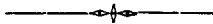


We need dwell but for a moment upon

THE CHERUBIM.

There are two points to be noticed with regard to these creatures about whom next to nothing is known, for they, at any rate for the present, cannot be connected with certainty with anything in the non-Hebraic world. The first point is that they are not said to have been visible; and it is a mistake of artists to represent them with a sword driving Adam and Eve out of the garden. This idea may have come first of all from the Greek version of Ezek. xxviii. 6 ("and the cherub led thee from the midst of the stones of fire"). The second point is one which brings one again (Gen. iii.) into relation with the history of Balaam's ass (both attributed to the source J). In the one we have "the Cherubim, and the flame of a sword," not, so far as we know, visible to man; in the second, we have "the angel of the Lord standing in the way, with his sword drawn in his hand" (Num. xxii. 23, 31), visible at first to the ass, who is represented as a humble and innocent instrument made use of by God, but only visible to Balaam after his eyes had been opened by the Lord. Whether this was a cherub or not does not appear, and what relation the cherubim of Gen. iii. 24 bore to the two cherubim of gold of the tabernacle (Exod. xxv. 18) and the two cherubim of olive wood in the temple (1 Kings vi. 23; in 2 Chron. iii. 10 two cherubim of image work overlaid with gold) is not in any way defined.

(To be continued.)



ART. III.—STUDIES ON ISAIAH.

CHAPTER V.

CHAP. V. divides itself into three parts: The song of the vineyard (vers. 1-7); five woes pronounced against the disobedient in Israel (vers. 11-24); and the description of the avenging army which will bring about the fulfilment of the woes.

I. The first point which strikes the reader of chap. v. 1-7 is that the word "song," as applied to a prophetic utterance, only occurs here and in chap. xxvi. 1, and that the idea of the vineyard in connection with a song reappears in chap. xxvii. 2. Both these latter chapters are assigned by the modern school of critics to another author than Isaiah. Of course, critics

have a right to their own opinion as to authorship, and there is no wish to complain of them for expressing it. But in a matter involving such delicate *nuances* of thought and expression as meet us in the endeavour to decide questions of authorship by subjective criticism, one has a right to complain if assertions are made too positively, and if what may be urged in arrest of judgment is roughly and sometimes even rudely ignored, as is too often the case with the school at this moment in fashion. It is true that in chap. v. 1 the feminine, and in chap. xxvi. 1 the masculine, form of the word translated "song" is used, and that the word translated "sing" in chap. xxvii. 2 is another word altogether. Yet the identity of idea, as well as some similarity of expression, tend to support the idea of unity of authorship so far as they go, and a *fair* critic would give due weight to the fact, and express Himself with all modesty in consequence of it. He would not jump to the conclusion too readily that—to paraphrase Lessing's language—everything that is new must be true, and everything true must be new. It was said in derision of some theories of philology, once put forward as positively as some theories of criticism now, that in them "all the vowels went for nothing, and all the consonants were interchangeable." In modern Biblical criticism it sometimes seems as if all differences which may suggest composite authorship are of first-rate importance, while all similarities which make against it may safely be neglected.

1. *The Vineyard*.—This simile is found broadcast in Holy Scripture. Ps. lxxx., which seems to be directly derived from this passage, Jer. ii. 21, Ezek. xvii. 6, 7, xix. 10-14, use the figure in the Old Testament. In the New it will be found among our Lord's words in the Parable of the Vineyard (Matt. xxi. 33-41; Mark xii. 1-12; Luke xx. 9-18). St. Paul (Rom. xi. 16-24) uses it also, but with the olive substituted for the vine. But the reverent and diligent student of Scripture will turn to John xv. for the fullest treatment of this great theme. The vine is not, as some theologians would make it, the Church, it is *Christ Himself*. By being grafted into Him we become parts of Himself—He in us and we in Him. Indeed, the Church, as it appears to the eye of Omniscience, is but the aggregate of those in whom God dwells, *in His Son and through His Spirit*. In virtue of the union set up by faith between the Root, or, rather, the Vine itself, and the branches, these latter can bring forth fruit—*i.e.*, the kind of deeds, words, and thoughts which flow naturally and automatically from the indwelling of the Spirit in the believer's soul. Such is the Scripture ideal of the Christian Church, and in its degree of the Jewish Church, which the prophet sets before us in this

parable. His Master completes it with the missing touches to be found in John xv. 1-9.

Tennyson, in his "Enone," makes the Goddess of Wisdom speak thus of her influence :

" I shall love thee well and cleave to thee,
So that my vigour, wedded to thy blood,
Shall strike within thy pulses, like a God's,
To push thee forward through a life of shocks,
Dangers, and deeds, until endurance grow
Sinew'd with action, and the full-grown will,
Circled through all experiences, pure law,
Commeasure perfect freedom."

How much more is this true of him in whom the Eternal Wisdom, the Incarnate God, dwells by faith, so that he is translated into " the glorious liberty of the children of God " ?

2. *What has been done for the Vineyard.*—First, it has been planted in the " horn of the son of oil," the phrase in the original, which is translated in A.V., " a very fruitful hill." The words doubtless mean the species of jutting promontory of land on the sunny sides of the hills and mountain peaks, which is found most advantageous for the growth of the vine and for developing its fruit. Next, we note that the soil has been carefully prepared for it by digging (see margin of R.V.). The stones, which might have interfered with its growth or kept the sun from its roots, have been removed. The vine planted was of the choicest kind, the *sorek*. The tower with which it was furnished might either be intended to shelter men who would drive noxious beasts and birds away, or protect it from the spoilers. The wine trough or vat was hewed out of the solid rock, that none might remove or disturb it. What a forecast of the Christian Church ! The Vine the Saviour Himself, the Perfect Man ; His perfection due to the conjunction of the human and Divine in one Person. The vineyard was duly prepared by the ministry of patriarchs, lawgivers, and prophets, who prepared the soil for the light of God's truth to enter, and took away all things which might offend. Guardians of the sacred enclosure were further provided, to protect it from the intrusion of false doctrines and evil passions. And the solid foundations of Divine truth were there to protect the fruit from injury when it had flowed from those who produced it.

3. *The Result.*—Instead of the fruit for which everything had so carefully been prepared, wild, or, rather, *sour*, grapes were produced. The word translated " wild " in A.V. and R.V. does not mean grapes from another stock, but simply not the sort of fruit which the *sorek* ought properly to produce. The reasons for this failure are not given. But the

results are only too plain from the woes which follow. The reasons, too, are clear enough. They are either the neglect to use, or the disposition to abuse, the advantages given. That advantages *were* given—that Israel was not compelled to grope for them, not expected to make bricks without straw, as the modern critic would have us believe—is clear enough from the description here. Christian and Jewish Church alike had the benefit of careful training. Israel had been given a law which was “holy, just, and good.” All kinds of precautions had been taken that the right fruit should come. Due preparation had been made for its production. God’s servants had removed causes of temptation by making plain the truth of God. The ideal of life placed before God’s people was a true one. The moral principles it presupposed were firm, sound, and intelligible. There were the “priest’s lips” to keep knowledge and to interpret “the law,” and prophets were sent to illustrate its principles and rebuke gainsayers. But if men would not use these blessings, or if they persisted in turning their meat into poison by misusing them, the grapes could not possibly come to maturity. If this were true of the Israelite, how much more is it true of the Christian Church! The Vine in the latter case is not merely God’s truth, it is “God manifest in the flesh” Himself. A fuller revelation of His Will has been given, and a more excellent order of priests and prophets to make it known. But if they neglect to teach, or teach falsely—and they have often done so—if God’s people follow them eagerly when they corrupt their message, resist and persecute them when they are faithful to it, how can the fruit of the True Vine ripen? Yet so it has been from the beginning, and so it is now. “Ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye.” Are not the “fruits of the Spirit” sadly hindered in their development in these days? Do we not see confusion, dissension, discord, dissatisfaction everywhere abroad, where all ought to be unity and peace? Luxury, sloth, and self-pleasing, where all ought to be mutual affection and mutual help? And so the Lord has taken away the hedge of His vineyard, and enemies are rushing in to lay it waste. The pruners and diggers make a show of work, but it is often to little purpose. The very “dew of heaven,” which typifies “God’s grace,”¹ fails to come down on those who have not learned to ask for it in a proper spirit. We cannot be satisfied with the aspect of the Christian world at the present moment. What is the explanation but that “the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and My

¹ Keble, “Christian Year,” Septuagesima Sunday.

people love to have it so" (Jer. v. 31)? Nor is there any remedy but that revealed of old "to the law and to the testimony. If they speak not according to this word, they are a people for whom there is no dawn" (ch. viii. 20, Heb.).

II. We come next to the five woes pronounced against those who have frustrated by their disobedience the purposes of God for His vineyard.¹ "He had looked for the administration of justice"² (I cordially re-echo Dr. G. A. Smith's complaint of our Revisers that they have obscured Isaiah's meaning by continuing to render this word "judgement," a word which has quite a different signification to English ears to that borne by the Hebrew), "and He found bloodshed; for righteousness, and He found an outcry."² The five sins denounced are:

1. *Greed*.—The critical school would have us believe that the greater part of the Pentateuch was still unwritten in Isaiah's time. Among the parts which they regard as yet unwritten are Lev. xxv. and Numb. xxvi.-xxxi. And yet they speak as if the land laws of Palestine were existing in Isaiah's time, although they have themselves asserted them to be of a later date. It is easy to make assertions on such points. But a careful criticism of the critical conclusions detects unexpected contradictions of those assertions. Had there been "no law" about the tenure of land, there could have been "no transgression" of it. But the assignment of the regulations concerning the tenure of land is extremely unlikely in itself. It is yet more unlikely that the story told in them of the daughters of Zelophehad was invented in order to give verisimilitude to the fictions of authors of a later date. With submission to the critics, it must be observed (1) that a good many such violent suppositions are needed to support their theories, and (2) that such suppositions are by no means proved. It is not very clear how such a curious romance as criticism requires them to have handed down to us in the story just mentioned could have come into existence in the declining days of the Jewish monarchy. Micah (chap. ii. 2) adds a darker feature to the picture. Lands are "seized," as Ahab did the inheritance of Naboth—a story, by the way, which proves the land laws to have existed in Israel as well as Judah, and as far back as the days of Ahab. What lesson has all this for us? Not an easy one to interpret.

¹ *Mishpat* signifies (i.) the sentence of the judge, (ii.) the principle on which his judgement should be founded.

² There seems no valid reason why we should not render *mishpach* by *bloodshed*. The *paronomasia* here is very characteristic of Isaiah. He hoped for *mishpat*, and behold *mishpach*! for *tz'dakah*, and behold *tz'akah*!

For while, on the one hand, an impoverished landlord is a curse, and his property of necessity in the worst condition of any, yet, on the other, a landlord who owns much property, and recognises in dealing with it no law but his own pleasure and caprice, may easily become a public danger. And he is unquestionably a source of deep irritation when he monopolizes land for sporting purposes so far as to exclude all but his personal friends from a share in the enjoyments it affords—a thing often done—and cares not a straw for the injury and inconvenience he may cause to the dwellers on the soil. The question of Irish evictions is yet more perplexing. On the one hand, it is cruel to drive out a starving peasant who has not wherewithal to pay his rent. On the other, it is the duty of a law-abiding subject to defeat, if he can, a conspiracy to take his inheritance away from him through the action of an illegal combination, which has for its object the depriving him of his property. The question is still further complicated by the fact that the Irish priesthood, by the encouragement of ignorance and indolence, renders a satisfactory solution of a difficult economic problem well-nigh impossible. But as far as Great Britain is concerned, we may safely say that on the conduct of the British landlord it depends entirely whether the “adding house to house and field to field” be a public danger or not. Impoverishment and depopulation, the prophet points out (vers. 9, 10), follow on monopolizing God’s earth for our own selfish purposes.

2. *Drink.*—The drinking habits here so fiercely assailed, the consequences of which are also very clearly depicted, seem to be those of the upper classes. If those who ought to set a good example in this respect fail to do so, misery and destitution and depopulation and disease and death are spread abroad. The humanizing influences of Christ’s word have abolished this sin, as a rule, among our upper classes. To be “as drunk as a lord” is no longer a proverb among us. It is only among the poorer classes, who as yet are not, on this point at least, thoroughly permeated with the principles of Christian ethics, that such sin is found to any serious extent. Yet it may be profitable to us to remember how this change has been wrought. There is a tendency in many quarters to depend on legislation in order to produce moral improvement. Doubtless it is our bounden duty to remove all temptations to sin out of our brother’s way, and all honour to those who attempt to do so. Yet men do not always sufficiently bear in mind that the attempt demands patience and care. Impatience has been the scourge of the Christian Church. Most of the schisms which afflict her have been due to the action of men who would not wait God’s time. Men have always endeavoured, and are still

endeavouring, to force the hand of the Almighty, forgetting that—

“Though the mills of God grind slowly, yet they grind exceeding small ;
Though with patience stands He waiting, with exactness grinds He all.”¹

It is a well-known fact that regulations which outrun the moral sense of a community will be evaded or ignored. Neither is it fair to “do evil that good may come”; to deny that God has given all things for use, and not for abuse; to punish those who have been carrying on without reproach a necessary business with the special license of the body politic, because of the ill use made by others of services which, under proper regulations and limitations, are a benefit to the community. By all means punish wrongdoers. By all means take away the corrupt inducements which at present are unquestionably in existence, and which tend to encourage the drunkard in his vile self-indulgence. By all means enlist as many recruits as possible on the side of temperance and thrift. But let us remember that the best of enactments are vain if the heart of a people remain corrupt. Let us not hinder the march of improvement, as has so often been done, because the pace is not fast enough to please us. And let us endeavour rather to *raise the people* by making them hate and despise the drunkard and his ways, than to imagine that we can make people sober by Act of Parliament. It is a question worthy to be thought out whether much of our moral reform work is not marred by want of faith; whether hurry and excitement do not often take the place of real spiritual progress; whether in our modern philanthropy “Satan” is not sometimes “transformed into an angel of light.” Do but bring men to the knowledge of God, through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and “all other things shall be added unto us.”

3. *Impatience and Distrust.*—The sin here reprobated has been anticipated to some extent in the remarks under the preceding head. Two classes of persons seem included here. First, those who encourage themselves in sin by their heedlessness and want of sense of responsibility, who, as the prophet puts it, “draw iniquity with cords of vanity,” and by want of principle “draw” sins after them, as a “cart” is drawn by a “rope.” This is a special danger in our own time. The Christian Church has erected a high moral standard among us, to which the most thoughtless must pay at least *some* deference. But the result has been the loosening of that strong moral and spiritual barrier which once existed between those who feared the Lord and those who

¹ Friedrich von Logan, “Sinngedichte.” Translated by Longfellow.

feared Him not. Consequently, many are tempted into acquiescence with a mere conventional standard of propriety, and to take no care to cultivate that deep inner conviction which distinguishes the true servant of God. Life to such becomes no matter of conscience, but simply a matter of convenience. Whatever is "the mode" may be followed without any self-questioning. If display and ostentation and vanity and hollow amusement and senseless distraction be "good form," then let us "go in for" it headlong. Fashion supplies the "cords of vanity" in the aimlessness and irrational character of her maxims. Society provides the "cart-ropes," the inducements to follow the multitude. And those who heedlessly allow themselves to be entangled in these toils soon lose all sense of higher things, and exchange the worship of Jehovah for the worship of self. The *second* class are those who are, as has been said, perpetually calling on the Almighty to "show His hand"; who are not content to do their duty, because He has prescribed it, but want to know the why and the wherefore of everything; cannot wait for Him to work out His high purposes in His own inscrutable way, but insist either on doing something when "their strength is to sit still," or busy themselves in idle disquisition when He has called upon them to act. We follow our own devices when we ought to be taught of God. He ought, we insist, to satisfy our reason, instead of, as He often does, simply commanding our obedience. And if things go wrong in this way, as they are sure to do, we blame Him for it instead of ourselves.

4. *The Inversion of God's Moral Order.*—There are plenty of moralists in this and every age who can set God right. To such persons it is useless to reply, "It is written." They know better than God. They can easily set the Bible right. This precept ought never to have been given; that is no longer suited to the times. The man who observes this principle is "righteous overmuch," while he who observes that is out of touch with modern enlightenment. Away with a high standard of domestic and family life; lower marriage to the level of mere convenience; let people change their partners as often as they please. As for their families—well, they must shift for themselves. Down with the idea that belief in Christ is essential to salvation; let every man and woman think and do as they please. Our newspapers and reviews teem with impatient and unsound utterances of this sort. Our novels disseminate such ideas among the unreflecting. And so many have outgrown the old ideas of a life of watchfulness and self-mortification, and have enthroned a life of perpetual distraction and amusement in its stead. The gospel of hard, genuine, honest work as the only source of real enjoyment in

life has ceased to be preached; men are now told in some quarters that to do as little as we can, as carelessly as we can, as grudgingly as we can, is the true road to social and material progress. Never mind, either, about religious observances; they are the delusions of a bygone age. We now need neither the parson nor the priest. We want no Sunday, no Sunday service, no outworn superstitions of that kind. As for the great hereafter—it may be, or may not be. We shall best prepare for it by putting it on the shelf and thinking no more about it. Does an idle and self-pleasing age think that anything but a “woe” can come of such imaginations as these?

5. *Drink and Injustice.*—The prophet returns to his first theme. It is apparently, however, this time drunkenness on the judicial bench which engages his thoughts. Thank God, we cannot, in the Christian England of our day, even conceive of such a monstrosity as a drunken judge! Yet we need only go back some two and a half centuries for such a sight. The infamous Jeffreys administered what he pretended to call justice in the intervals between one drunken debauch and the next. His brain was never free from alcoholic excitement; his moral sense was hopelessly overclouded. You can tell, in the reports of the State trials, when he is sitting on the bench by his indecent interruptions of counsel, his shameless brow-beating of witnesses, the wild exclamations by which he strove to divert the course of justice into the channels in which he desired it to flow. Isaiah gives us a picture of the results of such a mockery of justice, such a degradation of the majesty of law, in vers. 23-25. Such a judge was not ashamed to take a bribe in order to acquit the wicked, and to condemn the innocent man, in defiance of the evidence (ver. 23). We may be thankful to the Great Judge of all that for more than two centuries our judicial ermine has remained unsullied. Yet is there *no* blot on our legal system? Cannot the man with the long purse, the *company* with a long purse, drag a suit from tribunal to tribunal, till the poor man's purse and patience are alike exhausted? Does not the judge too frequently help the oppressor by being more anxious to display his legal acumen than to see that justice is done? And does not the greed of the legal functionary sometimes over-reach itself, while it deters the poor man from seeking the justice to which he has a right?

III. *The Scourge of Discord.*—The remaining verses of the chapter contain a vivid picture of the invading hosts who are destined to avenge upon Judah the sins laid to her charge in the five “woes” which we have been considering. Those who wish to recognise the human element in inspired Scripture may find an instance of it here. It is not, I must believe,

possible for the Christian Churchman, knowing, as he does, the reverence felt in all ages of the Jewish and Christian Church alike for the Scriptures of both covenants, to treat any of the historical books as "idealized history," if by the word "idealized" is meant exaggerated and inflated statements of matters of fact, made for a purpose, however excellent that purpose may be. But I know of no œcumenically admitted principle which would forbid us to suppose that here the prophet's imagination has furnished us with an ideal, rather than a strictly literal, picture of the Assyrian host.¹ The alarm, coupled with grief, which the approach of an invading host might strike into the heart of a patriotic Jew, might not unnaturally add darker features to the picture given us in the text, just as the monk of St. Gall, in his picture of Charles the Great appearing on the scene to receive the submission of Desiderius, the defeated Lombard King, heightens his picture with touches which invest the figure of the grandson of "Charles the Hammerer," to whom the title by which his grandfather was known was transferred, with an awfulness and majesty more than mortal.

War is ever a great scourge of God. And though of late the temple of Janus has been closed for ever-lengthening periods, yet "rumours of wars" continue to darken the horizon of our Empire. Fear of other great Powers drives us into a vast and profitless expenditure to protect our vastly extended borders from possible assault. And where actual war is not present, there are conflicts of a less deadly kind, not less costly, and indirectly very often not less fatal to life than war itself. Industrial conflicts, issuing in strikes; jealousies between classes, making production difficult and irregular; the greed which leads to overproduction; the jobbery and waste which "bind," needlessly, "heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne," on the necks of the people; the party spirit which impedes passing of useful measures, which repeals useful Acts because they were passed by the opposite party, and espouses disastrous causes for the sake of the votes of those who have taken them up; who can tell how much injury such needless dissensions have done, and are doing, to Christian society in our time and country? The spirit of faction (*ἐπιθεία*) is rebuked by St. Paul. But it is still sleepless and on the watch. Its arms are ever ready for action. And in

¹ On critical principles we ought, perhaps, to assign this chapter to another hand than Isaiah's! "Assyria is" not in it "the dominant world-force," nor is "Jerusalem the inviolate fortress of God and His people." God's people have "gone into captivity" (ver. 18), and a severe chastisement still is described as impending over them.

its track is a "roaring like the roaring of the sea;" it spreads over the land "darkness and sorrow;" and the light has been turned into darkness by reason of the clouds in the heavens.

Since these words were written Count Leo Tolstoi has issued, in connection with the Russo-Japanese War, a solemn denunciation of *all* war, offensive or defensive, on account of the miseries which follow in its train. It is impossible to help admiring the mingled courage, sympathy, and originality which characterize the writings of that extraordinary man. But, after all, Jesus Christ will prove to be wiser than the modern reformer who would shoulder Him aside as not "up to date," or denounce His moral standard as imperfect. I will not repeat what I have previously said about the very great and real blessings with which even war is wont to compensate for the miseries it entails. But as to the sin of defensive war, can such a position possibly be maintained? Count Leo Tolstoi would make the aggressive power the master of the situation, and all other men its slaves. Is there no degradation in calmly submitting to tyranny? No cowardice in sitting by and seeing others subjected to it? Are there no miseries worse than those produced by war among those suffering long from continued and cruel oppression, to which it seems impossible to foresee an end? Is any form of life more hideous and hopeless, more unworthy and morally repulsive, than that lived where society is divided into oppressors and oppressed? Let people look back to the Middle Ages, or France before the Revolution, and let them remember that but for armed resistance such a degraded condition of mankind must have been indefinitely prolonged. When a Frenchman eloquently condemned the monstrosity of taking a man's life for having committed murder, and demanded that capital punishment should be at once repealed, his witty interlocutor replied: "*Hé bien! que messieurs les assassins commencent.*" We cannot waste a single one of the thunders of our eloquence on *offensive* war. But to deny the right of self-defence is to proclaim the eternal slavery of mankind.

J. J. LIAS.

