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The Caper-Berry (*Eccles. xii. 5*).

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IN this poetical description of old age, instead of the familiar words "and desire shall fail," the Revised Version has, "and the caper-berry shall fail." That is, as one of the Revisers has explained it,<sup>1</sup> the caper-berry shall fail "to excite appetite or desire"; or, as another of the Revisers has expressed it,<sup>2</sup> "the caper-berry (a restorative and stimulating article of food) shall lose its power to rouse and revive."

The Hebrew word<sup>3</sup> which in the Authorized Version is rendered "desire" was first rendered "caper" in the Septuagint;<sup>4</sup> and thence the rendering found its way into later versions. But the interpretation was different from the one adopted in the Revised Version. This particular interpretation seems to have been first suggested in the Polyglot Lexicon of Schindler<sup>5</sup> (A.D. 1612). It has been approved and adopted in the Hebrew lexicons of Schindler,<sup>5</sup> Simonis,<sup>6</sup> Gesenius,<sup>7</sup> and Fürst,<sup>8</sup> in the commentaries or other writings of Poole,<sup>9</sup> Ursinus,<sup>10</sup> Van der Palm,<sup>11</sup> Lady Callcott,<sup>12</sup> Hitzig,<sup>13</sup> Stuart,<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rev. George E. Day, D.D., of Yale Divinity School. Letter to the New Haven Daily Palladium, dated July 2, 1885.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. Talbot W. Chambers, D.D., of New York City. "A Companion to the Revised Old Testament," p. 130.

<sup>3</sup> קָפֶרֶט.

<sup>4</sup> καὶ διασκεδασθῆ ἡ κάππαρις.

<sup>5</sup> Valentin Schindler, prof. Wittenberg and Helmstedt. Lex. Pentaglot., 1612.

<sup>6</sup> Johann Simonis, prof. Halle. Lex. Man. Heb. et Chal., 1757.

<sup>7</sup> F. H. Wilhelm Gesenius, prof. Halle. Heb. und Chal. Handwörterbuch, 1812. Eng. editions, Dr. Edward Robinson, Boston, 1844; Dr. Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, London, 1875. Thesaurus Phil. Crit. Ling. et Chal., Leipzig, 1829-1858.

<sup>8</sup> Julius Fürst, prof. Leipzig. Heb. und Chal. Handwörterbuch, 1857-1861. Eng. ed., Dr. Samuel Davidson, Leipzig, 1867. Concordantiæ Libr. Vet. Test., 1840.

<sup>9</sup> Rev. Matthew Poole, Synop. Crit., etc., London, 1669-1676.

<sup>10</sup> Johann Heinrich Ursinus, Arboretum Biblicum, 1687.

<sup>11</sup> Van der Palm, Eccles. phil. et crit. illustratus, Leyden, 1784.

<sup>12</sup> Lady Maria Callcott, Scripture Herbal, London, 1842.

<sup>13</sup> Dr. Ferdinand Hitzig, prof. Zürich and Heidelberg. Erklär. (Kurtzgef. Exeg. Handb.), Leipzig, 1847.

<sup>14</sup> Dr. Moses Stuart, prof. Andover Theol. Sem. Eccles., New York, 1851; Andover, 1864.

De Wette,<sup>15</sup> Ginsburg,<sup>16</sup> Gurlitt,<sup>17</sup> Noyes,<sup>18</sup> Wordsworth,<sup>19</sup> Zöckler,<sup>20</sup> Bullock,<sup>21</sup> Fischer,<sup>22</sup> Delitzsch,<sup>23</sup> Wright,<sup>24</sup> Köhler,<sup>25</sup> Renan,<sup>26</sup> and Bost,<sup>27</sup> and in the Revised English and Revised German versions. The later scholars, however, seem to have accepted the interpretation wholly on the authority of Gesenius and Fürst. Not one of them cites any other authority than either these lexicographers or the authors quoted by them, or appears to have made any independent investigation of the subject.

There are three objections to this interpretation.

(1) There is no evidence that the products of the caper-bush have, or were ever supposed to have, any special tendency to excite appetite or lust.

There is no doubt that capers, like olives, radishes, cucumbers, and other vegetable products used for relishes or salads, have, possibly in themselves, and certainly when pickled in vinegar or brine, some slight irritant and tonic properties; but it is claimed by these scholars that capers have a peculiar and very powerful stimulative quality, strongly provocative of all the physical appetites, and that for this reason the ancients used to partake of them, and offer them to their guests before and during meals.<sup>28</sup> Indeed, the whole appropriateness

<sup>15</sup> Dr. Wilhelm M. L. De Wette, prof. Heidelberg. *Die Heilige Schrift. Uebersetz.*, Heidelberg, 1859.

<sup>16</sup> Dr. C. D. Ginsburg. *Cohemoth*, 1861.

<sup>17</sup> Dr. J. F. K. Gurlitt, *Stud. und Krit.*, *Cohemoth*, 1865.

<sup>18</sup> Dr. George R. Noyes, prof. Harvard Coll. *Job, Ecclesiastes, and Canticles*, Boston, 1867.

<sup>19</sup> Dr. Christopher Wordsworth, Archdeacon of Westminster, afterward Bishop of St. Andrews. *Eccles.*, London, 1868.

<sup>20</sup> Dr. Otto Zöckler, prof. Greifswald. *Eccles.*, in *Lange's Commentary*, New York, 1871.

<sup>21</sup> Rev. W. T. Bullock, Sec. S. P. G. *Eccles.*, in *Speaker's Commentary*, London, 1873.

<sup>22</sup> Dr. Bernard Fischer, Editor *Buxtorfii Lex. Chal., Talm. et Rabb.*, Leipzig, 1875.

<sup>23</sup> Dr. Franz Delitzsch, prof. Leipzig. *Bib. Com., Eccles.*, 1877.

<sup>24</sup> Dr. W. A. Wright. *Cohel.*, 1883.

<sup>25</sup> Dr. August Köhler, prof. Giessen. *Kohel.*

<sup>26</sup> Joseph Ernest Renan, Membre de l'Institut. *Cohel.*

<sup>27</sup> Jean Augustin Bost, a Swiss writer. *Dictionnaire de la Bible.*

<sup>28</sup> "The metaphor here made use of is derived from an ancient practice, not quite obsolete in some countries within the memory of man, namely, that of presenting to the guests at a feast, some time before approaching the table, condiments of various kinds for the purpose of exciting appetite. Of these condiments

of the reference to the caper-berry in the passage under consideration, with the meaning supposed, depends upon the fact of the caper's having peculiar and extraordinary stimulating properties. Gesenius,<sup>29</sup> following Ursinus,<sup>30</sup> speaks of the caper as powerfully exciting appetite for food and venery; and Fürst<sup>31</sup> declares that "the berry of the caper-tree, with its pepper-like seeds, provokes to appetite and lust." And so Zöckler<sup>32</sup> explains: "And desire shall fail, that is, when neither the appetite nor sexual desire can be excited by so strong a stimulant as the caper-berry."

Now there is no evidence that capers have, or were anciently supposed to have, any remarkably stimulating properties. It is certain that they are not so regarded at the present time. They are in common use in all civilized countries, both as a condiment for the table and especially as a seasoning for boiled meats and fish, without any suspicion that they are powerfully provocative of appetite and lust. The United States Dispensary,<sup>33</sup> the encyclopædias, the botanical authorities, and the reports of travellers, all speak of the medical properties of capers, particularly of the bark of the root of the caper-bush, as being slightly stimulant, aperient, diuretic, antiscorbutic, and tonic, but say nothing about any special tendency to provoke appetite. The "Grand Dictionnaire" of Pierre Larousse says,<sup>34</sup> indeed, that capers "excite the appetite," but immediately qualifies this statement by adding, that "in regard to this it is necessary to take into account the action of the vinegar in which they are steeped." Gerard, in his "Herball" (A.D. 1597), says<sup>35</sup> that capers "stirre up an appetite to meat," but he is not regarded as good authority for anything which is not confirmed from other sources. Renan says<sup>36</sup> that "in the East certain kinds of capers are used for aphrodisiacs"; but he gives no

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a very favorite one in the East was the flower-buds of capers, preserved either in salt and water or in vinegar." Lady Callcott, Scripture Herbal, art. Caper.

<sup>29</sup> "Capparis, quæ et appetitum provocare et Veneris concupiscentiam incitare dicitur." — Thesaurus, ad verb. אֲבִינָה.

<sup>30</sup> "Estur capparis condimenti loco, quod fortiter suscitetur appetentiam cibi, instiget quoque ad Venerem." Arboretum Biblicum, ad verb. Caper.

<sup>31</sup> Heb. and Chal. Lexicon, translated by Dr. Samuel Davidson, ad verb. אֲבִינָה.

<sup>32</sup> Com. on Eccles., in Lange's Com., ad loc.

<sup>33</sup> Twelfth edition, Philadelphia, 1865, art Capparis spinosa, p. 1485.

<sup>34</sup> "Elles excitent l'appetit, mais il faut tenir compte à cet égard de l'action du vinaigre dont elles sont imprégnées." art. Câpre.

<sup>35</sup> art. Caper.

<sup>36</sup> "Certaines espèces de câpres passent en Orient pour des aphrodisiaques." Eccles., note ad loc.

authority for the statement. In La Maout and Decaisne's "Orders of Nature," it is stated<sup>37</sup> that "*Capparis sodada* is a native of tropical Africa," and that "the negresses eat its acidulous and stimulating fruit, which they believe will make them prolific." This, however, is a different kind of statement, and it is made with reference to a species which is found only in Central Africa. And the statement itself is questionable; for Dr. Barth tells us<sup>38</sup> that the fruit of *Capparis sodada*, though too bitter to be eaten freely from the bushes, forms, when dried, no inconsiderable part of the food of the inhabitants of Central Africa. Captain Speke<sup>39</sup> enumerates thirteen different species of capers found by him in Central Africa, and says of several of them that the leaves are used by the natives as spinach, but says nothing of any tendency in any of them to provoke appetite. Nor is any such quality attributed to *Capparis spinosa*, the only species found in the Mediterranean regions by Forskäl,<sup>40</sup> who travelled in those regions for the express purpose of studying their flora, and has noted with minute accuracy the caper and its uses and properties.

There remain the authorities cited and relied upon by Gesenius<sup>41</sup> and Fürst.<sup>42</sup> Pliny,<sup>43</sup> in the passage cited by Gesenius, descants upon the various medical effects of capers, especially their effect upon the spleen, but says not one word about any influence which they exert upon the appetites. Winer<sup>44</sup> frankly admits that though it would be convenient, he can find no such reference in Pliny's words, and therefore abandons the whole interpretation. The statement quoted by Gesenius<sup>41</sup> from Plutarch<sup>45</sup> seems more favorable to the interpretation: "they who have lost their appetite, on tasting a caper immediately find their appetite restored." But the quotation is disingenuously

<sup>37</sup> Mrs. Hooker's translation, art. Caper.

<sup>38</sup> Travels in Central Africa, v. 146.

<sup>39</sup> Journal of the Discovery of the Sources of the Nile, Append. G.

<sup>40</sup> Florula, p. 99.

<sup>41</sup> Heb. Lex. and Thesaurus, ad verb. קַפְרִיָּמָה.

<sup>42</sup> Heb. Lex. and Concordance, ad verb.

<sup>43</sup> Nat. Hist. xiii. 23; xx. 15.

<sup>44</sup> "Passender wäre dann freilich das Bild, wenn man an die für Wollust reizende Kraft der Kapper (Kapperbeere?) denken dürfte, wie Gesenius, Thesaur. i. p. 12 sq.; will; aber bei Pliny xiii. 23 kann ich davon nichts finden." Realwörterbuch, art. Kapper, and note.

<sup>45</sup> "Ἦδε δὲ πολλοὶ τῶν ἀποσίτων ἐλαίαν ἀλμάδα λαμβάνοντες, ἢ κάππαριν γευσάμενοι, ταχέως ἀνέλαβον καὶ παρεστήσαντο τὴν ὕρεξιν . . . οὕτως αἱ τουτῶν ἐφάλμων βρωμάτων εὐστομαίαι," κ.τ.λ. Sympos. Lib. vi., Qu. 2.

garbled. Turning to the passage, we find that it reads thus: "they who have lost their appetite, on tasting a caper, or a salt olive, immediately find their appetite restored": and it then proceeds to speak of this as the effect of these "salt foods." It appears, then, that the author attributes no more appetizing influence to capers than to olives, and that he finds the appetizing influence of both in the salt in which they are pickled. Bellonius,<sup>46</sup> in giving his observations made during his travels in the East, says<sup>47</sup> that he found in Arabia caper-bushes so large that he was obliged to climb them to get the berries, which were as large as hens' eggs, and contained pepper-like seeds. It is a little remarkable that no other traveller seems to have found these enormous capers: but, even allowing that this extravagant story is true, it was the caper of Arabia which Bellonius saw, of which Pliny<sup>48</sup> warns his readers not to eat, and Galen<sup>49</sup> says that it is much more acrid and fiery than the ordinary caper, and Dioscorides<sup>50</sup> says that "it produces pustules in the mouth, and eats away the gums down to the bone," and is "unfit for food." The only remaining authority is Avicenna,<sup>51</sup> who is cited by Schindler<sup>52</sup> as asserting that capers provoke lust. No reference, however, is given: and the statement is of little importance: for Avicenna, an Arabian physician of the tenth century, wrote of the Arabian capers, which have just been described, while he himself resided in Bokhara, in Central Asia.

It is farther urged that the Hebrew word<sup>53</sup> rendered "capers," and

<sup>46</sup> Cited by Gesenius, *Thesaurus*, ad verb.; Fürst, *Heb. Lex.*, ad verb.; Ursinus, *Arboret. Biblic.*, ad verb., etc.

<sup>47</sup> "Per istos colles oberrantes, cappares invenimus pumilaruum ficuum altitudinem æquantem, ut nobis conscendendæ fuerint ad earum fructus colligendos, gallinacei ovi magnitudine, et semina intus continentes, piperis instar calidæ, ipsæ cappares jugulandibus magnitudine non cedunt." *Lib. ii. Obs. 60.*

<sup>48</sup> "Cavenda ejus genera peregrina." *Nat. Hist. xiii. 44.* "Non utendum transmarino: innocentius Italicum est. . . Stomacho inutile esse inter auctores convenit." *Ib. xx. 59.*

<sup>49</sup> "Ἡ δὲ ἐν τοῖς θερμοῖς πᾶν χωρίοις γενομένη κάππαρις, ὥσπερ δὲ ἡ ἐν Ἀραβίᾳ, πολὺ τῆς παρ' ἡμῶν ἐστὶ δριμοτέρα, ὥστε καὶ τῆς καυστικῆς ἐπιπλέον μετέχει δυνάμεως." *Lib. vii.*

<sup>50</sup> "Quæ autem e rubro mari et Africa defertur acerrima, siquidem in ore pustulas excitat et gingivas osse tenus exest. Quapropter est cibus inepta." Quoted and translated by Stapel in his notes on Theophrastus, *Hist. Plant.*, art. *Cap.*

<sup>51</sup> Abri Ali el Hosein Ibn Abdallah Ibn Sina, commonly called Ibn Sina, or, by corruption, Avicenna. 980-1037. Bokhara.

<sup>52</sup> "Bacca capparis quæ cum cibi appetitum irritant, tum etiam juxta Avicennam instigant venerem." *Lex. Polygl.*, ad verb.

<sup>53</sup> אֲבִיבָה.

which is often applied to them in the Talmud, is derived from a verb<sup>54</sup> meaning *to desire*, and points to the tendency of capers to provoke desire. But the word is used in the Talmud not only for caper-berries, but also for all other small tree-fruits, as is clearly shown by Buxtorf,<sup>55</sup> and admitted even by Gesenius:<sup>56</sup> so that if the derivation of the word proves that capers have a tendency powerfully to excite the appetites, it proves the same thing respecting olives, cornels, laurels, myrtles, and all other such fruits, which is absurd.

The notion, therefore, that capers powerfully stimulate the appetites, and were used for that purpose by the ancients, is apparently absolutely without foundation. The truth seems to be, that capers were regarded less as a relish than as an article of food. *Cibus* and *βρώμα* rather than *condimentum* and *ᾠψον* are the words commonly employed in the classics in speaking of them. And as an article of food, they were used chiefly by the poorer classes (even as the fruit of *Capparis sodada* is eaten by the miserable inhabitants of Central Africa), and were commonly regarded as a coarse, innutritious, and unwholesome diet. Stapel<sup>57</sup> and Lobelius<sup>58</sup> descant, in almost the same words, upon the illustration which capers furnish of the disposition of men to indulge their fancy to the detriment of their health. Pliny<sup>59</sup> represents authors as agreed that all capers are injurious to the stomach, and particularly cautions his readers against those which are imported. Dodonæus<sup>59</sup> and Avicenna<sup>60</sup> both assert that capers afford very little nutriment when fresh, and still less when pickled. Columella<sup>61</sup> ranks capers with "sombre elecampanes and menacing ferulas." And the

<sup>54</sup> אִכָּה.

<sup>55</sup> "Bacca minuti arborum fructus, ut lauri, olivæ, corni, myrti et similium." Lex. Chal. Talm. et Rabbin., ad verb.

<sup>56</sup> "The Rabbies use the plural as denoting not only capers, but also the small fruits of trees, as myrtles, olives, etc." Heb. and Chal. Lex. (Tregelles), ad verb.

<sup>57</sup> "Sic delicæ homines fallunt, sanitatis detrimento. Sapor qui in illis percipitur a muria vel aceto ascititius est. Utriusque fructus, seu viridis seu maturus gustanti præbet saporem satis acrem et ingratum." Notes on Theophrastus, Hist. Plant., art. Cap., by Ivannes Bodæus, a Stapel, Amsterdam, 1644.

<sup>58</sup> "Palati studium fallit ingenium, valetudinis dispendio; nam qui sapor illis percipitur, ascititius est a muria, vel ab aceto; alioqui utraque acerrima et teterimi gustus est, sive viridis sive matura." Stirp. Advers., p. 282.

<sup>59</sup> "Si recentes edantur, exiguum admodum alimenti conferunt; sale vero macerati multo minus." Hist. Stirp., p. 734.

<sup>60</sup> "Fructus exiguum suppetit alimentum, præcipue sale conditus." Cited and translated by Celsius, Hierobot., art. Cap.

<sup>61</sup> "Capparis, et tristes inulæ, ferulæque minaces." Lib. x., p. 346.

poet Martial<sup>62</sup> sings: "Neither the mullet nor the thrush delights thee: but thou devourest capers, and onions swimming in putrid fish-sauce, and the flesh of a fore-quarter of pork which is already beginning to be tainted." "Caper-fashion"<sup>63</sup> even became a proverbial expression among the Greeks: "Thou livest caper-fashion, if thou canst eat anthias" (a kind of sea-fish).<sup>64</sup> It is said that the allusion is to the poverty of caper-pickers: but the quotation seems to point, rather, to the poverty of caper-eaters.

It is particularly insisted upon by Gesenius<sup>65</sup> and Fürst,<sup>66</sup> and those who follow them, that it is the *berry* of the caper-bush, "which with its pepper-like seeds provokes to appetite and lust," which is spoken of in this passage in Ecclesiastes. But

(2) There is no evidence that the berry of the caper-bush, "with its pepper-like seeds," is, or ever was, eaten.

There is no doubt that the fruits of several of the many species of the caper are eaten:<sup>67</sup> but we are now concerned with the capers of the Orient, where *Capparis spinosa* is the chief, if not the only, kind known.<sup>68</sup>

It is well known, or rather it is a fact astonishingly little known, that the capers of commerce are the unexpanded flower-buds of the caper-bush. They are of several different qualities, according to their size, the small round buds at their first appearance being the most valued, and the full-grown buds, just ready to burst into flower, being the least esteemed. The flower-buds, and those of the smaller sizes, are the only capers imported into this country. Recknagel and Company, who are among the largest importers of such goods in New York City, write:<sup>69</sup> "We have never heard of any imported except the usual kind imported and used for the table. To make sure, we have seen the leading importers of Spanish capers, and the

<sup>62</sup> "Nec mullus, nec te delectat, Bætica, turdus, etc.  
Capparin, et putri cepas alece natantes,  
Et pulpem dubio de petasone voras." Epig. iii., 76

<sup>63</sup> πρὸς καππάριον.

<sup>64</sup> πρὸς καππάριον ζῆς, δυνάμενος πρὸς ἀνθίαν. Com. Anon. 389.

<sup>65</sup> "Neque tamen, qua nos vesci solemus, floris gemma, sed ipsa bacca fruticisque fructus intelligendus est." Thesaurus, ad verb.

<sup>66</sup> "The berry of the caper-tree, with its pepper-like seeds." Lex. Heb. and Chal. (Davidson), ad verb.

<sup>67</sup> La Maout and Decaisne, "Orders of Nature" (Hooker), art. Cap.

<sup>68</sup> "The only European species." Letter from Prof. Asa Gray, of Harvard College, July 22, 1885.

<sup>69</sup> Letter of July 30, 1885.



principal broker in that line, and they agree with the above statement." M. Alexis Godillot, Jr., of the firm of Thurber, Whyland & Co., of New York City, writes:<sup>70</sup> "I handle a large quantity of capers in my Bordeaux factory, but they are not grown around that locality. I have to draw my supplies from the Departement du Var, three to four hundred miles south of Bordeaux, where they are grown. The caper comes on a hardy-plant called *Câprier*, which grows in a creeping way, and the caper of the market is the flower-bud of the caper-plant. We pack four kinds of capers, all of which grow on the same plant. They are only distinguished by their sizes. The smaller the bud the more difficult it is to pick, the less quantity it makes, and therefore the higher priced. The largest caper is the last stage of the bud before it opens to bloom: then the caper is gone." Louit Frères & Cie., of Bordeaux, France, after giving a similar account of their process of preparation, add:<sup>71</sup> "Scarcely any use is made of the berry, because the little seed which it contains is disagreeable to eat." Sig. Carlo Malenchini, of Livorno (Leghorn), Italy, writes:<sup>72</sup> "The fruit is prepared in larger quantities than the flower," but adds: "As I understand it, the caper-plant always produces first the fruit, and afterwards the flower." Evidently the writer has fallen into the common mistake of supposing that the small round buds are the fruit of the plant: for, of course, the idea of the fruit's preceding the bud is absurd. Mr. Philip Carroll, the American consul at Palermo, Sicily, makes the same mistake:<sup>73</sup> "The berries of the caper-bush are to a limited extent preserved in vinegar or salt, and used as a condiment, in Italy. The difference between the berry and the bud seems to be simply that of period, as it is understood if the former (the berry) is not taken early from the bush, it develops into a bud, and thence into a flower. The bud is not used." That is, if the small round bud, which Mr. Carroll calls the berry, is not picked early, it develops into a large bud, just ready to burst into blossom: and this large bud is not used. Mr. Edward Camphausen, the American consul at Naples, seems also to have fallen into the same

<sup>70</sup> Letter of Aug. 17, 1885.

<sup>71</sup> "On ne fait guère usage de cette baie parceque la petite graine qu'elle renferme est désagréable à manger." Letter of Dec. 12, 1885.

<sup>72</sup> "Da quanto sento, tanto il frutto come il fiore si sogliono preparare sotto aceto per uso di tavole, ma il frutto in maggiore quantità del fiore. Sempre per quello sento dire, la pianta del cappero produce prima il frutto, e dopo il fiore." Letter of June 14, 1886.

<sup>73</sup> Letter of Feb. 16, 1886.

error:<sup>74</sup> "In Naples a great many capers are used. The large berries are used, but the smaller ones are preferred. There is a large quantity exported here for Northern Italy, and also for France. The flower-buds are not preserved and used at Naples." The similarity of this language to that of Mr. Carroll in the letter just before quoted seems to show that Mr. Camphausen means the same thing, namely, that of the round buds when they first appear, which he calls berries, the larger are used, but the smaller are preferred, but the buds at a later stage, when just ready to open, are not used at all. The mistake of supposing the small round bud to be a berry is a very ancient one. Buxtorf (A.D. 1639) says:<sup>75</sup> "The caper produces among its leaves a berry, which, expanding, emits a flower." And even Dioscorides,<sup>76</sup> a botanical and medical writer of the first or second century, says: "The caper has a fruit like that of the olive, which, expanding, sends forth a white flower." Stapel<sup>77</sup> particularly notes the absurdity of the idea of the fruit's preceding the flower, and points out that Dioscorides means the bud, and adds, that ancient writers often speak of the bark of the papyrus as well as of that of the caper-bush, as "fruit." This ancient and common use of the words "fruit" and "berry" to denote the flower-bud of the caper, has doubtless done much to confirm the erroneous idea that the true berry of the caper-bush is eaten.

But there is reason to believe that the real berry is eaten, to a limited extent, in certain limited localities. Mr. Wallace S. Jones, the American consul at Messina, Sicily, writes:<sup>78</sup> "The caper-berry is here preserved and used as a condiment. I send you samples of the Lipari caper-berries (known as *capperi* in all Sicilian grocery stores), and caper-buds (*capperini*, or *puntini*). The berries are preserved in brine, and are used in the cooking of stock-fish, cauliflower, etc. The buds are preserved in vinegar, and are used as a relish." On their arrival, the samples were carefully examined, and put in alcohol for preservation. The "buds" proved to be the ordi-

<sup>74</sup> Letter of Jan. 30, 1886.

<sup>75</sup> "Capparis fructus inter folia producit baccam, quæ fathiscens emittit florem, unde emanat glans semine acinoso plena." Lex. Chal., Talm. et Rabbin., ad verb. סִפְרִיָּק.

<sup>76</sup> "καρπὸν (ἔχει) οἶον ἐλαίας, ὃς ἀνοιχθεὶς λευκὸν προίεται ἄνθος." Dias. ii. 204.

<sup>77</sup> "Ait enim quando dehiscens panditur florem promere. Ergo ante florem fructus: quod absurdum est. Fructum ergo vocat quod vulgo appetitus gulæque gratia comedimus." Notes on Theoph. Hist. Plant., art. Cap.

<sup>78</sup> Letter of Feb. 18, 1886.

nary capers of commerce, or small flower-buds in the earliest stages of development. The "berries" were simply the buds at a later stage of growth, just ready to open. With a needle the petals and stamens could be easily unfolded, and the perfect flower produced. Mingled with these large buds, however, in the proportion of about half a dozen to half a pint, were a few genuine berries, in the first stages of their growth. It appears, therefore, that to some slight extent in Southern Sicily, and here only, the young, green berries are used. This accounts for the statements in the encyclopædias and some other authorities, that in Southern Italy the fruit as well as the buds of the caper-bush is preserved and eaten. Loudon expressly states<sup>79</sup> that it is the *unripe* fruit which is eaten. The same practice exists, perhaps, in some localities in Southern France, although unknown to the large manufacturers. But there the berries are not called "capers," but "cornichons de câpres," that is, gherkins, and seem to be the product of a different plant.<sup>80</sup> This young, green, half-grown berry, in which the seeds are hardly distinguishable, is, however, a very different thing from the ripe berry "with its pepper-like seeds," which some scholars erroneously suppose to have been eaten: and even the unripe berry is used only in very limited localities, and to a very limited extent: and it appears from the letter last quoted that it is not used at all as a relish for the table, but only as a seasoning for cooking.

There is no mention whatever of the use of the berries in ancient times. Gerard, in his "Herball" (1597), says:<sup>81</sup> "The knops of the flowers, before they open, are the capers or sauce that we eat." Stapel<sup>82</sup> tells us that in his day (1644) only the small buds were imported into Holland. Bellonius<sup>83</sup> speaks of tasting the Arabian caper-berries; but his language indicates that he could only taste. He says that the natives put the berries into new wine, to retard the process of fermentation, but he says nothing about their eating them. Even *he* restricts the term "capers" to the buds; for he says that the berries of the Arabian caper-bush were as large as hens' eggs, and "the capers themselves" not smaller than walnuts.

But there is positive evidence that the berries of the caper-bush were *not* eaten in ancient times. Buxtorf defines<sup>84</sup> קפריים as "the

<sup>79</sup> Arboretum Brit., vol. i., p. 314, London, 1838. John C. Loudon.

<sup>80</sup> Grand Dictionnaire Universel, Pierre Larousse, art. Câpre.

<sup>81</sup> Herbal, art. Caper.

<sup>82</sup> Notes on Theophrastus, Hist. Plant., art. Caper.

<sup>83</sup> Lib. ii., Obs. 60. Quoted above in Note 47.

<sup>84</sup> Lex Chal., Talm. et Rabbin., art. קפריים.

caper, properly the rind or bark of the fruit of the caper." He then cites two passages<sup>85</sup> from the Talmud, in which persons are represented as eating the thick, fleshy rind, or hull, of the caper-berry, but throwing the berry itself away. There is, then, no evidence that the real berry of the caper-bush, "with its hot, pepper-like seeds," was ever eaten, any more than there is that it would produce appetite and lust if it were.

Moved by these considerations, many, including many of the most ancient versions and some of the greatest of modern scholars, while retaining the rendering "caper-berry," recognize the allusion as having something else in view than stimulating qualities of the caper. Most of them prefer the rendering, "and the caper-berry shall burst," or "be dispersed," that is, the old man shall go all to pieces, like an over-ripe caper-berry; or, the spirit shall break from its fleshy encasement, like the seeds of an over-ripe caper-berry from their shell. This is the interpretation approved and adopted by the ancient Septuagint,<sup>86</sup> Vulgate,<sup>87</sup> Syriac,<sup>88</sup> and Arabic<sup>88</sup> versions, and by the modern scholars Vaihinger,<sup>89</sup> Ewald,<sup>90</sup> Taylor,<sup>91</sup> Winer,<sup>92</sup> Rosenmüller,<sup>93</sup> Heiligstedt,<sup>94</sup> Umbreit,<sup>95</sup> Elster,<sup>96</sup> and Celsius.<sup>97</sup> Royle<sup>98</sup> supposes the comparison to be between the droop of the ripe caper-berry on its stalk, and the

<sup>85</sup> "Abjicit baccas, et comedit cortices." "Invenit dominum filium Raf. Assei, abjicentem baccas, et comedentem cortices." "Berach, 36, a." *Ib.*

<sup>86</sup> "καὶ διασκεδασθῆ ἡ κάρπαις."

<sup>87</sup> "Et dissipabitur capparitis."

<sup>88</sup> Gesen., Thesaur., ad verb. קַפְרִיָּא.

<sup>89</sup> Dr. J. G. Vaihinger. *Eccles.*, Stuttgart, 1858; *Stud. u. Krit.*, 1848, H. II.; *Real Encyc.*, Herzog, xii. 92, art. *Eccles.*

<sup>90</sup> Dr. Heinrich F. A. von Ewald, prof. Tübingen. *Die Dichter des alt. Bund.*, iv., Göttingen, 1837. "Und als bräche die kapper (welche frucht bekanntlich plötzlich aus ihrer kapsel hervorspringt, die hülle durchbrechend, also wie das vorige bild der auflösung), etc.

<sup>91</sup> Cited in the "Variorum" Edition of the Bible, Driver, Cheyne, etc.

<sup>92</sup> Dr. Georg B. Winer, prof. Leipzig. *Bib. Realwörter.*, *Caper.*

<sup>93</sup> Dr. Ernst F. K. Rosenmüller, prof. Leipzig. *Scholia in V. T.*, ix. 2, 1786-1817. Eng. trans., Clark's *Bib. Cabinet*, xxvii. 107. "The veteran who has reached the end of his days is compared to an over-ripe caper-berry."

<sup>94</sup> Dr. A. Heiligstedt, *Eccles.* (Maurer, *Com. gram. crit.*, iv. 2), Leipzig, 1848.

<sup>95</sup> Dr. Friedrich W. C. Umbreit, prof. Heidelberg, *Koheloth*, 1818; *Stud. u. Krit.*, 1857, H. I.

<sup>96</sup> Dr. Er. Elster, prof. Göttingen. *Eccles.*, Giessen, 1855.

<sup>97</sup> Dr. Olaus Celsius. *Hierobotanicon*, i. 210. Upsal, 1745, 1747.

<sup>98</sup> J. F. Royle, M.D. *Kitto, Cyc. Bib. Lit.*, and *McClin. Str. Bib. Theo. Eccl. Cyc.*, art. *Caper.*

hanging down of the old man's head. Valesius<sup>99</sup> thinks that the true rendering is, "and the caper-bush" (which often grows on tombs) "shall be broken away," so that the tomb can be opened to receive the old man.

(3) There is no evidence that the Hebrew word variously rendered "desire" and "caper-berry," has the latter meaning at all.

It is universally agreed that this word, which occurs only in this place, is derived from a verb meaning to desire, and therefore that its primary meaning is, *desire*. But it is contended by some that it has for its secondary meaning, the *caper*, as producing desire. The claim rests chiefly on the fact that in the Talmud a plural form closely resembling what the plural of this word would be is often used with the meaning of "caper-berries." But the word found in the Talmud is applied to all small tree-fruits, as well as to caper-berries, as we have seen.<sup>100</sup> In fact, it is a general word, and is nowhere applied to caper-berries, except when there is something else to indicate what kind of berries are spoken of. There are, besides this word, not fewer than three distinct words<sup>101</sup> which are exclusively appropriated to caper-berries. And finally, the word found in the Talmud has entirely different vowel points from those which would belong to the plural of the word in this passage,<sup>102</sup> showing that the Masorites regarded it as a different word. The Jews who produced the Septuagint were the first to recognize a reference to the caper-berry. Other versions and scholars simply followed in their track. But those translators were better acquainted with the later Hebrew of the Talmuds than with the ancient Hebrew of the Old Testament, and were often led astray by it.

In view of all this, the primary meaning "desire" has been retained in the ancient Chaldaic version,<sup>103</sup> in the Veneta version,<sup>104</sup> in Luther's version,<sup>105</sup> and in our own Authorized version, in the Hebrew lexicons of Ibn Ganach,<sup>106</sup> Parchon,<sup>107</sup> Rashi,<sup>108</sup> the two Buxtorfs,<sup>109</sup> Davidson,<sup>110</sup>

<sup>99</sup> Henry Valesius (de Valois). *Sacr. Philos.*, p. 514.

<sup>100</sup> See notes 55, 56, and text.

<sup>101</sup> קפריים, נצפה, צלף.

<sup>102</sup> The word here is אֲבִינָה: the singular of the word in the Talmud would be אֲבִינָה.

<sup>103</sup> Gesen., *Thesaur.*, ad verb. אֲבִינָה.

<sup>104</sup> "ὑπεξίς." A Greek version of the xiv. Cent., in the library of St. Mark's, Venice.

<sup>105</sup> "Und alle Lust vergehet."

<sup>106</sup> Ibn Ganach, or Djanah Jonah, better known by his Arabic name, Abulwalid Merwan. A Span. Jewish lexicographer, Cordova and Saragossa, 995-1050. Cited by Fürst, *Lex. Heb. Chal.*, ad verb.

<sup>107</sup> Salomon Parchon, a Span. Jewish lexicographer, fl. cir. 1020, in Aragon. Cited by Fürst, *id.*

and Davies,<sup>111</sup> and in the translations, commentaries, or other writings of Tigurinus,<sup>112</sup> Pagninus,<sup>113</sup> Münster,<sup>114</sup> Piscator,<sup>115</sup> Arias Montanus,<sup>116</sup> Castalion,<sup>117</sup> Junius and Tremellius,<sup>118</sup> Mercier,<sup>119</sup> Grotius,<sup>120</sup> Drusius,<sup>121</sup> Vatable,<sup>122</sup> Geier,<sup>123</sup> Witsius,<sup>124</sup> Clericus,<sup>125</sup> Knobel,<sup>126</sup> Hengstenberg,<sup>127</sup> and Tayler Lewis.<sup>128</sup>

A few scholars have proposed other interpretations, which do not call for special notice; namely, Symmachus,<sup>129</sup> Jerome,<sup>130</sup> Chajug,<sup>131</sup>

<sup>108</sup> Rabbi Solomon Isaaki, a French Jewish lexicographer, b. at Troyes, 1040.

<sup>109</sup> John Buxtorf, Sr., prof. Basle. *Lex. Heb. et Chal.*, Basle, 1607; also *Epitome Radicum Heb. et Chal.*, Basle, 1607. John Buxtorf, Jr., edited his father's *lex.*

<sup>110</sup> *Analytical Heb. and Chal. Lex.* B. Davidson. Bagster & Sons, London.

<sup>111</sup> Dr. Benjamin Davies. *Hebrew and Chal. Lex.* Amer. edi., Warren F. Draper, Andover, 1883.

<sup>112</sup> Leo J. Tigurinus, xvi. Cent. *Trans. O. and N. Test.* (Lat.).

<sup>113</sup> Sanctes Pagninus, a Dominican monk, b. Lucca, It., 1466. "V. et N. Test. nova trans." (Latin), 1528.

<sup>114</sup> Sebastian Münster, a Franciscan monk; became Prot.; b. Ingelheim, Palatinate, 1489; prof. Heidelberg and Basle. *Nova Transla.* (Latin).

<sup>115</sup> Johannes Piscator (Fischer), b. Strasburg, 1546; prof. Strasburg and Heidelberg. *Transla.* (German).

<sup>116</sup> Arias Montanus, a Span. priest and orientalist; b. Estremadura, 1527; compiler of the Polyglot Bible, Antwerp, 1571.

<sup>117</sup> Sebastian Castalion, b. Dauphini, Fr., 1515; prof. Geneva and Basle. *Transla.* (Latin).

<sup>118</sup> Franciscus Junius (François Du Jon), b. Bourges, 1545; prof. Heidelberg; and Emmanuel Tremellius, b. Ferrara, 1510; prof. Heidelberg and Sedan. *Transla.* (Latin), 1579.

<sup>119</sup> Jean Mercier, b. Uzès, France, beg. xvi. Cent.; prof. Royal Coll. France.

<sup>120</sup> Hugo Grotius (De Groot), b. Delft, Holland, 1583. "Annotations," London, 1679.

<sup>121</sup> Johannes Drusius (Jan Driesche), b. Oudenarde, Flanders, 1550; prof. Leyden and Franeker. *Eccles.*, Frankf., 1600.

<sup>122</sup> François Vatable, b. Picardy, France, close xv. cent.; prof. Royal Coll. France.

<sup>123</sup> Dr. Martin Geier, b. Leipzig, 1614; prof. Leipzig. *Eccles.*

<sup>124</sup> Dr. Herman Witsius (Wits), b. 1636; prof. Franeker and Utrecht.

<sup>125</sup> Jean Clericus (Le Clerc), b. Geneva, 1657; prof. Amsterdam.

<sup>126</sup> Dr. Karl A. Knobel, prof. Breslau. *Kohethe.*

<sup>127</sup> Dr. Ernst W. Hengstenberg, prof. Berlin. *Eccles.*, Berlin, 1853. "Die Erklär. von der Kapper wird, so verbreitet sie ist, doch als eine grundlose bezeichnet werden müssen."

<sup>128</sup> Dr. Tayler Lewis, prof. Union Coll., Schenectady, N. Y. Editor of Zöckler's *Eccles.*, in Lange's *Com.*

<sup>129</sup> An Ebionite Christian Jew of ii. Cent. translated the Bible into Greek. "ἡ ἐπίτομος, scil. ζωή."

Kimchi,<sup>132</sup> Aben-Esra,<sup>133</sup> Adonim,<sup>134</sup> Schmidt,<sup>135</sup> Döderlein,<sup>136</sup> and Hahn.<sup>137</sup>

Of the seventy-seven authorities examined in this paper, twenty-five favor the rendering "and the caper-berry shall fail," and fifty-two reject it. The twenty-five are principally modern scholars who have unquestioningly followed Gesenius and Fürst in relying upon three or four inapposite quotations. The fifty-two include all the great versions, except the two latest, all the great Jewish scholars of the Middle Ages, all the Hebraists of the post-Reformation period, and such modern scholars, among others, as Ewald, Rosenmüller, Celsius, Knobel, Hengstenberg, Davies, and Tayler Lewis.

<sup>130</sup> "Insight." **בִּינָה-בִּינָה**, according to Jerome and Aben-Esra, cited by Fürst, *Lex. Heb. et. Chal.*, ad verb.

<sup>131</sup> Jehuda Ben David Chajug, b. Fez, Africa, about 1030; the greatest of Hebrew grammarians; a Moorish Jew. Same rendering, cited by Fürst, *Concord.*, ad verb. **אֲבִינָה**.

<sup>132</sup> David Kimchi, a Jewish scholar, b. Narbonne, France, 1160. Rendering, "mem. viril."

<sup>133</sup> Abraham Ben Meir, commonly called Aben-Esra, a Span. Jew, b. Toledo, 1092. See note 130.

<sup>134</sup> Adonim Ben Tamim ha Mizrahi, according to whom **אֲבִינָה** is the fem. of **אֲבִי**, "the poor one," that is, the soul, "bursts forth" from its prison. So Hahn.

<sup>135</sup> J. C. Ch. Schmidt. *Eccles.*, Giessen, 1794. "The turtle-dove," the messenger of spring, "is despised." So Döderlein.

<sup>136</sup> J. Ch. Döderlein. *Eccles.*, Jena, 1784. Same as last.

<sup>137</sup> H. A. Hahn. *Eccles.*, Leipzig, 1860. Same as Adonim, note 134.