

is running. And the idea, therefore, is "they shall run, and not be weary ; they shall go on (running), and not faint."

This suggestion is legitimate, and it is workable so far as it goes. But it does not remove the anti-climax. For the sentence contains three clauses, and what is to be done with the first clause? Dr. Huizinga rejects Professor Cheyne's translation, "They shall put forth pinions as the eagles." That might have been made to represent a still lower stage of progress than the running of the athlete. But he rejects it, and abides by the old rendering, "They mount up with wings as eagles." Is it possible, then, that the way to get rid of the anti-climax is to preserve the old renderings throughout the three clauses, and interpret them as Principal

Reynolds does in a recent striking sermon on this passage? "I am inclined to think that Isaiah knew perfectly well that the floating and soaring of the great eagle over the desert waste or mountain top was, after all, though a lofty and blessed image of renewal of strength, not the highest. It represents a rapture, if you will. But raptures of reconciliation and high uprisings of the soul do not always portend the fulness and completeness of joy, and the continuous renewal of strength. Great is the power of patient, silent waiting for the slow 'grinding of the mills of God.' For my part, I cannot doubt that a steady onward plodding in a narrow path which winds and zigzags up a storm-cleft height, is in the poet-prophet's soul the highest form of strength, drawn straight from the Lord God Himself."

The Theology of Isaiah.

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III.

THE passages Isa. ii.-iv., v. appear to be somewhat later than chs. i., vi., though still earlier than the Syro-Ephraimitic war. It is probable that the chapters contain an outline of discourses extending over several years. There is little to define the date particularly. There is no allusion to any particular enemy, though the denunciations (chs. iii. 1-8, 25, 26, iv. 1) imply that the prophet thinks of a foreign foe as the instrument of the people's chastisement (cf. ch. v. 13 seq.). The country appears prosperous—it is filled with silver and gold (ch. ii. 7); luxury is abundant (ch. iii. 16 seq.); pride is the sin of the people, men and women. The nation had not been recently subjected to any humiliations. It was strong in the arm of cavalry and felt secure (ch. ii. 7). Such passages might suggest the reign of Jotham. But in ch. iii. 12 the prophet says, As for my people, their prince is a child, that is, probably, not in years, but in mind and capacity. Even if the words were taken collectively, "their rulers are children," the language would be little suitable to the reign of Jotham, but would justly apply to Ahaz, who

was a *dilettante* in religion (2 Kings xvi. 10), and without political foresight (Isa. vii.). There is an allusion to ships of Tarshish (ch. ii. 16), the station of which was Elath, on the Gulf of Akaba, which was lost to Judah early in the Syro-Ephraimitic war (2 Kings xvi. 6). But the allusion is hardly decisive in favour of a time previous to this loss, because ships of Tarshish was a general name for deep-sea ships, and they are used as a symbol for that which is great and powerful in a poem usually assumed to be later than this period (Ps. xlvi. 7), and the passage where the phrase occurs here (ch. ii. 12-22) describes a universal judgment on all that is high and lifted up, not only in Israel, but among men. The words of the people, or rather of the magnates (ch. v. 18, 19), are more probably sceptical than serious, "Let Him make speed, let Him hasten His work, that we may see it; and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it," and contain a reference to the threatenings of the prophet. Still this would imply no more than that the prophet had been for some time before the

people. The words rather suggest a time of tranquillity, when to the glass-eyed politicians no sign was visible of the fulfilment of the prophet's forebodings, and they felt justified in making light of his threats, or even deriding them. The passage ch. v. 25-30 hardly belongs to the same period as the rest of the chapter, for there a definite foe seems to be in the prophet's view. Whether these verses should be connected with ch. ix. 8 seq. is not easy to decide. This last passage looks also a very early one. It is occupied mainly with the northern kingdom, and seems a review of its history, the disasters of which, and the bloody internece strife that have rent the country since the death of the second Jeroboam, are regarded as the judgments of God—as Hosea had already said in God's name, “I gave them kings in Mine anger, and took them away in My fury.” To the prophets, events do not happen, and history is not of human transaction; events are God's operations, and He makes history—“Shall evil befall a city, and the Lord hath not done it?” (Amos iii. 6). It is scarcely possible to read Isa. ix. 8 seq. as a prediction; prediction is found only in the set, relentless monotony of the refrain, “For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still.”

As the passage stands, the contents of chs. ii.-iv. are briefly these:—

1. Ch. iv. 1-4, a beautiful prophecy of the time when Jehovah, the God of Jacob, shall be recognised by all nations to be God, and Zion, His abode, shall be the centre from which He makes His ways known to the world; when He shall arbitrate among the peoples, and there shall be perpetual peace.

2. Chs. ii. 5-iv. 1, not without great judgments shall this universal recognition of Jehovah as God alone be reached. These judgments shall be on all nations for their pride and idolatry, that Jehovah alone may be exalted; and on Israel, no less than the nations, for it has made itself one of the nations, and been rejected by Jehovah.

3. Ch. iv. 2-6, when these judgments are overpast, Jerusalem having been purified shall be holy to the Lord; Jehovah shall take the people to Him as He took them on their first redemption from Egypt, and the old tokens of His guidance and protection, the pillar of cloud and fire, shall be seen among them.

Unhappily, though much is contentious or at

least contended over in Isaiah, no passages are more contentious than ch. ii. 1-4, and ch. iv. 2-6, the former with reason, and the latter not altogether without it. Isa. ii. 1-4 is found again in Mic. iv. 1-4, and the possibilities regarding it are four, though they are not all equally probable. It may be by Isaiah, and repeated by Micah. Or it may be by Micah, and adopted by Isaiah. It may be by an earlier writer, and because of its singular beauty and the clear outlook of its faith have charmed alike the ear and the heart of both prophets. Or, finally, the very lucidity and simplicity of its diction, the very clearness of the vision, which no more strains to pierce the future but beholds it with open eye, and the astonishing self-consciousness of the religion of Israel, which knows itself to be the absolute religion, the destined heritage of mankind—many peoples shall say, Let us go up to the house of the God of Jacob—might suggest that the passage was later than the age of Isaiah and Micah, and that its position in both prophets is due to the pious cares of collectors who gave the glorious fragment a double place in their collections.

These possibilities cannot be discussed here. It may be said, however, that there is nothing in the passage which might not well have come from Isaiah. Its contents are but the natural deduction or corollary from the conception of Jehovah, and Isaiah's conception of the God of Israel is so lofty, so impossible to gauge or express, that no limits can be set beforehand to the issues which might seem to him contained in it. Elsewhere he has said virtually the same things as are said here, “Men shall cast their idols to the moles and the bats, and Jehovah alone shall be exalted in that day.” The passage refers exclusively to the coming supremacy of the God of Israel, there is not a word in it about the supremacy of Israel itself among the nations, which is so common a feature in later prophecies of the last times (Isa. lxi. 5 seq.). And though the “house of the God of Jacob” be spoken of, the reference is hardly to worship, but to the place of Jehovah's abode, the centre of His rule; and even such a prophet as Amos, whose contempt for “bodily exercise” and fixed localities of service, and all that is material in worship, is boundless, says that “Jehovah shall roar out of Zion, and give forth His voice from Jerusalem.” The limitations which cross the most absolute and universal conceptions of the

prophets are singular. But further, the other ideas of the passage are entirely those of Isaiah. To him Jehovah is less a God whom men worship than a King whom they obey and serve; and he himself, if anyone be, is a statesman in the kingdom of God, whose eye is directed to the social condition of men and their civil life. Only here his view, which is usually confined to Israel, widens out to embrace the nations of mankind. It is not individuals that make pilgrimages to the mountain of the Lord, but many peoples; the *torah* that they seek is to enable them to learn of his ways and walk in his paths. The *torah* is social, civil, even international. The King of Jacob becomes the King of the nations; He judges for the nations, and gives decisions for many peoples.

Some scholars have found difficulty in accepting ch. ii. 1-4 as Isaiah's, or at least in believing that the passage can have been put in its present place by his own hand, owing to the strong antithesis between it and the following threatening of judgment. One of the most singular things in the prophecies is this juxtaposition of passages of the most opposite tendency and outlook. Such passages are, for example, ch. viii. 5-8 with vers. 9, 10; ch. xvii. 1-11 with vers. 12-14; and a double stream of threat and promise seems to run through chs. xxviii.-xxxii. Would not the prophet have entirely enfeebled the impression which his threatenings and exhortations to reform were fitted to make if he had in the same breath announced God's interposition for the people's deliverance and their coming blessedness? Is not the stream of promise which runs through the threatened judgments interpolation from another hand? Or if in some cases the promises be from the hand of the prophet, is their place not due to editors who desired to take off the edge of the threats by placing the promised blessings beside them? The problem is difficult, and our complete ignorance of how and by whom the scattered oracles of any prophet were collected together, naturally opens the door to conjectures sometimes hazardous enough. It is certain, however, that Isaiah did both threaten and promise, and that in some cases he places the threats and promises very closely together: "Ah, I will ease Me of Mine adversaries, and avenge Me of Mine enemies . . . and I will restore thy judges as at the first . . . afterward thou shalt be called, The righteous city, the faithful city" (ch. i. 14-26). The promises and the threatenings both

follow from the same principles. God must judge, but God cannot destroy His own kingdom: "The eyes of the Lord are upon the sinful kingdom, and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth; saving that I will not destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord" (Amos ix. 8). It is possible that some passages now standing side by side, the tone and mood of which are very unlike, may not have been uttered contemporaneously, or even in close succession. We do not know the principles on which a prophet collected his own oracles. Obviously, in most cases, we have but fragments of the whole that he spoke, and it may have been his purpose to signalise only the luminous mountain peaks of his teaching, leaving the intermediate parts enveloped in shadow. There is no reason to doubt that the singular passage Jer. xx. came from the pen of that prophet, but it is hard to understand how the moods of mind revealed in it could have immediately succeeded one another: "Sing unto the Lord, praise ye the Lord; for He hath delivered the soul of the needy from the hand of evil-doers. Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed" (Jer. xx. 13, 14). Yet perhaps we may judge Eastern minds too much by the standard of our own. And perhaps we forget that a strange joy, not only involuntarily but almost against the will, sometimes lightens up the religious mind amidst external sufferings, and indeed because of them. And we are apt to overlook the conditions in which the writers of Scripture were placed; they did not possess a large assured creed like ourselves; they had fixed principles, chiefly about God, but the rest was presentiment, founded on their faith in God, and that these presentiments as to the future should sometimes be damped and almost smothered by the contrary events of the present and only blaze out fitfully was what might have been expected.

The attempt to gather together the religious ideas of Isaiah at this the earliest period of his career is an ungrateful task. His thoughts are felt in their true meaning only in the connexions in which he expresses them; tabulated and classified they lose their power, as much as the gorgeous insect is stripped of its glory when exhibited with a pin stuck through it in some collection. The prophets speak about God, His people, and the future of mankind.

i. What we find in Isaiah and the earlier

prophets is not strictly a doctrine of God, but of Jehovah, God of Israel. The origin and meaning of the name Jehovah is obscure. The same is true of all the divine names, such as God (*el, elohim*) ; they are common to most of the Shemitic peoples, but of uncertain meaning. Other names, such as Baal, Adonai, Molech, are plainer, and mean lord, sovereign, king. This idea of king is the prevailing one, and it is Isaiah's. The prophet's first words are, "I saw Adonai sitting on a throne, high and lifted up." It was Adonai, not his throne, that was high. Again he says, "Mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts" (ver. 5). The term "holy" with which the seraphim adore Jehovah is not at first, at least, a moral term. Its primary meaning and derivation are entirely uncertain, but it is a word that describes Jehovah as transcendent, as God in the absolute sense. The transcendence is not merely physical, but also moral, whether this idea had only come to be imported into the word or not, for the prophet anticipates death from being brought into the presence of Jehovah, not because he is a creature, but because he is sinful : "Woe is me, I perish ; for being a man of unclean lips, mine eyes have seen the King." The seraphim exclaim, "The whole earth is full of His glory." It is bad grammar and sensational exegesis to turn the expression round and render, "The fulness of the whole earth is His glory," meaning that everything or all that exists on the earth is a token, or an instance, or an element, of His glory (cf. ch. viii. 8, last words). What the "glory" of Jehovah is may not be easy to say. Probably men could not help thinking of Him at first as something physical, as surrounded with light or composed of it : "The light of Israel shall become a fire" (ch. x. 17 ; cf. Ps. civ. 2). But by and by the glory of Jehovah, just like His "name," became little else than a circumlocution for Jehovah Himself, though perhaps still with a shade of the primary notion, and the cry of the seraphim is, Jehovah fills the universe.

In the later prophets, the idea of Jehovah being the Creator becomes prominent, and many other doctrines, such as the unity of mankind, the extension of the kingdom of Jehovah over all nations, and the transfiguration of nature, appear as deductions from this idea, or at least the idea is used to confirm these beliefs. In the older prophets, the prevailing idea is that Jehovah is the Ruler. But even in them their conceptions, whether religious

or moral, are already fixed. The genesis of the conceptions lies much further back ; if anything is new, it is only the application of the conceptions and their extension over new regions. When contact with the Assyrian empire gave men the new idea of a world-power, the prophets' conception of Jehovah did not alter, it was only more widely applied, the King of Jacob became the King of the world.

The power of Jehovah over nature is unlimited. "I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard : . . . I will command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it" (ch. v. 5, 6). He offers Ahaz a sign, bidding him ask it in the heavens above, or in the depths beneath. The physical world from one pole to the other is open to his wishes. When Jehovah appears in His majesty and reveals Himself to the world, He shakes terribly the earth. He has a "day" on everything that is high, the oaks of Bashan, the mountains, the high towers. But it is in history and among men that His rule is most manifest. He pipes to the fly that is in the ends of the rivers of Egypt, and to the bee that is in the land of Assyria, and their swarming hosts answer to His call and settle down in Judah, which becomes the battleground where opposing empires contend for supremacy (ch. vii. 18). He "lifts up a signal to the nations from far, and pipes to them from the end of the earth ; and, behold, they come with speed swiftly" (ch. v. 26). When Jehovah's signal is recognised the nations hurry towards it, it is their loss that they do not always recognise the signal to be Jehovah's. The Assyrian is but the "rod of His anger," which he wields and flings away when His end is served with it. "Syria hath counselled evil against Thee, Ephraim also, and the son of Remaliah . . . thus saith Jehovah God, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass" (ch. vii. 5). Jehovah is the only fact in the universe, all else are but shadows which follow Him when He moves : "The Lord of hosts purposeth, and who shall disannul it? His hand is the outstretched, and who shall turn it back?" (ch. xiv. 27). Men and nations are moved like pawns upon a board. "The Egyptians are men and not God, their horses are flesh and not spirit." And it is not merely external movements that He animates, He enters into the minds of men and operates there. He pours out upon the people a spirit of deep sleep, closes their eyes and covers their heads (ch. xxix. 10). The terrible revolutionary passions

which rend the northern kingdom are but the insanity which He inspires : "they eat every man the flesh of his own arm : Manasseh, Ephraim ; and Ephraim, Manasseh : and both together are against Judah" (ch. ix. 20). They have drunk of the cup of Jehovah's wrath, which maddens them like a drug.

Jehovah is a moral Ruler whom men serve, rather than a God whom they worship. He gets sanctification "in righteousness" (ch. v. 6). There is an element of severity and of the terrible in the prophet's conception of Jehovah. At His revelation of Himself to the world, which cannot but yet be, men hide themselves in the rocks and in the holes of the earth from before the terror of the Lord, and from the glory of His majesty (ch. ii. 19). "Call nothing a conspiracy which this people calls a conspiracy, neither fear ye their fear. The Lord of hosts . . . let Him be your fear, and let Him be your dread" (ch. viii. 12). The true object of terror is He who is within Israel, not the hostile combinations of men without. Judgment can hardly be said to be the Lord's strange work, at least in one sense, though it is in another. The prophets threaten judgment with such monotony that we are sometimes tempted to ask, Is judgment the only weapon in the Lord's armoury? Yet when we consider how the judgments foretold by the prophets were more than fulfilled, a certain awe comes over us, and the feeling that we have not yet sounded the deeps of this history of the people Israel. The Lord complains, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me." And this is also the view which the prophets take of Israel's past. There lies behind them a long gracious history, filled with redemptive wonders—wonders in Egypt and the sea, manna and water from the rock in the wilderness, and the "wars of Jehovah" which gave them Canaan, and the greatest wonder of all, His choosing them to be His people, and His teaching them His law. To the prophets all these things were real, and if they had not the modern idea of "miracle," as they had no idea of "nature" and of natural law, the things were no less wonders. But the goodness of God had not led the people to repentance, and nothing remained but severity. Yet this certain foreboding of disaster is something inexplicable, though it is just the characteristic of the canonical prophets. And that it was so was seen even at that time, for Jeremiah regards it as the note of the true prophet that the prophecies

ruin. Such a prophet needs no other authentication.

What Jehovah is, is better seen from that which He requires of men than from what He Himself is said to be. He requires not only righteousness, but compassion, pity, tenderness. The orphan and the widow are His special care. And when the kingdom is the Lord's, the Messiah's rule will be specially exercised in behalf of the poor and the meek of the earth. Such a being as the prophet conceives Jehovah to be can have no peers. The idols are "nonentities," fit only to be flung to the moles and the bats.

2. In all things Jehovah is first and the people second, He is the type to which they must answer. Morals is but the obverse side of religion. Jehovah is the moral idea personified. The ultimate sanction of morality is Jehovah's will, Jehovah's example. Not, of course, that men in doing what was right always felt this. The external will of the Lord had, so to speak, furbished into brightness the half-effaced characters written already on the mind of men; He had been so long immanent in Israel that it had to some degree taken on His characteristics, and certain deeds were "folly in Israel." From the earliest time that we find men passing moral judgment on actions, they do not refer to any external standard, but judge of their own minds. Nevertheless, ultimately, all is referred to Jehovah, the sacred customs coming down from the past, immemorial consuetudinary practice, even the traditional laws of husbandry—"this also cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working" (ch. xxviii. 29).

Jehovah in all things going before with His pre-venient activity—not as the author of a "revelation," not as the giver of a "law," but as a living, moral person, feeling, speaking, operating, leading on the history and life of the people, and inspiring it with His spirit, what was required, as has been said, from the people was a response on their part as broad as this activity of His. This response was righteousness. It embraced both mind and conduct. It is but different phraseology when this response to Jehovah's operations is called Faith, and faith is called righteousness. Subtle distinctions between faith and practice, between a faith inoperative and a faith realising itself in conduct, would not occur to practical men like the prophets. These are but dialectical distinctions, "the theme

of writers"; a faith without works is a thing as fabulous as the chimera. This response to Jehovah in all His operations in the history of the people and of individual men is the essence of true religion, and the prophet is never weary insisting upon it. To Ahaz he says, "If ye will not believe, ye shall not be established" (ch. vii. 9), and to the people, "Come, and let us reason together; if your sins should be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow" (ch. i. 18). And of himself he says, "I will trust in Jehovah, who hideth His face from the house of Israel, and will wait for Him" (ch. viii. 17). And the same note is heard throughout all the prophecies: "They that are escaped of the house of Jacob shall stay upon the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, in truth" (ch. x. 20). "In that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall be toward the Holy One of Israel" (chs. xvii. 7, xxxi. 15, xxxi. 1-3).

And naturally, sin is just failure to respond to Jehovah, insensibility to the presence and the operations of the living God in the life of the people. The prophet does not go behind this insensibility, or seek to account for it. He takes the state of things as he finds it. Everywhere in events he himself hears the sound of Jehovah's goings, and sees the operations of His hands; but the ears of the people are heavy, their eyes smeared, and their hearts fat. Recognition of God in their history has become impossible to them, it is like bringing a book and saying, Read this, to a man who does not know letters. This insensibility is the parent of that formalism and externalism in the service of Jehovah, which He is weary to bear. Their religion was traditional rote, with no personality in it. Further, when the sense of Jehovah, God over all, no more lies upon the heart of man it exalts itself. Insensibility to God passes into pride of self; and it is this form of sin that the prophet specially assails. The Lord "will punish the fruit of the proud heart of the king of Assyria,

and the glory of his high looks" (ch. x. 7). It is the "pride of heart" of the people of Samaria that brings His chastisements upon them; and it is "because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with outstretched necks," that He will make them hideous and loathsome.

3. In the prophet's outlook into the future there is a nearer and a more distant horizon. The exquisite passage, ch. ii. 1-4, which must be admitted to be in tone unlike the prophet's other utterances at this period, belongs to the more distant, and also ch. iv. 2 *seq.* They describe the morn which rises clear and peaceful over all the world when the storm of judgment has spent itself. This storm-cloud bounds the nearer horizon. To the prophet, judgment on men's sin appears inevitable. Their insensibility to the living Ruler must be broken in upon. The Lord will reveal Himself in His majesty. And realising His manifestation as actually breaking upon the world, the prophet exclaims to men, "Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust from before the terror of the Lord, and from the glory of His majesty. The lofty looks of man shall be brought low, and the haughtiness of man shall be bowed down, and Jehovah alone shall be exalted on that day" (ch. ii. 10, 11). So powerful is the prophet's conception of the majesty of Jehovah, and the recognition due to it from men, that their insensibility awakens a certain animosity in his mind, and he represents the Lord interposing among men, and with a kind of indiscriminate and ironical fury putting an end to all distinctions of rank among them, and reducing society to a chaos by removing every one whom men called great, and in whom they trusted: "The Lord of hosts shall remove the stay and staff; the mighty man and the man of war; the judge, and the prophet, and the diviner, and the elder" (ch. iii. 1 *seq.*) Every head that rose above the mass shall be smitten down. Cease ye from man, for wherein is he to be accounted of!