

**JEPHTHAH'S  
DAUGHTER,  
AND OTHER POEMS**

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Jephthah's daughter, and other poems by Edward Henry Pember

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TABLE OF CONTENTS.

	PAGE
JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER, A TRAGEDY . . . . .	1
<i>WRITTEN TO A TYROLESE MELODY.</i> . . . .	105
NOTES IN TRAVEL: 1904 . . . . .	107
THE DEATHBED OF LEONARDO DA VINCI . . . . .	137
<i>TO A NIGHTINGALE IN JUNE</i> . . . . .	158
BLOTTED LIVES . . . . .	161
OLD AGE . . . . .	181
SONGS:	
<i>A CRADLE SONG</i> . . . . .	189
<i>EVENING</i> . . . . .	192
<i>MOBILE E DIFFICILE.</i> . . . .	194
<i>EYES</i> . . . . .	196
<i>THE WASP</i> . . . . .	197
<i>LOVE'S DAY</i> . . . . .	199
<i>DESERTED</i> . . . . .	200
<i>A DREAM</i> . . . . .	201
FAREWELL TO THE WETTERAU . . . . .	202
<i>THE SINGER'S MISSION</i> . . . . .	206
SUB FINE LABORUM . . . . .	207





JEPHTHAH'S DAUGHTER,

A

TRAGEDY

IN THREE ACTS.

B



## ARGUMENT.

IF any one were to object to this play on the ground that no modern dramatist ought to take a subject from the Scriptures, I should content myself with saying that such a prohibition would be too broad. It is not applicable alike to all the Jewish Chronicles, and least of all to a mythic story which is to be referred to times when the religion of the Hebrews was in a rudimentary condition, and when the effects of the effort made by Abraham and Moses to lift the Theistic conceptions of their countrymen on to a higher plane had wellnigh died away. Jahveh or Jehovah was little more to Jephthah and the Gileadites than a tribal God of Battles, such as Milcom and Chemosh were to Moab and Ammon. By the time we come to the days of the Prophets, when God had become the universal Creator, the boundless Being whose attributes, besides omnipotence, were love, mercy, pity, forgiveness and fatherhood, who was at once the touchstone and sanction for all hope, desire, and mental outlook, the whole case is altered; then and onwards the literature of the Jews, bound up with their religion, and hardly less with ours, becomes sacrosanct and not to be touched. I have for the foregoing reasons deemed myself at full liberty to deal as I pleased with the story of Jephthah's daughter. I have preserved the main incidents in all their naked cruelty, but I have not scrupled to weave around them the details of a romantic drama. I have allowed myself absolute freedom in my work, and I trust especially that no traces of archaism are to be found, either