

THE MINOR PROPHETS.

Each prophet had a gift of his own. His natural talents were not superseded, but were used by the Spirit who inspired him, and men of every grade and of every turn of mind found themselves suitably addressed.

Isaiah is chronologically the first of the minor prophets, ministering about 865 years before Christ. Hear his words. They poor forth a flood of desolation on the land, but at the same time declare what might be gotten instead. As he is the first, the very first prophet since David, whose works were committed to writing, how interesting it is to find in him the prediction of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Jonah then appears, B. C. 810. In him we see a prophet who shrank from his awfully swelling burden; but we also see in him how the Lord can use whom he will, and effect what he will. He is the prophet of Nineveh, blessed to awaken a mighty metropolis by a few and feeble words. He is himself a monument of the Lord's grace to the rebellious, and his success is not the less so.

Amos, a few years after, lifts up his voice suddenly among the ten tribes; while Jonah is sent from Galilee to Nineveh, Amos is sent from Judah to the kingdom of Israel. And there he appears a shepherd and a stranger, yet a man of power, speaking to Israel in words alluring with rural glow, while his theme is the Lord's righteous judgments.

Soon is he followed by Hosea, whose blasts against the backslider are like notes of Sinar's trumpet, waxing louder and louder, ever abrupt and startling. He too traversed the ten tribes, and exhibiting to them their God, unwilling to punish, but by no means clearing the guilty.

About 730 B. C., Micah appeared in Judah, contemporary with Isaiah, and possessing much of his his texture of mind, and even more sensitive tenderness, Mercy as well as judgment are his theme, and we leave him in the attitude of one wrapt in adoring love at the view of the God whom he proclaims to his fellow sinners; "Who is a God like unto thee?" &c.

Nahum, whom some fancied a dweller in Capernaum, at all events a Galilean, prophesied B. C., 710. In him we see how men of Galilee—how James and John—might be truly "sons of thunder." He is the prophet that announces Nineveh's doom; and never were thunder-claps heard more terrible than in his message. No Greek tragedian ever approached his sublimity of style. Let us stay for a moment and hear him describing the entering in of the foe at the breach in the walls:

"They are hearing; Stop, stop! but gone through back, Plunder the silver, plunder the gold— There is no end to the store; There is abundance of all covetable vessel— Emptiness, and emptiness, and void; Heart-melting, and tottering of knees; There is intense pain in all joints, And all faces withdraw their colour."

Ch. ii. 10, 11. Dr. Henderson's Trans.

Or stay one moment longer to see him painting the besiegers pouring into the city. His language so arrested Jerome, (see Henderson,) that he despaired of translating it, and every critic has spoken of it as unrivalled:—

"The sound of the whip, and the sound of the rattling of the wheels; The horses prancing, and chariots bounding; The mounting of horsemen, the gleaming of swords; The lightning of spears, The multitude of slain, And the mass of corpses; There is no end to the carcases— They stumble over their carcases."

Ch. iii. 2, 3. Henderson's Trans.

It is probable that Nahum uttered his prophecies among the ten tribes. About 630 B. C., in Judah, Zephaniah arose, a man of God in spirit like Jeremiah, and contemporary with him. Both he and Jeremiah began to prophesy, it is thought, in the reign of tender-hearted King Josiah. This points out the moral causes of Jerusalem's ruin. It would add interest to his history, if it could be proved, from chap. i. 1, that he was great-grandson to good King Hezekiah.

But seldom has a more rapt prophet appeared than the next we meet—Habakkuk. It is likely he was a Levite, if not even one of the singers of Israel (iii. 1, 19), and it may have been in one of his watchings by night in the house of the Lord, (ii. 1,) that he received his message. We feel him to be a prophet in the position of watchfulness and expectation—his loins girt, his lamp burning, his soul calm and happy. His magnificent strains set before us God our gladness in times of sin, and trial, and judgement.

It was about his time, or somewhere probably about 600 B. C., that Obadiah was heard,

perhaps in the temple, denouncing Edom's doom. He is the prophet of Edom, (soaring, like the eagle, above the rocky dwellings, and darting down upon them with his message of woe. Sin against the brethren is the burthen of his prophecy.

After this, the seventy years' captivity came on. And at the return from Babylon, Haggai appeared with his five messages, delivered with interrogatory vehemence to selfish men.

Zephaniah, like another Ezekiel, full of both clear and dark sayings, stands beside him, dealing with the destiny of Israel, and exhibiting them at last under the happy booths of the feast of tabernacles.

Malachi closed the whole. He is the prophet who gives "a last lingering look at the Mosaic dispensation." The sins of Israel and their future hopes are set before them, and then we are suddenly left by the prophet in expectation of some scene yet to arise. The Jews call him the "seal of the prophets," because with him ends the line of prophets until the Baptist arose, breaking the silence of four centuries, and ushering in "the prophet like unto Moses."—Presbyterian Review.

Tears Wiped Away.

"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Tears are the visible and affecting expressions of distress, and therefore, to say there shall be no more tears, is to say that all those causes of sorrow which exist in the present world shall be eternally removed. The text therefore adds, "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying;" because these are the causes which rend the hearts of men, and suffice their eyes with tears.

There shall be no more tears of separation. The longest and most painful separations are those which are caused by death; and what eye has not been dimmed with tears by this? He must have been unhappy indeed—over whose unmoistened grave no tears are shed, and whose death has occasioned no regrets. But the number of these is few. Death rends all hearts. When Joseph died, the children of Israel wept sore. "My father! my father!" exclaimed Elisha, when Elijah was taken away from him. "O my son Absalom! O Absalom, my son, my son!" said the much-loved David, as he "went up to the chamber over the gate," that he might weep alone. And when his friend Lazarus died, "Jesus wept." Well; be it so. To weep and to be wept is the irreversible decree as to man below; but then, so much the more welcome the state we hope for. A great voice is heard out of heaven, "And there shall be no more death."—The sight would be a blot in the tabernacle of God. The rigid limb, the silent pulse, the breathless lip, the palid cheek, the fixed and darkened eye,—these, these are not scenes for heaven. But this is the decree: "There shall be no more death." This shall restore and perpetuate your friendships, and wipe the tears of separation away forever.

And with the tears of separation pass away all these which pain wrings from the tortured body, or sorrow from the wounded spirit.—Martyrs, you have been racked and torn, but there is now no more pain for you; for, like your Master, you have exchanged your crown of thorns for a crown of glory. Patient sufferers from disease, you could weep, though you could not murmur; but wearisome nights are no longer appointed you. Nor does the spirit, full charged with its inward griefs, pour the flood into the eyes. No publican here smites on his breast, exclaiming, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" No Peter; the cowardly denier of his Lord, goes out to weep bitterly. No tears of shame and grief are shed over barrenness of spirit, and hardness of heart. Zion no longer cries, "The Lord hath forgotten me." "There shall be neither sorrow nor crying, nor any more pain."

And we may add, that there shall not be even tears of joy. For what do they suppose? The joy which finds relief in tears supposes a previous anguish, and that the change from one state to another shakes the feebleness of mortality. Or it supposes that we are so unused to strong emotions, that our measure of joy is soon filled up; that even the bliss of earth may be too copious for the contracted vessel of our hearts, and therefore so easily overflows in tears. But there shall be no such alterations in heaven; nor will the capacity for blessedness be thus limited. Joy will not be so much a stranger that we shall weep at meeting it. It will be a habit, not accident. It will be, not the transient flash, which dazzles, overpowers, and disappears, but the fixed and steady element in which we shall live forever.

And the text gives the reason of all this: "The former things are passed away." And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new." How impressive and sublime is the scene thus presented! Under the throne of Him who is arrayed in the glory of the Father, lie heaven and earth, the present seat of death, sorrow, and pain. He speaks, and they vanish, and "the former things are passed away." He speaks again, and a new heaven and earth spring into being: "The tabernacle of God is with men;" and he that sitteth upon the throne saith, "Behold, I make all things new." What a dream will then our earthly sufferings and labors, our joys and our sorrows appear! They have passed away, and a new world opens to our view to abide forever.

"With joy the sailor long by tempest tost, Spreads all his canvas for the distant coast; With joy the hind, his daily labor done, Sees the broad shadows and the setting sun; With joy the slave, worn out with tedious woes, Beholds the bliss that liberty bestows."

And if the sailor, thus joys, though the tempest must be again braved; and the laborer, though to-morrow's sun must awaken him to new labors, and shine again on the fetters of the slave; what is that joy, when the howl of the last tempest sinks upon the ear, when the last labor is completed, and our chains fall off forever! Behold, he creates all things new! The heavens are new, the earth new, the body new, the spirit new, society new, circumstances new; and new for this reason, that all is perfect, and all unchangeable.—Watson's Sermons.

Danger of Striving for Riches.

Riches got by deceit cheat no man so much as the getter. Riches bought with guile, God will pay for with vengeance. Riches got by fraud are dug out of one's own heart, and destroy the mine. Unjust riches curse the owner in getting, in keeping, in transmitting. They curse his children in their father's memory, in their own wasteful habits, in drawing around them all bad men to be their companions.

While I do not discourage your search for wealth, I warn you that it is not a cruise upon level seas, and under bland skies. You advance where ten thousand are broken in pieces before they reach the mart; where those who reach it are worn out by their labors past enjoying their riches. You seek a land pleasant to the sight, but dangerous to the feet; a land of fragrant winds, which lull to security; of golden fruits which are poisonous, of glorious hues which dazzle and mislead.

You may be rich and be pure; but it will cost you a struggle. You may be rich and go to heaven, but ten, doubtless, will sink beneath their riches, where one breaks through them to heaven. If you have entered this shining way, begin to look for snares and traps. Go not careless of your danger, and provoking it. See, on every side of you, how many there are who seal God's Word with their blood:—

"They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men to destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."—Rev. H. W. Beecher.

President Edward's Christian Experience.

Once, as I rode out into the woods for my health, in 1738, having alighted from my horse in a retired place, as my manner commonly has been, to walk for divine contemplation and prayer, I had a view that for me was extraordinary, of the glory of the Son of God, as mediator between God and man, and his wonderful, great, full, pure and sweet grace and love, and meek and gentle condescension. This grace that appeared so calm and sweet, appeared also great above the heavens. The person of Christ appeared ineffably excellent, with an excellency great enough to swallow up all thought and conception, which continued, as near as I can judge, about an hour; which kept me the greater part of the time in a flood of tears, and weeping aloud. I felt an ardency of soul to be, what I know not otherwise how to express, emptied and annihilated; to lie in the dust, and to be full of Christ alone; to love him with a holy and pure love, to trust in him, to live upon him, to serve and follow him, and to be perfectly sanctified and made pure, with a divine and heavenly purity. I have several other times had views very much of the same nature, and which have had the same effects. God by the communications of his Holy Spirit, has appeared as an infinite fountain of

divine glory and sweetness; being full, sufficient to fill and satisfy the soul; pouring forth itself in sweet communications like the sun in its glory, sweetly and pleasantly diffusing light and life.

Calvin on the Fire and the Worm.

With many people (says the Southern Presbyterian) Calvin is but another name for all that is stern and terrific. The following quotation from his writings, whatever may be thought of the correctness or incorrectness of his interpretation of the passage under consideration, (Matt. iii. 12,) will at least serve to show how much the real spirit of this man of God has been misunderstood:

"Many persons, I am aware, have entered into ungenerous debates about the eternal fire by which the wicked will be tormented after the judgment. But we may conclude from many passages of Scripture, that it is a metaphorical expression. For, if we must believe that it is real, or what we call material fire, we must also believe that the brimstone and the fan are material, both of them being mentioned by Isaiah. For Tophet is ordained of old; the pile thereof is fire and much wood; the breath of the Lord, like a stream of brimstone, doth kindle it. Isa. xxx. 33. We must explain the fire in the same manner as the worm, (Mark viii. 44, 46, 43,) and if it is universally agreed that the worm is a metaphorical term, we must form the same opinion as to the fire. Let us lay aside the speculations by which foolish men weary themselves to no purpose, and satisfy ourselves with believing that these forms of speech denote, in a manner suited to our feeble capacity, a dreadful torment, which no man can now comprehend, and no language can express."—[Calvin's Harmony of the Gospels, Vol. 1., pp. 200, 201.]

Hints on Sermon Making.

In one of the lectures addressed to his students on the composition of sermons, Dr. Stanford says: I cannot deny myself the pleasure of stating, that many years ago I met with a plain yet good old minister, who in conversation with me on the subject of the composition of a sermon, very pleasantly said, "I know of no better rule than the proportions observable in the structure of the human body. Let your introduction be short, like the head of the man, round; and full of expression. Make up the body of your sermon of the solids of divine truth; but be sure that Christ be the heart, and the Spirit of God like the lungs, to produce respiration. The legs to run after every class of your hearers; and a pair of arms tenderly to embrace them." This may appear to you a little fanciful, but I must confess, however singular and descriptive, yet to my mind it seemed worthy of being remembered.

Live for Something.

Thousands of men breathe, move, and live—pass off the stage of life and are heard of no more. Why? They did not a particle of good in the world; and none were blest by them, none could point to them as the instruments of their redemption; not a line they wrote, not a word they spoke could be recalled, and so they perished, their light went out in darkness, and they were not remembered more than the insects of yesterday. Will you thus live and die, O man immortal!—Live for something. Do good and leave behind you a monument of virtue that the storm of time can never destroy. Write your name by kindness, love and mercy, on the hearts of the thousands you come in contact with year by year, and you will never be forgotten. No, your name, your deeds, will be as legible on the hearts you leave behind as the stars on the brow of evening. Good deeds will shine as brightly on the earth as the stars of heaven.—Dr. Chalmers.

Magic of A Word.

Mother is a word to which every bosom responds. It finds its way to our hearts in our youth, and retains its hold upon us in our age. If fathers are looked up to for precept, principle, and example, mothers are relied on for tenderness and enduring affection. Fathers are strongholds of safety; mothers are sources of love and consolation. The word mother is as a soft balmy breeze coming up from the valley, sweet, soothing, and grateful; cooling the fevered brow, calming the ruffled spirit, and tranquilizing the agitated heart. What voice was ever like the tender, soft, voice of a mother?

"The lips of the righteous feed many; but fools die for want of wisdom."