the path her husband had taken on quitting her, and which she believed led immediately to the scene of death or victory.— She had not proceeded far when shouts of triumph resounded on all sides, and the next moment Abessalom delivered into her hands the standard of the enemy. Even at the same instant, and for the first time, did the unborn infant of Noëma tremble in her bosom!

His faithful warriors quickly followed the steps of their leader, and amidst sounds of triumph offered respectful homage to Noëma. Her surprise and joy somewhat calmed, she shed tears upon the hand of her husband, tears tender, and flowing from a heart satisfied even to the utmost.

Her

Her next care is to produce cakes, milk, and honey, which with an enchanting grace she presents to the chosen friends of her beloved. Some wine too of a delicious flavour, brought from the most celebrated vineyard of Canaan, and poured into Tyrean cups of gold, (the inheritance of her fathers, and never used since the day of her marriage,) was also an offering from her hand.

The guests, when regaled, loaded with benedictions this charming couple, and each sought his habitation. Night came, and the dwelling which sheltered Abessalom appeared to Noëma as the sanctuary of celestial glory and felicity.

But happiness on earth comes and goes like the lightning from Heaven. The situation of Noëma became to her every day more painful; her desires grew strange and capricious; the slightest contradiction affected her to tears; and even to her beloved Abessalom she betrayed impatience and fretfulness. But Abessalom
had

had evinced too much true courage not to shew himself kind and complacent on all such occasions. He watched her steps, he prevented her wishes. In language the most soothing he invited her to all which could ameliorate her health, or cheer her mind; and with equal care would he discard from her path what was noxious, or capable of causing her pain. Oftimes would he lure her into the open air, hoping that gentle exercise might invigorate her frame, and the breath of nature calm and pacify her mind. His arm was ever her support; and when at length she was overcome by fatigue, Abessalom would lead her to a bower erected by his own hand, amidst flowering and odoriferous shrubs, and which provided a cooling shade from the meridian sun. Many such had he taken care to weave around their dwelling. Did a vulture skim the air in pursuit of its prey, or did the croaking raven hover above his head, quickly an arrow flew beneath his

his hand; and thus their destruction destroyed the evil presage which the too susceptible Noëma might have conceived from their flight. To enumerate every instance of the tender and preserving care of Abessalom, during this anxious period, would be endless.

The chief governor, Somer, had not forgotten the distinguished services rendered him by Abessalom; but the infirmity of age had made him defer, until the arrival of autumn, his project of visiting the chief, even in his humble dwelling. His approach was now anticipated by Abessalom and Noëma; and every preparation that could flatter and do homage to a guest so noble, was made by them for his reception. Ere the moment that he was to appear, Noëma bestowed more than common care in the decoration of her person; for Somer was the friend of Abessalom, and had caused his wisdom and valour to shine resplendant. A golden net restrained the luxuriance of her
flowing

flowing ringlets; her form was enveloped in a garment of fine linen, curiously wrought, the same she had worn on her bridal day; while a sandal, new and elegant, graced her foot, and displayed the delicacy of its form. Thus attired, she advanced to welcome the aged governor, who gratefully returned her salutations. Mutual acknowledgements having past between Abessalom and his guest, for favours granted and received, and the hour of repast being arrived, Somer led Noëma forth, and seated her beside him, on a couch placed amidst tables prepared for his entertainment, and that of his numerous attendants. Above that beside which he was seated, were suspended branches of laurel and olive ingeniously interwoven, which was intermingled with devices emblematic of generosity, kindness, justice, valour, and virtues, the exercise of which eminently distinguished the government of Somer. Numerous domestics of both sexes, clad in garments white

as the driven snow, and decorated with wreaths of flowers, bore in their hands various dishes, pleasant to the sight and delicious to the flavour. All that the animal or vegetable kingdom could produce at this season, of rare and delicate, was served up. The rose of autumn, the pink, and sweeter citron flowers, were scattered round, and shed an odour more delightful far than the perfumes of Arabia; goblets overflowed with the choicest wines—joy was in every heart and played upon every countenance.—Alternately was chanted the goodness of the Creator in the formation of the sexes, the regeneration after the deluge, the holiness of them, the dispersion of the people, the social laws promulgated by Ashur, the power of Nebuchadnezzar, the mildness of the government of Somer, the courage of Abessalom, and the charms of Noëma.

The feast at an end, Somer arose, when Abessalom in a respectful tone addressed him :—

him:—"Most worthy among men, if our rural repast has not been displeasing to thee, thou wilt not refuse (according to our custom, and that of our fathers) to join in thanksgiving to the Most High for the favours we have tasted;" and bowing his knee, Abessalom pronounced, in a voice elevated and affecting, "Oh, God of mercies! to increase thy glory is impossible; but suffer at least that ours shall consist in adoring thee, and acknowledging the abundance of thy favours—let our worship, purified by thy light, for ever encircle the footstool of thy throne!" *Amen* with one voice resounded; when Somer, raising from his head the tiara that covered it, by which his white hairs were scattered over his countenance, added, "Next to the Most High, it is fit we should render homage to our god of Babylon, the great king Nebuchadnezzar;" and raising his goblet, he poured forth a libation. A second time did all

his followers bow the knee. Abessalom and Noëma stood erect; their eyes were cast down, and they witnessed the ceremony with indulgence. They were too much enlightened by the true faith to join in what was passing—nevertheless they could be peaceable and tolerant.

The time at length arrived when Somer was called by affairs of importance to return home. At the moment of separation, he took from his tiara a jewel of great beauty, and presenting it to Noëma, said, "This gem formerly belonged to the illustrious Semiramis; it is fitter to adorn thy brow than mine. Its lustre becomes thy beauty, and can well assort with the enlightened wisdom and bright intelligence that shines resplendant in thy husband; let its brilliancy reflect in thy sight the happiness thou hast, united, shed over the evening of my days, as also my gratitude." He was departing, and Noëma would have followed him.

"Remain,"

"Remain," said the old man; "virtue should ever precede power, but never follow it."

"Ah," replied Noëma, "thou art Virtue's self; she can neither precede nor follow thee."

Somer bowed to Noëma, but by a look of authority, prevented her from attending him without their habitation.

As he departed, Noëma shed tears of mingled gratitude and regret.

Abessalom, with a numerous retinue, accompanied him some part of his journey. In token of a last farewell, Somer pressed to his heart the hand of Abessalom, who in return clasped the knees of his venerable friend, and returned with haste to watch over Noëma, and dispel from her mind any melancholy impression the affecting circumstances of the day might have invited.

The nearer she approached the expected crisis, the more fondly did he redouble his attentions towards her. She

became languid and sedentary ; his ingenuity was exercised in forming new devices to lure her from home, thus to cheer her imagination by a succession of objects. It was returning from rather a long walk with Noëma, that her more than common inquietude warned Abessalom that the decisive moment was at hand. " Yet time perhaps may remain to us," said he, " to propitiate by a sacrifice the favour of God for our babe, now on the eve of entering upon life."

The moon had been in her perigee for two nights only, and the sun was on the point of entering the sign of Sagittarius, a period reckoned amongst the happiest by the Chaldean astronomers, when Abessalom, who had watched with impatience the glimmering dawn, left his dwelling, even as the first bright gleam illumined the earth.

Attended by his domestics, he with haste bent his steps towards the east, and sought

sought the summit of a mount, not far distant from his habitation. On this spot he erected an altar, intending to offer a sacrifice to the Creator, and implore the protection of those celestial spirits, destined by his providence to preside over the course of the stars, and at the birth of mortals. He had appointed to participate in this homage his most devoted subjects of both sexes. And now appear a groupe of virgins, clad in their holiday garbs, and carrying on their arms baskets filled with flowers and aromatic herbs, and conducting a young heifer, that had not yet fulfilled its second year. A band of youths follow, attired as for a day of pomp or combat. Distributed amongst them is the wood, the fire, the vases, and whatever is requisite to the sacrifice.—The procession is closed by the parents or kindred of the youthful band of both sexes. Abessalom descends into the plain, and leads the way as high priest, the expiatory knife uplifted in his hand.

With the assistance of his attendants, he had already loosened from the earth a square of marble, and placed it above some branches of young oak trees. Three verdant sods, stripped from the turf, and placed one above the other, served as steps to the altar.

The procession arrives at its base, a spark is communicated to the aromatics, and they scatter an odour sweet and intoxicating to the senses. The young damsels deck the heifer with the last flowers of autumn; it is bound upon the marble; the steel, which is to compleat the sacrifice, and which reflects the rays of the rising sun, glitters in the right hand of Abessalom as he exclaims, "Oh my God! thou in whose hands are placed the seeds of life and death, thou who hast enlightened our souls with a spark unextinguishable, deign to regard with complacency the sacrifice, which at this moment I consecrate to thee—let the life-blood of this innocent victim, like the purest incense,
mount

mount to thy throne, only to descend charged with new light for the infant which Noëma shall presently offer to the world. The offences of our first parents, the outrages committed by their descendants, have no doubt given to thee the just right to sacrifice our first-born, even at the moment they enter the gates of life. But thy clemency is such, that thou yet leavest to man the glorious privilege of meriting thy favours; and thy justice and mercy are content, that the blood of animals taken from our peaceful folds shall supply that of mortals due to thy irritated vengeance. I strike then without cruelty this unoffending heifer—may her death acquit the tribute of blood due to thee, and propitiate thy favour to grant to me a son, who shall learn from me to devote to thee his liveliest sentiments of fear, love, gratitude, and adoration!”

The innocent victim makes no resistance to the intended blow; it lowers its head even on the place where it is bound.

Abessalom strikes! the blood flows on all sides, while the old men dip in it their hands, and scatter it towards the four corners of the heavens and of the earth.—The entrails are consumed; and the remainder of the victim being first purified in holy flame, is distributed to the mothers of families then present.

“Noëma and I,” said Abessalom to the by-standers, “we owe you our thanks for the zeal you have concurred in towards our sacrifice. Forget not therefore to assemble about the second hour of noon, on the plain beneath the hill of Phasga which fronts our dwelling. This shall be a day of feasting, and the youth who shews himself most nimble in the race shall meet a reward. The prize shall be awarded from the hand of Noëma; and dancing shall crown this day, which from its earliest dawn has been consecrated to our Creator.”

The appointed hour is scarcely arrived, when Noëma, supported on the arm
of

of her husband, reaches the valley. A seat almost representing a throne is elevated for her above the turf, and shadowed with plain leaves, which now assume the yellow tint of autumn. The course is determined—at its termination the stake is erected, and bears on its summit a basket, which the victor is destined to carry to Noëma, who shall place in it a roll of stuff woven with the finest wool of her flocks. On each side of the course, seats formed with the turf are intended for the aged spectators and the young damsels.

The youths, to the number of fifty, are now placed in a line; and Noëma is to give the signal to start, by letting her right hand, which is elevated, fall upon her heart.

It would be tedious and difficult to describe the hopes and pretensions of these various rivals. It will easily be imagined, that the heart of many a young shepherdess was deeply interested in their

final success. In particular, we will notice Susanna*, distinguished for her beauty and modesty. She loved, almost unknown to her own bosom, the youthful Chœreas†, remarkable for his slender and graceful form, for the gaiety and innocence of his manners, and, above all, for his dutiful affection to his aged father. But the father of Chœreas was poor, and that of Susanna one of the richest inhabitants of the country. The youth was dazzled with the charms of this lovely shepherdess; yet had he never dared to echo her name, even when wandering amidst paths the most solitary. As the signal for the race was given, his eyes met those of Susanna—fleet as an arrow he cleaves the air, and soon leaves his competitors behind, all but Amasiah, the strongest and most undaunted of all, who arrives at the term, even at the same moment with him. Chœreas embraced his

* Or the Lily and rose.

† Or joyful.

rival—"We share the victory alike," said he; "but we have yet between us an interest that is incapable of being divided—that of exciting a preference in the heart of the loveliest and most virtuous fair of Chaldea. I speak not of her wealth; I regard it not; let us then wrestle for the prize, and see which of us (our efforts alike animated by the same divine object) shall indeed be victorious!"

Amasiah, vain of the strength given him by nature, immediately accepts the challenge, and presses Choëreas in his arms. The right foot of each is opposed to that of the other; their left, in a receding position, is strained to the earth, and balances the efforts of their arms. Every nerve is exerted—their chests meet—the victory is doubtful, when Choëreas, with wonderful dexterity, and by a sudden evolution of his left foot, destroys the balance of his adversary, and lays him prostrate on the earth.

Choëreas now seized the basket, and

with a tranquil and modest air placed it at the feet of Noëma. The basket was covered—she raised the lid, which concealed two turtle doves, white as milk, and who sheltered with their wings a third, their offspring, and not yet fledged. They had been tamed by Zambri* in his rustic dwelling, during his leisure moments, and were intended as an emblematic gift for Noëma. With one hand she takes the basket, and with the other presents the roll of stuff to Chœreas, who immediately hands it to his father, beseeching that it may defend him against the inclemency of approaching winter, since his wealth was not sufficient to provide him with other means. Tears flowed down the old man's cheeks, which his grey hairs wiped away. At a scene so affecting every one arose, and became anxious to applaud the victor. Susanna remained seated, nor raised her eyes—one

* Or one who fowls with nets.

single glance, however, escaped to Chœreas, and assured to him a triumph unequalled.

Presently music celebrated the glory of Chœreas, and summoned to the dance. Abessalom arose from his verdant throne, and taking the hand of Noëma, pressed her to descend and betray the signal that was to commence their innocent amusement. Noëma obeyed; and Abessalom leading forth the timid Susanna, placed her hand within that of the conqueror's.

Abessalom and Noëma having continued for some time to observe the various windings of the dance, and by their presence add to the common joy, retired, participating in each other's satisfaction, at the pleasure they were the means of distributing.

The warbling of birds had nearly ceased, and the croaking frog stealing from its oozy bed, gave signal of fine weather the succeeding day, when each fond father, accompanied by his daughter, who lavished

lavished on him caresses of respectful tenderness, and each mother supported on the stronger arm of her son, who caroled for her some song with which she had amused his infancy, reached their habitations, having partaken largely of the hospitality of Abessalom. At length sleep closed the eyelids of every inhabitant of the canton—sleep unvisited by those phantoms that watch by the couches of the wicked.

Abessalom and Noëma also partook of this delightful calm, accorded by their mortal as well as immortal state towards the virtuous. The first hour of the succeeding morn however arrived, and Noëma awoke, distracted by the pains of childbirth. Nor yet would she alarm Abessalom. It belongs to a woman of delicacy and sensibility to devour in secret the first torments that precede the birth of her infant—perhaps from an undefined feeling of modesty, mingled with a reluctance to impart suffering to a husband

band

band beloved. However, these sorrows, predicted to woman and her affectionate partner, who necessarily shares them, increase hourly, and call for succour, tender and informed. The sympathy capable of electrifying two hearts destined to exist next each other, had identified too nearly the existence of Abessalom and Noëma, not to make him sensible to her sufferings almost before they were heard. "Courage, my beloved," said he, gently approaching his face to hers, "the grand moment is arrived, and thou art preparing to give to the great Author of your being a new object to adore him."

Abessalom arose, and looking around, removed from the apartment all the flowers and divers perfumes, which fitly should disappear before the first of all fruits, and which might tend to enervate the parent stock from which it was to proceed. He next summoned the attendants of his household, of a sex whose compassionate heart, the delicacy of whose organs, of
whose

whose touch, whose affectionate nature, is gifted with the sacred privilege of best soothing the afflicted, above all, of succouring her on the eve of becoming a mother !

Abessalom provided consolation for the least fears of Noëma. “ Ah ! my beloved,” cried she, “ what if I should die ! it is the will of God that danger should closely attend on those sufferings I experience.”

“ Remember, my Noëma,” replied Abessalom, “ that thy mother, in bringing thee forth, trusted in God, and was saved.”

“ But Zebea, our neighbour,” returned Noëma, “ did she not expire, even at the moment that her son lived ?”

“ The judgments of the Eternal,” added Abessalom, “ in particular generations are inscrutable—but let us remark, that Zebea had received from nature a stature miserable and distorted ; with difficulty could she move a few paces from her dwelling ;

dwelling; her disposition too, in consequence, was acrid and fretful, calculated to increase the dangers of her situation—but for thee, Noëma, perfect symmetry marks thy form, as does the purest candour thy soul—thus fear and danger belong not to thee!”

During every interval of repose enjoyed by Noëma, Abessalom was employed in recalling her thoughts either to the happiest moments of their past existence, or in leading them to the future—the future, how glorious! when she should clasp to her bosom the son or daughter of a beloved husband, when she should nurture it, guide its infant steps—yea, that being whose virtues and whose affection should hereafter doubly recompense her!

At length the moment arrives—even as the sun has run half his course, and the sufferings of Noëma no longer endure—she hears the cries of her infant—those
cries

cries that awaken secret indescribable joy within a father and a mother's heart!

Noëma receives the tender kiss of her beloved, and peace and joy once more irradiate her countenance. Nor will Abessalom, also restored to happiness, turn towards his babe, until fully assured of the safety of its mother.

"It is a boy!" cried he, at length, in gentle accents, fearing to increase the agitation of his Noëma.

"Dear Abessalom," she replied, "my dream then was not false—methinks I behold Oziel smile on me, and that I hear the receding footsteps of Galgal, lamenting his shame."

Abessalom, satisfied of the perfect conformation of his son, wishes himself to become security for the first pious use he shall make of his opening faculties—he takes him therefore in his arms, and immerses him three times in pure water, drawn from the crystal source that plays
around

around his happy dwelling. At each time he pronounces the name of God, and calls his son Elnathan*, as being accorded him by divine favour. With uplifted eyes he recommends him to Heaven, and then places him within the arms of Noëma. She fixes on him her eager glance, smiles on him, and bathes him with tears, that start involuntarily from her eyes. Abessalom looks on, in a transport of tenderness and gratitude; his arms encircle Noëma—her babe; he presses them close, and thus his thanks exhale for the gift she has presented to him.

* Or given from God,



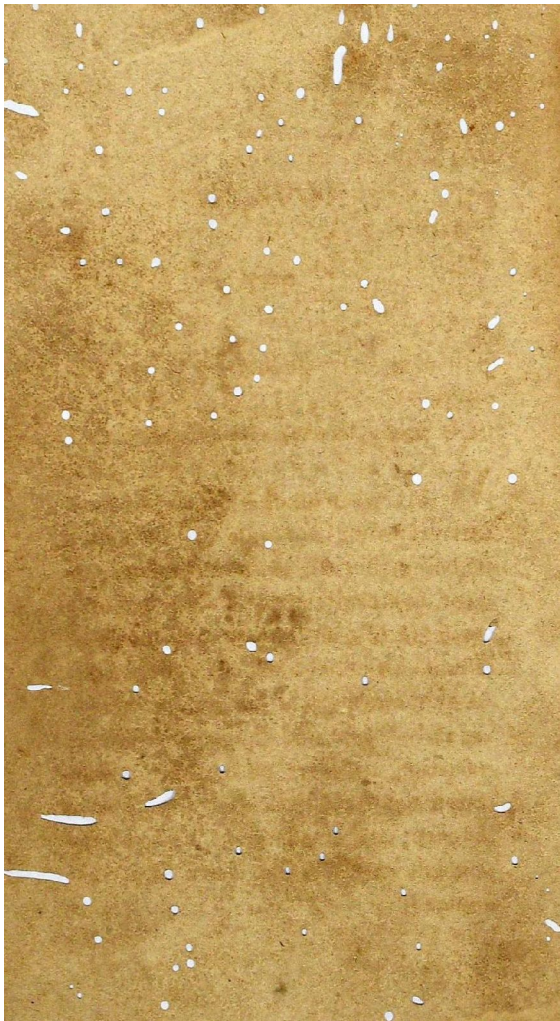
ELNATHAN;

OR,

THE AGES OF MAN.



BOOK II.



BOOK II.

Infancy.

“ First, the infant
Mewling, and puking in the nurse’s arms.”

WITH what unmingled pleasure and interest would not only the authors of its being, but the most indifferent spectator, contemplate the new-born babe—An image of man fresh from the hands of nature, his perfect features yet unstamped by the ravages of passion, and breathing only peace and innocence, did not reflection quickly present the numerous dangers and difficulties to which this innocent and unconscious being is exposed, even from the dawn of its existence !

Various

Various animals, scarcely ere they see the light, display a variety of unshackled movements, and instinct teaches them what is requisite for their preservation and subsistence; they appear even sensible to enjoyment. Behold, the fawn, the colt, and the kid, but newly born, they bound with joy and transport over the soil that is to nourish them; see them already nip the tender herb, and vigorously seek nourishment from their mothers; by their redoubled gestures they betray a sense of enjoyment. The chick too, starting from the shell, observe how firm it stands, how soon it seeks abroad for food, and how immediately it obeys the call of the parent hen, anxious to shelter it with her wings from the seasons inclemency, or the dangers that menace its life. The young palmipedes also, quickly from example slide into the neighbouring pond, and meet refreshment and subsistence; already can they dive, and seek safety beneath the wave
from

from the bird of prey that hovers round. Every animal that paces the earth, that skims the air, or swims on the water, has immediate regard to cleanliness; it dispels from it even the minutest insect. But the unfortunate infant entering upon life, uttering only vague and indeterminate cries of supplication or distress, appears almost the outcast of nature. Abandoned to himself during the first months of his existence, he would naturally become the prey of the most voracious death. Unable to remove from the place where he was laid, he would supply food for vile reptiles or voracious animals. He is, in short, so senseless and unintelligent, that even his lips must at times be stimulated to receive the nourishment necessary to the continuation of his existence.

To his parents then, but especially to his mother, does the lot fall to guard this helpless being, to anticipate his calls of hunger and thirst, to provide for him

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clothing suited to the variations of the climate he inhabits, to discard from him all but what can most conduce to health and pleasure.

And who was ever more ready than Abessalom and Noëma to fulfil with wisdom and tenderness those required ob-

During the first hours of the existence of Elnathan, they supplied his demands for food with some drops of honey mingled with water; at the same time, they were careful to observe that no unnecessary or misplaced ligature restrained the freedom of his limbs, or was capable of counteracting their natural growth.

Abessalom, deeply read in the book of nature, was convinced its author had not in vain supplied to a mother the means of nourishing her offspring, and considered it a crime in her who should refuse, either through indolence or a taste for pleasure, to suckle her infant.

"No doubt," said he to Noëma, while conversing

conversing on the subject, "it brings to a mother a world of care; her repose is interrupted, and a large portion of her time and pleasures are sacrificed; But then Nature has in store ample rewards for such as follow her dictates."

"Ah, my love," cried Noëma, "it is unnecessary to point out my duty; the voice of Nature already echoes through my heart, and asks of thee to place our infant on my bosom—bring him to me, I beseech thee." Abessalom pressed the hand of Noëma to his lips, and complied.

Assisted by the constant cares and soothings of her husband, Noëma rapidly gained strength. At length she was perfectly recovered, and thought of making a burnt-offering to the Lord, in gratitude for the favours he so lately had vouchsafed her. And what sacrifice could she offer, what type of fidelity more perfect, than the turtle-doves received at the hands of Chœreas? Yet the value of

the offering must be heightened, by some act of penance as well as of benevolence. To this end, Noëma imparted to Abessalom her intention of journeying towards Mount Anoth, distant six parsangs from their dwelling, there to supplicate Ezriel, the high priest, to bestow a benediction on the homage she was about to offer; and there also to consecrate the generous intentions she had in view.

All the neighbouring inhabitants were invited in two days to accompany this happy mother on her holy pilgrimage. The evening, however, previous to her departure, she was observed to seek the dwelling where lived the father of Susanna, under pretext of thanking him for the more than common interest he had taken in her late extremity.

It had been remarked, that since the day of the triumph of Chœreas, Susanna had taken care to separate the young lambs of her father's flocks from the rest of the fold, and with his permission, to drive

drive them, when the noon-day sun tempered a little the cold air of winter (that now began to set in), towards those more verdant pastures common to the other inhabitants of the canton; there Chœreas also neglected not to feed the few flocks which were all his wealth, and that of his father. Each day he and Susanna would insensibly drive their flocks the same way; but no sooner did they approach each other, near enough to converse together, than the timid shepherdess would lead her lambs in a contrary direction, while Chœreas did likewise, fearing, even by a sigh, to offend the object of his tenderest thoughts. Susanna, at departing, would sing, almost under her voice, some artless lay, which grew louder and more distinct with her receding footsteps. The notes were echoed back by Chœreas, the tone of whose pipe swelled also in the distance. But trifling like this must shortly have an end, and to Chœreas belonged its termination.

A tuft of pines and evergreen oaks intermingled their shade, and crowned the summit of a hill, situated towards the east. The yellow harvest had teemed on its declivity, and the stubble yet protected different herbs and fresh blades of grass, which the shepherds knew their flocks loved to crop. Here Chœreas drove his one morning, even at sunrise, and disposed them on one side of the hill, under the shelter of the trees that shadowed the summit. Susanna, who beheld not as usual the flocks of Chœreas, and lured perhaps by that irresistible sympathy which attracts the tender heart towards the object of its secret care, led her lambs up the opposite side. Disappointed at not finding what in secret she most desired, she sat down and leaned against the trunk of an oak, the most venerable this little grove could boast. Deep sighs presently broke from its interior, and Susanna, actuated by pity, quickly arose to discover from whence proceeded sounds

so piteous. In going round the tree, she perceives it is hollow, and even beholds Chœreas seated within it. A cry escapes her, and she is ready to fly toward her flock, that browzes at a little distance.

“Ah! fly me not,” exclaimed Chœreas; “from me thou hast nothing to fear.”

“It is right,” returned Susanna, “that I fly from one who conceals himself thus to terrify me.”

“Ah me!” sighed Chœreas, “n lambs and heifers have more courage than their shepherd; they dare to express their wants and sufferings by long and repeated moans; and me—I have not presumed, even to this day, to converse with my own heart on the subject dearest to it, and which even makes it suffer so intensely. The sight of Susanna, no doubt, calms my grief, but she flies me, and I endure anew.”

“And from what springs your sorrow?” demanded the shepherdess, with down-

cast eyes, and yet unwilling to depart—
“it cannot proceed from me; I would not
pain thee for the world.”

“Ah, Susanna!” murmured Chœreas.

“Speak!” returned the shepherdess.

“I have heard it was presumptuous to
confess one’s love.”

“Often, very often have I confessed
that I loved myself, nor felt that I did
wrong.”

“Oh! you are right to love yourself;
were I you, I would love myself most
willingly.”

“And why not love thyself, Chœreas,
even as thou art, wise and amiable?”

“Ah, no! I detest myself, for Susanna
cannot love me.”

“And who told thee so?” quickly re-
plied the shepherdess, and hurried away,
while she blushed deeply; and for the
last words which had so unwarily escaped
her, revenged herself on a lamb that
strayed from the remainder of the flock.
Chœreas followed, and throwing himself

at her feet exclaimed, "Beloved of my soul, would that I possessed the treasures of the earth, to lay them at the feet of thy father, who worships wealth, and thence obtain the hope of one day being thy husband!"

"Ah! Chœreas, this avowal was all that was necessary to render me truly miserable; my father is indeed opposed to thy wishes, which else I own would have met mine; and who better than thee can taste filial duty?"

"Yes, Susanna, thy father has some right to deny me, for mine is poor; but yet I am rich in tenderness; and methinks he should look more favourably on wealth like this." Chœreas became silent, and wept abundantly. The tender Susanna took from her neck the handkerchief there placed by the hands of modesty, and wiped away his tears. Chœreas snatched the gauze, and concealed it in his bosom, while Susanna, who perceived the sun decline, hastened to collect her flock,

flocks, and lead them to the fold, which was at some distance.

But Abessalom, who watched like a guardian angel over all that could contribute to the virtue or felicity of his neighbourhood, had followed Chœreas at a distance, and even taken his place within the hollow of the tree, where he beheld the affecting scene that had just passed. While Chœreas contemplated with rapture the handkerchief that had been Susanna's, Abessalom stole softly from his retreat, and descending the hill unperceived, hastened and related to Noëma what he had witnessed, certain that her ingenuity and humanity would contrive the means of rendering happy those tender lovers—and this hope it was that led her at length towards the dwelling of Susanna's father.

"Wealth is nought," said she to him, "when put in the balance with virtue. Marriage was ordained by God—Chœreas is virtuous, and Susanna will inherit riches

riches from you ; they love, and with an affection that merits your favour, since it waits for the approval of their parents. I acknowledge, however, that a happy marriage must not be disproportioned ; neither is it fit that either of those it unites should, even in secret, pride themselves in having enriched the object of their affection : for these reasons, Abessalom and I have determined on giving to Chœreas two talents of gold, as a fortune suitable to the dowry of your daughter. We intend also to provide, even till his last hour, for the venerable father of this amiable youth : thus you will not surely refuse, either to virtue or me, your consent to the union of this charming couple ?”

What mortal could resist the supplications of Noëma ! The father of Susanna withheld not his consent, and would even have refused the sum offered by Noëma. But she requested that he might not deprive her, or her dear Abessalom, of the

pleasure of bestowing a donation so well placed. She enjoined him also to keep as a profound secret the subject of their interview.

The dawn of the following morning, destined for the journey to Mount Anoth, had scarcely appeared, when the youths, the maidens, and old men (residents of the valley, and neighbouring hills), appeared before the dwelling of Abessalom and Noëma, in order to accompany them on their holy pilgrimage. The mothers of families alone remained to lead the flocks to the pastures, which this day were clothed with fresh verdure, the northern winds having entirely ceased.

The door of the dwelling was immediately opened, and Noëma, the image of celestial virtue, appeared clad in a garment of purple, trimmed with ermine. In her arms reposed her son, enveloped in a mantle of purest white. Abessalom followed, carrying the turtle doves, whose echoing resounded as if they had enjoyed perfect

perfect liberty. But to this offering Abessalom and Noëma thought somewhat should be added, in favour of their subjects; and what so appropriate as some loaves and measures of wine, the first of those fruits from which their prosperity flowed? Chœreas and Susanna were destined by Noëma to take charge of these presents; and as she instructed them to offer successively to Ezriel the bread and the wine, she placed on the brow of Chœreas a bonnet tastefully ornamented with a plume of feathers taken from the golden plover. The tresses of Susanna she crowned with a chaplet of myrtle and orange flowers interwoven.

Noëma had warned Ezriel of her approach, and that of her train. For more than twenty years had this venerable sage laboured with his hands to convert his rustic dwelling into a sanctuary that should invite the love of the Most High. Lilacs, honeysuckle, and jasmine, intertwined their branches, and formed an exterior portico;

portico; the floor was of inlaid marble, and the walls and ceiling were decorated with allegorical designs, that represented many of the attributes of God, his protection of the just, his mercy obtained by true repentance, his justice visited upon obstinate sinners, and numberless of his favours accorded upon earth. Various shrubs encompassed its exterior; and the cedar and palm-tree extended their loftier branches even across the roof, and closely defended it from the fury of the winds. As the sun sunk in the horizon, a lambent flame, kindled with sweet-scented woods, elicited a new day within this simple abode of true piety.

Ezriel approached the outer gate of his dwelling to welcome Noëma, who immediately bowed her knee, and presented to him her babe.

"Oh thou," cried she, "who art buried within these solitudes only to promote the glory of God, and to intercede for mortals, purify with thy breath, I beseech thee,

thee, this pledge of a tender union ; cleanse him from the evil of his origin, and from ought of ill that he may have contracted within my bosom—offer and recommend him to the protection of his Creator.”

Ezriel raised his eyes to heaven, and taking Elnathan in his arms, pronounced, in a voice that seemed from heaven, “Elnathan without doubt must partake of the weakness of humanity, but born of Abessalom and Noëma, never shall he deny the glory and power of God. Let thy saving grace then, oh, most omnipotent Lord ! descend, I implore thee, and fix his steps in the paths of virtue !” and breathing three times on the infant, Ezriel bestowed on him his benediction.

How did Noëma tremble, as her hands were extended to receive her babe ! but soon was she encouraged, for the first smile then played upon its lips.

When Elnathan was restored to the arms of his mother, Abessalom, with bend-

ed

ed knee, presented to the priest the turtle-doves prepared for the sacrifice.

“ They shall not perish by my hands,” said Ezriel, “ nor shall the blood of innocence ever be presented by the most peaceable of mortals.” Then advancing within the middle of the temple, he gave liberty to the doves, adding, “ Live with me, gentle creatures, in this solitude, and join thy accents to mine in praise of our Creator, even till the moment that mine shall expire for ever.”

“ Ah! may that moment be far removed!” cried Noëma; “ mayst thou long live to accept the first fruits of the earth, which we will not fail constantly to bring thee! they are now offered to thee in behalf of our colony, and shall be even presented by the hands of two victims, who prepare to complete, through you, the purest and most precious of sacrifices. — Chœreas, Susanna, approach; present to the high priest your gifts, and listen to his decree.”

As two young stags sheltered beneath a tree, tears trickling down their face, breathless wait the pursuit of the ravenous hounds, so at the words of Noëma, stand Chœreas and Susanna. Convinced that they have been adorned only to become more worthy of a bloody sacrifice, they advance to the foot of the altar, where the priest now ascends. Their trembling hands have already placed on its steps the charge confided to them by Noëma, when the good Ezriel, afflicted at their groundless terrors, hastens to raise them in his paternal arms, at the moment that they kneel before him.

“ Yes, happy pair,” said he, “ you come hither in the presence of heaven, to make of liberty a mutual sacrifice. In the sacred name of love, then (since I cannot doubt but this tender tie inspires your wishes), will I unite thee ;” and delivering to Chœreas a basket, whose contents were concealed by wild-flowers, Ezriel continued, “ within this basket are

two talents of gold, accorded by Abesalom and Noëma, to reward thy virtue, and render thee a match equal to Susanna; and for thee, fair maiden, is a ring of gold, pure as thy heart, the gift also of this generous couple, who hope thou wilt permit Chœreas to adorn with it thy virgin hand. Speak, Chœreas, speak, Susanna—this sacrifice, does it accord with thy wishes?"

Chœreas and Susanna, every feeling of their soul in unison, instantaneously flew and cast themselves at the feet of their respective fathers, tears the only interpreters of their wishes. The father of Susanna, already prepared for this scene, hastened, with a benignant smile, to lead his daughter back to the altar; but the father of Chœreas retires, and mingles with the croud; he had tenderly embraced his son; but unencouraged by his friends, he presumes not to lead him towards the altar.

"Fear nothing," cried Noëma, "not
even

even to become a burthen to that family of which Susanna may become the mother. Abessalom has appointed that thou shouldst, to thy latest breath, reside with him, to aid him by thy counsels, and draw towards his wife and child the blessing of heaven."

"Alas!" cried Choëreas, "if my father is taken from me, I must even refuse the celestial happiness offered to me. I am well acquainted with the soul of Susanna, and know that she likewise would be afflicted at my separation from a beloved father, to whom my cares are become so necessary."

"Be tranquil, Choëreas," rejoined the father of Susanna; "thou, thy father, my daughter, and I, shall all live under the same roof; we will make but one family, of which Abessalom and Noëma shall be the protecting angels;" at the same time he placed the hand of his daughter within that of the tenderest and most affectionate of sons.

Choëreas

Chœreas can scarcely believe his senses; is it possible so much felicity awaits him! his trembling hands scarce have power to place aright the nuptial ring delivered to him by Ezriel. At length Susanna, casting down her eyes on the steps of the altar, gently presents to him the destined finger, and her lover hastily gives to it the symbol of their future happiness. Ezriel bestowed on them his benediction, in the name of heaven—centre of sympathy and true love!

“Would,” said the generous pontiff to the spectators, “that I were able, in a suitable manner, to celebrate this auspicious day, and by feasting repay the toils of your journey; but accustomed to exist only on the limited produce of my garden, I can offer you but refreshment the most simple;” so saying he led the way towards a crystal spring, a little way distant, whence inviting his guests to repose upon the turf, he placed before them, in great abundance, dates gathered

hered but a short time before, grapes dried in the sun, and the fruit of the almond-tree scarcely yet ripe. Hymns ascended to heaven, and cheered the conclusion of the repast; after which this little band of pilgrims kissed the hands of Ezriel, in token of gratitude and respect, and with light footsteps returned to seek their dwellings.

Many days of bad weather had detained Abessalom and Noëma at home, when the winds were at length calmed, the sky became serene, and the early song of birds announced the opening spring.—As the sun reached its zenith, Noëma strayed abroad, carrying with her a little basket, serving as a cradle, in which slumbered her son; she was anxious that he also should be renovated by the sun's returning beams; she placed her beloved Elnathan beneath a lilac tree, whose young foliage might temper the excessive heat, and seated herself beside him. Her eyelids, at length weary of dwelling on the
object

object of her tenderness, languidly closed, and sleep, as if by sympathy, crept softly, and was participated between the babe and its mother.

During this moment of tranquillity, when the stillness of nature, or rather its gentle murmurings, encouraged the duration of their repose, a glittering serpent glides unperceived even to the foot of the cradle. It already scales its side, and is on the point of grasping in its sinewy folds the innocent creature that lies buried in sleep, when Abessalom, ever awake, when Noëma slept, to the interests of this precious treasure, darts forward, and with the instrument of his rural toil crushes the monster to atoms. The more serious occupations of the morning being passed, he was amusing himself in cultivating the flowers of his garden. At sight of the threatened danger, he uttered an involuntary shriek, that immediately awoke Noëma, whose features stiffened with horror, as she perceived the occasion of it.

Nor did the evil end here ; terror had so penetrated every fibre of her existence, that the source of nourishment to her infant became suddenly exhausted, and she drooped like the flower struck by the lightning's flash. Other means of subsistence were, with a doubting hand, supplied to Elnathan ; but his infantine structure soon betrayed symptoms that the change was too sudden.

However, Noëma, assisted by the soothing of Abessalom, and the medicinal remedies his experience had in store, began gently to revive ; and gradually nature (as if to recompence the past) gave to her means more abundant than ever, to restore to her cherished infant the colouring of health, which the lively apprehensions of its mother had for some days faded.

Noëma was overjoyed at this bountiful return of nutrition within her bosom, since an occasion soon occurred, by which it afforded to her the means of conciliating

ating an act of benevolence with her maternal duty.

Who would have supposed that the youthful Zambri, who knew so well how to tame doves, those emblems of perfect fidelity, would become the most faithless lover in the domains of Abesalom !

Those tender and flexible tones with which he used to ensnare the feathered tribe, and the soothing care with which he afterwards familiarized them, served but as essays for those perfidious arts with which he seduced the beauteous Segor, and thence plunged her into the abyss of misfortune.

— They were accustomed, from the proximity of their habitations, constantly to enjoy each others society—they shared like sports and like toils. They fed their flocks in the same pastures ; the voice of one echoed the song of the other ; and frequently seated beneath the same tree, they watched with eager attention the unwary

unwary flight of the little songster, within the defiles of the net they had together spread.

It chanced one day that a beautiful goldfinch was hid in the snares of the dextrous Zambri; Segor entreated that he would give it to her.

“So I will,” said he, gaily, “on one condition.”

“And what may that be?” asked the shepherdess.

“That thou wilt give me a kiss; the zephyr receives as much from the flowers, sweet emblems of thy beauty.”

“Well, thou mayst do like the zephyr.”

But unhappily the zephyr oft times swells to a breeze, blows an impetuous south-wind gale, and bending even the stem of the flower it caresses, leaves it faded beneath the ardour of its breath! Segor resembled the flower betrayed by the zephyr! And now the goldfinch, that, deprived of liberty, no longer warbled, was the sorrowful recompence that remained

to her for the most important of sacrifices. It was nearly two months after that Segor reflected on the extreme difference between a flattering fable and a painful truth: she was soon convinced that she had woefully encroached upon the chaste rights of wedded love, and that she must publicly blush for being a mother.

Zambri no doubt was the first to whom she confided a danger so unforeseen. But the perfidious youth, who had not yet completed his twentieth year, smiled upon her fears; and more impatient to free himself from her shackles than even the birds caught in his net, fled from the neighbourhood, as would one of his prey disentangled from the snare.

The unhappy Segor, abandoned to sorrow, forbore until the last moment to impart to her mother, severe as tender, (for father she had none,) her lasting shame. Her mother, on hearing her complaints, cast on her looks of indignation and

and compassion, and fled also from her presence, leaving her, however, to the experienced care of Micha, her neighbour. Her steps were bent to seek the author of her child's misfortune: indefatigable in her search, she at length discovered his concealment, and presenting to him a poniard, said, "It remains to thee, wretch, to pierce the bosom of her who gave birth to the object of thy unlicensed passion; to thee it justly belongs to put an end to my woes!"

Zambri, as if levelled by a bolt from heaven, fell at the feet of this distracted mother—"Suffer me," said he, "to follow thee, and repair my errors."

They quickly returned toward the unhappy Segor, who, amidst mingled torments, had just given birth to a son.

"I bring to thee," said Zambri to her, "a tender heart, that shall console thee, and for ever remain thine."

"It is too late," replied Segor, in feeble accents. "Oh! my God! pardon me."

I bereech thee ! and thou, my mother, pardon Zambri, and together let him and thee watch over my infant !” Segor, as she uttered these last words, expired.

At the same time was Zambri overwhelmed with remorse and affliction ; he had not foreseen consequences so fatal ; and now, alas ! no means were left to expiate his guilt. His despair resounded through the groves, even till it reached the ears of Noëma. Accustomed to fly and offer consolation to the least distress of her neighbours, she instantly sought to know from whence those accents of sorrow proceeded, and soon reached the scene of death and desolation. Zambri had returned to the couch of Segor ; his eyes were raised to heaven, whence he believed her soul had fled. The unhappy mother endeavoured, by the ardour of her embraces, once more to warm the bosom of her child ; but an eternal chill had crept over this sanctuary, which in an unguarded moment had been unhappily violated.

violated. Zambri turned aside, and clasped his infant to his breast in a fresh transport of grief.

“Do not,” said Noëma, “disturb, by thy frantic movements, the peaceful manes of Segor; transmit to her mother those attentions you had intended for her daughter, and thus acquit thy conscience; nor tremble for the safety of thy babe; I will place it next my son, and they shall together draw nourishment from the same source; while hereafter Abessalom shall guide their steps equally in the paths of wisdom.”

Noëma took the infant, and covering it in the folds of her robe, returned home to present it to her husband. “This child,” said Abessalom, as Noëma related to him the circumstances of its birth, “shall, no doubt, be the friend of our son; I rejoice that it has become ours.”

After this period, which did so much credit to humanity, the days of Abes-

salom and Noëma flowed on in an uninterrupted course of tranquillity ; their rural toils, their household cares, the tender assiduities required by their two nurslings, afforded only an agreeable variety.

The hearts of those tender parents, no doubt, beat high, when at length the safety of Elnathan or Zabdi* was threatened by any of the various maladies incident to infancy. Yet did the same wisdom and gentleness preside over their conduct in the day of trial as of prosperity.—Noëma received from the hands of Abesalom those remedies which his foresight and experience adapted to the nature of the malady, with a firmness and tranquillity unshaken. Her anxiety breathed in acts of utility, nor was exhaled in fruitless lamentations, hurtful even in the example it offered to her tender patients. Neither would she, with mistaken fond-

* Or that which is bequeathed.

ness, humour their caprices, and give an unbridled rein to their wills, a practice uncondusive to heal, and truly hurtful to the moral existence.

Abessalom had marked distinctly the difference in the organic structure of his sons. Elnathan was of a robust and vigorous constitution; his movements were bold, and his voice energetic. Zabdi offered a structure more delicate; his approach was timid, and his health more easily affected. Abessalom was careful, in every instance, to adopt a separate mode of treatment for the ills that affected each.

At three years old, Elnathan and Zabdi had escaped many a perilous juncture, and were the pride and joy of their parents. Abessalom and Noëma beheld with interest, even now, the developement of their faculties; their arms spread wide to receive their endearing caresses, they met their smile with sympathy and
B 4 sweetness.

sweetness. They wondered at the ingenuity of their tricks, at the intelligence that beamed in their little countenances, as, with eyes upraised, they endeavoured to divine the thoughts of the authors of their being.

But if, at a riper period, Abessalom was amazed at the intelligence of his sons, at the subtilty of their questions, he was also aware that the replies of him and Noëma should be guided by the utmost caution ; that hence depended their future understanding, views, and conduct. Elnathan and Zabdi were never repulsed with impatience ; their artless inquiries were listened to with attention, and answered with simplicity and truth ; and if the truth was above their comprehension, or contained more than was advisable for their tender years to be informed of, they were further told, that as they grew older and obtained knowledge, they would better understand it. Thus were they taught

taught diffidence in their own abilities, and excited to become daily more enlightened.

Till they reached their tenth year, the cares of Abessalom rather extended to perfect in them a sound state of health, to fix their principles, and prepare their minds for the reception of knowledge, than to crowd their memory, and dull their vivacity, by the study of abstruse sciences. They coursed the valley, they climbed the mountains, they swam the river; they were accustomed to hear the thunder roll, and to start not; the seasons' change brought to them no inconvenience. They were early taught to mark the wisdom and goodness of God, in the beauty and harmony of the universe; morning and evening were they invited to hush his praises; for Abessalom well knew that religion, if not entwined with our earliest associations, loses hereafter much of its fervour.

The child, confident in his own strength,

tries to obtain his wishes by commands ; the weaker infant has recourse to artifice. Abessalom watched in his pupils every early inclination to domineer or to falsehood, and repressed them with eagerness. He loved to bend their dispositions to the practice of benevolence, to a sense of the wants of others. To this end he would engage them to part with their food, their clothing, in behalf of their neighbours' distress. In their ordinary behaviour, they had no preceptor but nature ; so were their manners simple and unsophisticated as the scenes they inhabited. Those presents were bestowed with cheerfulness, and received with grace.

Like the other youths of the valley, Elnathan and Zabdi learned to till the earth and tend the flocks. During the season of autumn, if Abessalom and Noëma wished to reward their obedience, they were suffered to follow the labourers to the vineyards, and load their little baskets with

with grapes, which afterwards they distributed amongst those who gathered not. At all times were they allowed to join in the sports and recreations of the children of their neighbours. They mingled in their processions, and at the same time joined with them in hymns to the glory of God. Elnathan took particular pleasure in this last diversion, and generally placed himself at the head of the little band of youths (although in contradiction to his father), while by predilection he chose to precede the young maidens, Sephora, the sweet offspring of Chœreas and Susanna. This order of things had already produced much competition between Elnathan and his companions, and had often called for the interference of Abessalom or Noëma, who generally altered the decisions of their son, and placed at the head of these pious processions, Zabdi and the interesting Mara.

Mara ! the daughter of the unfortu-

nate Moria, whose history was confided to Abessalom and Noëma, and transmitted by them to their descendants, as a warning against the inordinate desire of pleasing, or rather against an inclination to love, unrestrained by prudence.

Elnathan and Zabdi were in the fifth year of their age, when Abessalom and Noëma, seated one day in the shade, conversing on the vicissitudes of life, and comparing the advantages of a rural existence with that led in crowds by the ambitious, perceived approach them a female form, whose air was dignified and graceful; her countenance, though marked by sorrow, betrayed traces of beauty, and her apparel, though simple, was characterized by neatness: she held by the hand a little girl of about three years old, and carried with her a casket.

She advanced close to Abessalom and Noëma, whom Ezriel had taught her to recognise, and delivered into the hands of the former a billet traced by the high priest.

priest. It contained only as follows:
“ Listen to Moria; pity and protect her!”

On perusing these words, Abessalom arose, and pressing the interesting Moria to repose herself beside his wife, entreated from her a relation of the unhappy causes that had driven her towards his domains. The sympathy of his tone could leave no doubt that his request was not dictated by curiosity, but alone by the desire of rendering her service.

“ My sorrows are indeed heavy,” replied Moria, heaving a deep sigh, “ and I believe singular in their nature: never should I have dared to obtrude them upon your ears, had not Ezriel commanded it, as also that I should implore your succour. I was born in the famous city of Hanothmir, of which Saphat, my father, was the chief governor. Austere in his principles, and incorruptible in the duties of his office, he knew but one weakness, that of his tenderness for me:

my mother died in giving me birth, and I was his only child. He feared to cause me pain by the least contradiction, and opposed only the example of his virtues to my errors. He did not believe it possible that I could abuse his indulgence, or by the least indiscretion tarnish my own reputation, or the honour of his name. Unhappily nature gave to my form some graces, and I attracted universal admiration; by which my vanity at least was gratified, if my heart was untouched. Amidst, however, the crowd of admirers who offered me their flattering homage, there were two youths whom I particularly distinguished. They were equally handsome and accomplished.—Gersom, the eldest, had gained the favour of my father, who prevailed with me to promise him my hand. Still Jamin, his rival, pleased me also; though not so eloquent as Gersom, he was to the last degree assiduous in anticipating the least of my wishes.

“ At

“ At the beginning of the first war proclaimed by our great king against the refractory city of Jerusalem, Gersom obtained a distinguished post in the army. He quitted me with the tenderest expressions of regret, at the same time enchanted at the prospect afforded him of making his love shine more resplendent by the achievements of glory. Jamin remained at Hanothmir, and encompassed me with attentions the most delicate; he left no endeavours untried to decide me in his favour. At length the violence of his passion began to affect his health, and I trembled for the safety of his days. Alas! how dangerous may become our apprehensions for the safety of him who loves us! My pity was breathed for Jamin, and he soon revived. Meanwhile Gersom returned not, and even some vague reports were spread of his death. To these my father listened not, but continued to extol his virtues and endowments; he talked to me of him as my affianced husband,

band, and assured me that he would soon return to crown my wishes. I listened to him with secret sorrow—oh! wise and indulgent Abessalom, hear me with patience, and thou, Noëma, forgive the blushes that must overspread my humiliated countenance. Jamin, at these sounds of my father, used every art that love could suggest to assure to himself a triumph, and to prove to me that only one way was left to gain the consent of the venerable Saphat to my becoming his and not Gersom's. The bird which precipitates itself from the highest heaven, at call of its captive fellow, whom it falsely believes free, not quicker or more unawares falls into the snare, than I, seduced by the empire of my senses, became guilty ere I knew that I was so! Jamin had scarcely left me when my father arrived from his country seat, where he had passed the two preceding days, accompanied by the heroic Gersom!

‘He has but one day to spare,’ said my father,

father, 'and he will consecrate it to thee, or rather to the last wishes of a fond parent. This night, Moria, Gersom shall become thy husband; to-morrow he will depart to lay at the feet of his king, the trophies he has gained from the enemy.' Gersom also talked to me—talked to me like a hero devoted to my will, and one who had not conquered, but that my remembrance animated his courage!

"I am not able to recall what at this dreadful moment were my thoughts or my replies. Stupor, shame, fear, gratitude, all overcame me. I suffered myself to be led to the altar; I became that night the wife of Gersom—his wife by every sacred title! At the morrow's dawn he quitted me to repair to Babylon.

"Jamin was quickly informed of the extent of his misfortune; yet would he (at least I fondly believed so) have concealed within his bosom our mutual affection and mutual error, had not report proceeded to announce that I should become

come a mother. During six months Gerson remained at the court of Nebuchadnezzar, to whom his counsels and knowledge of military affairs had rendered him necessary. At length the wished-for moment arrived, that would give him back to his wife. Burning with impatience, he arrives at the gates of his native city, but is there met by Jamin, who retards his steps, and dares to tell him, that though the marriage rights may have rendered me his, by those of nature, the babe I carry in my bosom belongs only to him.

“ In a tumult of rage they both reached my dwelling; each proceeded to interrogate me; I remained speechless! upon which they rushed forth, threats in their looks, and reproaches on their lips. For some moments I became senseless; at length recovering, I followed them with the utmost precipitation. They had fled beyond the city, and had reached a grove of cypress trees, that shadowed a monument, raised to the illustrious manes
of

of some of their fellow-citizens. I beheld their swords clash, their blows redoubled, and even saw them both fall weltering in their blood ! at this moment I reached them. My presence and my shrieks seemed to recall their fleeting souls; they cast a look to heaven, then on me; each took a hand of mine, pressed it tenderly, and expired, saying, *Take care of the pledge of our love.*

“ I ran to seek water at a neighbouring fountain; I tore my garments and bandaged their wounds; but, alas! they were no more! Upon this conviction my shrieks resounded anew, and I sunk motionless on the earth. After some time I awoke to a sense of my misfortunes; night had shadowed the universe, but the moon, stealing from behind the passing clouds, shewed all the horror of my situation. I fled in terror; and after wandering distracted, reached my wretched home, as the mists of morning crept over the city. Collecting my remaining powers,

powers, I traced for my beloved, outraged father, these words:—‘Hasten, dear author of my existence, to the monument of the cypress grove, and perform the last rites over Gersom and Jamin. I am the pitiable cause of their death; in their last moments; each believed himself the parent of the unfortunate being I carry in my bosom. Pity, and forget thy daughter, who cannot long survive them, but whose last sigh shall exhale in tenderness and respect for thee!’

“Having dispatched these lines, I snatched up what gold and jewels I possessed, and exchanging my garments to prevent discovery, immediately hurried from the city of Hanothmir. Since this dreadful period, I have wandered from solitude to solitude: without succour of any kind, I gave birth to the being you have placed between you. At length Heaven, no doubt appeased by the excess of my woes, directed my footsteps towards the dwelling of its minister, that
he

He might lend to me comfort by his prayers and counsel. The good Ezriel listened with indulgence to the recital of my woes, and consoled me with assurances of the pardon of Heaven—ever accorded to sincere repentance: he has even remanded me to you, to further heal my wounds, by your sympathy and charitable counsels. I have only to add, that I shall not become unto you a burthen—this casket yet contains gold and jewels sufficient to purchase for my child an humble habitation, with a tract of land, enough to assure her subsistence during the course of her isolated existence.”

Moria, as she concluded this recital, shed a flood of tears; Abessalom endeavoured to reassure her; and taking her by the hand (while Noëma took charge of the little girl) led her to their dwelling. The next day he concluded for her the purchase of a small, but neat cottage in the neighbourhood, lately left vacant by the death of the proprietor.

From

From henceforth Mara, under the special protection of Abessalom (who carefully concealed her history, as likewise her mother's) became the constant playmate of Elnathan and Zabdi. If the former was used to mark his preference for Sephora, the latter no less singled out Mara as the favoured companion of his sports.

One fine summer's evening, the children of the valley had assembled, and were particularly engaged in a sport, the object of which was, at a given signal for each to make sure of a seat, while one of the assembly, the least dextrous, was left standing. Sephora and Mara arrive together at the same seat, and each asserts that she is the foremost. The dispute grows warm; Elnathan takes the part of Sephora, Zabdi that of Mara; invectives are mingled; at length, Elnathan, no longer master of himself, seizes Mara by the hair of the head, and throwing her rudely on the ground, causes her nose to bleed violently.

A mother.

A mother, let her be humbled ever so, at sight of her child ill-treated, feels her pride and indignation aroused; Moria, on seeing her beloved Mara covered with blood, flew to Abessalom, and poured bitter complaints. Her anger, however, subsiding, she begged he would forbear to beat Elnathan. "It is not my custom," replied he, tranquilly, "but when the safety of Mara is attended to, I will take care that he shall humble himself before you and her."

Restoratives were offered to Mara, who had received no material injury, and Abessalom sought his son, then eight years old. He insisted that he should immediately solicit the pardon of Moria and her daughter, for the excess of his insolence and passion. The proud youth obstinately insisted that he had been in the right, and absolutely refused to comply with his father's orders. Abessalom having endeavoured, coolly but vainly, to persuade him of his error, at length perceived

perceived that the obstinacy of his son would, in future, become invincible, if not in the present instance overcome. To this end he led him to a solitary apartment, and with composure assured him, that until he became willing to make the required obeisance, he should there continue without food or company. The hour of repose arrived, and Elnathan remained obstinate. Some of the neighbours of Abessalom, and particularly Moria, remonstrated against the boy being left all night hungry and uncovered; but his father was inflexible—"I have pledged to him my word," said Abessalom, "and on no consideration would I give him reason to doubt of it hereafter; besides, there is no risk too great to hazard, in order to correct the disposition that he has this day betrayed."

Morning came, and Abessalom visited the culprit, whose appetite beginning to sharpen, and who having no latent hope that his father would relent towards him, surrendered

rendered himself with a good grace, and was content humbly to solicit the required forgiveness. This accomplished, his parents tenderly embraced him, and marked their subsequent conduct by more than usual indulgence. Elnathan was careful never more to incur similar punishment.

A fault committed by Zabdi shortly after, and of a nature unhappily according with his character of timidity and reserve, was treated in a manner different by Abessalom. It was curious to observe how materially Elnathan and Zabdi differed in disposition, although of an equal age, nourished by the same milk, and liable in every respect to the same treatment.—Elnathan was used to betray his resentment by open and daring hostility; that of Zabdi lingered in his bosom, and was appeased by concealed acts of revenge. His passion subsided, Elnathan would truly meet the embrace of the object that had offended him; while Zabdi, in like circumstances,

circumstances, though he would not refuse his forgiveness, yet became not wholly reconciled. The instance that claimed the severity of Abessalom was as follows:

Zabdi had conceived enmity to some of his comrades, who possessed a young rabbit white as milk, and which they had so thoroughly tamed as to render it to them a great amusement: while they were engaged in play, he took occasion to conceal the little favourite in his pocket, and quitting the room under a false pretence, hurried home, and hid his theft in a corner of the granary. Presently the rabbit was missed, and a fruitless search commenced for it, in which Zabdi also joined. His absence, however, was remembered, and he was not only suspected, but at length stood wholly convicted before Elnathan and his comrades, who carried their complaints to Abessalom. — “You have committed,” said he to Zabdi, “an act the most despicable, and I prohibit

hibit you for a whole week from mingling either in the sports of Elnathan or your other companions; you are at present unworthy of their society." Shame pursued Zabdi, and during the prescribed period, he endured excessive, but salutary mortification, from being shunned. Abessalom in the end, however, treated him with the accumulated indulgence he had on a former occasion shewn Elnathan.

Indeed similar care and similar kindness ever marked the conduct of Abessalom and Noëma to each of their pupils; their object was to dispel all rivalry, and unite them in the closest bonds of friendship. This system of equality was of further benefit, by insensibly humbling the self-importance of Elnathan, and on the contrary, elevating the too timid spirit of Zabdi. Thus, by a well-regulated infancy, during which the approach of envy, selfishness, and dissimulation, were as strictly guarded against as the proneness

of human nature to evil admits of, were they prepared to enter the more luxuriant season of adolescence.

It was in following the example of their enlightened chief and his amiable consort, that Moria, with Choereas and Susanna, guided the infant years of Mara and Sephora. For little difference is necessary to be observed between the sexes, during the period that includes infancy. Some variation in their sports, in their bodily exercises, by which otherwise the delicacy of female grace might be injured; a little more care perhaps in subjecting their wiles, and thus giving to their manners a softer hue; here was the only line hitherto drawn by the wise Abessalom between the fairer half of the creation and its proud remainder!

ELNATHAN;

OR,

THE AGES OF MAN.



BOOK III.



BOOK III.

Adolescence.

“ And then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel,
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school.”

P R I V A T E tuition, during the period in which we have comprehended infancy, no doubt possesses for both sexes advantages far above what the most healthful nurses, the wisest preceptors, or above all, that learning in the most renowned seminaries can furnish to children far removed from the parental roof. Nothing can equal for this tender age the affectionate cares, the minute attentions of an anxious mother, or the foreseeing eye of a wise father, jealous of the future

glory of his offspring. But when the succeeding period arrives, that the genius of the youth sends forth its first vigorous shoots, the tranquillity, the uniformity of domestic life, where the single mode of thinking that prevails may enervate and contract, rather than give strength and luxuriance to those fair blossoms, should be relinquished (particularly for such as are destined to move in a public sphere of life) for the activity of a public school, the emulation that it affords, with the benefit of example, that sharp spur to all that is great and honourable.

But if this is the path most hopeful for your cons, beware, oh, ye mothers! how you entrust from beneath your care your daughters of an equal age! Their maturer understandings, their flexible and enthusiastic nature, that grasps at novelty, their ears so open to flattery, their sensibility so easily awakened, the fragility of their frames, which the negligence of

of the stranger may distort for life—all impose that their sphere of action should only be extended beneath your watchful eye!

No sooner had Elnathan and Zabdi (on whom Abessalom founded strong hopes of benefit to his subjects) reached their tenth year, than he began to reflect on the best means of promoting their individual happiness for the future, and of rendering them fit instruments of his philanthropic views. Distrusting his own judgment on so serious a point, he resolved on consulting the high priest Ezriel; and as Noëma and Zambri (the rightful father of Zabdi) had equally an interest in the counsel he should receive, Abessalom invited them to accompany him towards the sage. He believed that on other accounts also, this little journey might be salutary for Zambri, whose spirits were depressed by the recent death of the mother of Ségor, to whom, from the period of her daughter's death, he had rendered

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rendered every attention of the most dutiful of sons.

The autumn was advanced, when Absalom, Noëma, and Zambri set forward, preceded by Elnathan and Zabdi, to whose direction they had confided two mules, laden with fine flour, the produce of the present year; as also two others, charged with the choicest wine. Their impatience increased hourly to meet the sage, for whom those presents were intended. At length, they arrive and behold him kneeling within the interior of the temple, his face bathed in tears. At sound of their footsteps he arose, wiped away his tears, and with a serene and benign countenance, approached his visitors, who on seeing his knee bent, had arrested their steps.

“Fear not,” said he, “to importune me with your presence; it gives me the greatest pleasure, for even now I dreaded lest my solitary prayer should fail to prove acceptable to the Almighty; kneel then
beside

beside the altar, and let our voices together ascend, and implore the influence of his gracious spirit."

They all knelt; and in unison raised their grateful hearts to heaven: after which Ezriel led his guests beneath the shade of a spreading beech, that fronted his dwelling.

"And how does Moria and her daughter?" asked he, when they were seated; "your generosity towards her, I suppose, has prevented you from naming her, each time that you have sent me your promised offerings—offerings of which I have endeavoured to make the use best according with the pious sentiments of the donor."

"Oh, Mara," cried Zabdi, "is very well, and very good; her mother too is well, and extremely fond of her."

The auditors smiled at this ingenuous reply; and Noëma quickly rejoined, "that Moria, indeed, from her conduct and strict piety, was the admiration of her
F 6 neighbours;

neighbours; her daughter too," she added, "from the precept and example of her mother, promised to become, one day, a pleasing and estimable woman."

"And now," said Ezriel, "may I demand the particular motive of your journey hither?"

"First of all, virtuous Ezriel," said Abessalom, "suffer me to present to you Zambri; his history I will in secret inform you of."

"That trouble may be spared you," returned the priest; "nearly six years have elapsed since I received it from his own lips. The continuance of his repentance and piety do indeed assure me of his felicity hereafter; constant have been my prayers in his behalf. Of your generous and tender care of his son, Zambri has also informed me; annually have I received his offerings, which I have partly distributed amongst the poor who come to seek God in these regions, and partly offered as a propitiatory sacrifice

crifice to the manes of the unfortunate Segor."

"Here, then," said Abessalom, "is Zabdi, and here Elnathan, whom during the first days of his infancy you deigned to look upon. We bring to thee, venerable Ezriel, these children, that thy hand may repose on their heads, and thy voice enlighten us, as to the measures most advisable to render their adolescence happy for themselves, and likely to contribute to their country's benefit, in an age more advanced. If parental fondness does not falsely flatter, their dispositions betray some auspicious indications; but we have doubted whether the domestic circle may not be a sphere too confined to bring to perfection those happy promises, even from the present moment till our pupils may have reached their sixteenth year."

Ezriel stretched forth his hand for Elnathan and Zabdi to approach him; he turned their faces towards the east, and
causing

causing them to bend the knee, pronounced those words—"Grant, Supreme Disposer of all things, that the wishes of a virtuous couple may be fulfilled in these children, and that my voice may be the true oracle, to dispose them in the path of future glory!" then laying his hand on each of their heads, he pronounced them three times blessed.

"Since," said Ezriel to Abessalom, some moments after, "you think me indeed worthy to consult, I propose that Elnathan and Zabdi, for whom our conversation will neither furnish pleasure or improvement, shall retire and feed their mules in the neighbouring pasture; they may even seek yonder orchard, and please their appetite with some fruit that yet remains, until we call them to partake of a more substantial meal." The wishes of Abessalom met those of Ezriel, and the children frolicked to a distance.—Then turning to Abessalom, Noëma, and Zambri, the high priest said—"I approve much

much of your solicitude, as to the nature of that education best suited to bring to perfection the faculties of your children, the early growth of which you have ably forwarded, by your tender cares and wise precepts. Now truly is the period (the perils of infancy past, and their principles biassed to virtue) when they should proceed to acquire knowledge, not to increase their self-importance, but, according to your desires, to become the happy instruments of doing good to others.

“ Reflection and experience shew that youths entirely educated at home generally become petulant, morose, or enervated, which renders them disagreeable to others and unhappy for themselves. Constant tenderness and attention spoils them—its reverse is discouraging, and without obstacles to encounter, their activity slumbers, and thus become unfit for the world. The most powerful stimulus

mulus to glory is emulation, to be found in a public seminary, where also the equality that reigns corrects the vanity that is induced by the desire to shine. There merit alone meets its reward, and chastisement is administered by an impartial hand. I would by all means advise you to relinquish the care of your son, and place them within the excellent college of Saron, distant about twelve parasangs from where you reside. It admits children of their age, and guards them until they have reached their sixteenth year. Elnathan and Zabdi will there be gradually initiated into the depths of learning, according as they are susceptible of instruction; and every necessary attention will be paid to their corporeal and moral existence. At the latter end of every summer, they will be allowed to return home and spend two months with you, during which time you will be able to mark their progress in useful science,

to recall their affection towards you, and inculcate additional lessons of piety and morality.

"Would to God," sighed Ezriel; "that I had been treated even after this manner! Yet believe me I should not have ventured my advice, had not you come to seek it; for the science of education has ever appeared to me a labyrinth, through which each mortal, to secure his safe retreat, must be conducted by a separate thread; besides, a variety of opinions on this subject rather tend to bewilder than enlighten.

"It is possible that the evils which personally accrued to me from an ill-conducted system of private education, may in some degree have biassed my opinions in favour of public tuition."

"Ah! is it possible," cried Noëma, "that you, the wisest and most amiable of beings, can have any thing to regret from the manner your youth was conducted?"

Ezriel shook his head, and was silent.

"It

"It belongs not to your nature," rejoined Noëma, "to be partially blind; if then the events of your life can at this moment furnish us with instruction, if they are not a mystery impossible to be revealed, deign to repose confidence in us; pour your sorrows into our bosoms, where they will meet sympathy, and not doubt create interest. The wisdom of Abessalom, the repentance of Zambri, by which he is endeared to you; I will add, the strictness of my own principles, which make me regard the secrets of others as inviolable, all induce you to rely on our discretion."

"I must," returned Ezriel, "be deeply sensible, Abessalom and Noëma, of your wisdom and virtue, so many proofs of which have reached my ears; I must also have beheld Zambri substitute a constant course of repentance and piety for the errors of his youth, to be able to reveal to you jointly, circumstances I would even hide from myself, but which during
forty

forty years have known no auditor but the Almighty, before whose altar I daily shed tears that console and strengthen me.

“ I am by birth a Samaritan; my ancestors were of a sect who disfigured the worship of God, by uniting to it that of images, and who retaining only the law of Moses, proscribed from their creed the writings of our holy prophets. But if my grandfather Bethor erred in so material a point, his son Pharmak, who gave me birth, became more enlightened: he renounced these schismatic doctrines, and retiring to a little village of Samaria, undertook the sacerdotal office, which he fulfilled in all its purity. My mother had died in giving me birth, and I remained his only legitimate offspring.

“ It was the intention of my father that I should succeed him in his holy office; at the same time, the severity of his principles led him to decide that I should make a vow of celibacy, the only state

he

he believed worthy to obtain the favour of Heaven.

“ Lest his views should be counteracted, he superintended himself my education. Nor can I deny that he bestowed unremitting pains to enlighten my understanding, and engraft in my heart the fear of God. Yet no smile of approbation, not the slightest caress, was ever granted by him to reward my progress; severity for ever sat on his brow; his will was a law, that I trembled to infringe: he inflicted punishment for my slightest offences, and for ever counteracted my most innocent desires. Above all was he careful to separate me from youthful society, by which the cheerfulness of youth was repressed, and care sat on my brow ere I had attained my sixteenth year.

“ I was sometimes dispatched by him on pious and charitable missions to the houses of our neighbours, from which I derived no little satisfaction; I there met
looks

looks that were kind, and could express my feelings unrestrained. I had entered my seventeenth year, when one evening I was sent with a present of wine to a neighbouring cottage, where an old woman, extremely poor, lay on her death-bed. I laid my offering beside her, and having expressed some words of consolation, was leaving the dwelling, when I was met at the door by a young shepherdess, the beauty and innocence of whose form struck me with surprise, and a sentiment of admiration, different from what I had ever known.— I involuntarily lingered; the young girl approached the bedside of her friend, inquired tenderly after her health, and at length supported her in her arms, while at the same time she administered some of the wine I had brought. My eyes were rivetted on her; her cheeks flushed by exercise, her golden locks waving on her shoulders, she seemed

seemed to me at this moment one of the celestial quire sent to waft the soul of the dying woman to heaven! I returned home, but the shepherdess dwelt in my thoughts, and floated in my dreams; I might never see her more—the thought was painful.

“It was the object of my father to detach my thoughts from all earthly considerations; on this account, I was not suffered to share in rural occupations. I was unused to cultivate the earth or tend the flocks, or to do ought but pursue an uncheering course of study, and perform exercises of piety, a system you will perceive that could ill tend to the great object he had in view, since it presented to me the divine service under a gloomy aspect, and made me envy the most thoughtless and uninstructed of our neighbours. Moreover, the fear which his presence inspired me with, prevented the existence of all confidence between

us; so that all I saw, heard, and felt, was confined to my own bosom, and might there operate to good or evil.

“Some months elapsed after I had beheld the vision that caused such a sudden thrill within my heart, and had even aroused my dormant senses, when I was called to assist at a sacrifice, at which my father presided. My eyes, that hitherto on such occasions were never raised from the ground, except towards heaven, now glanced in all directions to seek amongst the procession of youths and virgins that attended, the object whose features were traced in my memory. Alas! I unhappily beheld her, and she appeared to my sight to have increased in loveliness. I resolved to watch her receding footsteps, and discover, if possible, her dwelling; but my attempts failed, she mingled with her companions, and I was summoned to attend on my father. The same emotions, the same disappointment returned, but with increased violence, as after I
had

had first beheld her, she was withdrawn from my sight. My uneasiness was increased too, by fancying that my father's frown lighted on me, for the distraction of my looks and manner during our holy sacrifice.

“Night came, and brought with it no repose: my whole existence seemed reversed, as if by some unexpected shock. Ere the dawn of another day appeared, I arose, and creeping softly from my dwelling, endeavoured to calm my fevered frame, by loitering amidst our groves. My eyes fixed on the earth, I wandered I knew not whither; and the sun had risen in full splendour ere I recollected, with trembling, that I was without my father's call, and that, should my absence be perceived, his heavy displeasure would be my portion. I quickened my returning paces; but on descending the declivity of a little hill, from whence our dwelling could be seen, I perceived in the plain below a flock of lambs that had been
just.

just driven forth, while their shepherdess loitered at a little distance, apparently in the act of looking for something she had lost. Curiosity to know what she was searching for, led me towards her.—‘What hast thou lost, gentle shepherdess?’ said I; she raised her eyes, and I perceived the destroyer of my quiet. Surprise and joy quivered at my heart. ‘I have not lost any thing,’ she replied, ‘but my good aunt lies dangerously ill, and I seek some herbs whose juice I am told will restore her to health.’ ‘Suffer me to help you,’ said I: without uttering another sentence, I presently filled a little basket she carried in her hand; my father, and his supposed displeasure, had been entirely forgotten. ‘To-morrow I hope to thank you more fully,’ said she; ‘my aunt will be better, and I shall then be at leisure, even in this same spot:’ she tripped lightly away, but left me happy in the idea that the morrow would restore her to my sight.

“I failed not to elude my father’s vigilance, and go in search of her promised thanks. Ere the sun had risen the succeeding morn I was at the foot of the hill, where with a palpitating heart I waited the approach of Anna (for so I soon discovered my shepherdess was called). Presently she issued from a neighbouring tuft of trees, preceded by her lambs, and advanced quickly towards me. I inquired for her aunt; ‘Oh, she is much better,’ said she, ‘and longs to thank you for gathering those herbs that have done her so much good.’ ‘Where does your aunt live?’ said I. ‘In the cottage behind yonder tuft of trees,’ she replied. ‘And you also, do you live there?’ ‘Yes, my aunt and I live together alone.’ Before we parted she repeated her instances that I would repair to the cottage and receive the thanks of her relation. ‘Another time,’ said I, ‘my father now expects me.’ I felt that I had already infringed his commands, (for he never suffered me
to

to converse with any young person), and my conscience prohibited me at this moment from farther disobeying him.— Would to God that I had continued to listen to its voice, and that I had preserved my obedience unsullied!

“ For three successive morns I brushed away the dew from the flowers, in order to obtain renovation to perform the tedious exercises of day, by a sight of the lovely and innocent Anna. At length I became convinced that life was not quite the dull and hopeless state I had been taught to believe it, and which indeed from experience I had hitherto found it. The alarms of my father were soon awakened on perceiving the fire that now sparkled in my eye, and the inattention of my manner on the most serious occasions. He watched my footsteps; and I met him not far from the spot where I had just quitted Anna, on the third morning from our first acquaintance.

‘ Thou triflest, I see,’ said he, ‘ and art

inclined to lose sight of the high calling for which thou art intended: at thy peril, return again to converse with the shepherdess Anna; a heavy curse will attend thee, shouldst thou disobey.'

"His words struck terror to my heart, but I thought not of counteracting them; on the contrary, I experienced inward contrition for my disobedience hitherto, and even sought to reconcile myself to Heaven, by frequent reiterations of my devout exercises. But Nature once roused, her voice could not be wholly stifled: after some weeks, my longing to behold Anna increased daily, and at length gained such strength, that I resolved on following her at a distance, and thus gratify my sight—fatal temerity! which will soon shew how dangerous the first deviation from our sense of rectitude may become.

"The sun had almost set, my father was confined to his dwelling by indisposition, and I stole forth, with the hope of gazing on Anna, even as she led her
flocks

clination gave way, and I followed Anna within her habitation. Bethuel, who had never been married, and whose existence was wrapt up in her niece, welcomed me warmly, thanked me for the herbs I had formerly plucked for her, and invited me, ere I returned home, to come and visit her often. To be brief, my friends, and not weary your attention, I did indeed frequently return within the dwelling of Bethuel. If my father was sick or absent, or that in a manner I could elude his vigilance, I was by the side of Anna, to pour my griefs into her bosom, and seek consolation for them in her smile. Existence assumed for me a new colouring; the earnestness and enthusiasm of my nature expanded, and love and hope cheered my dreary path.

“If the conduct of my father towards his son was marked by severity unequalled, that of Bethuel towards her niece betrayed an excess of indulgence scarcely less hurtful. The inclinations of Anna were

were her law, to promote her pleasures, the business of her life. She soon perceived that my love for her niece did not go unrequited. Taking no heed of the future, her study was to encourage our interviews, and to conceal them from my father, in obedience to the will of her dear child, whom she feared to pain by a contrary mode of acting. It is possible, however, that a sentiment of humanity might have so actuated her. When I approached her dwelling, she saw sorrow in my countenance. Ere I departed, it was irradiated with joy; she was unwilling then to refuse me a refuge from the severity which it was but too plain my home afforded. In justice to myself I must observe, that my stolen marches were not enjoyed without bitter self-reproach, that often led to worthy resolutions for the future; but, alas! I had listened to the seductive voice of Passion, she had lured me along her flowery path, and I was un-

able to regain the ways of reason and of truth.

Days, and weeks, and months, fled, and I had found means to gain the susceptible heart of the beautiful Anna; mine also was wholly subservient to her will. We were, however, roused from our blissful dream, when, on entering my eighteenth year, my father pronounced me worthy to prefer my vow of everlasting celibacy, which he had ever intended I should perform. Horror chilled my blood as he delivered to me his intentions on this subject. 'Yes,' said he, 'in three days from hence, I trust thou shalt have entered a state, that will render thee fit hereafter for divine service.' I turned hastily away to conceal my emotion.—My father believed that I was hastening to implore the favour and protection of God, when my steps were bent to share my grief with Anna. 'In three days,' said I, 'and I am to renounce thee for ever!

ever ! it is my father's will ! ' And wilt thou indeed comply with it ? ' she replied. I answered not. ' Ah ! ' said Anna, ' there is no punishment, no reward that could make me renounce thee ! ' tears and sighs prevented her farther utterance. I clasped her to my palpitating heart : ' No, ' said I, ' nothing shall separate us—not even my father's will. I will relinquish the high calling for which he has intended me : I will make thee my wife, fly with thee even to the desert, and let the labour of my hands supply our subsistence. Make ready, my love ; ere to-morrow's dawn we shall be beyond the reach of persecution. '

" The sun rose next morning, and beheld us united within the sacred bands of wedlock, and already at a distance from our native homes. Ere the dawn, I had bid an eternal adieu to the paternal mansion, and stealing towards the dwelling of my beloved, took her by the hand, and led her immediately to a neighbour-

ing sanctuary, where we offered up our vows to Heaven; from thence we had proceeded on our journey, we scarce knew whither, mutual affection our sole dependence.

“ We continued our journey all day, reposing ourselves at intervals beside a limpid stream, which kindly allayed our thirst, or yet beneath the shade of trees, the fruit of which provided us with refreshment. Night at length approached, and entering a forest, we determined that its most shady recess should furnish us shelter, even till the dawn of another day. Here then we arrested our steps, having singled out a verdant spot, overgrown with moss and thickly shadowed above. I was on the point of leading my beloved to the nuptial couch, when suddenly a tempest arose that shook the roots of the strongest trees; the thunder rolled, the lightning flashed; all nature seemed convulsed. Overcome with the secret dread that the vengeance of Heaven

ven was about to punish my disobedience, and send death on me or my adored companion, I disentangled myself from her encircling arms, and prostrated myself to the earth, in token of submission to the Divine Will. Presently the thunder ceased to roll, the lightning disappeared, and an awful stillness superceded this dreadful concussion of nature. I looked up, and pressing the hand of Anna, dared to believe that happiness was yet my own, when by the pale light of the moon, I saw advancing towards us a venerable form, which I soon recognised as the shade of my grandfather Bethor, who some years before I had even seen expire within the arms of my father. 'Behold me, in a hollow voice, 'behold thy grandsire, who once dared to interpret the scriptures as it best pleased him, and to set up a rival to God of brass or wood. In mitigation, however, of the just punishment I am thence doomed to suffer, it is conceded to me by Heaven, to warn thee not

to plunge deeper in the gulf of sin; thou hast already proceeded far—for know, that she whom thou hast taken to be thy wife is—she is thy sister—the daughter of thy father, and the offspring of illicit love; her mother died in giving her birth, and she was confided to a relation from whose care you have snatched her, and who ever remained ignorant of her true origin.’—‘Oh why,’ cried I, ‘did not the lightning strike me, ere I lived to hear this dreadful truth!’—‘Mind’st thou not, Ezriel,’ continued the spectre, ‘the warning voice of thy father, who once said to thee, *converse no more with the shepherdess Anna, or a heavy curse will light on thee.*’ I knew the relation in which she stood to thee, but thou dared to disobey him, and behold the fruits!’ The words of my father did indeed re-echo in my ear; I fell on my face, even beside the lifeless form of Anna, who had swooned at the tale unfolded by the spectre; heart-rending groans betrayed my affliction.

affliction. 'Arise,' said Bethor, 'quit the side of this woman, and endeavour to retrieve thy errors, by the exercise of piety and forbearance, during the remainder of thy days.' 'What! leave Anna, leave her for ever?' 'Shouldst thou hesitate to bid her, even from this moment, a last farewell, unheard of misfortune will visit you both.' 'And what will become of her?' said I, raising myself up. '—She must go even where I point—trust her to Heaven, it will not desert her—hasten, I say, to quit this spot.'

"I obeyed, with anguish beyond the power of language to describe; I turned my back on her, on whom but a few moments before was ~~treasured~~ the felicity of my life. Yes, I left her, and pursued my solitary way, a prey to remorse and disappointment. For more than forty years have I remained in ignorance of what became of her; nor for my father, or any of my kindred, have I ~~once~~ dared to inquire. I became a minister of the

Most High, and during the first twenty years of my misfortune, begged my way through distant countries, and applied myself to the attainment of wisdom. If I had no worldly riches to bestow, I endeavoured to console by my words the afflicted, and by my counsel, to lead the young, or the wicked, into the paths of virtue. At length, after a long lesson of experience, and wondrous vicissitudes, I rested in this spot, where I have continued to support the weak, and place an endless trust in God.

“Here, my friends, concludes the sketch of my melancholy story; if it does not point out to you the best path to pursue in the education of your children, it will, at least, instruct you as to that which is to be avoided.”

Ezriel remained for some moments silent, his eyes bathed in tears. Abessalom, Noëma, and Zambri, thanked him, in accents of tender sympathy, for a recital which had deeply affected them. They
lamented

lamented to him the severity with which his youth had been treated; and they admired the ways of Providence, which leaves to him who is by nature virtuous, the means of repairing the errors of his youth; indeed, their respect for Ezriel was much increased, since they knew his piety to be the effect of resignation to the behests of Heaven. They promised to be guided by his counsels; and to send their sons to the college at Saron.

The old man now arose, and calling Elnathan and Zabdi, provided for the whole party a rural repast, the choicest he could afford. This concluded, he promised them a fervent share in his prayers, and shut himself within his oratory, anxious to regain that composure which the review of his past sorrows had diminished.—Noëma was placed by her husband on one of the animals that had carried their offerings; Abessalom or Zambri alternately held the reins, while Elnathan and Zabdi walked on each side; it was thus that the
little

little party reached home, the evening of the day they had set out.

The following day Abessalom announced to his sons that in two days they should depart with him for the college of Saron, and counselled them to employ the intermediate time in taking leave of their acquaintances, and in assuring them, how ardent was the wish that their studies henceforward should lead to the prosperity of the commonwealth.

Noëma now exchanged the infantine garments of Elnathan and Zabdi for such as were suited to a riper period, and which accorded better with their increasing strength and agility. They wore a hat of supple leather, and their feet were protected with buskins of goat-skin. Thus accoutred, they proudly set forward to bid farewell to their neighbours, and former playmates. Their bravery, however, deserted them when they approached Sephora and Mara; as they remembered that they should see them no more, their
tears

tears fell in abundance: nor did they sorrow alone—Sephora sobbed aloud, and Mara, taking the hand of Zabdi, could scarcely be prevailed on to relinquish it.

The day of departure being arrived, our youths repaired before sunrise to kneel before their mother, Noëma. With a heart swelling with mingled emotions, she clasped them to her bosom, bathed them with her tears, and at length bestowed on them her tenderest blessing. They were gently led from her side by Abessalom, who participated in this moving scene, and who proceeded to conduct them on their journey.

His reputation had long preceded him at Saron, and the governors and college were much flattered at his approach, since they doubted not but their fame would be increased, by so wise a man condescending to place his sons within their care.

Abessalom was anxious to learn the exact plan pursued by them, towards the enlargement

enlargement of their pupils' understandings, the forming of their disposition, and the perfecting their organic structure. It was the superior of the Cenobites, and president of the college, that proceeded to answer his inquiries.

"Six years," said he, "completes our course of instruction; the first is employed in making our pupils perfectly acquainted with their native language, the Chaldean, that thence they may both speak and write it correctly: the second is destined to the study of the Greek and Egyptian tongues, which besides the instruction that they convey, teach our youth a more intimate knowledge of their native language: they are able to express it with greater delicacy, catch the nicety of its synonymous terms, and make a juster choice of epithets. The fourth year is devoted to the study of history, to which we add geographical and astronomical instruction: the fifth to elementary physics; nor within this period is eloquence

quence and poetry forgotten. The sixth and last year is given to the obtaining a profound knowledge of the divine laws, to which (we all along persuade our pupils) every other acquirement is only intended as an introduction.

“ One or other of the above studies occupy the morning; the afternoon is shared amid various recreations and exercises, according best with the taste and bodily strength of each of our pupils.— We encourage wrestling, racing, shooting the bow; field sports also are permitted, as serving the double purpose of diversion and exercise. Serious occupation again intervenes, and employs some part of the evening; but we are careful that the day shall close with agreeable associations: to this end music, and sometimes dancing, is introduced; the former is learned by such of our scholars as betray an inclination for it.— Our chief care is to provide employment constantly; for nothing we consider

sider so detrimental to either cheerfulness or the improvement of intellect, as idleness, by which the youth grows tired of existence, and the mind lies fallow. It is unnecessary to add, that our attention is at all times directed towards moral improvement and religious exercises.— Punishment we make as rare as possible; and it is ever in proportion to the offence that provokes it. In case a pupil becomes incorrigible, which sometimes happens, from his infancy not being properly superintended, we contrive some excuse to send him back to his parents, nor suffer the continuance of his evil example.”

When ~~Abraham~~ had listened to this exposition, which truly pleased him, he called to him his sons Elnathan and Zabdi, recommended to them obedience to their superiors, and took of them an affectionate farewell; after which he hastened to the consolation of their tender mother. He found her in the society of
Zambri,

Zambri, Moria, and Susanna, who had repaired to comfort her for the loss of her dear children. How much was her solicitude abated, by the relation given her by Abessalom of the manner in which they were to be treated within their present abode ! And now many of the leisure moments of this wise and amiable couple, were employed to assist in the education of Sephora and Mara. It was agreed on all sides, that ignorance in women in no manner secured the performance of their domestic duties, that it rendered them less agreeable as companions, less useful as wives, and less capable of fulfilling their ~~office~~ as mothers. Intellectual knowledge had, therefore, a large share in the education of Sephora and Mara ; but still was it considered a secondary object to the due regulation of their tempers and dispositions. “ Men govern abroad,” said Abessalom, “ women at home ; I am not sure then but the happiness of our species lies most under
their

their controul; so is it necessary to endow them with mildness, forbearance, and foresight."

If severity was dangerous in the education of boys, Abessalom considered it as tenfold worse in that of girls; love, not fear, he was convinced, should be the motive of their obedience towards their guardians, if their safety was duly considered. Moria and Susanna aimed then at being not only the preceptors, but the friends of their daughters.

Elnathan made rapid progress in the acquirement of learning, while within the college of Saron. His acknowledged superiority above his other companions, however, rendered him neither vain or presumptuous; for goodness and generosity dwelt within his heart, and tempered any inclination he might have to triumph; he was at once respected and beloved. Zabdi, though of a milder disposition, did not so quickly succeed in gaining the friendship of his schoolfellows;

lows: he was often detected in secretly betraying their faults to his governors, with the hope of thereby obtaining their favour. Notwithstanding, he evinced daily improvement, and by the encouragement he received to candour and benevolence, obtained at length the confidence and applause of all.

A vacation took place during the autumn of every year they were at Saron; how did they tremble with impatience as it approached! A faithful servant was always sent by Abessalom at the appointed day of its commencement, to conduct our youths home: how anxiously was his arrival watched! how affectionately was he at length embraced! the horses they were presently to mount, how were they stroked and caressed! What a delicious aspect did the country wear as they advanced towards their native valley! the herbage how green! the trees how fruitful above all others! the birds how sweetly

sweetly they sung!—and now arrived, even at the door of the paternal mansion, their hearts palpitate, their tears flow. In one moment is Elnathan in the arms of Abessalom, Zabdi in those of Zambri, while Noëma stands by, and presently receives both the youths in her embrace. Another half hour, and they are impatient to visit their former neighbours. “Ah! Elnathan and Zabdi, how are they grown!—how improved!” Such were the artless exclamations with which they were greeted by their playmates and acquaintances—exclamations capable to flatter and please their yet unsophisticated hearts. But Sephora and Mara, how sweet was *their* reception! On perceiving from their casements Elnathan and Zabdi, they fly to meet them; they take their hands—they smile on them, nor are satisfied till they lead them to their mothers, Susanna and Moria, who tenderly embrace the children

children of their dearest friends. Oh ! careless and fleeting moments of adolescence, thy charm is never, never to be forgotten.

But though the period of vacation passed rapidly by, though it was alternately varied by the lessons and smiles of their parents, by sports and exercises, in company with their former associates, yet towards its conclusion, would the impatience of Elnathan and Zabdi burst forth to return to the theatre of emulation : thus the desires of youth, if artless and affectionate, are yet wandering and unsteady.

Our youths had indeed ~~one~~ predominant reason for their impatience to return to Saron ; this was to enjoy again the society of two of their comrades in particular, whom they loved greatly, and to whom they had once rendered a most signal service.

Towards one of the extreme boundaries of Armenia, and near to the foot of

Mount Ararat, was established a colony of Scythians, who believed they did honour to the Deity, by sacrificing, at the arrival of every new lustre, two youths from ten to twelve years of age, chosen from amongst the sons of their most esteemed chiefs, who even were so barbarous in their natures, as to contend for the honour of devoting their children. At one of those appointed periods, the choice fell upon Naaman and Saaph, sons of the terrible Bezec. But though the heart of their father was hardened, their mother Osa was yet accessible to the feelings of nature; nor could she find it possible to part thus cruelly from her children. The night, therefore, previous to the intended sacrifice, and while Bezec was sunk in sleep, she arose softly, and taking her sons by the hand, led them towards the banks of the Euphrates, not far from its source. At daybreak she was able to procure a little boat, with two oars; and charging it with two milch
goats.

goats she had purchased, as also food and cloathing her foresight had secreted, she invited her sons to follow her within this frail bark, and thus avoid the fate that awaited them—a fate that until this moment they had not foreseen.—The Euphrates is scarcely navigable from its source, until it approaches the Tigris; to the divine interposition of Providence it must then have been owing, that after two days and nights abandoned to the waves, Osa and her children were able at length to conduct their little vessel within a creek, and thence land on a rocky island situated in the centre of the river. On this island, which was uninhabited, (though but twenty parasangs from Charan) Osa discovered a cave, which served her as a dwelling. The leaves of the plane-tree, gathered by Naaman and Saaph, provided beds, and the goats found sufficient nourishment amidst the crags and steeps. Their milk, together with some wild fruits scattered over this bar-

ren soil, furnished subsistence to this helpless party, during the course of a year. The cheerfulness of the children met no interruption; but Osa, surely, felt no trifling anxiety as to the future.

An unforeseen event at length destroyed her remaining quiet, and left her no hope of subsistence being longer continued to her and her sons in their present retreat. During the heat of a summer day, as Naaman and Saaph were bathing on the shore near to where their little bark was anchored, Osa observed two enormous wolves emerge from the river, across which they had swam; and seizing the two friendly goats, who were peaceably brouzing at the foot of a rock, quickly fly with them out of sight. "Ah, my children," cried Osa, "we can no longer subsist—behold those savage animals, who fly with our goats; who knows too, but that they may return and even seize thee in their grasp? Ah! let us quickly unmoor our boat, and trusting ourselves
once

once more to Providence, seek farther along the river a retreat of more safety, and one more capable, perhaps, of supporting life." Osa and her children haste to collect what little store of provisions they possessed, and casting a grateful look towards the entrance of the cavern which had so long sheltered them, they step into their boat, and commit themselves to the mercy of the waves.

Having rowed the boat towards the middle of the river, they abandoned it to the course of the flood. During three days and three nights, which a bright moonlight illumined, it pursued an uninterrupted course, the banks of the Euphrates, during that time, offering no possibility of effecting a landing. At length, on the fourth day of their voyage, our navigators came within sight of Saron, around whose walls the stillness of the waters afforded to them the cheering prospect of being able to gain the shore.

Alas!

Alas! they knew not how difficult the navigation was even here; and that should they happen, by their unskillfulness, to pass certain stakes that were erected as a warning, they must inevitably perish in the gulf below. Even at the moment that Osa and her companions, unaware of their danger, suffered their boat to pass within the first stake, they were perceived by Elnathan and Zabdi, who were then engaged in fishing, and who immediately called to them to steer their bark to the right, or it would be quickly swallowed up. Osa nor her sons knew not the language in which they were addressed, nor steered as they were directed; upon which Elnathan and Zabdi, who from their infancy were able to swim, immediately stripped off their garments, and plunging into the water, hastened to save this hapless crew. They gained the boat, and lending a hand to it on each side, while with their other
they

they supported themselves above the water, they safely conducted it within harbour, removed from all danger.

The surprise of the spectators was much excited, on perceiving that this little vessel had no other pilot than a feeble woman, and two children, clothed in the skin of wild beasts, and speaking an unintelligible language. The superiors of the college of Saron, from various tokens, becoming convinced that Osa and her children were unfortunate and unprotected, hesitated not to shelter the latter within their sanctuary, and even to undertake the care of their education.— Osa, placed in a little dwelling adjoining the college, failed not to render herself useful, and evince her gratitude by washing the tunics of the pupils, and by tending them if they happened to be indisposed.

Naaman and Saaph made rapid progress in learning the Chaldean; nor was Osa slow in this particular, for at

the end of two years, she could accurately describe in it, the manners and customs of her native country, as likewise the events of her life. From the above relation, it is but natural to suppose, that a more than common friendship should exist between Elnathan and Zabdi, and their comrades Naaman and Saaph.

Our brave and generous youths had nearly completed their course of study at Saron, when an unforeseen event cast some shade over the reputation they had there obtained.

Zabdi, on account of some fault, not serious in its nature, but for which he had been frequently reprov'd, was at length condemn'd to pass a whole fortnight without any intercourse with his companions; eight days of the prescribed period had elapsed, when Elnathan finding that all solicitation proved vain to have the remainder of Zabdi's punishment remitted, secretly repaired to his chamber by night. "Arise," said he

he to Zabdi ; " we are amongst tyrants, whom nothing will appease ; let us therefore begone—we have obtained sufficient knowledge to ensure us a livelihood elsewhere, even in some spot where we shall be free." Zabdi murmured something of the duty owing to their preceptors, as also of the pain they should cause Abesalom and Noëma ; but Elnathan, who pursued with enthusiasm what he had once resolved on, would listen to no opposition. Zabdi, fearing to appear ungrateful, since it was in his behalf Elnathan was proceeding, and being also somewhat tired of his banishment, followed his companion. They scaled the high wall of the garden, and directed their course along the banks of the Euphrates, continually approaching that point where it joins the Tigris.

Having travelled for three days they scarcely knew whither, they were at length benighted on the borders of a forest.—Hunger and thirst had overtaken them,

and they almost repented in secret of their rash flight. As they were considering where they could best seek shelter till the coming morn, they espied a light not far distant. With joy they hailed it, as giving signal of the existence of some habitation, where they might taste repose and refreshment. Accordingly they summoned their almost exhausted strength, and marched forward. After crossing many solitary paths overgrown with thorns and brambles, they arrive at the door of an habitation that wears no mean appearance. Their calls are answered by a woman, who has apparently passed her thirteenth lustre, but whose form wears the appearance of former grace and loveliness.

"You seek an asylum, no doubt," said she to our young travellers, "enter therefore, and we will provide what accommodation is in our power."

Elnathan and Zabdi followed their conductress to the interior of the dwelling, where

where she introduced them to the notice of a female much older than herself, one bowed down by years.

“What motive, my children, can have led thee into these deserts?” said she: “to judge by thy countenances, devotion does not guide thy steps; nor yet art thou subjects for the healing art, which it is our province to practise here.”

The youths remained silent, confusion in their looks.

“Speak, speak, some wild pranks, I am sure, have driven thee from thy parents.” Still the youths knew not what to reply, when she who had first spoken to them rejoined, “Come, my children, thou shalt partake of some refreshment, when, I doubt not, you will have courage to confide your secret to our friendly ears; if thou hast, indeed, got into a scrape, we will endeavour to extricate thee by wise counsel;” so saying she laid before them different articles of food.

Elnathan and Zaldi eat heartily, having passed many hours without sustenance: after which, encouraged by the gentle and conciliating tones of the younger of their hostesses, they related their flight from the college of Saron, with the reasons that had occasioned it.

“Thou hast been very foolish, indeed,” said their auditors; “but ere we part, I trust thou wilt be convinced of thy error, and feel for the affliction thy parents must even now endure for thy absence.”

Elnathan, though bold and unreflecting during the first moments of passion, was ever affectionate and kind-hearted; at mention of his parents, and their probable sufferings on his account, he now burst into tears.

His hosts perceiving these indications of contrition, joined their voices to encourage the repentance of him and his companion, for the unthinking and disobedient step they had taken, and endeavoured

voured to convince them how greatly they would offend against Heaven, were they to persevere in it.

“Ah!” said Zabdi, “the good Ezriel, I am sure, would say as much!”

“Ezriel!” repeated, in evident agitation, the least advanced in years of those who counselled; “who is Ezriel of whom you speak? where does he live? how long hast thou known him?”

“Ah, Ezriel is the best and wisest of men,” cried Elnathan and Zabdi, in one voice; “he lives on Mount Anoth, where our parents, Abessalom and Noëma, conduct us during every vacation, to solicit his prayers and receive his advice.”

She who had spoken last now bent her knee, and seemed to pray fervently, while the old woman also raised her eyes and clasped hands to heaven.

The conversation ended, and Elnathan and Zabdi betook themselves to repose, which they stood much in need of. With
the

the dawn they arose, and proceeded to examine the precincts of the little dwelling where they had been so kindly received. It was situated in a fertile valley, surrounded by hills clothed to their summit with pine and oak trees: a limpid stream meandered around it. Here was a spot dear to sorrow and meditation. As the sun arose, Elnathan and Zabdi, while straying in the valley, were met by several strangers of both sexes, who advanced towards the dwelling, and who they at first mistook for pilgrims, but who presently informed them that they came to the valley of Eleana (for so that just described was named), to seek relief for various diseases which its mistress was famed for being able to cure.

Elnathan and Zabdi re-entered the dwelling, where they found prepared the morning's repast, and to their no small surprise, their hostess (for such in reality was the least aged of the females they had
already

already seen) and her venerable companion ready to accompany them back on their way to Saron.

“We must e’en return then,” said Elnathan, who, left entirely to himself, would have been deterred by fear, and still more by shame, from thinking of such a step.

Their venerable friends assured both him and Zabdi that nothing less than a quick return, and a prompt acknowledgement of their error, could in future ensure them the protection of Heaven—“to secure to you the pardon of your governors and parents,” added they, “and to witness your return to your duty, we resolve to accompany you back to Saron.”

No opposition being made by our youths, the party quickly commenced their journey, the female part on horseback, Elnathan and Zabdi on foot.

But what was the anxiety of Abessalom, Noëma, and Zambri, to hear that during three days their sons had been
absent

absent from school! The superiors of the college, with no other idea but that their pupils were returned home, had delayed during two days to forward their complaints to their parents, of so serious an infraction of their established rules.

During a whole day, Abessalom and Noëma, afflicted and humiliated, sought every corner of their neighbourhood, in hopes of finding their beloved children, become, alas! disobedient, even at the critical moment; but no where could they be discovered.

At length Abessalom and Zambri determined on proceeding to Saron, and there endeavour to gain more particular information as to the path they might have taken. "Calm thyself, Noëma," said her husband, "they will certainly be restored to us; they, no doubt, repent their error ere now; but the pride of Elnathan prevents him as yet from coming to humble himself before us."

Abessalom and Zambri were within a few
paces

paces of the college of Saron, when Elnathan and Zabdi, with their new acquaintances, reached its gates. "There is my father," whispered Elnathan to the least aged, at the same time slackening his pace. She immediately dismounted, and approaching Abessalom, "We bring you," said she, "two fugitives, whose errors I trust are already expiated by sincere repentance. They were wanderers, and we received them into our dwelling of Eleana. In return for the reception they there met, as also for any trouble we may have been at to conduct them hither, the only favour we claim is the pardon of their parents towards them."

Elnathan and Zabdi at this moment threw themselves at the feet of Abessalom. It was impossible he could defer the solicited grace. He embraced them, adding, "that he placed his entire reliance that their future conduct would be such as to repay the anxiety they had so wantonly caused to him and their mother."

ther." Having expressed his utmost thanks and gratitude towards the respectable females, whose benevolence had been so active in his favour, Abessalom, still accompanied by them, proceeded humbly to intercede with the governors of the college, for the entire forgiveness of Elnathan and Zabdi. This was presently granted, with a suitable exhortation, in favour of their former conduct, which had been so irreprehensible.

And now the venerable superior of the institution invited Abessalom, Zambri, and the worthy conductresses of Elnathan and Zabdi, to prolong their stay until the next day, when the autumnal vacation was to commence, that they might witness the distribution of premiums, which this evening were to be awarded to such of the pupils whose conduct had been most praiseworthy during the preceding year. Abessalom hesitated to comply, till Zambri offered immediately to return to Noëma, and acquaint her
with

with what was passing. The recluses of Eleana agreed to remain too. Abessalom gladly acceded to their proposal of the next day conducting Elnathan and Zabdi into the arms of their mother. "We have a pilgrimage to make to Mount Anoth," said they, "but it will first be pleasing to us to witness the joy of a tender mother, on recovering her lost children."

The pupils were at length assembled, and in the presence of numerous spectators, the prizes were adjudged. The scene was interesting; joy and pride marked the countenances of the successful candidates, while the disappointment of the least worthy was soothed by the caresses of their parents and preceptors, who encouraged them to look forward to the approaching year for final success.—Elnathan and Zabdi, whose judgments were superior to all the others, were yet prevented from putting in their claim to distinction from their late indiscretion.

This,

This, however, being the term of their course, they received an eulogium for their former diligence and good conduct, calculated to dispel any unfavourable impression their not being admitted to the prizes might have induced in the assembly.

And now the remaining hours of their stay at Saron were employed in expressions of gratitude towards their preceptors, and in tender adieus to the partners of their toils and pleasures. Their satisfaction was much increased, by being permitted to invite Naaman and Saaph to accompany them home during the ensuing holidays.

With what impatience did Noëma advance to meet the happy party ! The first movements of Elnathan and Zabdi were to throw themselves at her feet, but soon after were their arms clasped round her neck. “ Ah ! ” said she, “ how could you ever forget your mother ! ” “ Never, never more can we forget her ! ”
they

they replied in one voice, tears starting to their eyes. Abessalom now led the attention of Noëma towards the two recluses, to whom they owed the safe return of their sons. Noëma bestowed on them every mark of gratitude and attention. They would immediately have proceeded on their journey to Mount Anoth, when Abessalom insisted on their deferring it till the following morning, when he promised to conduct them himself to the feet of the good Ezriel.

Faithful to his promise, Abessalom at sunrise led the way to the sanctuary of the high priest. He was pacing the little avenue leading to it, as the sage and his party advanced. "I have brought you, father," said Abessalom, "two visitors, to whom I am much indebted; it was their earnest desire to make a pilgrimage hither."

Ezriel having stretched out his hand to welcome his friend, turned towards the pilgrims—he appears struck on behold-
ing

ing them—a moment's silence ensues—at length the youngest of the strangers advances, throws her arms around his neck, and amidst a flood of tears, ejaculates—“Ezriel, my brother, dost thou not know me?”—“Anna! is it so, or doth my senses wander?”—“Truly, indeed, doth thou behold thy sister, the long-lost Anna!”—Sobs prevent the farther utterance of these affectionate and sanctified beings, as they remain locked in each others embrace. The aged pilgrim now approaches—“Ezriel,” said she, “and I too—canst thou not remember me?”—“That voice,” said Ezriel, “is, indeed, familiar to me—yes Bethuel it must be! Merciful God! thy ways are omnipotent!” The good woman shared the embrace of Ezriel, who nearly overcome by emotions unexpected and strange, was obliged to be seated; his friends sat down beside him on the turf. “And my father?” said he at length, in timid accents; “canst thou tell me?” “Our father,”

father," replied Anna, "no doubt at this moment enjoys the recompence of the just in Heaven; ten years after thy departure he resigned his earthly sufferings; and ere he expired, pronounced his forgiveness for us both." Ezriel's tears flowed afresh: "Proceed," said he; "tell me the events of thy life, and by what miracle thy steps were led hither." Anna, summoning composure, complied. Her relation was nearly to the following effect:

When she had lost sight of Ezriel on the evening of their unhappy union, the shade of his grandfather Bethor beckoned to her to follow him, even till they came to the banks of the Euphrates; here he gave her the promise that she should again behold her brother, after a lapse of years, and when their mutual passion had been entirely subdued by time and resignation to the will of Heaven: after which, directing her to follow the southern course of the Euphrates, and to put her trust in
God

God for safety, he disappeared from her sight.

Anna, now entirely desolate, pursued the course she had been directed, unknowing where it might lead, or what was to be her future destiny. She travelled many hours, until, overcome by fatigue, affliction, and want of sustenance, she sunk almost lifeless to the earth. At this moment, which she hoped might be her last, was she overtaken by a venerable priest, who was journeying along the banks of the river, and who immediately took pity on her helpless condition. The good man, on hearing her piteous tale, took her under his protection, and at length conducted her to Eleana, where resided an aged female, remarkable for her piety and benevolence, and who knew from herbs to draw a balm for every disease. She became the favourite of this charitable being, who invited her to calm her sorrows by the constant exercise of piety, and who
even

even taught her the healing art, by which, at a future period, she might become useful, and gratify her charitable inclinations. For twenty years had Anna resided under the roof of Rachel, when one day she was accosted by an elderly woman, who requested she would lead her to Rachel, whose fame in healing the sick had drawn her a long way from home. "I had once a child," added she, "who was the comfort and solace of my life, but many many years ago she left me to live in solitude. Grief for her absence at length brought to me an ill state of health, which I have long patiently endured, but am now come, by the advice of one who reaped benefit from her skill, to seek relief from Rachel." "Ah! Bethuel! ah! my aunt!" said Anna, "Heaven be praised, I have found thee!" It was, indeed, Bethuel, who was thus accidentally restored to her niece.

She had now met a balm for her complaints, beyond what medicine in any age could bestow. Her joy was too great to let her think of immediately returning home; and Rachel soon after sinking beneath the weight of years, and leaving Anna her representative at Eleana, Bethuel continued to dwell with the object of her former care, and it was even resolved she should remain with her to her latest breath. From Bethuel Anna learned the fate of Pharmal. He was overwhelmed with affliction, at finding that his son had fled—fled also with his sister—and for ten years, notwithstanding the stoicism of his character, he continued a prey to regret; at the end of that period he was released from worldly suffering.

After the death of Rachel, Anna followed her example in every particular, and continued, by her piety, benevolence, and skill, to draw towards Eleana the
unfortunate

unfortunate of all descriptions, even till the moment when she set forward to gain the residence of Ezriel.

With the other particulars of his sister's life, the sage of Mount Anoth was made acquainted with the manner by which she discovered his retreat.

Abessalom honoured with his tears the affecting scene he witnessed between Ezriel and his sister. He lent an attentive ear also to the relation of Anna, which having an end, Ezriel, with a countenance beaming with renovated joy, said to him, "My dear friend, even now you will enter my dwelling, and share with us a frugal repast; after which you will proceed alone to rejoin your family—for you may well suppose, I shall not so soon part with my sister and Bethuel. Return to me, however, quickly, and bring with you Noëma, Zambri, and your sons, Elnathan and Zabdi; having finished their course of instruction at Sarôn, and the season of adolescence being at its term,

I would give you my counsel, as to the best means to be adopted for their benefit, during the tempestuous and dangerous period that is to follow."

Abessalom was guided by the words of Ezriel—he shared his repast, where peace and gladness reigned; after which he hastened to relate for Noëma the eventful occurrences of the day.

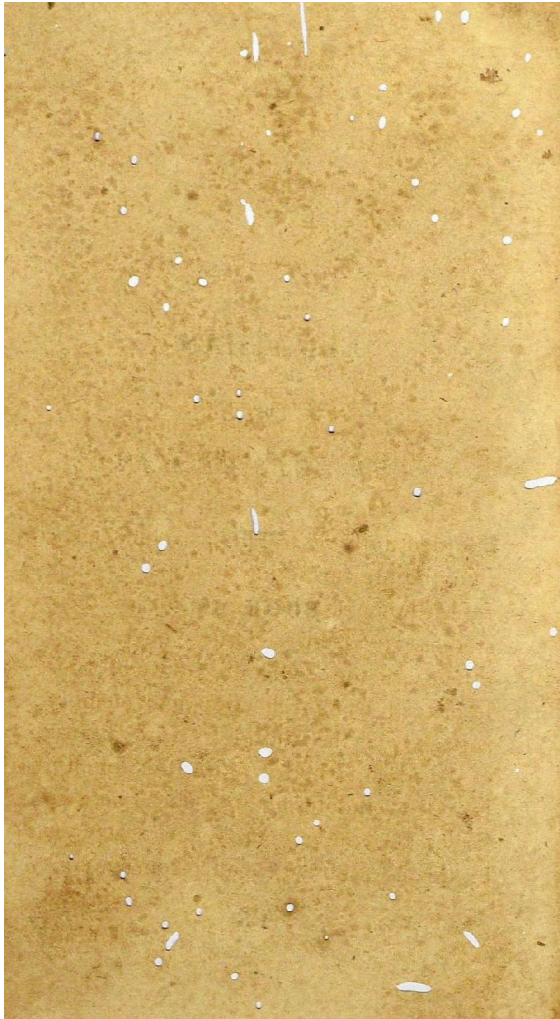
ELNATHAN ;

OR,

THE AGES OF MAN.



BOOK IV.



BOOK IV.

Manhood.

“ And then the lover,
Sighing like Surnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress's eyebrow.”

THE season of vacation had hitherto afforded nothing to Elnathan and Zabdi, like the pleasures they enjoyed at their return home at the conclusion of their studies at Saron. Happy beyond all others are the concluding days of adolescence! when reflection and memory repose, and the soul glows with a sense of freedom, when it sighs after felicity, pure but indeterminate; and roams at large, like the monarch new seated on his throne, who endeavours from amongst

a thousand blooming beauties to choose the one most worthy to share his empire!

The friendship that subsisted between our youths and the young Scythians, increased in particular the pleasures of the former. To introduce to their neighbours Naaman and Saaph, to lead them through their groves and orchards, to invent for them new sports and exercises, to render each day happier for them than the last, was a never-ending source of amusement. Shall we add, that the dawn of love, just bursting on their sight, lent added charms to the present period, and led Elnathan and Zabdi to conclude that they already tasted of the felicity of Heaven.

Abessalom and Noëma, during two months, forbore to fatigue in the least the understandings of their pupils; they considered that a state of calm sometimes best contributes to the unfolding of the operations of nature. They loved, therefore,

therefore, that their sons should repose on a bed of sweets, as most encouraging to the growth of those virtues and noble exertions that were hereafter to be devoted to the welfare of their fellow-creatures. Those tender parents had also the prosperity of Elnathan and Zabdi in view, when they winked at their constant visits to the dwelling of Susanna and Moria, and viewed their anxiety to unite the daughters of those amiable persons with all their pleasures; for Abessalom and Noëma believed that there exists no greater safeguard against vice, or more powerful incentive to honourable deeds, than pure and ripening love.

When it appeared right that their days of cloudless tranquillity should have their term, Abessalom called to him his sons, and in the presence of Noëma thus addressed them:—"My children, the time is now arrived, when your thoughts must turn to serious reflection. This life, I am grieved to tell you, resembles a steep

mountain, whose acclivity is difficult to climb, but which, however, presents for the traveller destined to gain its summit, some smiling spots where he may repose with delight. Yet these verdant recesses often lead to more difficult passes, and to proceed is hazardous: still for him who completes his journey with safety and honour, a rich reward is in store. As such is the picture of life, it remains for you then to search every known source of wisdom and experience, for rules best adapted to guide you safely over the rugged path. To this end, you no doubt will concur with your mother and me, in thinking that our first and most advantageous step should be to seek the counsels of the virtuous Ezriel. We will all set out to-morrow for Mount Anoth, while Naaman and Saaph shall return to the university of Saron, and to the arms of their affectionate mother." Having proceeded so far, Abessalom summoned to him the young Scythians, and communicated

nicated to them the necessity of their departure, as his sons must now extend their views and their studies; he gave to each a piece of gold, and conjured them to write to him, whenever they or their mothers should stand in need of assistance, pecuniary or otherwise.

And now Elnathan and Zabdi lead their friends to take leave of the acquaintances they had lately formed.—Alas! those young Scythians, ingenuous, grateful, and affectionate, partook but little of the rugged nature of their native soil! They wept at parting from their late associates, and particularly when they pressed the hands of Martha Mesron, young shepherdesses of the valley. But still more did they weep, at the moment they took a last farewell of Elnathan, Zabdi, Abessalom, and Noëma.

The party destined for Mount Anoth set off at an early hour. When they arrived, their gifts, as usual, were placed

on a stone, where the pilgrims in general placed their offerings for Ezriel. At sight of Abessalom and his train, which consisted of Noëma, Zambri, and their sons, the good priest arose from his prayers, and conducted them to a grotto, which he had appropriated to his sister and Bethuel, who were on the eve of their departure for Eleana. "I am aware, my friends," said Ezriel, "of the motive of your journey hither; but the presence of my sister and Bethuel will not in the least restrain our converse. Let us then altogether taste the breeze at the entrance of this grotto, and impartially determine if I have well judged the plan to be pursued by your sons, from hence till their four-and-twentieth year, when they shall become established for the remainder of their days. By all that I can learn, Elnathan and Zabdi are well grounded in the principles of religion and morality, consequently they have obtained rules for their conduct; they may also have

have gained an idea of the depravity of mankind. Yet these are studies in which they are yet novices. The purity and ingenuousness of their natures make them regard as rare and monstrous, what in life is at all imperfect. To their uncontaminated view, all nature should assume a hue splendid as the rose—exhale a perfume simple as the violet. But the more unsophisticated are their hearts, the more liable are they to seduction. It must be our care then to give them a full view of the theatre of the world, before they are suffered to mingle with the actors.

“ Though Egypt has lost much of its ancient splendour, I would advise that Elnathan and Zabdi should be immediately placed within the college of Memphis. By its original laws, it receives within its walls the sons of its superiors, those of the principal citizens, a few foreigners who come well recommended, and even the children of the reigning monarch.

monarch. The priests who govern it are obliged to guide each pupil alike in the paths of wisdom and science. It is their duty to ripen the knowledge that has been acquired elsewhere, to exalt the characters of their pupils, and render them firm, patient, and persevering; capable of governing others, but still more capable of governing themselves.

“ This elevation of soul, so conducive to all that is great and noble, may, however, engender a degree of pride and sternness, which must not go uncorrected. It is grand, no doubt, to soar above error, and indulge the thought of one day being able to crush it; but it is no less commendable to descend from the height of science and stoicism, to pity the weakness of those whom necessity obliges to grovel—tenderly to assist and direct them in their uninformed course. The eagle that is able fixedly to regard the sun, descends from the highest heavens,

to shelter with its protecting wings its helpless young, and try to assist their flight.

“ Having spent three years at Memphis, our youths shall fix their residence during two years at Athens, where a constant intercourse with the graces will polish their manners, and temper their harsher education at Memphis, and where they may study, at their source, the admirable laws of Solon.

“ It now remains to Elnathan and Zaidi to make some display of their various attainments; so well fortified, they must be exposed to danger, to have the glory of conquering. To the city of Babylon, therefore, I would direct their course from Athens—it is now the centre of refinement and genius. Here, for the space of three years, should they become familiar with the varieties and temptations of a splendid court, without departing from the line of duty; here too is a last acquirement,

acquirement, should they obtain military skill.

“ This, Abessalom, is the plan that, were I in your place, I would offer for the acceptance of my sons. In case you approve of it, I will immediately write to Cherub, the senior of the college at Memphis, and with whom I possess no trifling interest, to receive Elnathan and Modi, and shew towards them every possible kindness.”

It was not without visible emotion that Noëma listened to the project of separating from her her sons during eight years. She was on the point of expressing her reluctance to it, when Ezriel thus prevented her—“ I understand, Noëma,” said he, “ what you suffer at the thought of losing sight of your children for so long a period; but since it never was my object to enforce the attainment of wisdom at the expence of nature’s legitimate pleasures, I must add to what I have
already.

already said, that it is most desirable your sons should return to you, for a short interval, at the conclusion of their stay at Memphis; and again, when they shall quit Athens. Heaven has bestowed on you riches; nor will it, I am sure, disapprove, that some short part of them should be employed in their recalling to you your children, that they may pour into your bosom their very errors, and receive from your approving smile incitement for the future. To record you further, most amiable of women, parting with your sons, I would recall you the number of years which Isaac was separated from his son Jacob, and the patience he evinced, firmly believing that the beneficence of the Eternal would be thereby extended on the land."

Noëma now breathed freely, for the last words of Ezriel offered inexpressible consolation. The plan of the high priest was immediately to be commenced, and Abessalom requested from him the proffered

ferred letter to Cherub ; determining to attend the steps of his sons to Memphis.

“ And now, my friends,” said Ezriel, “ I have yet another sacrifice to invoke, at the hands of one of you in particular. I prepare to quit this abode, and spend the remnant of my days next my sister, at Eleana ; certain duties attach her hither, and I will e’en help her to their fulfillment. Zambri, your constant piety has already rendered you a hermit—your conduct is irreproachable—come, then, and place me in this sanctuary ; in your favour will I relinquish all those little improvements, derived from the sweat of my brow, and which tended to cheer my banishment ; accept my offer, and thus contribute to our mutual happiness.”

Zambri raised his eyes to Heaven, and softly pronounced the names of Segor and her mother ; then falling at the feet of Ezriel, he accepted his proposal, beseeched of him his benediction, and that he would constantly forward to him his salutary

salutary advice. He tenderly embraced his son, Abessalom, Noëma, and Elnathan, who presently after took their departure.

The next day Zambri was left alone on Mount Anoth, where he spent the remainder of his life, beyond the reach of temptation, wholly devoted to the exercise of piety and benevolence.

Eight days had scarcely elapsed, since Abessalom, Elnathan, and Zabdi, had quitted Ezriel, when every thing was prepared for their journey into Egypt. In prospect of a longer separation from their children than she had ever yet experienced, sensibly afflicted Noëma; but reflecting that it was them she loved, and not herself, her tears were repressed, and she persisted with calmness towards the completion of suitable garments to accompany them. The mildness of the Egyptian climate, where rain was scarcely known, induced the custom of its inhabitants to go with their heads always uncovered. Tunics of fine linen, girdles of various-coloured

Toured silks, buskins formed of deer-skin—these were the only garments that graced the most distinguished of the Egyptians, and were those which the sons of Abessalom received from their mother, on the eve of their departure from their native home. This eve, how sad for Sephora and Mara! It is true, the affection that warmed their bosoms for Elnathan and Zabdi, could not yet be called *love*—it was a sentiment tender, ingenuous, and amiable—perhaps steadier, more real, when joined with greater ardour. “We are going,” said the youths, on parting them, “where it would be dishonour not to be virtuous;” and these words, though vague, softened for Sephora and Mara the anguish of a last farewell! Abessalom thought fit to spare Noëma the agony of beholding her sons depart, and before the dawn of day secretly commenced his journey.

It was near a fortnight ere the travellers reached Memphis. Abessalom stopped

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ped during two days, to view, with Elnathan and Zabdi, the ruins of Jerusalem, the former capital of Chaldea, and lately reduced to ashes by order of Nebuchadnezzar.

“What an afflicting spectacle,” said Abessalom to his sons, “is now this city, once so brilliant and opulent, under its monarchs David and Solomon! Amongst this heap of ruins, amid this frightful solitude, fit resort of wild beasts and birds of prey, where shall we find that magnificent temple, projected by the Almighty himself? Where the glory of the Jewish nation—its power, that extended even to the banks of the Euphrates—the treasure that filled the palaces of its monarchs—the immensity of its commerce, the riches of its arsenals, the beauty and excellence of its military institutions?—all, all have disappeared, even as the sun sinks at eve into the western main. And why? because the Israelites, often warned and chastised, at length reached the summit

mit of ingratitude and impiety; and such, my sons, shall be the reward of all who dare to counteract the oracles of God, manifested to us in holy scripture."

Arrived at Memphis, Abessalom hastens to deliver to Cherub the letter of Ezriel, in which was detailed his own merits, the lessons that Elnathan and Zabdi had hitherto received, and the hopes their father entertained of their improvement at Memphis.

"Times are much altered," said Cherub, when he had perused the letter; "Egypt has lost its grandeur since it became tributary, and that with the entrance of the conqueror, was introduced contempt for morality and religion.—However, we flatter ourselves, that if in any corner of Egypt are preserved the archives of ancient glory, even so that they may be consulted with success, it is within the walls of our university.

"Ingratitude," continued Cherub, "is unfortunately inherent within our natures—

tures—observe, and you will find that it has hitherto been the destroyer of nations. Sesosiris shared a large portion of his glory with the Egyptian priests, our progenitors in this institution—to his sons and to his subjects, they gave an equal education; they opened for both every possible source of wisdom: but how miserable has been the return! that elevation of soul, that noble pride, which was promulgated from without these walls, at length made the Egyptians themselves licenced, even to countenance the most voluptuous excesses—excesses which estrange them every day further from us, and may tend to our final destruction. But this, Abessalom, is conjecture; and since your sons are so well grounded in knowledge, in piety, and morality, and that they have but three years to remain with us, I doubt not of being able to fulfil towards them the recommendation of Ezriel. The details of our practice would be now too tedious

but

but the constant correspondence of your sons, will, I hope, prove to you that their time is profitably spent.

“ You could not have arrived at a moment more interesting for them, or for us, than is the present. Amongst our pupils who are Egyptians, and have attained their sixteenth year, we are on the point of declaring which are of royal descent. The offspring of our kings, delivered into our care from their birth, are apparently confounded with that of the

Egyptians born on the same day, and at the same time received by us, they are not suffered, until this era, to become acquainted with their brilliant destiny; they are even unknown to the honors of their being. A period of anxious recognition then is to take place this evening, after which the king, at the head of the sacerdotal order, will proceed to judge a cause the most interesting to legal authority, to justice, and to nature. To be a witness of our forms, repair with
your

your sons an hour after midday to the grand hall of our lyceum, where, after the important process I have named shall be decided, I will advance, and receive them at your hands. Having gained the consent of the king to their admission, they will henceforward, like the other pupils, be entertained entirely at his expence."

"How," replied Abessalom, "shall I shew my gratitude for your intended favours?"

"In continuing to worship God, and promote the felicity of your fellow-creatures." So saying, Cherub retired.

The sun had not long reached its zenith, when Abessalom and his sons entered the great hall of the university. A numerous croud was already assembled; notwithstanding, silence and order reigned.—The entrance of the hall being at length closed, the procession of priests ranged themselves on a stage towards the right hand of the throne, where was to preside the monarch, who directly appeared. He

was followed by the nobles of the kingdom, who took their station on his left hand.

When those privileged persons were arranged in due order, Cherub, in an elevated voice, summoned Dina, the widow of Abiathar, to advance and plead before the king, the priests, and the nobles, the cause she had given notice of. Immediately appeared from behind one of the pillars which supported this superb edifice, a female whose air was noble and interesting. She was in deep mourning, and a long black veil fell over her face.

"Sire," said she, throwing back her veil in presence of the king, and revealing a countenance full of sweetness and candour, "the claim I have on your justice is, no doubt, singular, and what few would dare to prefer. Others in my place might rest satisfied to see their son seated on the steps of the throne, and even considered as its lawful heir, while in secret they prided themselves on bestowing
their

their maternal cares on the rightful son of their prince. But in so doing, I feel that nature and truth would raise within my conscience, pangs far too great for ambition to silence.

“No sooner had I given birth, mighty king, to the son whom I dare to dispute with you, than, according to the excellent laws of the great Sesostris, he was taken from me, to receive a like education with him whom the divine favour had on the same day accorded you; as also with the other children of the nobles born likewise at the same period. In delivering him to the ministers of our holy religion, my husband took especial care to follow the example of other parents in similar circumstances, and attach to his garments a label indicative of his name and descent. I too was yet more particular (as will appear presently) to give to him tokens by which he could never be mistaken.

“Though never permitted to behold

my son Benoni, I yet remained tranquil as to his lot, until an unforeseen event roused my anxiety. I was bitterly lamenting the loss of an adored husband, who had been taken from me but a year before, when I was informed that a woman desired to speak with me alone, on a subject of great importance. She was shewn into my presence, when falling on her knees, and bathing my feet with her tears, she said, 'Listen to me, I have only a few moments to live. At the moment the priests received into their care the son of their king, as also thine, the former was delivered to Mysia to suckle, the latter to me on the same account. We came acquainted with the origin of our nurslings, by Obadiah, the priest, neglecting immediately to detach from the infants the mark which their parents had left to distinguish them. Mysia, hereupon, observing a material difference in the healthful appearance of the children—the royal infant being weakly, while thine gave

gave symptoms of a long life, said to me, ' Let us e'en secretly exchange the children, by which I shall best secure the recompence that is awarded to her who safely brings up the royal heir ; and in this recompence I promise that you shall largely share.' Alas ! I was tempted to comply ; Mysia became the nurse of your son, whom the priests all along considered as the royal offspring, while, in fact, the charge of it was committed to me ; and notwithstanding our expectations to the contrary, I was successful in preserving its life. Our secret has remained until this moment undiscovered ; but Mysia dying a few days since, the sole weight of it became insupportable to me. Ere I however revealed it, I took care to prevent the punishment that would necessarily await me, by swallowing poison ; at this moment it circulates through my veins. I have only left to recommend to thy care my three children, and then withdraw to breathe my last ;

“And in fact,” said Dina, “the death of this unfortunate woman was revealed to me an hour after. The truth of her words may be substantiated, by viewing on the breast of my son a mark representing the head of Isis, which I was careful, according to the manner of India, to engrave there, previous to his being taken from me on the day of his birth. Thy decree, sire, I then await to have my child restored to me.”

Dina was silent, and the priest Obadiah arose.

“If,” said he, “the ravings of the dying were received as just allegations, and thought sufficient to brand as negligent our sacred order, the fabric of government, morality, religion, would be quickly overthrown. Since it was the will of Sesostrius to have his descendants, during their early years, confounded with those of his nobles born on the same day, such an instance as the present was never known to occur—negligence is wholly foreign

foreign to our function. Not one witness either can be produced to substantiate the charge; and for the pretended mark, which bears with it some evidence, it might surely have been imprinted by nature, and have escaped the observation of those who paid the first attentions to the royal infant. I pronounce that the tale we have heard is unworthy the ear of our sovereign."

Dina was now on the point of replying, when the king motioned to her to be silent, and ordered that the youths in question should be produced.

"It is on your lot, brave youth, to decide for the monarch, as they advance before us. We have assembled to decide between you I gave birth, the one is Dina; unforeseen it doubtful who is the each." The accredited looking first towards the youth, then towards Dina, stepped forward and threw himself into the arms of the

"Sire," said he, "I have no doubt but I embrace my mother."—"And I," cried the other youth, mounting the steps of the throne, while tears started to his eyes, "kneel before my father!"

"Fallacious are those signs," cried the priests, "they should not be attended to."

"Sire," exclaimed Dina, in an energetic tone, "the mother who reclaims her son speaks the language of truth immutable. Behold the image, that is imprinted next the heart of my child. Sire, we would both be rendered unfortunate, you by your doubts, me by my certainty, if you, by your sentence, consecrate the image that heaven and earth dis-

of us be rendered
ed the monarch, calm-
deprived you of a hus-
me without a partner
Become then my wife,
na. Benoni, Amalek, shall be
equally

equally my children; and whichever, within a certain number of years, shall have acquired most wisdom and most virtue, him will I nominate my successor."

The prince raised up Dina, who had thrown herself at his feet, and even supported her on his arm, without the lyceum, amidst the acclamations of the whole assembly, who with one voice blessed Heaven for having given to them a ruler so generous and enlightened.

Cherub now hastened to intercept the steps of his king, by presenting to him Abessalom and his sons.

"Sire," said he, "allow me to present to you a Chaldean of high degree, remarkable for his wisdom and virtues, and who claims your protection for his sons, whom he wishes to place for the space of three years within our university. Here are the youths, whom I supplicate you to admit to a share of that education

accorded beneath your own eye, to the children of the Egyptian nobles."

Abessalom, whose example was followed by Elnathan and Zabdi, bowed profoundly before the king.

"Is it true," said the prince to Abessalom, "that your ruler, not content with having subjected to him a part of my dominions, means to pursue his conquests even to the pillars of Hercules?"

"Sire," replied Abessalom, "what the king of Babylon really intends on that subject, I am ignorant; but had he been, like me, witness to the grandeur of thy conduct this day, I scarcely think he would encroach farther on thy power."

Flattery gains even on the wisest—a few more words having passed, the sovereign of Egypt commanded Cherub to admit Elnathan and Zabdi under his care.

"Hasten then to embrace thy children," said the priest to Abessalom; "they must follow the king amidst the other pupils

pupils—fail not to remember me to Ezriel—farewell!”

Abessalom poured forth his thanks, and clasped his sons to his bosom. Elnathan and Zabdi melted into tears, kneeled to their father, received his benediction, and having desired a fond remembrance for Noëma and Zambri, gave each a hand to Cherub, who led them forth to join the train of the king.

Their garments and other necessities provided by their mother were lodged by Abessalom at the gate of the university: after which he set out for Chaldea, hoping to rejoice Noëma with an account of the happy reception their sons had met from the Egyptian monarch.

It is universally acknowledged, that there never existed a more perfect system of education than that followed within the university of Memphis, particularly for pupils from the age of sixteen to nineteen inclusive; for at the age of

nineteen, the course of instruction ended, and the education of the Egyptian youth was considered as complete.

It is an error to suppose that the Egyptians did not acknowledge as the foundation of their creed, the unity and omnipotence of God, in creating and governing the universe. Equally skilled in astronomy as the Chaldeans, they were penetrated with the conviction that the stars could not so faithfully perform their course, unguided by one wise and all-seeing power. But though this great truth was evident to their reason, they had been further led by their passions to suppose inferior deities, to whose influence they might ascribe each caprice of their variable and ill regulated natures. The Egyptian priests, knowing that one great principle regulated in common their religion and the Chaldean, suffered Elnathan and Zabdi to absent themselves, whenever homage was offered to inferior deities; at the same time, they strictly prohibited

prohibited them from indulging in rail-lery, at the religious ceremonies observed by others.

Amongst other advantages, the sacerdotal college contained an immense library, which was daily augmented, and over which was justly written, *a repository of medicine for the soul*. But what this institution offered as most admirable, was to behold the sons of royalty (recognised as such from their sixteenth year), continue their education undistinguished above the other pupils, except by a severer discipline, to see them, though destined to be absolute on earth, humbly submit to the austerities of their religion, and with downcast eyes listen to the words of their priests (particularly addressed to them), fraught with the future punishment that awaited such as departed on earth from their duty.

Though the law of Moses was not here taught, our Chaldeans experienced that *do as thou would be done unto* was the

the principle of government. Shortly after his admission, an example offered, highly salutary for Elnathan. One of the younger boys having rudely and wantonly assaulted one of his comrades, inferior to him in strength, a slave was immediately summoned, and commanded by Cherub to bestow upon the culprit, stroke for stroke, an equal punishment as that he had imperiously inflicted. One other instance will display the nature of that discipline our youths were wisely subjected to. One of his comrades, who was an Egyptian, having publicly reproached Zabdi with being a foreigner, and thereby caused his tears to flow, was condemned to march in procession (to his great disgrace), with a label pasted on his forehead, where was written, *a foreigner who refuses to acknowledge all men as brothers.*

Besides the exercises and recreations they had partaken of at Saron, our youths were permitted horse and chariot races, fencing,

fencing, and the game of chess. Premiums were not dispensed until the moment the scholars prepared to quit the university, when such as were deemed worthy were decorated by the hands of the king, with a chain of gold, bearing a medal, on one side of which was engraved a head of Sesostris, on the other one of Psammeticus. In return for these favours, the scholars were expected to deliver a short oration, expressive of their thanks.

It was the duty and pleasure of Elnathan and Zabdi, during their residence at Memphis, to forward regularly to their parents an exact account of the manner in which their time was spent. Their dispatches could not fail to delight the rural council (composed of Abessalom, Noëma, and a few of their chosen friends), who endeavoured to modify the instruction given at Memphis, for the benefit of Sephora and Mara. These maidens daily repaid the attention that was bestowed on them by their parents, and by
Abessalom

Abessalom and Noëma. They became wise without pedantry, prudent without affectation, and devout without any tincture of fanaticism.

Elnathan and Zabdi having passed three years at Memphis, Abessalom set out in order to conduct them home. The day for his arrival within the college was appointed by Cherub ; it was one of general enlargement for such of the pupils as had completed their nineteenth years. Ere Abessalom could embrace his sons, he had the pleasure of seeing them, in presence of the whole sacerdotal order, and a numerous assembly, receive from the king the badge of distinguished merit ; but, ah ! how was he elated on hearing their discourse in return ! their eloquence charmed every ear, and yet betrayed a striking contrast. That of Elnathan was wild, impetuous, and glowing with imagery ; he extolled the monarch to the skies, and painted his deeds of glory and renown. The periods of Zabdi were of a more finished nature ; they

they breathed more of tenderness than fire, and reflected the private virtues of the sovereign.

“ You may, indeed, be proud of your sons,” said the king, turning to Abessalom.

“ Yes, sire,” he replied, “ I do, indeed, see them enriched from the treasures of your wisdom and virtue.”

“ I understand,” added the prince, “ that you intend they shall proceed to pass two years at Athens. The trophy their merit has won, will there be serviceable to them; yet if you will allow me, I will command Cherub, in my name, to recommend them to the chief archon of the republic.”

Abessalom expressed his warm thanks, and was allowed, as were also Elnathan and Zabdi, to kiss the hand of the monarch, in token of a last farewell.

Ere the conclusion of the day, Abessalom and his sons expressed, by tears rather than words, their gratitude to Cherub for the extent of his favours. They
received

received from him a letter in the king's name for the archon, and early the next day departed. Elnathan and Zabdi regretted much not being allowed to take leave of their associates; but parting scenes were forbidden to the Egyptian youth, as tending to enervate.

What joy, what pride filled the hearts of Noëma and Zambri (who had purposely crept from his retirement) on again beholding those precious youths! beholding them rich in wisdom and virtue, and even decorated with the most flattering ornament! Now indeed did the tender Noëma reap a rich reward for her sacrifices and privations!

“ Oh, Elnathan and Zabdi! let us haste to meet them,” cried Sephora and Mara. Yet their reception of the youths was no longer marked by a tender embrace. On viewing the change which three years had made in the appearance of their former playmates, their approach became timid; they blushed for the

the joy they had felt a moment before, and the intended welcome almost died on their lips. Nor did any levity of tone or gesture, on the part of Elnathan and Zabdi, tend to dispel the bashfulness of their fair friends; their behaviour was grave and formal, which was not only to be attributed to the increase of years, but to being unaccustomed to the society of women, and having their thoughts continually directed to themes the most exalted. The thoughtless caressing school-boy was now the proud philosopher.

The natural tenderness of their natures, though of late repressed, soon, however, unfolded with new charms, beneath the melting influence of that social affectionate circle they had now entered; rural scenery too—who will deny its taming influence! the fields, the orchards, where once their youth had sported, recalled every hour some fond association, and disposed their hearts to friendship and to love!

Yet

Yet no longer did Sephora and Mara run to seek their traces; no longer in their presence did they solicit leave to join their rambles: the affection of these maidens, once so eager for display, now sought how best it could conceal itself.

Our youthshad been sometime at home, when one day they overtook Sephora and Mara, who had sought a solitary path, and at length became seated next them on the turf:—"Ah," said Elnathan, "you no longer love us; formerly you did not choose to walk alone, if we were to be found—how different from us! years and reflection have but increased our affection for you, even to the point to give us pain."

"Indeed our friendship is not abated," said Mara, "but we consider you too wise now to be always pleased in the company of simple shepherdesses."

"If we have become wise," said Zabdi, "it was to render ourselves more worthy of your regards, not to exalt us
above

above you: ah! no, we have ever thought of you as of superior beings, born to be the glory of your sex, and to make the happiness of ours."

"Your studies then," said the gentle Sephora, "have not effaced your former regard for us?"

"Make me not, by a contrary doubt," cried Elnathan, vehemently, "curse the last three years of unwearied application!"

"And you love us more since you have become wiser?" added Mara.

"We swear it to you," cried the youths, in one voice; "your beloved names have appeared at the top of every page we have read; your idea has been the stimulus to all our exertions—yes, in the name of all that is most chaste, most virtuous—in the name of *love*, we swear it!"

Sephora and Mara blushed, and sighed—"Ah!" said the latter, after a moment's silence, "swear not in the name of
love:

love: your parents have not suffered you to drink so deep at the fountain of knowledge, their views for you are too extended, to suffer that two humble shepherdesses should share your hearts."

"You are mistaken, Mara," replied Elnathan; "our parents are too wise and too good, to suffer our intercourse daily to increase, if they had resolved to frown upon our future loves."

"Yet, methinks," said Sephora, "that Mara is right, and that thy parents would rather thy love was placed on nobler objects."

"And what nobler objects," rejoined the impassioned youth, "could they find? Love waits not upon riches—beauty is its guide, simplicity the language it delights in, the feeling heart is its throne. Be assured, our parents are too enlightened to think that happiness is to be procured by assimilating only with the rich and powerful—virtue is the idol they worship, and they are not ignorant
that

that it oftener dwells in the cottage than the palace.

“Lest, however, they should mistake the love that mingles with our being, as only a boyish fancy, we will refrain from communicating it till our travels shall be completed. Then, become yet more worthy of thy affection, we will throw ourselves at the feet of our parents, who, regarding our constancy as the presage of future felicity, will join our hands with those of the objects of our choice, nor envy for us the destiny of kings. All we require then at present is, that you will accept our vows—Zabdi’s never to belong to any other than Mara—mine, to have neither mistress or wife but Sephora.”

Who that loved could refuse to listen to vows like those of Elnathan and Zabdi, enforced by all the eloquence of tones and looks? Who also could resist exchanging them?

Presently the countenances of this happy party beamed with serenity and joy

joy—these words, “you love me, then, you will always love me?”—“Yes, ever, evermore!” were all they could reciprocally utter, until the approach of Abessalom and Noëma changed the scene.

How swift fly the days, the months, for lovers who taste the sweets of courtship! Thirty days had elapsed since our young people had first exchanged vows of mutual tenderness, and they appeared to them but as one. Strong as was the gratitude of Elnathan and Zabdi towards the good Ezriel, to whom they were commissioned to deliver the affectionate remembrances of Cherub, it was with reluctance they obeyed the summons of Abessalom, to quit the society of their mistresses during eight days, and repair with him to visit the priest, who now resided with his sister at Eleana, and who even appeared as an angel sent to perfect her in the ways of piety.

But a day yet more sad arrived for the lovers, when they were to depart for Greece.

Greece. As may be supposed, a thousand times were their vows repeated, and a thousand times were their tender adieus re-echoed by Sephora and Mara. For the first time, Elnathan and Zabdi were conscious that there existed on earth objects from whom it was more cruel to part than from their mother Noëma. Ah! but too mortifying for parents is the inevitable moment, when they perceive disputed (though innocently) their accustomed place in the affections of their children!

Abessalom accompanied his sons to Damascus, and thence embarked with them for Athens: but twenty-eight days elapsed before he reached the destined port. To a dead calm succeeded a violent tempest, as the vessel appeared within sight of the island of Crete. But Elnathan and Zabdi, resigned (after the lessons of their father) to the will of Heaven, trembled not, though the deep seemed opening every instant to engulph them.

Abessalom, it is true, overheard them mingle the names of Sephora and Mara in their prayers; but this he forbore to notice, and continued, in the midst of danger, to shew a countenance still more tranquil than his sons.

At length happily arrived at Athens, our travellers presented themselves before the archon Megacles, who having perused their recommendation, bestowed on them the most flattering attentions. Abessalom communicated to him what had been the course of education hitherto received by his sons, and intreated his advice as to that they were destined to receive at Athens.

“The plans,” said Megacles, “of the Egyptian priests towards forming the minds of youth, certainly tend to all that is sublime and heroic; yet methinks you are wise in bringing your sons to acquire somewhat of our polish, since virtue becomes more attractive, assisted by the graces. If you give me leave, I will
place

place your sons under the guidance of Callophilus, the friend of Solon. He is a wise man, rather, it is true, attached to novel systems; he will, however, direct the minds of his pupils to the contemplation of the noblest works of genius and art. He has no children, and he permits his wife, Aristeia, who possesses rare accomplishments, constantly to assemble at her house the most celebrated philosophers, poets, and orators of the day: thus no advantage will be missing, that can render profitable the visit of your sons to Athens."

Abessalom thanked Megacles, and requested he would lead him to the house of Callophilus and Aristeia. These respectable persons immediately attended to the request of their chief magistrate, and seemed happy to admit under their roof Elnathan and Zabdi, whom they promised to treat as their own sons, nor neglect ought that could render them truly accomplished. Abessalom put into the

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hands

hands of Aristeia a purse of gold, to defray the additional expence she would now be subject to—"Ah!" said she, "we Athenians are but ill versed in economy; yet surely here is more money than will suffice."

Abessalom replied, "it was better to be provided against every possible contingency," and requested Aristeia to retain all the contents of the purse. Abessalom remained at Athens, to take a cursory view of its works of art; then embracing his sons once more, and taking a respectful leave of their preceptors and of the archon, re-embarked for Asia, and safely rejoined Noëma, after an absence of seven weeks from home.

The ambition to become more worthy of Sephora and Mara, daily animated the pursuits of Elnathan and Zabdi.—Callophilus led his pupils to the study of the Greek language, in all its purity; he passed in review before them, the various systems of philosophy with which Greece abounded,

abounded, and encouraged them to distinguish what was most admirable in each. They frequented with him the school of Solon, followed him to the Areopagus, and the theatres. Beneath the eye of Aristeia, they studied eloquence and the fine arts, in every branch. The improvement of Elnathan and Zabdi was rapid. Solon was used to wonder at the depth and originality of their observations. They soon became the pride of their tutors.—It was even so when a horde of barbarians from the Thracian frontier invaded the coast of Achaia. Megacles, charged to repulse them, took with him Elnathan and Zabdi, whose valour and ingenuity beneath the military garb, performed such wonders, and was so successful, that on their return to Athens, they received the thanks of the archon, in the name of the republic.

Three months previous to the time they were destined to quit Athens, Elnathan wrote to Abessalom, conjuring

him to hasten and witness his and Zabdi's efforts to obtain a prize at the Delphic games. This anxious father, desirous to animate by his presence the exertions of his sons, arrived at Athens some days before the time that had been prescribed to him. On all sides, he heard resounded the praises of his sons; still did he counsel them to reflect well upon the hazard of displaying their talents in public. He represented to them, that should they be vanquished at Delphi, the reputation they had acquired would be completely tarnished; and on the other hand, to be successful, would excite the jealousy of the Greeks, who would not bear patiently to find themselves surpassed by foreigners, whom they were in the habit of despising in general. But the ardour of the young heroes was not to be damped by the prudent arguments of Abessalom; their dearest hopes were engaged on the present occasion, and they even prepared for the contest.

We shall forbear to describe the magnificence which the finest productions of art and of nature spread over the scene where was represented the Delphic games; what the presence of the first magistrates of Greece, and a number infinite of spectators, lent to it of majesty; what the splendour of religious ceremonies, destined to precede and close the games, shed over it of sublime; what was added to it, by the charms of music—music various in its kinds; writers of every nation have done justice to this wonderful picture. We shall then no farther notice it than as relating to our Chaldean youths.

Three days had the games continued, and Elnathan and Zabdi had borne away the prize from many a young athletic, for feats of strength and agility: but a nobler contest was yet to arrive—the supreme judges entitled to decide on the superiority of genius, were already assembled within the temple of Apollo, to

adjudge the prize for eloquence and poetry !

Numerous candidates—some in the morn of life, some grown grey in literary pursuit, successively appeared, and in a tremulous voice rehearsed aloud their different performances. At length silence reigned, and each brow waited to receive the palm of victory, when Elnathan and Zabdi stepped forward, and declaring that Chaldea, not Greece, gave them birth, asked permission to present, each, his composition. The liberty was granted, and every eye was turned on them. Zabdi, in a voice clear and harmonious, delivered an oration, shewing the intimate connexion between filial and patriotic love. Elnathan, in tones deep and swelling, chanted a lyric ode, upon the agreement of the heavens and the earth to render mortals happy.

A silence of some moments was the first effect produced upon the assembly, on having listened to those wonderful youths :

youths: but soon repeated thunders of applause hastened the decision of the Delphian judges, who declared that the prize of poetry and eloquence belonged only to Elnathan and Zabdi.

The ivy wreath immediately decorated their brows; besides which, it was decreed by the literary tribunal, that two medals, bearing this inscription, *Greece, to true merit*, should be struck off, in the name of the whole republic, and sent to these victorious youths, even after they reached their native land.

With tranquil but satisfied aspects, Elnathan and Zabdi humbly bend before their judges, and express, in simple terms, their gratitude. With rapid steps they then hasten and pour forth their thanks to Solon, Callophilus, and Aristeia, as the promoters of their present glory.—Abessalom too—they clasp his knees—but unable to support his emotions, he leans for support against a pillar of the temple.

The impatience of him and his sons to

return home may be easily conceived. Having acquitted their several duties in Athens, they took advantage of the first vessel bound for Sidon; and wafted by prosperous gales, soon reached the desired port, from whence they proceeded to throw themselves into the arms of Noëma.

With the sincerest affection did they embrace her; but, as may be well imagined, their trophies were reserved to be laid at the feet of Sephora and Mara.

Love, glory, what charms dost thou reflect upon each other! disunited, thou art no longer the same! With what pride and confidence did Elnathan and Zabdi expect the moment when they should again exchange vows with their mistresses! it soon arrived, and brought with it all its anticipated rapture.

The present season was nearly the happiest in the life of Elnathan and Zabdi, who really now were all that the fondest parents could desire. Their exterior was manly and graceful, their manners easy
and

and playful, their natures ingenuous and affectionate, and their understandings strong and improved by the richest lore that the world could then boast.

With what pleasure they visited Zambri, and next proceeded to salute the worthy Ezriel, and invoke, under his immediate auspices, the favour of the Almighty, whose worship they had preserved pure and unadulterated, even in the bosom of idolatry.

Nor did they neglect to repair to Saron, to offer acknowledgments to their former preceptors, and renew their friendship with Naaman and Saaph. The good Osa was grown nearly blind, and her sons suffered no small inquietude, at the possible burthen which they and their mother might be on their charitable governors. They shared their uneasiness with Elnathan and Zabdi, even in the presence of Abessalom and Zambri, who had accompanied their sons to Saron. "We will soon remedy this," said Zam-

bri : “ the little farm that once belonged to Segor and her mother, and which, on the death of the latter, reverted to me, now remains vacant. Let Naaman and Saaph, therefore, occupy it, guided by Abessalom; their industry will force it to yield, not only enough for them and Osa to live comfortably on, but an overplus in favour of Zabdi.”

How much was this generous project applauded ! immediately it was imparted to the superior of the college, who betrayed much reluctance to part with his Scythian pupils. He could not counteract for them, however, the advantages of independance ; and the project was therefore universally agreed to.

Elnathan and Zabdi now contended which should cede their place in the car of Abessalom to the venerable Osa ; which should lead her to Noëma, to whom she was impatient to express her thanks, for the tender care once taken of Naaman and Saaph.

In a short time the three amiable wanderers were established within their little domain, where their industry procured them freedom and competence.

The happiness of the little colony over which Abessalom and Noëma presided, became somewhat clouded by the death of the fathers of Chœreas and Susanna. Victims to an epidemic complaint that visited their neighbourhood, these venerable and respected beings expired in the arms of their children, who were inconsolable for their loss.

According to expectation, Abessalom received the medals fabricated in the name of the Grecian republic for his sons. He delivered them to Elnathan and Zabdi, who immediately presented them to Noëma. Gratified as she was by these presents, she thought it but right that Zambri should share in them; the medal, therefore, of Zabdi was reserved for him.

Our youths had now been at home
some

some weeks, when Abessaloin warned them that they must shortly set out for Babylon.

“My sons,” said he, “your improvement and successes have hitherto been the glory of your father, and your mother’s joy. A new era now opens before you, when your wisdom and virtue will be severely tried. Yes, without pilot or rudder, but such as your own resources can supply, will you soon be launched on a dangerous and troubled ocean—God grant you weather the storm ! Beware of sensual pleasures, and the vanity of shining above others. The first will render you cowardly and enervated ; the last, make you contemptuous in your demeanor, rash in your actions, and prodigal to the prejudice of the indigent. I send you to Babylon, the centre of grandeur and corruption, unattended, that you may shew, by walking with a firm step on the brink of temptation, that you possess true energy of soul. The man who has never
resisted

resisted cannot be termed virtuous. I have also in view, that you should, by every means, render yourselves capable of serving your country, which, alas! declines daily in prosperity. Its capital is where you will best be able to learn its several political relations, and where you can best study the means of preventing its downfall. I need scarcely recommend to you, as the chief means of safety in your dangerous passage, to lift your hearts, at morn, at noon, at eve, towards the Great Disposer of all things; place in him your whole trust, and he will not forsake thee. My fortune is at your disposal; draw from it whatever sums you may require; on your prudence I entirely rely. And now, my sons, think of taking leave of your friends. Your mother and I will accompany you on your journey as far as the residence of our good friend Somer, who is very desirous to behold us ere he quits this life; you will

will thence proceed alone, while we return to our native home; hasten—the day after to-morrow shall we all depart.”

Elnathan and Zabdi, with aching hearts, seek Sephora and Mara, who were generally to be found in each other's society.

“Ah!” said Mara, when she heard the dreadful fiat, “you are going then into the midst of grandeur and of pleasures, which will soon make you remember with contempt our humble dwellings, and all our innocent enjoyments.” Elnathan cast on her a reproachful look, nearly one of indignation.

“No,” said he, “we are not so volatile as you imagine; nor can our tastes be thus easily vitiated.”

“The wonders of art, the refinements of luxury,” rejoined Zabdi, “will only afford a contrast, by which your artless graces will assume a brighter colouring in our imaginations.”

Elnathan heaved a deep sigh—he could
no

no longer talk tranquilly of the time when indeed he should cease to behold Sephora.

When Abessalom and Noëma, with their sons, reached the palace of Somer, which happened on the evening of their departure from home, they found his favourites and attendants, by whom he was adored, busily employed to retard, by every possible means, the moment of his dissolution.

Abessalom and Noëma hastened beside his couch. "Ah! thank Heaven," said he, in accents that betrayed he had not long to live, "your approach is the token for me of future felicity; and Elnathan, and Zabdi the child of your adoption, where are they?"

"Here," said Abessalom, "come to seek your commands and benediction, ere they proceed to Babylon."

"We are all come," added Noëma, "to minister to your wishes."

"They are fulfilled on earth," said Somer,

mer, "since I see you, and press your hands; I much feared that you would not arrive in time. In meditating on your virtues and bright example, my declining years have been soothed. Some token of my gratitude to you, Abessalom," said Somer, delivering to him a letter, "is contained within this packet, which Elnathan is destined to carry to my granddaughter, Cyprus, the reigning queen of Babylon. Since Nebuchadnezzar was four years ago struck by the hand of God, and doomed for his presumption to share the nature of the brute creation, she has singly filled his throne. Her power being unlimited, I have recommended thy son to her, and commanded that she might lose no occasion of serving him. I doubt not her attentions will extend to Zabdi, and that she will faithfully follow my instructions."—The words of Somer faltered—he pressed still closer the hand of Abessalom. "Oh, my God!" cried he, after a moment's

ment's silence, "pardon my idolatry—the veil that clouded my reason is fallen, I am wholly thine—receive me, I beseech thee." Somer, as he uttered these words, expired.

Grief resounded afar for the loss of this august personage. Abessalom, Noëma, and their sons, shed tears to his memory; their affliction, however, was softened by the firm hope that the Almighty had caught his parting breath, and that his soul reposed in Heaven. They assisted in rendering him funeral honours; these performed, Abessalom and Noëma returned home, while Elnathan and Zabdi, sensibly affected by such successive partings, took the road to Babylon, where they arrived in the evening of the fourth day from quitting their parents.

The next morning, Elnathan, habited in mourning, presented himself before the queen, and delivered to her the last will of Somer, whose death she was already informed of. She perused it amidst sobs
and

and tears. "Sons of the wise Abessalom," said she, at length, "your abode, while at Babylon, can only be in our palace; this is the least that can be accorded to the offspring of him who was once so forward to crush rebellion. I will, besides, give orders that you shall have free admission to my presence, whenever you may require it. Prince," added she, turning to Evilmerodac, the presumptive heir to the throne of Babylon, "allow me to place these young men under your special protection; their father once delivered my ancestor, Somer, from the danger threatened him by the seditious Enac, and he has ever supported the power of Nebuchadnezzar."

Evilmerodac now demanded the motive of the travellers in visiting Babylon.

"The desire, great Prince," replied Elnathan, "to learn the means by which we can best serve our country, whether in time of war or peace."

"I will take care then," returned Evilmerodac,

merodac, "to recommend you to the notice of our general in chief, and also to that of our prime minister."

The prince fulfilled his promise. Elnathan and Zabdi were particularly distinguished by both those personages, who perceiving that their talents were of a brilliant order, soon initiated them into affairs of state, both civil and military.— They were shortly even entrusted with certain posts, which they did honour to, whether by their sagacity or valour.— They gained universal favour in Babylon; for while their superiority was allowed, all bore testimony to their amiable and conciliating demeanor.

But while the most brilliant success attended our youths in their political and military career, another scene opened to their view, in the pleasures and vanities of love, through which they were not likely to pass with equal credit, situated as they were, in the midst of a voluptuous city, where good morals were turned
into

into ridicule, and alluring vices applauded. An antidote certainly offered, in the wise and affectionate counsels they occasionally received from their father and Noëma; as also in the pure and sacred attachment they felt towards Sephora and Mara.

But though Elnathan and Zabdi reaped the full benefit of a wise education, and correct habits, their characteristic blemishes were yet visible. Elnathan betrayed the haughtiness of his soul, with a taste for splendour and magnificence; while the disposition of Zabdi shewed a nature too flexible. These peculiarities, added to their captivating exterior, subjected them to the designs of women very unworthy of them.

The lavish bounties and attentions of Cyprus continued to ellicit the gratitude of Elnathan, even till she began to consider herself the person obliged. Though the vanity of the youth was naturally flattered by the distinguished favours of a princess,

princess, young and beautiful, he was far from imagining they were dictated by any other motive than compliance to the last wishes of her honoured grand-sire.

Zabdi appeared less at court, and resigned himself to the pleasure of frequenting the Babylonian theatre, presented a scene of allurements for the senses, scarcely to be resisted. The celebrated actress Rahab, particularly interested him by the variety and fascination of her talents. She became acquainted with his admiration of her; and being in turn captivated with the grace of his form, she failed not, by accumulated endeavours, to increase the effect her powers had already produced. She was dissatisfied, however, to be a mere puppet, and to excite only expressions of admiration, were they even exaggerated. One night, therefore, as Zabdi quitted the theatre, after having sobbed aloud at the representation of unhappy love, by Rahab,

hab, he was followed by her—"Charming youth," said she, "my performance this night was but the expression of that passion you have inspired within my bosom. Surely, then, you will not bestow less pity on my real, than on what you believed my fictitious woes."

"Oh, surely not!" said the ingenuous, breathing yet a sigh to the mimic he had quitted.

"To-morrow, then, you will visit me," said the courtesan. "I inhabit yonder mansion, exactly opposite the theatre; so early, I beseech you."

Reason, prudence, Mara, those were forgot! Ere the sun had advanced many moments in his course, the impatient Zabdi had tapped three times at the door of the enchanting actress. With a seductive smile she greets him, adding, "How flattering is this punctuality for one who feared her love would meet only an unkind return!"

Rahab, whose form was a model of perfection,

section, was attired like a nymph who conceals her charms only to render them twofold in the eyes of her lover. Her apartment was decorated in the most luxurious taste. Curtains of rose-coloured silk admitted a doubtful light, while the freshest flowers scattered around, breathed a delicious perfume.

Rahab led her guest towards a downy sofa—"You love me, then," said she, "and who would not love you? Ah! I do not like generalities."

"Indeed I offer you no common incense."

"Charming Zabdi, we are not at the theatre. Alas! I fear you are not in love."

"There are two sorts of love," said Zabdi; "the first renders us wholly dependent on the will of the object beloved; she presides over all our thoughts and actions; and this love is crowned by Hymen. The next renders us sensible to

beauty in every form, and in general is styled admiration ; it would be quite destroyed, if we should offer it any sacrifice, to the prejudice of the sentiment I first described."

" Have you ever felt this first sort of love ?"

" Yes, I have it no longer to bestow ; but the second kind, charming Rahab, is yours."

What a novice ! thought the enchantress, and in Babylon too ! however, she forgot not her part, but leaning her head on the shoulder of Zabdi, sighed and wept alternately. The youth was melted, was terrified, and arose quickly to depart—" We shall meet again !" said he.

" This day let it be," replied Rahab ; " a brilliant procession of youths and virgins, as no doubt you are informed, are to proceed towards the ancient palace of Semiramis, and chant hymns in honour of her memory. All our celebrated

brated beauties will attend in cars, decorated with emblems of glory and pleasure; you must then follow my car; refuse me not." Zabdi hastily promised compliance, and departed.

Had he possessed true firmness, he would now have bid a last farewell to Rahab; but such was not the case; and Zabdi was seen mounted on a steed richly caparisoned, attending the car of Rahab, which appeared amidst numerous others, guided by the most beautiful of the Babylonian fair.

While Rahab gloried in being thus escorted by one of the handsomest youths of the court, she excited the jealousy of Azaph, the courtesan, who, meditating revenge, ceased to follow in regular procession the car of the actress, and giving the reins to her steeds, drove so hastily against the horse of Zabdi, that its rider was instantly overthrown. General attention was excited; Zabdi was unable to

arise; he had received a severe wound in the leg, and his arm was dislocated. He was, however, assisted to mount the car of Rahab, who conducted him home, and continued to bestow on him all the attentions her professional duties would admit of. With the added care of Elnathan, he presently recovered; when anxious to express his gratitude to Rahab, he repaired one morning at an early hour to her apartments.

But how great was his surprise to find there a young Babylonian of renowned profligacy, who, as also Rahab, were yet in their morning undress! Upon hearing Zabdi's expressions of gratitude, the gentleman bowed, and retired to an inner apartment.

"Don't look so much surprised," said Rahab; "that is an old lover of mine, it is true; but he does not require that I should be constant to him."

"Indeed!" said Zabdi, his vanity and
delicacy

delicacy at once shocked at such gross evidence of the hypocrisy and depravity of his charming actress. "Nor could I either then be entitled to your constancy?"

"Oh, that is a different case," said Rahab, attempting to take his hand.

"Your kindness to me, and the superiority of your talents," replied Zabdi, "yet claim some portion of my esteem—Farewell, I go to seek my dear Elnathan."

Alas! how was Elnathan then employed! He had entered a house of public entertainment, or what might be styled a coffee-room, and had remained there some moments, when he heard the name of Cyprus introduced amongst some strangers near at hand: one of them, in particular, lavished on her keen invective, loudly condemned her profusion, and even taxed the prudence of Nebachadnezzar, for having married a person who was not of royal descent.

Elnathan,

Elnathan, who at first repressed his anger, but who could no longer bear to hear his benefactress thus abused, replied with warmth, "that as virtue and beauty rendered all women equal, so sedition and malice place upon a footing men who take pleasure in traducing their sovereign."

"It appears to me, young man," said the detractor of the queen, "that you might be less insolent in delivering your maxims."

"I never was insolent," retorted Elnathan, "but I know how to punish those who dare to be so."

"We will even try," said the stranger, "which of us best deserves that title;" and the disputants retired to measure arms.

This was the first time Elnathan had appeared in single combat, and his adversary happened to be a skilful fencer.—The son of Abessalom long parried with
amazing

amazing dexterity the thrusts of his adversary; but at the moment when he had nearly pierced him to the heart, he (Elnathan) received a wound in the arm, which ended the combat. Our hero sunk into the arms of Zabdi, who, much afflicted, had him immediately carried to the palace, where he resided. The queen was quickly informed of the disaster, and of the circumstances that occasioned it. As may be supposed, her interest in Elnathan was endeared many fold; nor did she leave untried whatever could accelerate his recovery. This at length took place, when he hastened to pour forth his endless gratitude to Cyprus.

But reciprocal gratitude between two persons, young, and of a different sex, insensibly ripens into a tenderer sentiment. It is true, Elnathan strictly guarded against this change of feeling, by continually recalling to his mind the artless graces of Sephora, her sincerity, her modesty,

desty, forming such a contrast to the meretricious charms to one met in Babylon. Yet the most wary have much to dread from unguarded moments.

Elnathan was now quite reinstated in health, when Evilmerodac gave orders for a chace, of which the ladies of the court were invited to be spectators. Each was to choose to conduct her car, a cavalier in whose dexterity she could confide.—Elnathan had been a competitor in the chariot races at Delphi; he was, therefore, chosen without hesitation to guide the car of the queen. But, whether from the effect of chance or design, he presently found himself with his royal mistress, at a great distance from the rest of the court, and even from the hunters.

“Ah!” said the queen, “we have gone astray; but since it is even so, let us alight, and repose awhile from our fatigue beneath yon shady beech.”

Elnathan drew in the reins, and assisted

sisted the queen to descend from her car.

“Elnathan,” said she, as they were seated on the turf, and fixing on him a look of inexpressible tenderness, “my heart has long been thine; nor can I think that your’s has remained insensible to its palpitations. Let us then no longer waste the precious moments of youth, but fly to some spot where unrestrained we may enjoy our mutual tenderness: you are celebrated in Egypt, in Greece; we may find a refuge in either of those countries.”

Elnathan felt the full force of the glance bestowed on him by the queen; his hand pressed hers—he was nearly conquered; when the sound of Egypt, of Greece, recalled his scattered senses. Cherub, Callophilus, what wouldst thou say? He let go the hand he held, and would most likely have refused the proffered honour, when the fierce Evilmerodac suddenly appeared

peared in view—"Madam," said he, sternly, "the court are alarmed at your absence—they can have no idea that you amuse yourself thus tranquilly." The queen in evident confusion arose. "You will suffer me," said the prince, "to conduct you home, to silence any unworthy suspicions your absence might give rise to." The queen feared to disobey—she was handed into the car of Evilmerodac, while Elnathan returned home in silence to seek his brother.

To Zabdi he communicated his adventure, with the embarrassed situation in which he now found himself. "Alas!" said Zabdi, "we must quit this country for a time; thou seest now slippery is the path of pleasure. Only three months, and we had nearly forgot our parents, our gentle mistresses, even our God! We will as quickly as possible solicit leave of absence from our respective stations, and turn our steps away."

This

This advice was adopted—and the last hours of his four-and twentieth year had struck for Elnathan, and had nearly done the same for Zabdi, when they took the road leading to their native land.

END OF VOL. I.

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