

But *שָׁלוּחַ* no doubt means, as in *v.* 17 (Heb. 11), *his weapon* (from *שָׁלוּחַ*), and some verb must have fallen out, or the text be otherwise faulty. Maurer's explanation, *every one's weapon was water*, i.e. served instead of his customary ablutions, is more ingenious than probable. The clause is omitted in the LXX. Rödiger emends *בְּיָדוֹ* for *הַפִּיּוֹם*, *every one had his weapon in his hand*; others, following the Syriac and Arabic, *every man was with his weapon a full month*.

vi. 11. Marg., *could go into the temple and live*, i.e. being a layman, enter the sanctuary with impunity. Cf. Num. xviii. 7; and for the construction, Exod. xxxiii. 20.

ix. 17. In the Hebrew text the word *בְּמַרְיָם*, *in their rebellion*, stands somewhat strangely at the end of the sentence; lit. *and appointed a captain to return to their bondage in their rebellion*. But some Hebrew MSS. and the LXX. read *בְּמִצְרַיִם*, *in Egypt*, for *בְּמַרְיָם*, *in the rebellion*; and a comparison of Num. xiv. 4, on which the passage is based, leaves little doubt that this is the true reading.

A. F. KIRKPATRICK.

THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH.

IV. THE FLYING ROLL AND THE EPHRAH.—ZECH. v.

THE preceding visions have given to Zechariah and the people assurance that the Temple and city shall be rebuilt; that the old offices which had formerly secured the well-being of Israel should again be established; that a new era in Church and State was opening under the good guidance of God. There was promise given of a perfectly organized community. Was this not enough? Alas, no! The sickening thought must at once have arisen in the Prophet's mind, What can even this avail so long as the people are what they are? Build a house with every

appliance for comfort, finish it in the best style, and then invite into it a family that has been used to a hovel, and your fine house will soon be filthy and uninhabitable. Put a foolish, incompetent, pleasure-seeking lad into a flourishing business, and he will soon bring it down to his own level, and wreck both it and himself. God makes a heaven for us, but by our very entrance into it we make it a hell. So, thinks the Prophet, here is a land restored to us, a land in which we are to have every advantage, in which our civil government and our religious institutions are to be simply the form in which God's presence and care for us are manifested; but what avails all this, if the people remain just what they were before God swept them out of their land? This thought of the Prophet, these visions are sent to meet or to anticipate. For they assure him that the land shall be purged of sin and evil doers.

The form in which this was announced to Zechariah was peculiar and not at first sight easily intelligible. The Prophet saw what he took to be a huge sheet of parchment, such as the law was written on, flying through the air; and this was explained to be the curse sent forth by God against thieves and perjured persons. It was in the form of a writing, to denote that it was deliberately uttered and would stand. It was thirty feet by fifteen, probably to convey the impression that a large number of sins and curses were specified in it. It was flying, as if hovering like a bird of prey, or sweeping over the land unhindered in its pursuit of its object. It was to drive forth or purge out from the land every sinner specified on the one side of it or on the other—thief or liar. And it was to come into the house of the offender, and like a pestilence, a dry rot, or a fire, it was utterly to consume the very fabric of his home, so that he should be quite blotted out. That is to say, the community was to be cleansed by the destruction of individuals. In ancient times, when pestilence,

bad harvests, reverses in war, fell upon any people, they concluded that some members of the community had committed flagrant crime, and they set themselves to discover and banish such wrong-doers, and so purify the nation. God here assures the Prophet that he will use this method, that His curse will go forth in a visible form and exterminate the sinners so as to leave the community stainless.

The succeeding vision has a similar meaning. Wickedness in the form of a woman is pressed down into an ephah and held in by a cover of lead, and like an evil beast in a cage, is hurried away into a godless land and fixed immovably there. It is remarkable, however, that an ephah should be used for conveying her away—not a simple box, not a cage, but a large wooden measure. The ephah may be used here as the symbol of trade and commerce, just as scales or a ship are sometimes used as their emblem now; and it may be intended that the thieving and lying against which the curse was directed were chiefly to be found among the mercantile men and traders. Or the measure may mean that the wickedness of the people was an ascertained quantity, that all the sins of individuals, the petty cheatings and white lies and equivocations and plausible statements had gone into an accurate standard measure, were counted, weighed, and taken note of. The Prophet could not make out what was in the ephah until the leaden disc was lifted; then he saw a woman, the personification of wickedness; wickedness full-grown, seductive, plotting, prolific; wickedness come to a head, filling up the measure.

Then appeared two winged women who bore away the ephah, rapidly and as it were without effort; “the wind was in their wings,” and they sailed on the breeze as large-winged birds do. This was easy to them for “they had wings like the wings of the stork,” whose long black

wings stretching out from its white body have not only a striking and beautiful effect, but enable it to soar high and fly immense distances. In its annual migration it covers a longer distance than from Judæa to Shinar.

The first truth, then, which this double vision brings before us is this : that the prosperity of a community, or a happy and thriving social condition, depends not only on outward tokens of God's favour, such as good harvests, freedom from epidemics, successes in war or diplomacy ; not only on possessing the best possible form of government and an ecclesiastical condition of which neither radical nor conservative can complain ; but also, and mainly, on the sound moral character of the people themselves, on the sense of honour they carry with them into all their dealings, the principle and high tone which characterize their daily life. Church and State may be organized on the best possible principles ; Joshua and Zerubbabel may both be assured of God's favour, and yet the social condition of the people may be rotten to the core ; and until the members of the community are men of honesty and good faith, there is no kingdom of God upon earth. It is not by issuing a proclamation at the town-cross, nor by passing one or two new laws, nor by appointing one or two new government officials, nor by a touch or two here and there throughout the land to hide nuisances and abolish old grievances, that a community can be regenerated. No such swift and easy processes are once thought of by God as sufficient. He declares His favour for this land, but does not suppose that thus He will finish all abuses and perfect reform. He immediately follows this up with the most keen-sighted, closely scrutinizing investigation, and the most thorough-going treatment of evil-doers in practical matters.

This reminds us in the first place that we may depend too much on well-devised legislation and the machinery of government for the prevention of crime. It is after all only

indirectly that law acts towards the repression of vice. It can directly take cognizance of crime only after it has been committed; and the punishment of the criminal *may* indeed deter others—although in some savage islands where there is no law there is a much greater respect for property than among ourselves. But it is a helpless way of dealing with crime, to deal only with the convicted; to lift up the sword or the lash only after the evil has been done. This surely is to lock the door after the horse is stolen; it is to lay out cemeteries and make provision for the dead by way of preventing disease. And in point of fact no laws, regulations, or supervision will ever prevent dishonesty. You may have admirable machinery, an elaborate system of checks making fraud immeasurably more difficult, but you must always leave much in the hands of individuals. No system is absolutely self-acting; and wherever you admit a human hand, you admit the possibility of fraud. You may make it more difficult and more discreditable and perilous for men to cheat you, but you will never make it impossible. Of course it ought to be made difficult. For the sake of the young, and of those who are under great temptation, every obstacle should be laid in the way of dishonesty; otherwise we tempt men and lead them into needless trials. At the same time men are not machines, and if it were possible to remove all opportunity of fraud, this would merely be equivalent to removing all opportunity for the education of conscience, for the development of trustworthiness and self-control, and that strength of character which comes of keeping one's hands clean where the temptation to soil them has been exceptionally strong. The life of a man in trade or business is eminently fitted to develop, and let us most thankfully acknowledge often does develop, many of the most valuable and admirable qualities in human character—a manly patience under reverses, a generous consideration of others in their time of straitened

circumstances, ability to face and manage the actual facts and persons which this world presents, and to carry oneself among them guided always by the private voice of conscience, rising superior to public opinion, to prevalent custom, to mere greed, selfishness, and excitement. These are valuable qualities, qualities which are the very salt of our community, but they are qualities not easily arrived at. They are qualities with a history at their back, a history of years of discipline, of evenings and nights of anxious thought, of long periods when the evil suggestion came back in hours of weakness and had to be thrust aside in these times of weakness with pain and difficulty. They are qualities most distinctively and peculiarly moral, the well-deserved result of moral trial, and therefore impossible if the social system were reduced to a mere machine in which no man could do wrong or turn out a failure.

But under the strain of temptation the double sin of theft and lying is constantly produced. Fraudulent covetousness, underhand selfishness, is still the too common result of the probation which our social condition necessarily institutes. And the curse of God is directed against this double sin, because from its very nature it frequently evades the punishment society would inflict. It is notorious that it is difficult to deal with many forms of fraud as sharply as the public instinct feels they ought to be dealt with. Spectators are filled with burning indignation when they see the far-reaching and long-drawn calamity with which innocent persons are overwhelmed through the preposterous self-confidence and unscrupulous greed of a few men puffed up by commercial vanity or blinded and hardened by insatiable lust of money.

But there is no such thing as successful sin. In one way or other the sin of the sinner finds him out. And impressive as are the terms in which the curse against such sins is here pronounced, it becomes tenfold more so when inter-

preted in the light of its fulfilment in actual instances ; in which all that a man has built up around himself and that he has made himself a liar and a thief to secure, is visited with utter and irreparable ruin. There is many a household that can tell you what is meant by these words : " It shall abide in the midst of his house and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof." It means that the clever financier is overtaken by reverses which make investigation necessary, and is exposed as foolish, unscrupulous, disreputable. Or it means that the children in whom he used to find comfort, who knew nothing of the stories told of him, and in whose unsuspecting fondness he found relief, now begin to eye him with suspicion and his home is consumed around him. And even if outwardly he still prospers, out of his very prosperity the curse of God glares at him with a condemnation he cannot endure.

For though he may baffle the scrutiny of men, he cannot escape the curse which rises in his own conscience and in his own life. This meets him in every room ; he is conscious of it as he transacts business with you ; it is full before his mind as he talks with you by his fireside ; at every turn it stands before him. It is so subtle and impalpable he cannot contend with it ; there is nothing he can preserve from its influence ; like a relentless creditor it exacts the uttermost farthing ; like a fire it passes always to new fuel till all is consumed. It leaves no part of his life in which he can secrete himself and say, I am safe from it here. He sees the whole fabric of his life being destroyed by it and he can do nothing to stay the destruction. There is nothing so substantial as to resist its gnawing tooth. He feels that it is the hand of God he is fallen into, for he recognises that the curse that consumes him is as just and as omnipresent as God Himself. He learns at last that " morality is in the nature of things," and that he who proposes to better himself by fraud is simply proposing to make

a new world and a world very different from this. When we begin to feel the reality and penalty of sin, we naturally attempt to excuse ourselves. We begin to wonder whether after all it may not be a mere superstition to be so afraid of sin, whether we were not intended to live freely in youth and comfortably in age according to our likings. But we find that we might as well resent sleeping as an interruption, and strive to do without it; or think eating a mere traditional custom; nature asserts itself and punishes us quickly. And as certainly, though not always as speedily, does a man receive according to the deeds he has done. He finds that when he breaks a moral law he makes all nature his enemy.

The grand result, then, which these visions point to is a cleansed land. "The Banishment of Wickedness" might be affixed to this chapter as its title. In the most graphic form this grand achievement is here set before us. As we represent in our paintings, or on our public buildings, merchandise, music, poetry, or any of the nationalities of the world, in the female form, so here wickedness represented as a woman, is banished to the land of Shinar, a land fit only for transporting convicts to, a land which represented to the Jewish mind all that was remote, alien, and of bad repute. This, then, is God's purpose. He will banish wickedness. How does this purpose suit our view of the future? Possibly there are other things which we would more gladly see packed up and transported. The claims of Christ and of holiness, in all their inevitable and penetrating omnipresence; the serious responsibilities and far-reaching consequences of life—perhaps some feel that these are their most real burden. Might not some, if they spoke their mind, step forward and say. "Put my debts thus out of sight, and let them disappear into a far land, and you will do me a substantial kindness." Or, "Take my bodily ailments and weaknesses, and give them

as real a dismissal, and you show me a vision worth seeing." Take these things, or, we might even dare to say, these persons with whom we have got entangled, and banish them for ever, and our spirit rises to a new life, emancipated and jubilant. How men daily strive to banish out of sight, to bury under a weighty and immovable cover, things that mar their happiness and make life intolerable. The poor wretch that buries deep the blood-stained knife and clothes that betray him; the man that locks his door and burns to the last letter the tell-tale document; the craven who ships to the Antipodes the partner of his guilt—these are but types of the eagerness which we all display in ridding ourselves of what we conceive to be hostile to our interests. Are we as eager to see the last of wickedness? Would we view its banishment from the land, with something of the feeling with which men saw Napoleon safely put out of the way, and removed beyond the possibility of disturbing the peace of Europe? Surely there are many who would do so; who can form to themselves no brighter picture of the future than that here shown us of wickedness borne away; the stork's wings decreasing in the distance, becoming first like gulls, then like swallows, and finally invisible; and men turning then to breathe freely and congratulate one another that now we had seen the last of wickedness; that henceforth there should be no more of those bitterest of all distresses that come through the hard-heartedness of man to man, through lust of pleasure and lust of gold, through envy and ambition and revenge.

And in point of fact this alone can give men a genuine hopefulness about the future. Suppose our own past life were exempt from wickedness and all that wickedness has brought into it, how different and how much happier would it be. Are we not conscious that were we put back into childhood there is nothing we should more determinedly

aim at, than to keep free from the sins we have fallen into? We have a kind of feeling as if without wickedness life would be flat, insipid and wearisome; that if you take away from life all that we need to do on account of the recklessness and sin of other men, and all the excitement of temptation and pleasure of sin in ourselves, you leave nothing but an emptied husk, out of which all the flavour and nutriment have gone. Our own consciousness about the past shows us how contrary to the truth is any such idea; how it is wickedness that at every point, so far from making life brilliant and stimulating, has emptied life of its strength and sparkle, and has left us but the dead sour lees. We see plainly enough that if wickedness is to continue as dominant in ourselves and in others as it has been, it is a mere pretence at living we can make, and our future is emptied of all solid reality of hope.

Are we then to have no share in this greatest work of cleansing the land? Is it a work we have in view as we come in contact with men in the actual life of this world? Do we seek, let us say quite as much, not to say far more, to purge the actual world of wickedness as to make our own out of it? Does it not strike you as a discreditable style of living, to use men for our own worldly uses and never bring them into contact with anything higher than the world; to use all the common usages of trade, good and bad, for our own ends, and never seek to improve them? Who can improve society but the men who actually compose it? Who can bring bad customs to an end but those whose temptation it is to perpetuate them? Where is this purified society God promises to come from, but out of actual human society? It is our society made better by ourselves. To wait till society regenerates itself, and till everybody will support you in righteous action and in carrying out your higher views, is unreasonable, you being the salt which is to purify society. If society is not regenerated it is because

the individual is not. If we decline to use our influence on that part of society we touch, we, in so far, prevent the possibility of the very thing we profess to be hoping for, the regeneration of society.

It would appear that men live on under the impression that meeting one another, and being mixed up in many transactions here, they must adopt some very questionable ways; but that meeting one another in some other and future life, and being mixed up in far larger and wiser society there, they will find it easy to be loving, self-sacrificing, generous, upright, bent upon the public good rather than their own. The hollowness of such an expectation, the fatuity of such a conception of the future, has been exposed a thousand times :

“No, no; the energy of life may be
Kept on after the grave, but not begun!
And he who flagg'd not in the earthly strife,
From strength to strength advancing—only he,
His soul well-knit, and all his battles won,
Mounts, and that hardly, to eternal life.”

Is not probity as much your duty to-day as it will be this day a hundred years hence? Does not God value purity of life in us now as much as He will value it when it may perchance be easier of attainment?

Still it may be felt that the extrication of social and business customs from all that is corrupt may be spoken about, but when these customs are practically met with it appears impossible to eliminate their wickedness and banish it. Even though we clearly see that if we do not live with clean hands in this world there is no great prospect of our doing so anywhere else, though we clearly see that Christ meant to regenerate society upon earth, yet wickedness seems to be so inextricably mixed up with everything, that it evades our grasp. It is almost impossible for us to measure the guilt which may attach to customs in which

we have been brought up. The fact that they are recognised customs, that intercourse with men and the profits of business almost entirely depend upon them, and such considerations as these, weigh against the apparent fraud that strikes the outsider. But this ephah reminds us that there is a measure for every human transaction, that the precise amount of guilt is ascertainable and ascertained, that each weak connivance with dubious practice, and each bold origination of some new and private path to illegitimate gain, is silently weighed and measured by Him whose eyes are in every place; and that so far from wickedness being inextricable from the ordinary ways and life of men, it can be presented as separable and individual as this woman of the vision, and as if it were merely a partner who had hitherto indeed entered into every concern we have to do with, but with whom partnership may be, and is to be, dissolved. The evils which so darkly blot our social life and customs continue very much from this cause, that we do not resolutely measure the guilt which attaches to the practices we are led into as members of society. We make no resolute effort to judge things for ourselves, and to resist being sucked down to much immorality and sin by the current of our profession or trade.

It is an inspiring work to which this vision summons every man, to share in ridding the land of wickedness. The most abundant satisfaction is enjoyed by the man who brings a clear gain to a number of his fellows, or saves them from much suffering; who leaves behind him something which enters into the life of men, and which permanently helps or strengthens or purifies that life. Great inventions, laws potent for good, decided steps in human progress, are possible only to the few. But to all it is possible definitely to weaken that which lies at the root of all human misery. Is there no grain of wickedness you can cast into the ephah? Is there no rising, resisting,

struggling habit that is resolved to be out upon us again, which we can resolutely thrust down and bury under the heavy leaden mass of God's condemnation? Surely when God shows us such a vision, and discloses to us the purposes in which He finds pleasure, there are some who give a serious, thoughtful response, some who say within themselves, I will, in the light of God's presence, consider my life, whither its general course tends, what good purpose it can accomplish, and what in me is hindering this good purpose.

MARCUS DODS.

THE PROPHECIES OF ST. PAUL.

II.—THE EPISTLES TO THE GALATIANS, CORINTHIANS, AND ROMANS.

WHEN we pass from the Epistles to the Thessalonians to the next group of letters—those to the Galatians, Corinthians and Romans, all four of which were written in the course of a single year, some five years later (A.D. 57-58)—we are at once aware of a great diminution in the allusions to the future. Galatians contains rather more matter than both letters to the Thessalonians, but does not contain a single prediction; and the much longer letter to the Romans, while alluding now and then to what the future was to bring forth, contains no explicit mention of the Second Advent. The first letter to the Corinthians is three times as long as both letters to the Thessalonians, but contains rather less predictive matter. We should not be far wrong if we estimated that these four letters, in about nine times the space, give us about as much eschatological matter as the two letters to the Thessalonians.

The contrast exists in nothing else, however, except the