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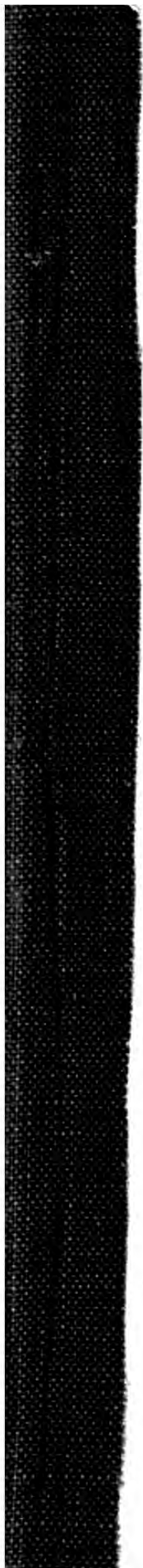
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SHUNAMITE:

64/1173
A Poem,

From the Fourth Chapter of the Second Book of Kings.

BY STEPHEN DUCK.

PUBLISHED IN 1730—RE-PUBLISHED IN 1830,

For the Benefit of the Canterbury Penny Charity.

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Stephen Duck, the Author of this Poem, was born 1705, in the County of Wilts. He was sent to the village school and learnt to read and write, with little or no grammar, for the schoolmaster complained that he learnt faster than he could teach him; whereupon his mother took him home, fearing that he would become too wise, and consequently above his station in life. But the seeds of knowledge having been once sown, had fallen in too fertile a soil, to be checked by a cold aspect; they grew vigorously enough, but alas! were mostly weeds. In short, as might have been expected, Stephen Duck wrote little worth publishing, till the present little Poem, "The Thresher's Labour," and "Poverty," which were sold together, and went through seven editions. His father was a poor labourer, and our author continued to earn his bread as a Thresher, at the wages of 4s. 6d. per week. But his heart was not with the flail! Every moment of leisure was passed in reading. Milton and Addison were his favorites, and Bailey's Dictionary his reference for all words beyond his comprehension. A copy of his *Shunamite*, &c. was sent to the Earl of Tankerville, at Windsor, where the Hon. Mrs. Clayton, of her Majesty's bed chamber, happening to see it, she presented it to the Queen, who was pleased to settle a pension on our poetical Thresher, of £30. per annum for life, and a small house at Richmond. By the aid of friends he afterwards went to College, and was in due time presented to the living of Bvfleet, Surrev. He fulfill

the duties of a Pastor for many years, highly respected, but he was at last seized with a nervous melancholy, which no medicine could relieve, and in an unfortunate moment he threw himself from a bridge, near Reading, into the Thames, and was drowned, 1756.



This little work is respectfully offered to the *indulgent* notice of the ladies and inhabitants of Canterbury and its Vicinity. The original M.S. in the possession of Mrs. Thornton, (St. Mildred's,) was lent to Mrs. Green, who has been prevailed on to re-publish it by Subscription, the proceeds of which, (after the printing has been defrayed,) will be wholly applied for the Benefit of the Penny Charity. And Mrs. Green takes this opportunity to acknowledge her gratitude for the very liberal and distinguished patronage with which her anxious, though feeble endeavours, have been rewarded.

The Shunamite.



Deign, Heavenly Muses, to assist my song :
To Heavenly Muses Heavenly themes belong.
But chiefly Thou, O God, my soul inspire,
And touch my lips with thy celestial fire ;
If Thou delight'st in flow'ry *Carmel's* shade,
Or *Jordan's* stream, from thence I crave thy aid:
Instruct my tongue, and my low accents raise,
To sing thy wonders, and display thy praise ;
And make th' inhabitants of Judah's land
Give ear, and Israel to my voice attend.

Thus when the *Shunamite* had made her
prayer,
The crowds promiscuous throng'd around to hear
Th' amazing tale ; while thus her joyful tongue,
Mov'd by the heavenly power, began the song.

Attend, ye seed of Abram, and give ear,
Whilst I Jehovah's glorious acts declare :
From that great source of power what wonders
spring,
If he assist my lays, my muse shall sing.

My Lord and I, to whom all-bounteous heaven
His blessings with no sparing hand had given,
Like faithful stewards of our wealthy store,
Still lodg'd the stranger, and reliev'd the poor.
And as Elisha, by divine command,
Came preaching virtue to a sinful land.
He often deign'd to lodge within our gate,
And oft received an hospitable treat ;
A decent chamber we for him prepar'd ;
And he, the generous labour to reward,
Honours in camp or court to us propos'd,
Which I refus'd, and thus my mind disclos'd :
Heaven's King hath plac'd us in a fertile land,
Where he showers down his gifts with copious
hand ;

Already we enjoy an affluent store,
Why should we be solicitous for more ?
Give martial camps, and kingly courts to them
Who place their only bliss in fleeting fame ;
There let them live in golden chains of state,
And be unhappy, only to be great.

But let us in our native soil remain,
Nor barter happiness for sordid gain.

Here we may feed the indigent in peace,
And clothe the bare with the superfluous fleece, }
And give the weary fainting pilgrim ease. }
This we prefer to pomp and formal show,
Which only serves to varnish o'er our woe ;
Refulgent ornaments, which dress the proud,
Objects of wonder to the gazing crowd ;

Yet seldom give content, or solid rest,
To the vain man by whom they are possess'd.

All blessings, but a child, had heaven supplied,
And only that the Almighty had denied ;
Which, when made known to the prophetic seer,
He said, and I before him did appear,
And the first moment I approach'd the room,
He gravely rose, and did new looks assume ;
Not such a wildness and fanatic mien,
With which, some say, the Delphic priests are
seen,

When they for mysteries of fate explain
The odd chimæras of a frantic brain ;
But with a grave majestic air he stood,
And more than human in his aspect glow'd ;
Celestial grace sat on his radiant look,
And power diffusive shone before he spoke.
Then thus : Hail, generous soul ! thy pious
cares

Are not forgot, nor fruitless are thy prayers :
Propitious heav'n, thy virtuous deeds to crown,
Shall make thy barren womb conceive a son.
So spake the seer, and to complete my joy,
As he had said, I bore the promis'd boy.
Soon to my friends the welcome news was
known,

Who crowded in apace to view my son ;
Surpris'd, to hear my unexpected bliss,
And each rejoices for my happiness.

When all had said, I mov'd my joyful tongue,
And thus, to God, address'd my grateful song.

O God! what eloquence can sing thy praise;
Or who can fathom thy stupendous ways?
All things obey at thy divine command,
'Thou mak'st a fruitful field of barren land:
Th' obdurate rock a fertile glebe shall be,
And bring forth copious crops, if bid by Thee;
Arabia's desert shall with plenty smile,
And fruitful vines adorn th' uncultivated soil.

As thus she spake, her audience raise their
voice,

And interrupt her song, as they rejoice.
O God! we gladly hear thy mighty power,
And joyfully thy gracious name adore:
All nature is subservient to thy word,
And shifts her wonted course t' obey her Lord,
We, for thy servant's joy our thanks express;
As grows the child, so let her bliss increase;
And may thy delegate, who did preside
Over his native hour, his actions guide!
And, ye protecting Angels, that do still
Wait round the bless'd, preserve them from all ill;
Inspire his soul with virtue whilst on earth,
And be his watchful guardians until death,
Then safely bear——The dame here wav'd her
hand,
The people straight obey the mute command;

All silent stand, and all attentive look,
Waiting her words, while thus she mournful
spoke.

All pleasures are imperfect here below ;
No lasting joys we wretched mortals know :
And while we wait our growing happiness,
Some sudden grief destroys the rising bliss.
Ere fourteen years were measur'd by my son,
(So soon, alas ! the greatest blessing's gone)
He in the harvest to the reapers goes,
To view the bearded sheaves erect in rows ;
Like an embattled army in the field ;
(A new delightful prospect to the child !)
But either there the scorching sun display'd
His heat intense, and on his vitals prey'd ;
Or sudden blast, or apoplectic pain,
With racking torture seiz'd his tender brain :
His spirits fail'd, he straight began to faint,
And vainly to his father made complaint.
The glowing rose was quickly seen to fade,
At once, his beauty and his life decay'd.

Soon at my house the dismal news I heard ;
Soon at my house the dying child appear'd.
T' embrace him I with fond affection run,
And O ! said I, what pain afflicts my son ?
He try'd to speak ; but fault'ring gave a groan .
No perfect word proceeded from his tongue,
But on his lip the broken accents hung.

All means I us'd that might allay his pain,
And strove to give him ease, but strove in vain :
Short, and more short he drew his rosy breath,
Too sure presage of his approaching death.
The blood congeal'd, the heaving heart beat low,
And his head dropt with a declining bow :
Thrice from my breast to raise himself he try'd,
And thrice sunk down again, and groaning dy'd.

Thus, when with care we have nurs'd a beau-
teous vine,
And taught the docile branches where to twine :
An eastern gale, or some pernicious frost,
Nips the young tree, and all our labour's lost.

With horror chill'd, awhile aghast I stood
Viewing the child, and trembling as I view'd.
My eyes discharg'd their humid store apace,
And tear succeeded tear adown my face ;
Scarce my dilated heart the grief sustain'd ;
At length, recovering speech, I thus complain'd.

O fleeting joys, inconstant as the wind,
That only for a moment please the mind,
Then fly and leave a weight of woe behind !
But yet in vain I thus lament and mourn,
The soul once fled shall never more return ;
And the fair body now must be convey'd
To earth's dark bosom and eternal shade.
Yet let me not prescribe a bound to heaven,

Nor can I think the wonder were more great,
If the departed soul resume her seat.
What if I to Mount Carmel haste away,
To him who did his mystic birth display ?
His powerful word the barren fruitful made :
His powerful word, perhaps, may raise the dead,
The famous Tishbite rais'd a widow's son ;
Elisha has as wondrous actions done.
When he to Jordan's rapid torrent came,
He with the mantle smote th' impetuous stream ;
Obsequious to the stroke, the waves divide,
And raise a liquid wall on either side.

At Jericho, long had the barren soil
Deceiv'd the husbandman, and mock'd his toil ;
Yet at his word it grew a fertile field,
And pois'nous springs did wholesome waters
yield.

Nor can he only such great blessings send,
But curses, if invok'd, on him attend ;
Else how at Bethel call'd he vengeance down,
As a just scourge on the opprobrious town ?

Again, when Moab peace with Israel broke,
And vainly strove to quit the servile yoke ;
Our powerful kings had led th' embattled host
Through Edom's sultry wilds and air adust,
Where the confed'rate troops no water found ;
Dry were the springs. and steril was the gro

The Captains wanted strength, and courage
fail'd,

When thirst and foes at once the host assail'd.

The Kings to him their joint petitions made,

And fainting soldiers crav'd his timely aid ;

Nor crav'd in vain : the powerful word he spake,

And flowing waters form'd a spacious lake ;

The shining streams advance their humid train,

And Edom's wilds soon grow a liquid plain.

Not in more plenty did the waters run

Out of the rock when struck by Amram's son.

And who can that amazing act forget,

Which he perform'd to pay the widow's debt ?

Whose quantity of oil one pot contain'd,

Yet num'rous vessels fill'd before 'twas drain'd.

Then he who such stupendous acts has done,

If God propitious prove, can raise my son.

So saying, up I caught the child with speed, }
And laid it on the sacred Prophet's bed ; }
Then call'd my servant to prepare the steed. }

Pensive and sad, my mourning husband said,

Fain would I from this journey thee dissuade ;

No God to-day the Prophet does inspire,

Nor can he aught reveal thou dost require.

To whom thus I :

Rather than sink, attempt my hopes to raise, }
Tell me no more of ceremonial days, }
His God is present still, and hears him when he }

prays.

Thus said: urging my steed with eager haste,
Swift as the mountain roe, the plains I past;
O'er hills and dales my journey I pursu'd,
Nor slack'd my pace till flow'ry Carmel view'd:
On whose delightful brow, in cool retreat
Among the curling vines, the Prophet sat;
Whose twining arms a beauteous arbour made;
The beauteous arbour form'd a grateful shade;
The fanning zephyrs gently play'd around,
And shook the trembling leaves, and swept the
ground;
Down humbly at his feet I prostrate fell,
Submiss, and weeping, told the mournful tale.

Calm and compose thy anxious mind, said he,
Tears can't revoke the Almighty's fix'd decree.
We live and die, and both as he thinks fit;
He may command, but mortals must submit.
Death is a debt we all to nature owe,
And not an evil, but when counted so,
Yet if of Heaven I can my suit obtain,
Thy child shall live, and thou rejoice again.
Thus said, with looks divine his staff he views,
As if some powerful charm he would infuse;
Then calls his servant hastily, and said,
On the child's face see this discreetly laid.
The obsequious servant his command obey'd.

O Thou, said I, on whom my hope depends,
Do not transfer this work to servants hands!

If thou thyself refuse with me to go,
Here to the list'ning vines I'll vent my woe ;
Still prostrate lie, lamenting for my son,
'Till every hill prove vocal to my moan.
More had I said, but grief the words suppress'd ;
Yet sighs and silent tears explain'd the rest.

At length he from his verdant seat arose,
And hastily adown the mountain goes
To Shunem ; we with speed our way pursue,
The city soon appears within our view ;
And the returning servant at the gate,
Pensive and sad without success, we met ;
The beauteous child by death still vanquish'd lay ;
Still death insulted o'er the beauteous prey ;
'Till to the house the sacred seer was come,
And with supernal power approach'd the room.

By the dead child awhile he pensive stood,
Then from the chamber put the mourning crowd ;
That done, to God he made his ardent prayer,
And breath'd upon the child with vital air :
And now the soul resumes her pristine seat,
And now the heart begins again to beat ;
A second life diffuses o'er the dead,
And death, repuls'd, inglorious doth recede.

Thus when a prowling wolf hath stol'n a lamb,
He sternly guards it from the bleating dam ;
But if the keeper comes, he quits his prey,

And now the Prophet to my longing arms
Resigns the child, with more than wonted charms ;
The blushy rose shone fresher in his face,
And beauty smil'd with a superior grace.

So when heaven's lamp that rules the genial
day,
Behind the sable moon pursues his way,
Affrighted mortals, when the eclipse is o'er,
Believe him more illustrious than before.

Here ends the dame, and the promiscuous
throng,
With Hallelujahs thus conclude the song ;
Righteous and good art Thou, Lord God of
Host,

And all thy works are wonderful and just ;
Both life and death are in thy powerful hand ;
Both life and death obey thy great command ;
By Thy great power the Heavens and Earth are
aw'd,

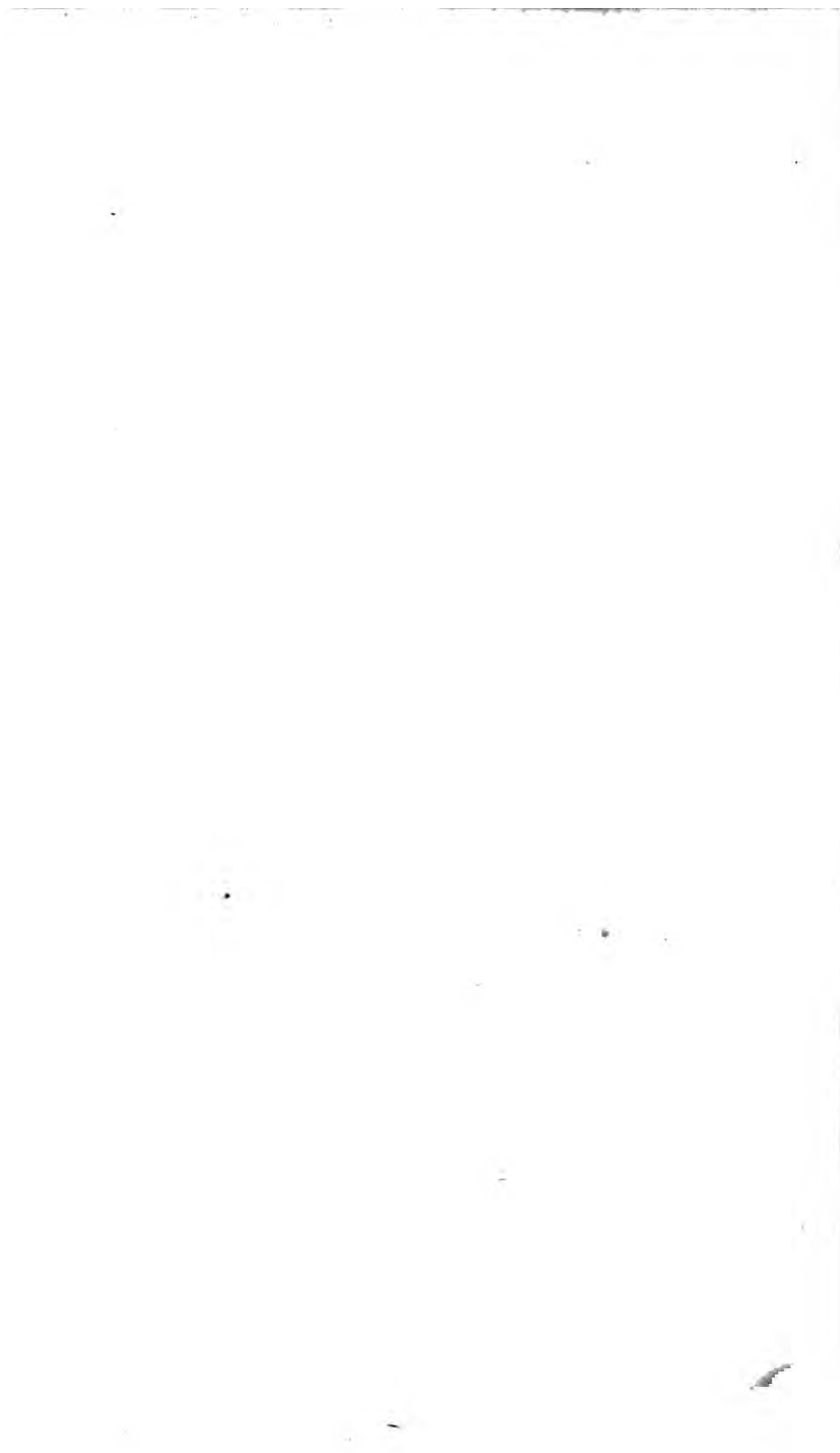
Then let the Heavens and Earth adore their God.
Thou glorious Sun, that measur'st all our days,
Rising and setting, still advance his praise.

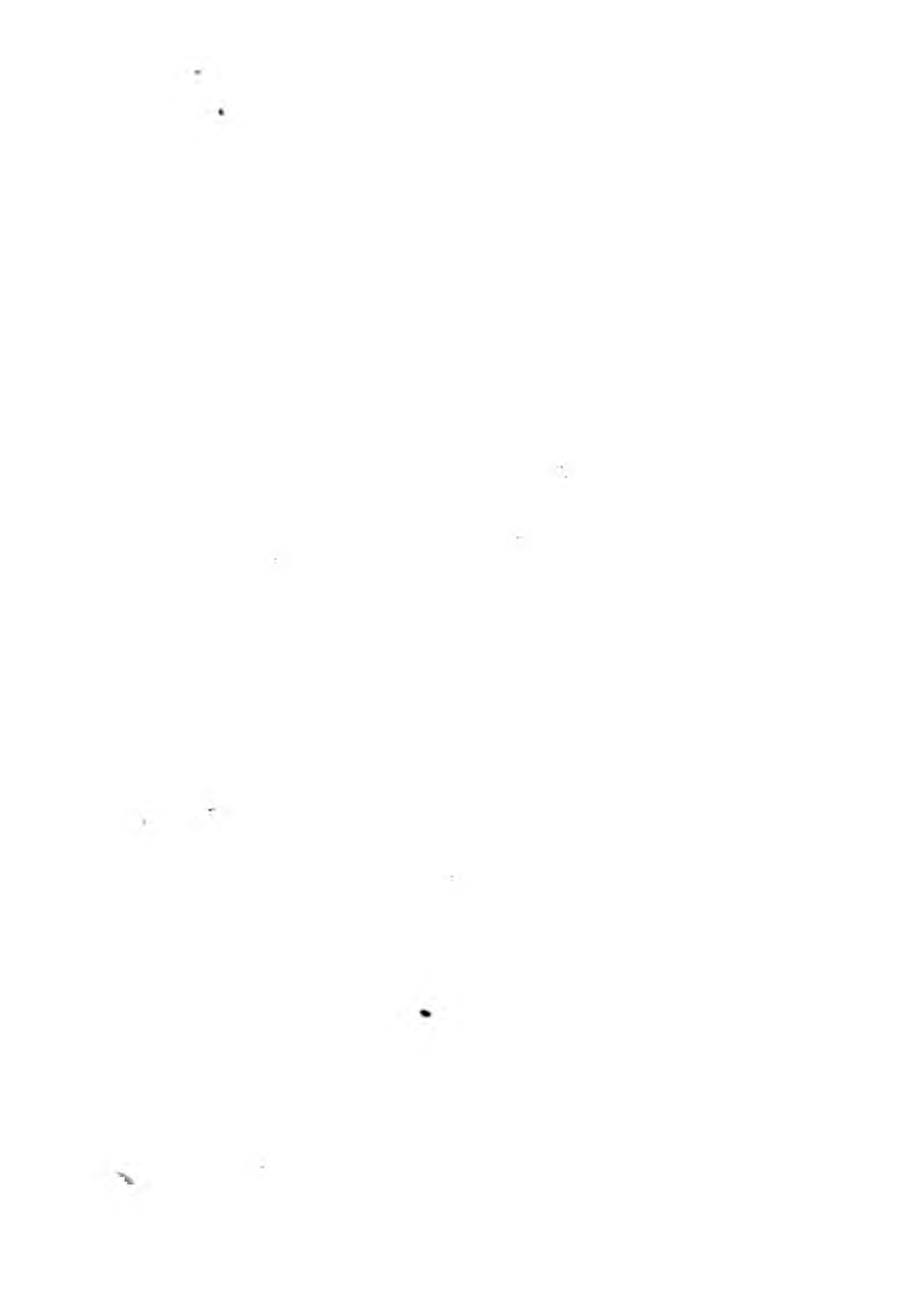
Thou Moon, and ye less glitt'ring orbs that dance
Round this terrestrial globe, his praise advance ;
Ye liquid seas, still waving to and fro,
Praise when ye ebb, and praise him when ye flow ;
Ye wand'ring rivers, and each purling stream,
As ye pursue your course, his praise proclaim :

e dews, and mists, and humid vapours, all
raise when ye rise, and praise him when ye fall ;
ut chiefly Israel, who so oft do'st view
is powerful works, his daily praise renew.



FINIS.





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