

good. "Come and test our reports," say they, "and assure yourselves that they give a true description of what is being done." We feel sure if people knew how accessible they are many of the crowds which now swarm over Switzerland would prefer these delightful mountains. Torre Pelice, the chief town, is only forty miles from Turin. Fast trains from Paris by Mount Cenis bring you to Turin, and a train goes direct from there to Torre Pelice. At that place a most homely hotel at six francs a day, the Hôtel de l'Ours, is kept by M. Michelin and his obliging Swiss wife, who speaks English. The Pension Bel Air, a few minutes' walk from the town, amidst gardens and woods, is highly spoken of, and from there charming drives may be taken to all the chief centres of Waldensian interest.

FRANCIS GELL.

ART. VI.—STUDIES ON ISAIAH.

CHAPTERS II. AND III.

WE take the last verse of chap. ii. in connection rather with what follows than what precedes, because it is united with chap. iii., ver. 1 by the word "for." The connection of thought between chap. ii. and chap. iii. would seem to be this: in the former the prophet, in perhaps the finest of all his magnificent word-pictures, has contrasted the Majesty of God with the littleness of man. He has invoked the vengeance of the Divine Being, Whose greatness he has depicted on the puny worm which has dared to lift up itself against its Maker. He recalls the words—modern criticism, be it remembered, attributes these words to an unknown writer, whose work Isaiah may or may not have seen—in which the founder of Judaism tells us who placed in man's nostrils the breath of life (Gen. ii. 7), and he goes on to predict the punishment in store for a rebellion which is irrational as well as ungrateful.

Vers. 1-6.—We have already noted that moral strength can only co-exist with faith in, and obedience to, Him Who is eternal. The intellectual power, the gift of organization, the capacity for rule which God imparts to those whom He has raised up for special tasks, and which is often dependent on national rivalries and personal ambitions, and independent of moral character, *may* and even *will* do a mighty work for a time. But it has no permanence. The great empires of ancient days—Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece—passed swiftly away. They depended only on a fortuitous concurrence of

circumstances. Modern conquerors, too—Clovis, Charlemagne, Jenghiz Khan, Tamerlane, Akhbar, Napoleon—“had their day,” and their work “ceased to be.” Why Rome was an exception to this otherwise universal rule it is difficult to say. Perhaps it was the Roman respect for law and the Roman institutions generally which has given those institutions such permanence that we may trace their influence even now on the course of modern civilization. But certain it is that no empire can be lasting which does not rest on something deeper than mere personal ability and lust of power. The seeds of dissolution are, from the very beginning, actively at work in a community which forgets God. We have a striking picture in the verses we are now considering of the way in which such seeds are apt to germinate. Temporal prosperity can only be established on principles of justice and truth. “The whole stay of bread and the whole stay of water” is taken away from a society in which self reigns supreme. Where education in uprightness and self-sacrifice is wanting, the nation produces neither the just judge nor the successful warrior. Its statesmen are without foresight; its artificers without skill or industry. Its ruler, absolute in power, is perverted from his childhood by flattery and wanton indulgence, and afterwards is led away by his own passions, and by the misrepresentations of those on whom he is compelled to depend. It would seem that this passage was written in the days of King Ahaz. From what we learn of him in chap. vii. 11, 12, he seems not to have been entirely devoid of force of character. At least, he could cover his conduct with some semblance of rationality. His weakness seems rather that of Richard II. than of Henry III., or Edward II., or Henry VI. That is to say, he was a bad and foolish king, not because he had no power to be better, nor because he was incapable of steady adherence to a purpose, but because he deliberately set himself to neglect his duties. Shakespeare has given us a picture of Richard which, though it does not necessarily represent him accurately, may very possibly fit King Ahaz. He represents the king as encouraging too much familiarity on the part of his inferiors.

“The skipping king, he ambled up and down
 With shallow jesters and rash bavin wits,
 Soon kindled and soon burned; carded his state,
 Mingled his royalty with capering fools,
 Had his great name profaned with their scorns
 And gave his countenance, against his name,
 To laugh at gibing boys and stand the push
 Of every beardless vain comparative.”¹

¹ “The First Part of Henry IV.,” Act III., Scene 2.

And so "familiarity bred contempt." Thus, apparently, it was with Ahaz. He became the tool of his own family. "Children (*cf.* ver. 12) oppressed" his people, and "women ruled over them." How many an Oriental empire has crumbled away in a few years through harem intrigues such as are here hinted at! The word here translated "babes" only occurs here and in chap. lxvi. 4 (a sign of unity of authorship). It probably in the first place meant children, and thence came to mean the *disposition* of children, the unstable, changeable spirit, the want of purpose and seriousness which so many children display. "And I will give lads to be their princes, and children's whims shall be supreme among them." And as a natural result of want of stability at the head, anarchy would become prevalent among the people. There would be no mutual respect, but each man would endeavour to oppress his neighbour—just such a state of things as makes the Turkish Empire a by-word in Europe now. Another object-lesson is at present before us of the tendency of absolute power to weaken an empire by the necessary dependence of the autocrat on those who are at once his vassals and his masters. The Russo-Japanese war began by Russia's neglect of solemn engagements with the world at large. The deception practised by the Government on neighbours and only too obviously upon its head was soon followed by deception practised on its own people. Administrative collapse has followed, and the social and political unrest thus engendered bids fair to produce the state of things described in ver. 5—the dissolution of the social order, and the enthronement of arrogance and violence in its stead. Only "pure religion and undefiled"—only obedience to Christ and His law of love, mercy, and truth, can save a nation from such a fate.

Vers. 6-9 paints in still stronger colours the social disorganization which existed in Judæa, as well as (ver. 8) its cause. Authority had abnegated its powers; society was resolved into its constituent elements; each town and village became an independent unit; anyone who seemed better off than his neighbours was asked to undertake the office of government. But the request was far too dangerous to be granted. The King of one hour was only too likely to be the condemned criminal of the next. We are reminded of the later days of the Roman Empire, when a sudden tumult among the soldiery raised a man to the position of Emperor or commander who never expected or desired such an elevation—an elevation dangerous to decline, and still more dangerous to accept. For the "greatness" thus "thrust on" a man could only be maintained at the sword's point, and the very persons

who had forced the dangerous dignity upon the favourite of the moment would almost certainly forsake him when the hour of peril drew near. The passage has also another meaning for us. It illustrates the tendency of men, when danger besets them, to seek a leader near at hand. It is productive of good as well as evil. In fact it was the foundation of modern society. Our own ancestors, when the Northmen came down and harried their shores, sought their ablest or most powerful neighbour "to master and to lord," for only under powerful leadership could they resist the fierce and ubiquitous invaders. On some such principle as this it was that the King of the West Saxons, whose blood still runs in the veins of our present King, became "master and lord" of the whole island, and by this natural principle of resort to the most influential and, as was not unfrequently the case, the worthiest, these kingdoms were ultimately under one sceptre. The principle, then, is itself a good one. But it failed in Judæa, because the social and moral conditions were retrograding, not advancing, and none under such circumstances would undertake so difficult a task. That great, but unfortunately too little appreciated, poet, Sir Henry Taylor, has well depicted a similar state of things.

"When they were brought together in the Square
I spake. I told them that they lacked a chief;
For though they saw that dangers compassed them,
Amongst their captains there was none could win
The love of all, but still some guild or craft
Would stone him if they might."¹

The whole play turns on the danger of such a situation. It represents the leadership of a turbulent democracy as accepted with reluctance, persevered in with difficulty, and terminated on the bloody field of Rosebecque. It would have been well for himself had Van Artevelde declined to be a "binder up" (see ver. 7, margin of R.V.) of the wound of his people. Only where patriotism and public faith exist in a high degree can such a position be a safe one. When English politicians prefer party to the public safety, the fate of the British Empire trembles in the balance. It should be ours to demand a high standard in our public men.

Vers. 9-12 contain an accusation, a warning, and a lament. The accusation is (we may observe that the prophet evidently believes the people to be well acquainted with the account of the state of Sodom in Genesis, though the critics suppose it to be the work of an unknown writer with no special claim to authority, and possibly of a date not much anterior to that

¹ "Philip Van Artevelde," Part I., Act II., Scene 1.

of the prophet himself) that Judah sins boldly and shamelessly, as Sodom had done before. Judah is warned that, however circumstances may at present seem to favour evil-doing, punishment will infallibly follow on sin. As Moses had said to the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh, "Be sure your sin will find you out," if you go back from your plighted word. The doctrine that God would reward the righteous and punish the ungodly had been plainly laid down from the beginning (especially in Lev. xxvi. and Deut. xxviii.), else where had their sin been? This is a question difficult to answer, if we imagine Hebrew history as it stands, before criticism resolved it into its constituent elements, to be untrustworthy. The lament is that the mischief comes down from the head to the members. It is "they that lead thee" who "cause thee to err." Therefore let those who are in high places take heed to their ways, for high position and great responsibility can never be divorced.

Vers. 13-15 contain an indictment of, perhaps, the commonest sin of mankind, the habit of growing rich on the sweat of other men's brows. The national conscience in England has not been very long awakened to the injustice involved in it. Disraeli, in his "Sybil," calls attention to the degradation of the future wives and mothers of England which, in 1845, existed almost without protest in the mining districts. He and others have described the fierce insurrection of 1843 on the part of a people who were beginning to be educated enough to feel their wrongs. The writer of these lines remembers being told by an eye-witness how in those days he had seen a manufacturer start out in the morning to his factory in perfect health, and how in the evening this manufacturer was brought back dead—not so much the victim of his own as of other men's sins. Not at first was the rich man's conscience awakened to the "wrong and robbery" involved in all this. It needed the spread of education; the union of working-men to obtain their rights; the full and long-continued discussion of the social condition of the working classes, and of the comforts and privileges they may fairly claim for themselves and for their families. It may be safely said that the conscience of England is awake now. The Church—too often, it is to be feared, even still, the Church of the well-to-do—was slow to realize the true state of things. But now she has her Christian Social Union and other kindred societies seeking to bind all men together in the Divine brotherhood of Christ's Church. Henceforth what we have to fear is in the opposite direction. Danger lurks in the attempt to accelerate unduly the rate of social progress—a course which must inevitably

tend ultimately to retard it. All men have a right to the *necessaries* of life. That must be conceded. But whether they have a right to an equal share of its luxuries is quite another question. At least, it is not possible to secure such a share at once without a revolution, which, if it do not spill much blood, may at least be the cause of much suffering. And that suffering, be it noted, will be felt most heavily by the very class whose sufferings men desire to relieve. It is only by slow and steady progress that a civilization which was once largely pagan can be made wholly Christian. Whether such a civilization involves absolute social equality may well be doubted. But two things are certain. One is that it *is* and *must be* wrong to "crush God's people" and to "grind the faces of the poor"; and the other is that our possessions were not given to us by God for our own use, but for the glory of God and the welfare of mankind at large. Let those that have money "be as those that have none." Let them not squander what God has given them in luxury and self-indulgence, but let them regard it as a trust they hold for the benefit of all.

Vers. 16-iv. 1 relate to the part woman plays in social disorganization. Christianity has raised woman to a position such as she has never before held in the world's estimation. Yet it would be quite a mistake to imagine that in heathen countries she has invariably been the slave of man. In the early Babylonian days she seems to have held a position of much social importance—one even, it might almost be said, of preponderance. Even in the lowest condition to which she has been reduced she has always been a powerful social factor, if not as man's companion, yet as the educator of his children in their early days, on which, as a rule, their whole future depends. Perhaps, from this point of view, there is more meant than meets the eye in the invariable mention in Jewish history of the King's *mother*, presumably as being the deciding influence over his life. When Isaiah describes the luxury of the daughters of Zion he may have intended to imply that in earlier and simpler times, when no such luxury was possible, the faith and life of Jewish women stood at a higher level than in his day. So Juvenal, in the appalling catalogue of the vices of the Roman women of his time contained in his sixth Satire, begins by contrasting the morals of contemporary society with those of ruder ages long gone by. His is, indeed, a shocking picture. Even if the vices he lashes were the exception rather than the rule, they would have been quite enough to account for the gradual break-up of the Roman Empire. As the women are, such, in the long run, will the men become. There is a closer connection than

most people have imagined between the immorality of the upper classes in the time of Charles II. and the shameless political corruption and unscrupulousness which made this country a by-word till the end of the reign of George II. The failure of Mohammedanism as a governing power may be traced to the low estimation in which women are held in its creed. The mere slave of men's passions, woman is doomed to captivity and ignorance. And she revenges herself on her tyrants by bringing them to ruin. It is to the harem life, its littleness, its jealousies, its intrigues, its immoralities, its utter incapacity to rise to high or noble ideas, that the unfitness of the Mohammedan ruler may for his great task be traced. And even in Christian countries, luxury, and its concomitant vanity, are utterly opposed to the thoughtfulness, the tenderness, the sweet unselfishness, the high devotion to a person or a cause, which characterize the female sex when touched by the influences of true religion. The lesson Isaiah would teach us is needed now. Never was luxury so universal. Never were opportunities for self-indulgence so plentiful. Never, therefore, has it been so necessary that the temptations to frivolity, sloth, and love of ease, should be kept in check by the sovereignty within of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Now, as ever, the indulgence of feminine vanity and extravagance is a social danger. It often does violence to the plainest laws of health. It is often reckless of the comfort and well-being, the moral and religious condition, of others. The laws of English society, very largely women's creation, often contravene the laws of God. Those who have figured in the Divorce Court, if they only possess beauty, accomplishments, riches, are still fêted and caressed by those who should pass them by. Even the improved education of women may only lower them if it makes them forget the position assigned by God to woman in the social economy. And, worse still, our social laws often entangle and draw away those who would fain rise above them. Then let Isaiah's warning to the women of Judah ring in the ears of the women of England. Let them give the lie to the charge that—

"The woman's heaven
Is vanity, and that is over all."

And that—

"An unreflected light did never yet
Dazzle the vision feminine."¹

Let them learn that the woman who abuses the good things

¹ "Philip Van Artevelde," Part I., Act I., Scene 6.

of this life instead of using them, who forgets that, like the Son of man, she was sent into this world "not to be ministered unto, but to minister," shall not only bring on herself the curse of ver. 24, but on those also to whom she should have been an impulse and an inspiration (vers. 25, 26). In some way or other our social life, if not ordered as God would have it, will lower the *status* of woman, if not in the way described in chap. iv. 1. We may thank God that no such terrible degradation as is indicated there threatens the women of Christian England at the present day.

We must pass over the mention of the "Branch" till we reach chap. xi. Suffice it to remark here that, viewed in connection with John xv. 1-8, it reminds us of a fact very insufficiently grasped at the present moment—namely, that all resistance to the empire of sin, all victory over temptation, all progress of the individual and the race, is inseparably connected with the indwelling within us of the Incarnate Lord by His Spirit. Not He alone, but all those who are united to Him by faith, are prophesied of as the "Branch" or "shoot." It is their "fruit," the fruit of good works, worked, not by any righteousness of their own, but by the righteousness of the Lord who dwells within them, which are "excellent and comely" for themselves and those around them.

It is seldom, moreover, that the evangelical prophet allows himself to dwell on the mournful side of his picture. Above and beyond the miserable present, which afflicts his soul, does he lift his gaze. He beholds afar off the vision of Divine glory abiding in a redeemed and regenerated congregation of God's people. It is far off still. Yet how much nearer than it was, through Jesus Christ our Lord! In Him we live in a dispensation of forgiveness and acceptance, typified and accomplished by His Cross—a time when the "filth" of His sons and "daughters" is "washed away," purged by the spirit (why the revisers suggest "blast" in their margin it is impossible to understand) of Divine justice, and of that consuming love which purifies and refines by taking away all that is worthless. The type of the law here alluded to by the prophet—that of the pillar of the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night—is fulfilled. There is guidance for God's people in the "day" of prosperity, and in the "night" of perplexity and affliction. Amid the burning "heat" of luxury and ease we shall find a cool retreat in the tabernacle of the living God. And in times of depression, persecution, unmerited neglect, bereavement, loneliness, weakness, sickness—yea, even unto death—there shall be a "covert from storm and from rain."

To quote Sir Henry Baker's exquisite adaptation of Ps. xxiii. :

"In death's dark vale I fear no ill
With Thee, O Lord, beside me;
Thy rod and staff my comfort still,
Thy Cross before to guide me."

NOTE.—It may be useful in these days, when the criticisms of a particular school are represented to us as the established conclusions of modern research, to note certain critical points in the present chapters. The reader is requested to bear in mind the fact that, according to the critics of this school, chap. xi. 10-16, chap. xii., chaps. xiii.-xiv. 23, chap. xv., chap. xvi., chap. xxi., chap. xxiv.-xxvii., and chaps. xxxiii.-xxxix., are *not* Isaiah's any more than the chapters from chap. xl. to the end. Be it therefore observed that the peculiar word "swallow" or "swallow up," as equivalent to *destruction*, used in chap. iii. 12 (Authorized Version, *destroy*) is found in chaps. xxv. 7, 8, xxviii. 4, xlix. 19, which are asserted not to be by Isaiah. Chap. xxxii., in which is a similar train of thought to the indictment of women contained in this chapter, is admitted to be Isaiah's. But no reason is given why chap. xxxii. should be, and the following chapters should not be, by Isaiah. The word translated "beautiful" in chap. iv. 2 is also very characteristic of this book, both in parts attributed to Isaiah and those attributed to other writers. Still, its use, it must be admitted, is not *confined* to this book. The Hebrew word translated "the escaped of (Israel)" is not only found in chap. x. 20, but in xv. 9 and xxxvii. 31, passages which the critics do not ascribe to Isaiah. They rarely occur anywhere else in this sense. Moreover, there is a distinct allusion to the "pillar of the cloud" and of fire mentioned in the Pentateuch. It is true that some of the passages in the Pentateuch, in which reference is made to this miraculous incident, have been ascribed to the supposed author whose writings Isaiah may have seen. But the references in this imagined author to the pillar of fire by night as well as the pillar of cloud by day only occur in two places. The allusion here by Isaiah postulates the frequent and emphatic reference to the fact found in the Pentateuch as we now have it—*i.e.*, in Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, much of which, it is now pretended, was written after his death. Otherwise the allusion would have required some explanation, since but little stress is laid upon the circumstance in the passages in "JE," to whom the sections in question are assigned.

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