

THE SON OF A PROPHET. By GEORGE ANSON JACKSON. "Hast thou considered my servant Job." Pp. vi, 394. Boston and New York : Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 1893. \$1.25.

Two objections might be raised to this story of the reign of Solomon, one ethical, one literary. The first is, that the author attributes to Ben-aiiah, the son of Jehoiada, and to Bathsheba, principally the former, a character of treacherous bloodthirstiness, of which the record gives no indication, and attributes Adonijah's attempt upon the crown to cunning and roundabout enticements of theirs, of which there is not the faintest evidence, and which are hardly intelligible in the story itself.

Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.

The literary objection is, that the story conveys back into the time of David a maturity of reflection on the relation of Israel to the nations which there is no reason to believe had occurred to even the most exalted minds, and describes an antagonism between priests and prophets which does not appear to belong to *any* period of Israelitish history. Even Jeremiah himself, a priest in birth, describes the whole body of the priests and of the prophets as joined in the same unholy conspiracy. The opposition is between here and there a lofty soul, whether within or without the priesthood, and the great mass of commonplace characters, whether called priests or prophets. Besides, the distinction between Israel and Paganism is evidently scarcely known in David's time, and such an ethical and religious indignation against even Baal and Astarte as could make the thought of missionary effort abroad in the time of David even intelligible is hardly "mentally presentable." The whole atmosphere of the story appears to us exceedingly anachronistic. The anachronism is made the more glaring by modernisms, not merely of speech, but of thought, such as "after all, the old death-dealer has a heart." "Solomon has no conception of the seriousness of the crisis," heightened by such Americanisms as "loaned" and "spatted the hands," and "making the shortest record ever known."

However, laying all questions of consonance with the age aside, Mr. Jackson has given us a brilliant story, full of color, variety, and splendor. The description of Tyre, its magnificence and the horrors of cruelty and lust in its worship, is grand. Egypt is unrolled before us, and affinities and ancestral sympathies of religion described in whose reality there is small reason to believe, but which are so developed as to produce for the time being at least a certain impression of verisimilitude. The story, however, has its fullest liberty, as it is meant to have, in breathing the free air of the Hauran, and of the tents of the Kenites and the other semi-Israelitish tribes which fringe the Holy Land, or form little islands within it, holding the faith of Jehovah, but unbound by the Levitical ritual. The fusions and transitions between these and Israel proper are described with life-like ease, and in a way serving to show how they at the last made it easier to break the hard shell of Judaism and to have wider-ranging thoughts of God and his purposes. To this end Job, substantially, is antedated by many ages, with perhaps not inadmissible freedom. Thus the little story may be regarded as achieving its essential purpose. It is full of faith, love, and hope.

The description of the Jubilee agrees with popular impression, although there is reason to believe that, as the rabbis declare, the Jubilee was an ideal never once realized during the whole history of Israel.

Charles C. Starbuck.

ANDOVER.