The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

Editor: Dr. Paul Carus.
Assistant Editor: T. J. McCormack.
Associates: E. C. Hegeler. Mary Carus.

VOL. XV. (no. 7) July, 1901. NO. 542

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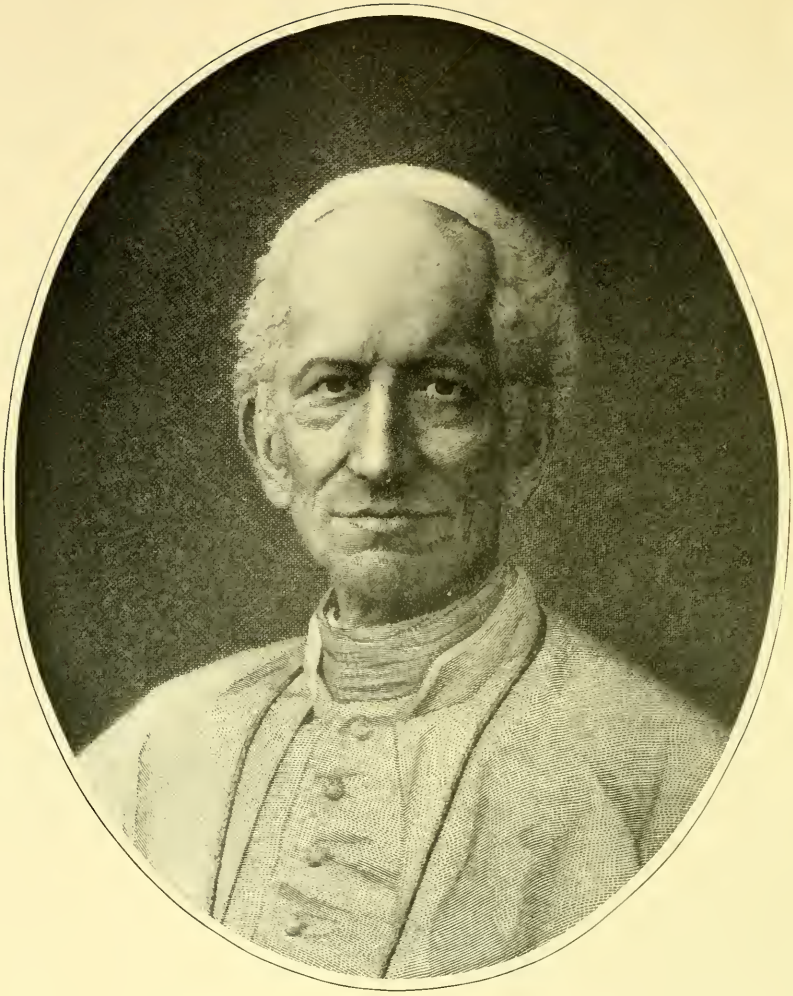

POPE LEO XIII.

Born March 2, 1810.

Frontispiece to The Open Court.

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THE LEGENDS OF GENESIS.[1]

BY H. GUNKEL.

II.

THE LITERARY FORM OF THE LEGENDS.

THE beauty of the legends of Genesis has always been a source of delight to readers of refined taste, and it is not mere chance that painters have been so fond of choosing the subjects of their works from Genesis. Scholars have more rarely expressed appreciation of the beauty of these narratives, often perhaps for personal reasons, and perhaps often because the æsthetic point of view seemed to them incompatible with the dignity of science. However, we do not share this prejudice, but, on the contrary, are of the opinion that one who ignores the artistic form of these legends not only deprives himself of a great pleasure, but is unable properly to satisfy the scientific demands of the understanding of Genesis. Nay, more: it is no insignificant question for science to answer, in what the peculiar beauty of the legends consists,—a problem whose solution requires a thorough investigation of the contents and the religion of Genesis.

GENESIS IS PROSE.

The first question is, whether the form of the diction is prose or poetry. Aside from Genesis 49, which is a poem and not a narrative, and on that ground alone is out of place in Genesis, all that the book contains is prose in form. Detailed investigations of the nature of this prose have not been carried on. Meanwhile, at least this may be said, that this prose is not the common colloquial lan-

[1] Continued from the May *Open Court*.

guage of every day life, but is more artistic in its composition and has some sort of rhythmical construction. Hebrew prosody is still a sealed book to us, but in reading Genesis aloud one feels an agreeable harmony of rhythmically balanced members. The translator of Genesis is constrained to imitate this balancing of sentences. Since the legends were already very old when they were written down, as will be shown hereafter, it is a matter of course that the language of Genesis is somewhat archaic; this too must be reproduced in the translation. In certain passages, the climaxes of the stories, the language rises into poetry, as is the case with the German *Märchen*, where the spells and charms are in poetic form. In the case of some of the legends we know variants both Biblical and extra-Biblical, notably of the stories of creation, of the Garden of Eden and of the Flood, which are in strictly metrical form. Inasmuch as these poetical variants are known to be older than the prose versions transmitted in Genesis, we are warranted in the conjecture that the poetic form of these legends is older than any prose form whatever. The older and strictly rhythmical form, which we must suppose to have been sung, would differ from the later prose form, which was recited, as does the ancient German epic from the later *Volksbuch* (book of popular legends), or as do the Arthurian poems of Christian of Troyes from the prose versions of Mallory's *Morte d'Arthur* or the Welsh Mabinogion.

GENESIS A FOLK-BOOK.

A second question is, whether these poetic versions are popular traditions or the productions of individual poets. Modern investigators have answered the general principle of the question to the effect that Genesis is popular oral tradition written down. We are able to explain clearly how such popular traditions originate. Of course, in the ultimate beginning it was always an individual who improvised or devised this or that poem. But it is characteristic of such popular traditions that we are never able to observe them in the germ, any more than we can in the case of language, but that they appear, wherever we hear of them, as primitive possessions inherited from the patriarchs. Between the poet who first conceived them and the time when they were fixed for transmission to posterity a long period elapsed, and in this period the legends were repeated from generation to generation and passed through many hands. Yet however faithfully such legends are transmitted they are inevitably altered in the course of the centuries. And thus

they finally become the common product of the people. This transformation of the legends was unconscious, at least in its earlier stages. Only in the more recent modifications is it reasonable to assume the operation of conscious art.

Both narrators and auditors regarded the legends as "true" stories. That this is true of the legends of the Old Testament is shown in the historical books of the Bible, where the narrators proceed by almost imperceptible degrees from legends to genuine historical narratives. It follows also from the legends themselves, which go about in all seriousness to account for actual conditions: because the woman was made from man's rib, therefore he longs for union with her; here we see that this story was no mere poetical figure to the one who told it, but an event that had actually happened. And furthermore, it is to be expected from the nature of the case: legends come from ages and stages of civilisation which have not yet acquired the intellectual power to distinguish between poetry and reality. It is therefore no slight error when modern investigators declare the legend of Paradise to be an allegory which was never intended to represent actual occurrences.— Moreover, for the very reason that the legend is the product of the whole people, it is the expression of the people's mind. And this is a point of greatest importance for our interpretation of the legends of Genesis. We are warranted in regarding the judgments and sentiments presented in Genesis as the common possession of large numbers of people.

THE CONTENTS OF GENESIS IN PRIMITIVE FORM.

Accordingly we should attempt in considering Genesis to realise first of all the form of its contents when they existed as oral tradition. This point of view has been ignored altogether too much hitherto, and investigators have instead treated the legendary books too much as "books.' If we desire to understand the legends better we must recall to view the situations in which the legends were recited. We hear of such situations Ex. xii. 26 f., xiii. 14 f., Joshua iv. 6: when the children ask about the reason of the sacred ceremony then the father answers them by telling the story. Similarly we can imagine how the story of Sodom was told with the Dead Sea in view, and the legend of Bethel on the summit of Bethel. But the common situation which we have to suppose is this: In the leisure of a winter evening the family sits about the hearth; the grown people, but more especially the children,

listen intently to the beautiful old stories of the dawn of the world, which they have heard so often yet never tire of hearing repeated.

Many of the legends, as will be shown later, have such a marked artistic style that they can scarcely be regarded in this form as products of the collective people. On the contrary, we must assume that there was in Israel as well as among the Arabs a class of professional story-tellers. These popular story-tellers, familiar with old songs and legends, wander about the country, and are probably to be found regularly at the popular festivals.

We have seen (p. 386, May *Open Court*) that the transmitted prose narrative was perhaps preceded by a narrative in regular rhythmical form and intended for singing. In the case of these songs the circumstances of their presentation may have been different. From the precedent of the Babylonian poem of the creation, which in its form is an Easter hymn in praise of Marduk, we may infer that the legends regarding forms of worship go back to hymns for the sanctuary which were perhaps sung by the priest at the sacred festivals and on the sacred ground, cp. p. 281, May *Open Court*. But however this may be, the legends regarding sanctuaries as we have them now had certainly ceased to be sung, and, as their peculiarly colorless attitude shows, were not connected with the sacred place in this form, but belong already to popular tradition.

THE REAL UNIT IN GENESIS.

A new and fundamental question is: What unit is really the constituent unit in Genesis, the one which we should first apply ourselves to? For there are a number of different units in Genesis. The most comprehensive unit is the whole Pentateuch, then Genesis, and then the single collection of legends that preceded it; then the individual legends of which the book was composed. Among these a distinction has to be made between the independent individual legends, such, for example, as those of the flight of Hagar and the sacrifice of Isaac, and on the other hand certain groups of several legends constituting legend-cycles, such as the cycle which treats the destinies of Abraham and Lot down to the birth of their sons, or the one comprising Jacob's experiences with Esau and with Laban, or the one of which Joseph is the hero. All of these various units must be considered. But the first question is, which of these units is most important for our purposes, that is, which of them was the original unit in oral tradition.

This is a question that arises in many similar cases: Which is the elemental unit: the song-book, the individual group of songs

in it, or the individual song? Is it the gospel, the address, or the individual utterance that is reported of Jesus? The whole apocalypse, the separate apocalyptic documentary sources, or the individual vision? For the proper understanding of Genesis also it is of critical importance that this question be clearly met and correctly answered. Hitherto investigators have seemed to regard it as a matter of course that the original sources were the constituent units, though the true view has not been without witnesses.[1] Popular legends in their very nature exist in the form of individual legends; not until later do compilers put several such legends together, or poets construct of them greater and artistic compositions. Thus it is also with the Hebrew popular legends. The legends of Genesis even in their present form give clear evidence of this. Every single legend that is preserved in an early form is a complete whole by itself; it begins with a distinct introduction and ends with a very recognisable close. Compare certain specific cases: Abraham wishes to sue for a wife for his son; being too old himself he sends out his oldest servant,—thus the story opens. Then we are told how the old servant finds the right maiden and brings her home. Meantime the aged master has died. The young master receives the bride, and "he was comforted for the death of his father." Every one can see that the story ends here.

Abraham is directed by God to sacrifice his son; this is the exposition (from 22 on), which makes an entirely new start. Then we are told how Abraham was resolved upon the deed and very nearly accomplished it, but at the last moment the sacrifice was prevented by God himself: Isaac is preserved to Abraham. "Then they returned together to Beersheba." We see that the narrative always begins in such a way that one recognises that something new is about to begin; and it closes at the point where the complication that has arisen is happily resolved: no one can ask, What followed?

Similarly, the unity of the separate legends is shown in the fact that they are in each case filled with a single harmonious sentiment. Thus in the story of the sacrifice of Isaac, emotion is predominant; in that of Jacob's deception of Isaac, humor; in the story of Sodom, moral earnestness; in the story of Babel, the fear of Almighty God.

Many stories are entirely spoiled by following them up imme-

[1] Reuss, AT III., p. 73: "Originally the legends of the patriarchs arose individually without connexion and independently of one another."—Wellhausen, Composition 2, p. 9: "Tradition in the popular mouth knows only individual legends."

diately with new ones which drive the reader suddenly from one mood to another. Every skilful story-teller, on the contrary, makes a pause after telling one such story, giving the imagination time to recover, allowing the hearer to reflect in quiet on what he has heard while the chords that have been struck are permitted to die away. Any one, for instance, who has followed the story of Isaac sympathetically, feels at the close the need of repose in which to recover from the emotion aroused. Those stories especially which aim to give a reason for some present condition (Cp. the May *Open Court*, pp. 271, 276–283, *supra*) require a pause at the close so that the hearer may compare the prophecy and its present fulfilment; as evidence of this consider the close of the story of Eden, of the Flood, or of the drunkenness of Noah.

LEGEND CYCLES.

In later times there were formed of these individual legends greater units, called legend cycles, in which the separate legends are more or less artistically combined. But even here it is not at all difficult in most cases to extricate the original constituent elements from one another. Thus the legend cycle which treats Abraham and Lot separates clearly into the following stories: (1) The migration of Abraham and Lot to Canaan; (2) their separation at Bethel; (3) the theophany at Hebron; (4) the destruction of Sodom; (5) the birth of Ammon and Moab; (6) the birth of Isaac. The legend cycle of Jacob-Esau-Laban divides clearly into the legends of Jacob and Esau, of Jacob and Laban, the legends of the origin of the twelve tribes, with various legends interspersed of the origin of ritual observances. In the stories connected with Joseph, also, those of Joseph's intercourse with his brothers are clearly distinguished from those of Potiphar's wife, of Pharaoh's dreams, and those of the agricultural conditions of Egypt (Gen. xlvii. 13–26).

This leads to the practical conclusion for the exegete that each individual legend must be interpreted first of all from within. The more independent a story is, the more sure we may be that it is preserved in its original form. And the connexion between individual legends is of later origin in many cases, if it is not simply an hallucination of the exegete.

As an example of a primitive legend which is almost wholly without antecedent assumptions, take the story of Hagar's flight, Gen. xvi., for which we need to know only that there is a man named Abraham with a wife named Sarah; everything else is told

by the legend itself. An example of a later narrative is that of the suit for the hand of Rebeccah (chap. xxiv.): this legend is based upon a whole series of individual elements which belong to other legends, as the kinship and migration of Abraham, the promise of Yahveh at the migration, the facts that Isaac was his only son and the son of his old age, and so forth. Hence it is the individual legend with which we shall have to deal first in this treatise.

LENGTH OF LEGENDS.

What are the limits of such a story? Many of the stories of Genesis extend over scarcely more than ten verses. This is the case with the stories of Noah's drunkenness, of the tower of Babel, of Abraham's journey to Egypt, of Hagar's flight or the exile of Ishmael, of the trial of Abraham, of Jacob at Bethel and at Penuel. After these very brief stories we can classify a series of more detailed stories occupying about a chapter, such as the story of Paradise, of Cain's parricide, of the Flood, of the theophany at Hebron, of the betrothal of Rebeccah, of the deceit of Isaac by Jacob. Finally the legend cycles exceed this limit of space.

This matter of the compass of the legends constitutes a decided distinction between them and our modern productions. Even the most complex legend groups of Genesis, such as that of Joseph, are of very modest extent by modern standards, while the older legends are absolutely abrupt to modern taste. Now, of course, the brief compass of the old legends is at the same time a symptom of their character. They deal with very simple occurrences which can be adequately described in a few words. And this compass accords also with the artistic ability of the narrator and the comprehension of the hearer. The earliest story-tellers were not capable of constructing artistic works of any considerable extent; neither could they expect their hearers to follow them with undiminished interest for days and even weeks continuously. On the contrary, primitive times were satisfied with quite brief productions which required not much over half an hour. Then when the narrative is finished the imagination of the hearer is satisfied and his attention exhausted.

On the other hand our narratives show us that later times were no longer satisfied with the very brief stories of primitive construction; a more fully developed æsthetic faculty demands more scope for its expression. Thus greater compositions arose. This growth in the compass of legends was favored by the circumstance of their being written down; written productions are natu-

rally more discursive than oral ones, because the eye in reading can more easily grasp larger conceptions than the ear in hearing. Accordingly, this too is a measure of the relative age of legends, though a measure which must be used with caution: the briefer a legend, the greater the probability that we have it in its original form.

SIMPLICITY AND CLEARNESS OF PRIMITIVE LITERARY ART.

The brevity of the legends is, as we have seen, a mark of the poverty of primitive literary art; but at the same time this poverty has its peculiar advantages. The narrow limits within which the narrator moves compel him to concentrate his entire poetic power into the smallest compass; so that while these creations are small, they are also condensed and effective. And the moderate grasp which these small works of art have to reckon upon in their hearers results also in making the narratives as clear and synoptic as possible.

To make this last fact more evident, consider in the first place the balance of parts. Not only the longer of these narratives, but especially the briefest also are outlined with extraordinary sharpness. Thus, the story of Noah's drunkenness is constructed as follows: Exposition, Noah's drunkenness. I. the occurrences: (1) Canaan's shamelessness; (2) the filial respect of Shem and Japhet; II. the judgments: (1) concerning Canaan; (2) concerning Shem and Japhet.—Or take the story of the Garden of Eden, chap. iii.: I. the sin: (1) the serpent tempts Eve; (2) the woman and the man sin; (3) as consequence, the loss of their innocence; II. the examination; III. the punishments: (1) the curse upon the serpent, (2) upon the woman, (3) upon the man; IV. conclusion: the expulsion from the garden.

By means of such plain and beautiful analyses the narratives gain in clearness, that is, in the prerequisite of all æsthetic charm: the whole is analysed into divisions and subdivisions which are themselves easily grasped and the relation of which to one another is perfectly plain. And these outlines are never painfully forced, but seem to have come quite as a matter of course from the nature of the subject. Consider, for instance, in the story of Eden how perfectly the outline corresponds to the contents: in the fall the order is: serpent, woman, man; the examination begins with the

last result and reverses the process, the order here being: Man, woman, serpent; the punishment falls first upon the chief sinner, and accordingly the original order is here resumed: serpent, woman, man. Hence the modern reader is advised to heed the systematic arrangement of parts, since the analysis will at the same time give him the course of the action.

Furthermore, the narrator of the legend, unlike the modern novelist, could not expect his hearers to be interested in many persons at once, but on the contrary he always introduces to us a very small number. Of course the minimum is two, because it takes at least two to make a complication of interests: such are the cases of the separation of Abraham and Lot, of Esau's sale of his birthright, and of the story of Penuel; there are three personages in the story of the creation of the woman (God, the man and the woman), in the story of Cain's fratricide (God, Cain and Abel), in the story of Lot in the cave, and of the sacrifice of Isaac; there are four in the story of Eden, of Abraham's journey to Egypt, of Hagar's flight, of the deception practised upon Isaac by Jacob.

There are indeed narratives in which more personages take part, as in the case of the detailed story of the suit for the hand of Rebeccah, and especially in the stories of the twelve sons of Jacob. Yet even here the narrators have not been neglectful of clearness and distinctness. In very many cases where a number of persons appear, the many are treated as one: they think and wish the same things and act all alike: thus in the story of the Flood and of the tower of Babel all mankind are treated as one person, so also with the brothers Shem and Japhet, with the three men at Hebron and at Sodom (according to the original version of the story), Lot's son-in-law at Sodom, the courtiers of Pharaoh, the citizens of Shechem (Gen. xxxiv. 24), the brothers of Dinah (xxxiv. 25), the citizens of Temnah (xxxviii. 24), and in many other cases. This is in accord with the conditions of antiquity, in which the individual was much less sharply distinguished from the mass of the people than in modern times. At the same time, however, this condensation of several persons into one is due to the inability of the narrator to catch and depict the actual distinctions among individuals.

How limited in those days the capacity of even an artistically developed narrator to depict character is shown in the conspicuous instance of the story of Joseph: the narrative presents Joseph and the eleven in conflict; among the others the story distinguishes Joseph's full brother, Benjamin, the youngest; of the remaining

ten Reuben (Judah) is recognised separately. But this is the extent of the narrator's power to characterise; the remaining nine lack all individuality; they are simply "the brothers."

Further simplicity is attained by means of the arrangement of parts, which, as we have noted, resolves the story into a number of little scenes. And in these scenes it is rare that all the persons of the story appear at once, but only a few, usually only two, are shown us at once. Compare the scenes of the story of the suit for Rebeccah; the first scene shows Abraham and his servant, the second shows the servant alone on the journey and at the well, the third the servant and the maiden, the fourth the maiden and her family, the fifth (and principal) scene shows the servant together with the maiden in her home, the sixth the servant returning home with the maiden, the last their arrival at the tent of Isaac. Or, another instance, the story of the exile of Ishmael (xxiv. 4 ff.) shows in succession: Sarah hearing the laughter of Ishmael, and persuading Abraham; Abraham expelling Hagar; then Hagar alone in the wilderness with the child, and finally her rescue by the angel. The story of Jacob's deception (xxvii.) treats first of Isaac and Esau, then of Rebeccah and Jacob, next of Jacob before Isaac, and of Esau before Isaac, of Esau's hatred of Jacob, and finally of Rebeccah's advice to Jacob.

The narrative takes especial pains to motivate this succession of scenes; and yet it does not hesitate to simply drop a personage on occasion, as in the case of the serpent after the temptation, or of Rebeccah after the death of Isaac. By means of this analysis the narrative gains great clearness; the hearer is not constrained to keep a confusing group of people in view, but he sees them in succession; thus he has time to inspect them at leisure and to familiarise himself with them. Only once, at the climax of the action, do all the persons appear together: thus in the story of Eden, in that of Noah's drunkenness, and in the story of Joseph at the close. But even here the narrators considered grouping necessary. They would not have been able to conduct a conversation between a number of persons at once. Thus at the end of the story of Eden God does not reprove all the participants in one common address; but he turns first to the serpent, then to the woman, then to the man. And elsewhere also it is the nature of the style to divide up the conversation into so many dialogues.

CHIEF AND SUBORDINATE PERSONAGES.

The survey of the various personages is further facilitated by a very distinct separation of leading and subordinate parts. The hearer does not have to ask many questions to learn which of the personages should receive his especial attention; the narrator makes this very plain to him simply by speaking most of the chief personage. Thus in most of the legends of the patriarchs the patriarchs themselves are as a matter of course the chief personages. In the following cases the personages of their respective stories are arranged in the order in which they interest the narrator: Cain, Abel; Abraham, Sarah, Pharaoh (Genesis xii. 10–20); Abraham, Lot; Hagar, Sarah, Abraham (chap. xvi); the servant and Rebeccah are the chief personages in chap. xxiv., the others being all of second rank; in chap. xxvii. the chief personages are Jacob and Esau, while the parents are secondary; in the story of Jacob and Laban these are the chief personages, the women secondary. In this classification sympathy and veneration are not to be confused with interest; the artistic interest of the narrator is greater in Cain than in Abel, in Hagar than in Sarah; in chap. xxiv. the servant is the chief personage while Abraham has only a subordinate part. —In many cases it is the destinies of a single leading personage that we pursue, noticeably in the case of the stories of Joseph.

DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS.

In attempting to discover the method by which characters are depicted we are first struck by the brevity with which subordinate personages are treated. Modern literary creations have accustomed us to expect that every personage introduced be characterised if possible with at least a few touches as an independent individual. The method of the primitive saga-man is entirely different. The personages whom he considers altogether or temporarily subordinate receive little or no characterisation. In view of the primitive feeling on the subject it is a matter of course that not much attention was paid to slaves. The attendants of Esau (xxxii. ff.) or of Laban (xxxi. 23) are introduced merely to show their masters' importance, and have no further significance. The narrators did not even consider it necessary to mention the sin of the two chamberlains of Pharaoh (xli. 1), or the feelings of Dinah (xxxiv.), or those of Sarah on the journey to Egypt (xii. 10 ff.). Hirah, the friend of Judah (xxxviii. 1, 12, 20), is not characterised; the sin

of Er (xxxvii. 7) is not specified; nothing is told of Shuah, the wife of Judah (xxxviii. 2–12), that is really characteristic; the same is true of Joseph's steward (xliii. 16), of Potiphar, and others.

And even the characterisation of the chief personages is remarkably brief according to our notions. Only a few traits, often but one, are ascribed to them. Cain is jealous of his brother, Canaan is shameless, Shem and Japhet respectful. In the story of the separation of Lot and Abraham, the former is greedy, the latter conciliatory. In the story of Hebron, Abraham is hospitable, and in the migration he is obedient to the will of God. In the story of Penuel, Jacob is strong and brave, in the affair with Esau he is crafty, in the story of Joseph he is fond of the children of Rachel. In the somewhat complex story of the Fall the serpent is crafty and evil, the man and the woman are guileless as children, the woman is fond of dainties and gullible, the man follows his wife. Even in the case of God each individual story as a rule speaks of but one single quality: in most of the legends he is the gracious helper, in others, as the stories of Paradise and Babel, he is the lofty sovereign whose concern is to keep men within bounds.

We are struck by this paucity in the legends, since we are familiar in modern compositions with portraits made up of many separate traits and painted with artistic detail. The art of the primitive story-tellers is very different. True, it is based upon the actual conditions of primitive ages in one respect: the men of antiquity were in general more simple than the many-sided men of modern times. Yet it would be an error to suppose that men in those earlier days were as simple as they are represented to be in the legends; compare in evidence of this the character sketches of a somewhat maturer art in the second Book of Samuel. With this example in mind we shall recognise also that there is some other ground for the brevity of the legends of Genesis than that abbreviation of the real which is inevitable in every artistic reproduction of life.

POPULAR LEGENDS TREAT MEN AS TYPES.

It is, on the contrary, a peculiar popular conception of man that we meet in Genesis. This conception was unable to grasp and represent many sides of man, much less all; it could see but a little. But so much the more need had it to catch the essential traits of the individual, wherefore it constructed types. Thus in the story of the flight of Hagar, Hagar is the type of the slave (xvi.) who is too well treated, Sarah of the jealous wife, Abraham

the type of the conciliatory husband. Rachel and Leah are types of the favorite and of the unloved wife; in the story of the migration of Abraham to Egypt, or the story of Joseph, Pharaoh acts like the typical Oriental king in such cases; his courtiers are courtiers and nothing more; Abraham's servant, chap. xxiv., is an old and tried servant; Isaac, in the story of the deception, is a blind old man, and Rebeccah a cunning, partial mother; Abraham in his migration and in chap. xxii. is the type of the pious and obedient man. A number of figures are the types of the races which are said to be descended from them: the shameless Canaan, the generous but stupid Esau, the crafty Laban, the still more crafty Jacob (cp. the May *Open Court*, p. 274).

Doubtless it is another sign of the lack of creative grasp when the legends thus present to our eyes species instead of individuals; but the narrators have made a virtue of necessity. Within the limited sphere assigned to them they give us extraordinary achievements. The types which they had the opportunity to observe they have depicted with a confidence and a clearness similar to those displayed in the national types preserved to us by the Egyptian painters. And for this very reason many of the old legends still fascinate the modern reader, and even the unlearned reader; they often reproduce universally human conditions and relations which are intelligible without interpretation unto this day. To the special student, however, they yield much greater pleasure, for to him they furnish the most intimate revelations regarding primitive conditions and sentiments.

As a natural conclusion from this simplicity of the characters represented we recognise that the art of these popular legends was far from undertaking to show any development in the characters, such as improvement or degeneration. Not that primitive times ignored the possibilities of such changes; the denunciations of the prophets as well as historical evidence prove the contrary. But the art of the story-teller is far from equal to the task of depicting such an inward change. All that modern exegetes claim to have found in Genesis in this line is simply imported into the sources: Jacob's dishonest character did not change at all; and Joseph's brethren are not at all reformed in the course of the story, but simply punished.

While, therefore, the individual legends recognise in the main only one quality of the personages involved, the legend cycles are able to give more detailed descriptions, although after a peculiar manner. The characteristic instance is, of course, the portrayal

of the figure of Joseph in the cycle of legends devoted to his history. Here each individual legend brings out one or two sides of his nature: one legend (xxxvii.) tells us that he was loved by his father and therefore hated by his brethren, and that he had dreams; another (xxxix.) tells us that everything throve under his hand, and that he was fair and chaste; a third (xl.) that he could interpret dreams; and a fourth (xli.) that he was crafty; and so on. Combining all these individual traits we get finally a complete portrait.

Furthermore, the narrators are exceedingly grudging in the outward description of their personages: they reveal nothing regarding hair, complexion, eyes or garb. In all this they seem to take the normal Hebrew type for granted. And wherever they deviate from this rule in their description, it is done for specific reasons: Esau is red and hairy (xxv. 25) clearly because he is a type of the Edomite; Joseph wears his long garment with sleeves (xxxvii. 3) as a badge of the love of his father; Leah had "tender eyes" and Rachel is beautiful of form (xxix. 17) to explain why Jacob rejects Leah and loves Rachel.

Now if we ask what principle the story-teller follows when he does emphasise definite characteristics of his personages, we discover that the characterisation is generally subordinated to the action. The particular quality of the person is emphasised that is necessary for the development of the action; all others are ignored. The story of the deception practised by Jacob tells how the latter, following his mother's counsel, induces his father to bless him instead of Esau: here Jacob is crafty, he practises deception; Esau is stupid, he lets himself be cheated; Isaac is easily deceived, is blind; Rebeccah is cunning, she gives the deceitful advice and is partial to Jacob. This is further portrayed in a more detailed narrative: Jacob is a shepherd who dwells at home with his mother, Esau a hunter whose venison the father is fond of. The modern story-teller would add a quantity of further traits to give color and life to the figures, but the primitive story-teller rejected all such details. It is very easy to see what the æsthetic interest of the narrator was: he cared above all things for the action; the portrayal of figures was for him only a secondary matter.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]