
JUDGES 9:1 Abimelech the son of Jerubbaal went to Shechem to his mother's brothers, and spoke with them, and with all the family of the house of his mother's father, saying,

Abimelech is made king; and, to secure himself in the kingdom, slays his brethren; Jotham, the youngest only escapes, Jdg 9:1-4. Jotham reproves him and the Shechemites by a curious and instructive parable, Jdg 9:7-21. Abimelech having reigned three years, the Shechemites, headed by Gaal the son of Ebed, conspire against him, Jdg 9:22-29. Zebul, governor of the city, apprises Abimelech of the insurrection, who comes with his forces, and discomfits Gaal, Jdg 9:30-40. Abimelech assaults the city, takes, beats it down, and sows it with salt, Jdg 9:41-45. Several of the Shechemites take refuge in the temple of Baal-berith; Abimelech sets fire to it, and destroys in it about one thousand men and women, Jdg 9:46-50. He afterwards besieges and takes Thebez; but while he is assaulting the citadel, a woman threw a piece of millstone upon his head, and killed him. Thus God requited him and the men of Shechem for their wickedness, and their ingratitude to the family of Gideon, Jdg 9:51-57.

Verse 1

Abimelech - went to Shechem - We have already seen that Abimelech was the son of Gideon, by his concubine at Shechem. His going thither immediately after his father's death was to induce his townsmen to proclaim him governor in the place of his father. Shechem was the residence of his mother, and of all her relatives.

JUDGES 9:2 "Please speak in the ears of all the men of Shechem, 'Is it better for you that all the sons of Jerubbaal, who are seventy persons, rule over you, or that one rule over you?' Remember also that I am your bone and your flesh."

Verse 2

Whether is better for you, either that all the sons - This was a powerful argument: Whether will you have seventy tyrants or only one? For, as he had no right to the government, and God alone was king at that time in Israel; so he must support his usurped rule by whatever means were most likely to effect it: a usurped government is generally supported by oppression and the sword.

JUDGES 9:3 His mother's brothers spoke of him in the ears of all the men of Shechem all these words: and their hearts inclined to follow Abimelech; for they said, "He is our brother."

Verse 3

He is our brother - We shall be raised to places of trust under him, and our city will be the capital of the kingdom.

JUDGES 9:4 They gave him seventy pieces of silver out of the house of Baal Berith, with which Abimelech hired vain and light fellows, who followed him.

Verse 4

Threescore and ten pieces of silver - Probably shekels; and this was the whole of his exchequer. As he was now usurping the government of God, he begins with a contribution from the idol temple. A work begun under the name and influence of the devil is not likely to end to the glory of God, or to the welfare of man.

Hired vain and light persons - רִיקִים וּפְחָזִים anashim reykim uphochazim, worthless and dissolute men; persons who were living on the public, and had nothing to lose. Such was the foundation of his Babel government. By a cunning management of such rascals most revolutions have been brought about.

JUDGES 9:5 He went to his father's house at Ophrah, and killed his brothers the sons of Jerubbaal, being seventy persons, on one stone: but Jotham the youngest son of Jerubbaal was left; for he hid himself.

Verse 5

Slew his brethren - His brothers by the father's side, Jdg 8:30. This was a usual way of securing an ill-gotten throne; the person who had no right destroying all those that had right, that he might have no competitors.

Yet Jotham - was left - That is, all the seventy were killed except Jotham, if there were not seventy besides Jotham. All the histories of all the nations of the earth are full of cruelties similar to those of Abimelech: cousins, uncles, brothers, husbands, and fathers have been murdered by their cousins, nephews, brothers, wives, and children, in order that they might have the undisturbed possession of an ill-gotten throne. Europe, Asia, and Africa, can witness all this. Even now, some of these horribly obtained governments exist.

JUDGES 9:6 All the men of Shechem assembled themselves together, and all the house of Millo, and went and made Abimelech king, by the oak of the pillar that was in Shechem.

Verse 6

And all the house of Millo - If Millo be the name of a place, it is nowhere else mentioned in the sacred writings. But it is probably the name of a person of note and influence in the city of Shechem - the men of Shechem and the family of Millo.

JUDGES 9:7 When they told it to Jotham, he went and stood on the top of Mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said to them, "Listen to me, you men of Shechem, that God may listen to you.

Verse 7

Stood in the top of Mount Gerizim - Gerizim and Ebal were mounts very near to each other; the former lying to the north, the latter to the south, and at the foot of them Shechem. But see some remarks on the extent of the human voice in some hilly countries in the following extract from a late traveler in the East: - "The great extent to which the sound of the voice is conveyed may be mentioned. Some persons have thought this a proof of the extreme rarity of the atmosphere. A similar observation is made by Captain Parry in his Voyage of Discovery to the Polar Regions in 1819-20, where he states that in the depth of winter the sound of the men's voices was heard at a much greater distance than usual. This phenomenon is constantly observed on the Neilgherries. I have heard the natives, especially in the morning and evening, when the air was still, carry on conversation from one hill to another, and that apparently without any extraordinary effort. They do not shout in the manner that strangers think necessary in order to be heard at so great a distance, but utter every syllable as distinctly as if they were conversing face to face. When listening to them, I have often been reminded of those passages in holy writ where it is recorded that Jotham addressed the ungrateful men of Shechem from Mount Gerizim, that David cried 'from the top of a hill afar off' to Abner and to the people that lay about their master Saul, and that Abner addressed Joab from the top of a hill." - Letters on the Climate, Inhabitants, Productions, etc., etc., of the Neilgherries, or Blue Mountains of Coimbatore, South India, by James Hough, of Madras: 1829.

That God may hearken unto you - It appears that Jotham received this message from God, and that he spoke on this occasion by Divine inspiration.

JUDGES 9:8 The trees set out to anoint a king over themselves. They said to the olive tree, 'Reign over us.'

Verse 8

The trees went forth on a time - This is the oldest, and without exception the best fable or apologue in the world. See the observations at the end of this chapter, Jdg 9:56 (note). It is not to be supposed that a fable, if well formed, requires much illustration; every part of this, a few expressions excepted, illustrates itself, and tells its own meaning.

To anoint a king - Hence it appears that anointing was usual in the installation of kings, long before there was any king in Israel; for there is much evidence that the book of Judges was written before the days of Saul and David.

The olive tree - The olive was the most useful of all the trees in the field or forest, as the bramble was the meanest and the most worthless.

JUDGES 9:9 "But the olive tree said to them, 'Should I leave my fatness, with which by me they honour God and man, and go to wave back and forth over the trees?'

 Verse 9

Wherewith - they honor God and man - I believe the word אלהים elohim here should be translated gods, for the parable seems to be accommodated to the idolatrous state of the Shechemites. Thus it was understood by the Vulgate, Arabic, and others. It is true that olive oil was often used in the service of God: the priests were anointed with it; the lamps in the tabernacle lighted with it; almost all the offerings of fine flour, cakes prepared in the pan, etc., had oil mingled with them; therefore Jotham might say that with it they honor God; and as priests, prophets, and kings were anointed, and their office was the most honorable, he might with propriety say, therewith they honor man. But I am persuaded he used the term in the first sense. See on Jdg 9:13 (note).

JUDGES 9:10 "The trees said to the fig tree, 'Come and reign over us.'

JUDGES 9:11 "But the fig tree said to them, 'Should I leave my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to wave back and forth over the trees?'

Verse 11

But the fig tree said - Should I forsake my sweetness - The fruit of the fig tree is the sweetest or most luscious of all fruits. A full-ripe fig, in its own climate, has an indescribable sweetness; so much so that it is almost impossible to eat it, till a considerable time after it is gathered from the trees, and has gone through an artificial preparation. This I have often noticed.

JUDGES 9:12 "The trees said to the vine, 'Come and reign over us.'

JUDGES 9:13 "The vine said to them, 'Should I leave my new wine, which cheers God and man, and go to wave back and forth over the trees?'

Verse 13

Which cheereth God and man - I believe אלהים elohim here is to be taken in the same sense proposed on Jdg 9:9. Vast libations of wine, as well as much oil, were used in heathenish sacrifices and offerings; and it was their opinion that the gods actually partook of, and were delighted with, both the wine and oil. The pagan mythology furnishes the most exquisite wines to its gods in heaven, and hence the nectar and ambrosia so much talked of and praised by the ancients. It is not reasonable to suppose that Jotham makes any reference here to the sacrifices, oblations, and perfumes offered to the true God. This language the idolatrous Shechemites could scarcely understand. What could the worshippers of Baal-berith know of the worship of the God who gave his law to Moses? And it is not very likely that Jotham himself was well acquainted with the sacred rites of the Mosaic religion, as they had been little preached in his time.

JUDGES 9:14 "Then all the trees said to the bramble, 'Come and reign over us.'

Verse 14

Then said all the trees unto the bramble - The word **טוֹךְ** *atad*, which we translate bramble, is supposed to mean the rhamnus, which is the largest of thorns, producing dreadful spikes, similar to darts. See Theodoret on Psa 58:10. There is much of the moral of this fable contained in the different kinds of trees mentioned.

1. The olive; the most profitable tree to its owner, having few equals either for food or medicine.
2. The fig tree; one of the most fruitful of trees, and yielding one of the most delicious fruits, and superior to all others for sweetness.
3. The vine, which alone yields a liquor that, when properly prepared, and taken in strict moderation, is friendly both to the body and mind of man, having a most direct tendency to invigorate both.
4. The bramble or thorn, which, however useful as a hedge, is dangerous to come near; and is here the emblem of an impious, cruel, and oppressive king.

As the olive, fig, and vine, are said in this fable to refuse the royalty, because in consequence, they intimate, they should lose their own privileges, we learn that to be invested with power for the public good can be no privilege to the sovereign. If he discharge the office faithfully, it will plant his pillow with thorns, fill his soul with anxious cares, rob him of rest and quiet, and, in a word, will be to him a source of distress and misery. All this is represented here under the emblem of the trees losing their fatness, their sweetness and good fruits, and their cheering influence. In short, we see from this most sensible fable that the beneficent, benevolent, and highly illuminated mind, is ever averse from the love of power; and that those who do seek it are the thoughtless, the vain, the ambitious, and those who wish for power merely for the purpose of self-gratification; persons who have neither the disposition nor the knowledge to use power for the advantage of the community; and who, while they boast great things, and make great pretensions and promises, are the tyrants of the people, and often through their ambition, like the bramble in the fable kindle a flame of foreign or domestic war, in which their subjects are consumed. The sleepless nights and corroding cares of sovereignty, are most forcibly described by a poet of our own, whose equal in describing the inward workings of the human heart, in all varieties of character and circumstances, has never appeared either in ancient or modern times. Hear what he puts in the mouth of two of his care-worn kings: -
 "How many thousand of my poorest subjects

Are at this hour asleep? - Sleep, gentle sleep,
 Nature's soft nurse! how have I frighted thee,
 That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down,
 And steep my senses in forgetfulness?
 Why rather, sleep, liest thou in smoky cribs,
 Upon uneasy pallets stretching thee,
 And hush'd with buzzing night-flies to thy slumber
 Than in the perfumed chambers of the great,

Under the canopies of costly state,
 And lull'd with sounds of sweetest melody?
 O thou dull god! why liest thou with the vile
 In loathsome beds; and leav'st the kingly couch
 A watch-case, or a common 'larum bell?
 Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
 Seal up the ship-boy's eyes, and rock his brains
 In cradle of the rude imperious surge;
 And in the visitation of the winds,
 Who take the ruffian billows by the top,
 Curling their monstrous heads and hanging them,
 With deafening clamours, in the slippery clouds,
 That, with the hurly, death itself awakes?
 Canst thou, O partial sleep! give thy repose
 To the wet sea-boy, in an hour so rude;
 And, in the calmest and most stillest night,
 With all appliances and means to boot,
 Deny it to a king? Then, happy low, lie down!
 Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown." - "O hard condition! twin-born with greatness,
 Subjected to the breath of every fool,
 Whose sense no more can feel but his own wringing!
 What infinite heart's ease must kings neglect,
 That private men enjoy!
 And what have kings, that privates have not too,
 Save ceremony, save general ceremony?" - "'Tis not the balm, the scepter, and the ball,
 The sword, the mace, the crown imperial,
 The intertissued robe of gold and pearl,
 The farced title running 'fore the king,
 The throne he sits on, nor the tide of pomp
 That beats upon the high shore of this world,
 No, not all these, thrice gorgeous ceremony,

Not all these, laid in bed majestic,
Can sleep so soundly as the wretched slave."

Shakespeare

This is precisely the sentiment expressed in the denial of the olive, fig tree, and vine.

JUDGES 9:15 "The bramble said to the trees, 'If in truth you anoint me king over you, then come and take refuge in my shade; and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon.'

Verse 15

Come and put your trust in any shadow - The vain boast of the would-be sovereign; and of the man who is seeking to be put into power by the suffrages of the people. All promise, no performance.

Let fire come out of the bramble - A strong catachresis. The bramble was too low to give shelter to any tree; and so far from being able to consume others, that the smallest fire will reduce it to ashes, and that in the shortest time. Hence the very transitory mirth of fools is said to be like the cracking of thorns under a pot. Abimelech was the bramble; and the cedars of Lebanon, all the nobles and people of Israel. Could they therefore suppose that such a low-born, uneducated, cruel, and murderous man, could be a proper protector, or a humane governor? He who could imbrue his hands in the blood of his brethren in order to get into power, was not likely to stop at any means to retain that power when possessed. If, therefore, they took him for their king, they might rest assured that desolation and blood would mark the whole of his reign. The condensed moral of the whole fable is this: Weak, worthless, and wicked men, will ever be foremost to thrust themselves into power; and, in the end, to bring ruin upon themselves, and on the unhappy people over whom they preside.

JUDGES 9:16 "Now therefore, if you have dealt truly and righteously, in that you have made Abimelech king, and if you have dealt well with Jerubbaal and his house, and have done to him according to the deserving of his hands

JUDGES 9:17 (for my father fought for you, and risked his life, and delivered you out of the hand of Midian:

JUDGES 9:18 and you have risen up against my father's house this day, and have slain his sons, seventy persons, on one stone, and have made Abimelech, the son of his female servant, king over the men of Shechem, because he is your brother);

JUDGES 9:19 if you then have dealt truly and righteously with Jerubbaal and with his house this day, then rejoice in Abimelech, and let him also rejoice in you:

JUDGES 9:20 but if not, let fire come out from Abimelech, and devour the men of Shechem, and the house of Millo; and let fire come out from the men of Shechem, and from the house of Millo, and devour Abimelech."

Verse 20

Let fire come out from Abimelech - As the thorn or bramble may be the means of kindling other wood, because it may be easily ignited; so shall Abimelech be the cause of kindling a fire of civil discord among you, that shall consume the rulers and great men of your country. A prophetic declaration of what would take place.

JUDGES 9:21 Jotham ran away, and fled, and went to Beer, and lived there, for fear of Abimelech his brother.

Verse 21

Went to Beer - Mr. Maundrell, in his journey from Aleppo to Jerusalem, p. 64, 5th edit., mentions a place of this name, which he thinks to be that to which Jotham fled, and supposed to be the same as Mishmash, 1Sam 14:5, 1Sam 14:31. It is situated, he says, towards the south, on an easy declivity; and has a fountain of excellent water at the bottom of the hill from which it has taken its name.

JUDGES 9:22 Abimelech was prince over Israel three years.

JUDGES 9:23 God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech:

Verse 23

God sent an evil spirit - He permitted jealousies to take place which produced factions; and these factions produced insurrections, civil contentions, and slaughter.

JUDGES 9:24 that the violence done to the seventy sons of Jerubbaal might come, and that their blood might be laid on Abimelech their brother, who killed them, and on the men of Shechem, who strengthened his hands to kill his brothers.

JUDGES 9:25 The men of Shechem set an ambush for him on the tops of the mountains, and they robbed all who came along that way by them: and it was told Abimelech.

Verse 25

The men of Shechem set liers in wait - It pleased God to punish this bad man by the very persons who had contributed to his iniquitous elevation. So God often makes the instruments of men's sins the means of their punishment. It is likely that although Abimelech had his chief residence at Shechem, yet he frequently went to Ophrah, the city of his father; his claim to which there was none to oppose, as he had slain all his brethren. It was probably in his passage between those two places that the Shechemites had posted cut-throats, in order to assassinate him; as such men had no moral principle, they robbed and plundered all who came that way.

JUDGES 9:26 Gaal the son of Ebed came with his brothers, and went over to Shechem; and the men of Shechem put their trust in him.

Verse 26

Gaal the son of Ebed - Of this person we know no more than is here told. He was probably one of the descendants of the Canaanites, who hoped from the state of the public mind, and their disaffection to Abimelech, to cause a revolution, and thus to restore the ancient government as it was under Hamor, the father of Shechem.

JUDGES 9:27 They went out into the field, and harvested their vineyards, and trod the grapes, and held festival, and went into the house of their god, and ate and drank, and cursed Abimelech.

JUDGES 9:28 Gaal the son of Ebed said, "Who is Abimelech, and who is Shechem, that we should serve him? Isn't he the son of Jerubbaal? and Zebul his officer? Serve the men of Hamor the father of Shechem: but why should we serve him?"

Verse 28

Zebul his officer - זְבֻלִּי זְבֻלִּי pekido, his overseer; probably governor of Shechem in his absence.

JUDGES 9:29 Would that this people were under my hand! Then I would remove Abimelech." He said to Abimelech, "Increase your army, and come out!"

Verse 29

Would to God this people were under my hand - The very words and conduct of a sly, hypocritical demagogue.

Increase thine army, and come out - When he found his party strong, and the public feeling warped to his side, then he appears to have sent a challenge to Abimelech, to come out and fight him.

JUDGES 9:30 When Zebul the ruler of the city heard the words of Gaal the son of Ebed, his anger was kindled.

JUDGES 9:31 He sent messengers to Abimelech craftily, saying, "Behold, Gaal the son of Ebed and his brothers have come to Shechem; and behold, they incite the city against you."

Verse 31

They fortify the city against thee - Under pretense of repairing the walls and towers, they were actually putting the place in a state of defense, intending to seize on the government as soon as they

should find Abimelech coming against them. Fortifying the city may mean seducing the inhabitants from their loyalty to Abimelech.

JUDGES 9:32 Now therefore, go up by night, you and the people who are with you, and lie in wait in the field:

JUDGES 9:33 and it shall be, that in the morning, as soon as the sun is up, you shall rise early, and rush on the city; and behold, when he and the people who are with him come out against you, then may you do to them as you shall find occasion."

JUDGES 9:34 Abimelech rose up, and all the people who were with him, by night, and they laid wait against Shechem in four companies.

JUDGES 9:35 Gaal the son of Ebed went out, and stood in the entrance of the gate of the city: and Abimelech rose up, and the people who were with him, from the ambush.

Verse 35

Stood in the entering of the gate - Having probably got some intimation of the designs of Zebul and Abimelech.

JUDGES 9:36 When Gaal saw the people, he said to Zebul, "Behold, people are coming down from the tops of the mountains." Zebul said to him, "You see the shadow of the mountains as if they were men."

JUDGES 9:37 Gaal spoke again and said, "Behold, people are coming down by the middle of the land, and one company comes by the way of the oak of Meonenim."

Verse 37

By the plain of Meonenim - Some translate, by the way of the oaks, or oaken groves; others, by the way of the magicians, or regards of the times, as in our margin. Probably it was a place in which augurs and soothsayers dwelt.

JUDGES 9:38 Then Zebul said to him, "Now where is your mouth, that you said, 'Who is Abimelech, that we should serve him?' Isn't this the people that you have despised? Please go out now and fight with them."

JUDGES 9:39 Gaal went out before the men of Shechem, and fought with Abimelech.

JUDGES 9:40 Abimelech chased him, and he fled before him, and many fell wounded, even to the entrance of the gate.

JUDGES 9:41 Abimelech lived at Arumah: and Zebul drove out Gaal and his brothers, that they should not dwell in Shechem.

JUDGES 9:42 On the next day, the people went out into the field; and they told Abimelech.

JUDGES 9:43 He took the people, and divided them into three companies, and laid wait in the field; and he looked, and behold, the people came out of the city; He rose up against them, and struck them.

JUDGES 9:44 Abimelech, and the companies that were with him, rushed forward, and stood in the entrance of the gate of the city: and the two companies rushed on all who were in the field, and struck them.

JUDGES 9:45 Abimelech fought against the city all that day; and he took the city, and killed the people who were therein: and he beat down the city, and sowed it with salt.

Verse 45

And sowed it with salt - Intending that the destruction of this city should be a perpetual memorial of his achievements. The salt was not designed to render it barren, as some have imagined; for who would think of cultivating a city? but as salt is an emblem of incorruption and perpetuity, it was no doubt designed to perpetuate the memorial of this transaction, and as a token that he wished this desolation to be eternal. This sowing a place with salt was a custom in different nations to express permanent desolation and abhorrence. Sigonius observes that when the city of Milan was taken, in a.d. 1162, the walls were razed, and it was sown with salt. And Brantome informs us that it was ancient custom in France to sow the house of a man with salt, who had been declared a traitor to his king. Charles IX., king of France, the most base and perfidious of human beings, caused the house of the Admiral Coligni (whom he and the Duke of Guise caused to be murdered, with thousands more of Protestants, on the eve of St. Bartholomew, 1572) to be sown with salt! How many houses have been since sown with salt in France by the just judgments of God, in revenge for the massacre of the Protestants on the eve of St. Bartholomew! Yet for all this God's wrath is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

JUDGES 9:46 When all the men of the tower of Shechem heard of it, they entered into the stronghold of the house of Elberith.

Verse 46

A hold of the house of the god Berith - This must mean the precincts of the temple, as we find there were a thousand men and women together in that place.

JUDGES 9:47 It was told Abimelech that all the men of the tower of Shechem were gathered together.

JUDGES 9:48 Abimelech went up to Mount Zalmon, he and all the people who were with him; and Abimelech took an axe in his hand, and cut down a bough from the trees, and took it up, and laid it on his shoulder: and he said to the people who were with him, "What you have seen me do, make haste, and do as I have done!"

JUDGES 9:49 All the people likewise each cut down his bough, and followed Abimelech, and put them at the base of the stronghold, and set the stronghold on fire on them; so that all the people of the tower of Shechem died also, about a thousand men and women.

JUDGES 9:50 Then went Abimelech to Thebez, and encamped against Thebez, and took it.

JUDGES 9:51 But there was a strong tower within the city, and there fled all the men and women, and all they of the city, and shut themselves in, and went up to the roof of the tower.

JUDGES 9:52 Abimelech came to the tower, and fought against it, and drew near to the door of the tower to burn it with fire.

JUDGES 9:53 A certain woman cast an upper millstone on Abimelech's head, and broke his skull.

Verse 53

A piece of a millstone - פלח רכב pelach recheb, a piece of a chariot wheel; but the word is used in other places for upper millstones, and is so understood here by the Vulgate, Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic.

And all to break his skull - A most nonsensical version of את גלגלתו ותרץ vattarits eth gulgolto, which is literally, And she brake, or fractured, his skull. Plutarch, in his life of Pyrrhus, observes that this king was killed at the siege of Thebes, by a piece of a tile, which a woman threw upon his head.

JUDGES 9:54 Then he called hastily to the young man his armour bearer, and said to him, "Draw your sword, and kill me, that men not say of me, 'A woman killed him.' His young man thrust him through, and he died."

Verse 54

Draw thy sword, and slay me - It was a disgrace to be killed by a woman; on this account, Seneca the tragedian deplores the death of Hercules: -

O turpe fatum! femina Herculeae necis

Autor feritur.

Herc. Oetaeus, ver. 1177. "O dishonorable fate! a woman is reported to have been author of the death of Hercules."

Abimelech was also afraid that if he fell thus mortally wounded into the hands of his enemies they might treat him with cruelty and insult.

JUDGES 9:55 When the men of Israel saw that Abimelech was dead, they departed every man to his place.

JUDGES 9:56 Thus God requited the wickedness of Abimelech, which he did to his father, in killing his seventy brothers;

 Verse 56

Thus God rendered, etc. - Both the fratricide Abimelech, and the unprincipled men of Shechem, had the iniquity visited upon them of which they had been guilty. Man's judgment may be avoided; but there is no escape from the judgments of God.

I Have said that the fable of Jotham is the oldest, and perhaps the best, in the world; and referred for other particulars to the end of the chapter.

On the general subject of fable, apologue, and parable, the reader will find a considerable dissertation at the end of Mat 13:58; I shall add but a few things here, and they shall refer to the oldest collection of fables extant. These are of Indian origin, and are preserved in the Sanscreeet, from which they have been translated into different languages, both Asiatic and European, under various titles. The collection is called Hitopadesa, and the author Veshnoo Sarma; but they are known in Europe by The Tales and Fables of Bidpay, or Pilpay, an ancient Indian Philosopher. Of this collection Sir William Jones takes the following notice: - "The fables of Veshnoo Sarma, whom we ridiculously call Pilpay, are the most beautiful, if not the most ancient, collection of apologues in the world. They were first translated from the Sanscreeet, in the sixth century, by Buzerchumihir, or bright as the sun, the chief physician, and afterwards the vizir of the great Anushirwan; and are extant under various names, in more than twenty languages. But their original title is Hitopadesa, or amicable instruction; and as the very existence of Aesop, whom the Arabs believe to have been an Abyssinian, appears rather doubtful, I am not disinclined to suppose that the first moral fables which appeared in Europe were of Indian or Aethiopian origin."

Mr. Frazer, in his collection of Oriental MSS. at the end of his History of Nadir Shah, gives us the following account of this curious and instructive work: - "The ancient brahmins of India, after a good deal of time and labor, compiled a treatise, (which they called Kurtuk Dumnik), in which were inserted the choicest treasure of wisdom and the most perfect rules for governing a people. This book they presented to their rajahs, who kept it with the greatest secrecy and care. About the time of Mohammed's birth or the latter end of the sixth century, Noishervan the Just, who then reigned in Persia, discovered a great inclination to see that book; for which purpose Burzuvia, a physician, who had a surprising talent in learning several languages, particularly Sanskerritt, was introduced to him as the most proper person to be employed to get a copy of it. He went to India, where, after some years' stay, and great trouble, he procured it. It was translated into the Pehlui (the ancient Persian language) by him and Buzrjumehr, the vizir. Noishervan, ever after, and all his successors, the Persian kings, had this book in high esteem, and took the greatest care to keep it secret. At last Abu Jaffer Munsour zu Nikky, who was the second caliph of the Abassi reign, by great search got a copy of it in the Pehlui language, and ordered Imam Hassan Abdal Mokaffa, who was the most learned of the age, to translate it into Arabic. This prince ever after made it his guide, not only in affairs relating to the government, but also in private life. "In the year 380 of the Hegira, Sultan Mahmud Ghazi put into verse; and afterwards, in the year 515, by order of Bheram Shah ben Massaud, that which Abdal Mokaffa had translated was retranslated into Persic by Abdul Mala Nasser Allah Mustofi; and this is that Kulila Dumna which is now extant. As this latter had too many Arabic verses and obsolete phrases in it, Molana Ali beg Hessein Vaes, at the request of Emir Soheli, keeper of the seals to Sultan Hossein Mirza, put it into a more modern style, and gave it the title of Anuar Soheli. "In the year 1002, the great moghul Jalal o Din Mohommed Akbar ordered his own secretary and vizir, the learned Abul Fazl, to illustrate the obscure passages, abridge the long digressions, and put it into such a style as would be most familiar to all capacities; which he accordingly did, and gave it the

name of Ayar Danish, or the Criterion of Wisdom." This far Mr. Frazer, under the word Ayar Danish. "In the year 1709," says Dr. Wilkins, "the *Kulila Dumna*, the Persian version of Abul Mala Nasser Allah Mustofi, made in the 515th year of the Hegira, was translated into French, with the title of *Les Conseils et les Maximes de Pilpay, Philosophe Indien, sur les divers Etats de la Vie*. This edition resembles the *Hitopadesa* more than any other then seen; and is evidently the immediate original of the English Instructive and entertaining *Fables of Pilpay*, an ancient Indian philosopher, which, in 1775, had gone through five editions. "The *Anuar Soheli*, above mentioned, about the year 1540, was rendered into the Turkish language; and the translator is said to have bestowed twenty years' labor upon it. In the year 1724, this edition M. Galland began to translate into French, and the first four chapters were then published; but, in the year 1778, M. Cardonne completed the work, in three volumes, giving it the name of *Contes et Fables Indiennes de Bidpai et de Lokman; traduites d'Ali Tcheleby ben Saleh, amateur Turk; 'Indian Tales and Fables of Bidpay and Lockman, translated from Aly Tcheleby ben Saleh, a Turkish author.'*"

The fables of Lockman were published in Arabic and Latin, with notes, by Erpenius, 4th. Amstel., 1636; and by the celebrated Golius, at the end of his edition of Erpen's Arabic Grammar, Lugd. Bat., 1656, with additional notes; and also in the edition of the same Grammar, by Albert Schultens, Lugd. Bat., 1748, 4th. They are only thirty-seven in number.

Of the *Hitopadesa*, or fables of Veshnoo Sarma, we have two very elegant English translations from the original Sanscreeet: one by Sir William Jones, printed in his works, 4th., vol. 6, Lond. 1799; the other by the father of Sanscreeet literature in Europe, Dr. Charles Wilkins, of the India House, 8 vo., Bath, 1787, with a collection of very important notes.

The *Bahar Danush*, or *Sea of Wisdom*, abounds with maxims, apothegms, etc., similar to those in the preceding works; this was most faithfully translated from the Persian, by Dr. Jonathan Scott, late Persian secretary to his excellency Warren Hastings, published in three vols. 12 mo., with notes, Shrewsbury, 1799. This is the most correct version of any Persian work yet offered to the public. The original is by Einaut Ullah. Of these works it may be said, they contain the wisdom of the oriental world; and many of the numerous maxims interspersed through them yield in importance only to those in the sacred writings. The fables attributed to Aesop have been repeatedly published in Greek and Latin, as well as in all the languages of Europe, and are well known. Those of Phaedrus are in general only a metrical version of the fables of Aesop. The compositions of La Fontaine, in French, and those of Mr. Gay, in English, are very valuable.

JUDGES 9:57 and all the wickedness of the men of Shechem did God requite on their heads: and on them came the curse of Jotham the son of Jerubbaal.
