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J. Kitching.
April 71.

THE
PROPHET JEREMIAH:
A BIBLE STUDY.

BY
DR. J. KITCHING.

REPRINTED FROM THE
"FRIENDS' QUARTERLY EXAMINER."

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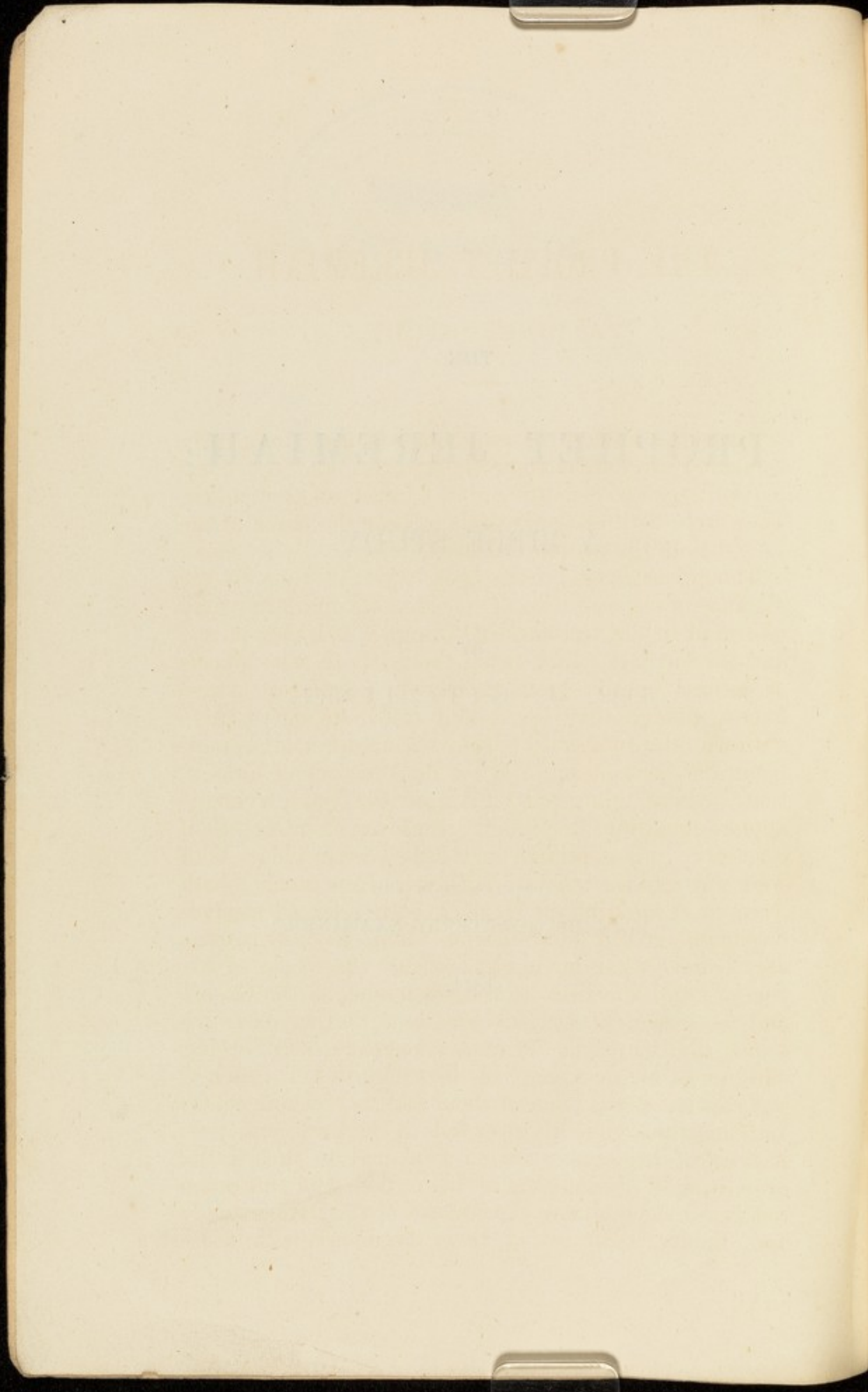
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THE PROPHET JEREMIAH,

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JEREMIAH among the prophets has been frequently compared to Paul among the apostles, and the comparison seems to be borne out in a variety of particulars. They were both chosen vessels to bear the name of the Lord before the people and before kings.

Though separated from each other in time by the distance of six centuries, a considerable similarity may be traced in the vicissitudes through which they passed and the fortunes which befell them. Both were objects of intense enmity from their own people, at whose hands, though they loved and strove to serve them with the utmost devotion, they endured much ill-treatment and persecution. What Paul records of himself, that he was "in perils by mine own countrymen," applies equally to Jeremiah. Both were beaten—Paul certainly, and Jeremiah probably—with rods; both were put into the stocks; both were imprisoned; both were in "tumults oft"; they both held themselves disencumbered of domestic ties—Paul, we may reasonably believe, that he might dedicate the whole of his energies and affections to the preaching of the Gospel and the spread of Christ's kingdom; Jeremiah, as we know, that he might not experience the grief of seeing children of his own share in the calamities of a sacked and captive city. Each of them had to proclaim views and doctrines violently opposed to the pride and prejudices of his countrymen. One had to preach the overthrow of the religion of his nation, and the other to foretell the temporary overthrow of the nation itself; and, finally, both sealed their testimony with their

blood. These points of accordance are found in their outward lives ; but their inner life, as betrayed in their respective writings, is not without numerous and interesting harmonies. Both are eminently subjective, and it is in a large measure owing to this subjectivity, that so much of their personal history is interwoven with the great themes on which they were respectively engaged. Whilst pursuing with unflinching zeal and fortitude the high commission with which they were entrusted, and braving every eventuality to which it might lead them, they were keenly alive to the suffering which it entailed. Whilst willingly incurring the loss of all things, they were fully sensible of the extent of that loss. Owing to their ready sympathies and quick emotions, they were both peculiarly amenable to the influence of external circumstances, and the feelings entertained towards them by their fellow-men.

But here we are on the threshold of a marked diversity between the two men. Paul was the disseminator of the glad tidings of life and immortality, and he foresaw a glorious future of blissful eternity beckoning him onwards and sustaining him through every trial. Hence he soon rose in triumphant ecstasy above the gloom of present woe. He sang praises in the dungeon and the stocks of Philippi. There was more of elasticity and enthusiasm in his constitution than in that of Jeremiah. The latter was more disheartened by adversity, and even on one occasion was so thoroughly depressed as to curse the day on which he was born. These traits in the character of the Prophet render his writings peculiarly interesting in a biographical point of view, and it is to them that we are indebted for some interesting details of his personal history. We know more of him as a man, and of his feelings in the trials he endured, than of any other prophet. His inner life is shown with a simplicity and pathos which link the favoured seer by common sympathies to the universal brotherhood of

man. Living, as he did, in the exalted regions of Divine communion, he was still keenly alive to the treatment he received from his fellow-men.

Whilst our admiration is freely accorded to the conscientious faithfulness with which he fulfilled his prophetic and ministerial functions, he engages our deep sympathies for the strain and trial to his natural disposition which those functions occasioned. He was of a shy and retiring disposition, constitutionally addicted to melancholy, and especially adapted to dwell on what is gloomy and discouraging; and his writings show a remarkable power of describing scenes of woe and desolation, and depicting the sombre and suffering phases of human experience.

The vicissitudes and distresses of his own life are vividly reflected in the colour with which he paints the moral landscape of his time. The gentleness and susceptibility of his mind are too prominent to be concealed even amid the greatness of the national catastrophe of which he was the herald and martyr. We see this description strikingly exemplified if we contrast the narrative of Daniel with that of Jeremiah.

The sublime equanimity of Daniel holds him in sustained attention to the overruling providence of God, even in the midst of events attended with the severest trials to himself. When he is cast into the lions' den, though he spares a thought for the feelings of the king, he has none for himself as the chief sufferer. When Jeremiah passes through an ordeal less critical, he introduces into his narrative details highly suggestive of the personal suffering he endured, such as that he sank into the mud at the bottom of the pit, and that he was hoisted up by padded ropes passed under his arms. Daniel's majestic narrative simply states, that he was "taken up out of the den." No doubt he was cast into it with as little tenderness, even if he was taken up with more than his contemporary.

These personal details add very much to the charm of Jeremiah's writings. They supply a want which we all feel in reference to men chosen by God as the vehicles of his inspiration. We want to know what sort of men they were, and whether they felt like ourselves, and the social incidents which befell them. This kind of curiosity is especially quickened in regard to the prophets and heroes in the Holy Scriptures, who seem, by their spiritual loftiness, so far removed from the sphere of ordinary men.

Who does not greatly enjoy the glimpse given us in the Gospels of the personal appearance of John the Baptist by the mention of his raiment—no soft clothing, but a garment of camel's hair and a "leathern girdle about his loins."

It is not, however, in view of such details that the following pages are written, but with that of presenting the life and labours of Jeremiah in a rather more connected review than we have them in his own writings, in order that we may realise a little more clearly what kind of life some of these "prophets and holy men of old" had to pass. The history of Jeremiah offers a good illustration of what is said in the Epistle to the Hebrews of those heroes and martyrs, "of whom the world was not worthy;" of their grand old faith rising bright and steadfast over all the sufferings of this life, whilst their eyes were steadfastly fixed on that city "which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God."

Jeremiah lived in stormy and troublous times, and his public life as a prophet and preacher extended over a period of forty years. He began his career when a young man, in the reign of Josiah, and outlived the four succeeding kings and the downfall of the kingdom.

There is evidently considerable disarrangement in the order of the writings as they are now placed,

looking at them in a chronological point of view. Though it cannot be ascertained in what order Jeremiah published his writings, it is certain that the Divine messages were delivered in a different order to that which they now occupy. The first twenty chapters contain discourses delivered during the reign of Josiah. The king who reigned next after Josiah was Jehoahaz; then followed Jehoiakim, Jeconiah, and Zedekiah. Jehoahaz and Jeconiah are not mentioned as reigning by the Prophet, probably on account of the shortness of their reigns. "Several chapters, however, are occupied with the time of Jehoiakim, and yet we find chapter xxi. dealing with the affairs of Zedekiah, who succeeded him. Again, instead of continuing what relates to Jehoiakim, and his brothers Jehoahaz and Jeconiah, in chapters xxii. and xxiii., by inserting the section contained in xxv., which is especially referred to the fourth of Jehoiakim, we find, in chapter xxiv. 8, 10, a prediction belonging to the time of Zedekiah. We have, likewise, chapters xxvii., xxviii., xxix., xxxiii., and xxxiv., referred to the reign of Zedekiah, whereas chapters xxxv. and xxxvi. relate to transactions which occurred in the reign of Jehoiakim. There is also the introduction of a passage, chapter xlv., dated from the fourth of Jehoiakim, after the predictions relating to the Jews who had fled to Egypt subsequent to the destruction of Jerusalem. With these exceptions, however, there is a general consecutiveness in the arrangements of the contents of the book."—*Henderson*.

The only other fact which I need notice in reference to this subject is, that there is a great discrepancy between the order of the chapters as they exist in the Hebrew Bible and in the Septuagint.

A little attention to the chronology, as elucidated by the above remarks, will enable us to follow the eventful career of the Prophet, from his first entry

on public life in his youth to its close in his old age.

Jeremiah was of the tribe of Levi, and was born at Anathoth, one of the three cities of the tribe of Benjamin, which were given to the sons of Aaron (1 Chron. vi. 60). He inherited the priestly office from his father, Hilkiah. At what age he began the public office of his ministry is not stated. It was in the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign, and that he was young is evident from the manner in which he answered the summons of his Divine Master. "Ah! Lord God," said he, "behold I cannot speak, for I am a child." The Lord was not displeased with this outburst of youthful modesty. He showed his chosen servant that he was not to be sent forth in his own strength, but that he should be qualified for the part he was required to act, how arduous soever it might be. The Lord put forth his hand and touched his mouth, imparting, with that act, the substance and power of the Holy Spirit: "Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth." Strength and courage were imparted to him at the same time, so that he became as "a defenced city, an iron pillar and brazen walls against the whole land." Thus fortified with a power not his own, the timid and shrinking youth issued forth to deliver those bold warnings, and thrust home those withering reproofs which soon brought upon him the fulfilment of God's declaration—"And they shall fight against thee but they shall not prevail against thee, for I am with thee to deliver thee."

Nothing can more forcibly present to us the transforming influences of the gifts and graces imparted by this Divine touch to Jeremiah than the first public act which followed it. He presented himself in the streets of Jerusalem, addressing the people with the most uncompromising plainness, sternly reproofing their ingratitude to God, denouncing their idolatry, and

threatening them with the doom which must inevitably follow a continuance in their sins. Scarcely can a grander scene be presented to our contemplation, than the stripling Prophet, untrammelled by his native shyness and modesty, and arrayed in the majesty of Divine strength, denouncing, in language sublime in its simplicity, but terrible in its force, the impiety of the people and the displeasure of their God. The delivery of public addresses, varying in their contents according to the instructions of the Holy Spirit, appears to have formed, for many years, the great duty of his life. In these sermons he spared neither the people nor their leaders. After describing the gross sensuality of the people, he comes to the fearful climax in the general corruption :—

“A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so; and what will ye do in the end thereof?” (ch. v. 30, 31.) “From the least of them even to the greatest of them, every one is given to covetousness, and from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.” (vi. 13.) Sometimes, he was ordered to occupy a particular station for the delivery of his addresses, when the subject of his discourses might derive solemnity and force from its connection with the locality. Christ once entered into the temple, and telling the people that they had made it a den of thieves, drove them out with a whip of small cords. His words on that occasion had reference to Jeremiah, who six hundred years before, had been commanded to stand by the gate of the Lord’s house and address to those who entered it these words :—“Is this house which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the Lord.”—vii. 11. His early ministrations had been confined to Jerusalem, but they soon assumed a larger

scope, and he was ordered to travel through the cities of Judah, and proclaim God's truth to the people at large. He thus added the duties of a missionary to those of a stationary preacher. Whether the extension of the area of his labours was connected with any political event or religious crisis, it is not of importance to enquire. There is nothing on the face of the narrative to refute the idea that it might be connected with the finding of the Book of the Law in the recesses of the temple, when that sacred edifice was repaired by Josiah. The mention of "this covenant" which occurs in the Prophet's address, very probably alludes to some portion of the Pentateuch which the preacher had with him. Adam Clarke is of opinion that the missionary journey was undertaken in the reign of Zedekiah, which would throw it some years later than the period to which the context refers. At whatever time it was performed, it was in pursuance of the Divine command, and afforded another proof of that Divine solicitude for the welfare of the people which is so touchingly commemorated in Chron. 2, xxxvi. 15—"And the Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes and sending them, because he had compassion on his people and his dwelling-place; but they mocked the messengers of God and despised his words, and misused his prophets until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people till there was no remedy."

The impressions which God desired to produce, were not left to the unassisted force of words. Jeremiah was directed to employ certain symbolisms which had so peculiar a significance to the Jewish mind. This mode of inculcating important truths had been familiar to them from the earliest times. They were thoroughly initiated into the language of symbol and metaphor as a medium for the conveyance of prophecy. From the seven fat kine and seven lean kine of Pha-

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raoh's dream, to the almond tree and seething pot of Jeremiah, every kind of symbol met with intelligent apprehension from this poetic and fable-loving people. The special symbolism which Jeremiah was now called upon to employ, required the devotion of much labour and time. He was commanded to procure a linen girdle or sash, and wear it round his loins till it was dirty. He was not to have it washed, but when he had worn it till it was unfit for longer use, he was to travel to the river Euphrates and conceal it in a hollow of the rocks on the banks of that river. Having done this and returned home the injunction came, "after many days," that he should return to the Euphrates and fetch the girdle. The distance from Jerusalem to Babylon or its neighbourhood, which would be the nearest point where he would strike the Euphrates, could not be less than from four to five hundred miles. This journey had to be performed twice, and when we take into account the difficulties of the way, the two expeditions must have imposed upon him a large amount of labour and hardships. In modern times a similar undertaking accomplished in pursuance of a Divine call would be described at length in a voluminous biography. In the instance of Jeremiah, the two journeys involving a weary travel of 2,000 miles are succinctly related in four short verses. Some Annotators lean to the view that by Euphrates is implied a certain town or place such as Ephratah or Bethlehem. They adopt this idea to escape the difficulty of the two long journeys, confessing, at the same time, that the word employed means, in all other places, the river Euphrates. We may, therefore, safely conclude that these long pilgrimages were literally performed, especially as it is consistent with the habits of the Scripture-writers to pass over great events or laborious deeds in a few simple words. The length of the journey and the time needful for its performance,

may be held to form material elements in the significance of the transaction. Whether this be the case or not, we cannot but admire the dramatic force of the whole, and the completeness of each part of this extraordinary parable. When the Prophet dug the girdle out of the hole in which he had concealed it, it was "marred." The damp to which it had been exposed had caused it to mildew. It had become foul and loathsome, so that no man would choose to bind it round him. It represented the Jewish people. When new and clean, it had been in close proximity to the body of the Prophet, as the Jews had been admitted to the presence and favour of their God—but now that they had become corrupt through disobedience and idolatry, they had become unlovely in the Divine sight, and were to be sent into a distant country where their beauty should be marred. The humiliation to which their sins were bringing them could scarcely be more strongly put before them. This lesson lost nothing of its force by the way in which Jeremiah applied it. In the discourse which he addressed to the people on this occasion, he breaks out into one of those exquisite touches of poetry so familiar to his lips and pen, "Give glory to the Lord your God before He cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, He turn it into the shadow of death and make it gross darkness." (Ch. xiii. 16.) Richness of imagination and fertility of illustration characterise Jeremiah in whatever mood of mind he may be, or whatever subject he may be handling. Whilst inflicting the severest reproaches on the people for their ungodliness, he cannot refrain from giving a poetic garb to his reproof. In the same address which furnishes the preceding quotation, he asks his hearers, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, who are accustomed to do evil."—xiii. 23.

The symbolism above described as being employed by the Divine Being for the admonition of his people and the inculcation of truth, finds a close analogy in the practical teaching which the Prophet received when he was ordered to go down to the potter's house and watch the operations of the workman, while he submitted the clay to the action of the wheel, and framed it into vessels suitable for the uses of life. The potter was endeavouring to mould his clay into a certain vessel, but failed to give it the intended form. He therefore shaped the spoiled work into another pattern. (Ch. xviii.) On another occasion the Prophet was required to station himself near the east gate of Jerusalem in the valley of Hinnom, and after pronouncing an awful message of future devastation and death, he was to cast an earthenware bottle with violence to the ground, in token of the catastrophe which should overtake the inhabitants of the city. The valley of Hinnom was to change its name to the valley of slaughter. After he had performed this unmistakeable ceremony, he repaired to the court of the temple and reiterated there the coming of God's judgments. As the inspired medium of God's controversy with the people, and the foreteller of the miseries which their sins would entail, Jeremiah held a peculiarly painful position. His sensitive nature shrank with especial repugnance from uttering the unpalatable and grievous truths which he was required to declare to his compatriots. Another feature of his character also heightened the painful nature of his office. He was of a timid disposition and averse to personal suffering. He was not cast by nature in the mould of heroes to whom persecution and martyrdom are either welcome or indifferent. He feared the recoil upon himself of the public indignation which would be excited by the announcement he had to make of the Divine retribution. False prophets abounded

who assured the people that the disasters and sufferings predicted by Jeremiah were the gloomy conjurations of his own morbid fancy rather than the settled purpose of God. These false prophets gained the ear of the people and conciliated their favour by lulling them into a false security. By assuring them that neither captivity, famine, nor sword awaited them, they rendered the genuine predictions of Jeremiah the more hideous by contrast with their own, and exposed him to popular discredit and revenge. The Jews were too deeply sunk in spiritual blindness to take a lesson from analogous passages in their own history, which might have guided and saved them in the present crisis.

If they had referred to the history of Ahab, and the issue of his wicked conduct in the matter of Micaiah, the son of Imla, they might have recognised a similarity in the state of public affairs then with that of their own. In both cases there was a lying spirit in the mouths of the popular prophets (ch. xi. 18). But when do nations allow the voice of history to hold sway over the tumult of present passions?

It now became Jeremiah's duty to foretell the destruction of Jerusalem, and the captivity of her people—their awful and manifold sufferings whilst undergoing the chastisement of an angry and alienated God. The terrible dispensation was rolling towards them on the rapid wheels of time, and it had never been the duty of a citizen to paint, in the glowing colours of inspired truth, so harrowing a picture of coming woe to his beloved country. When Noah foretold the doom of a world, death by water comprised the sum of the horror. Jeremiah had to warn his fellow-citizens, his beloved compatriots, all of them, with himself, children of the stock of Abraham, that death in its most dreadful and hideous forms awaited them.

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fowls of the heaven and the beasts of the earth to devour and to destroy.”—ch. xv. 3.

Jeremiah recoiled with all the natural tenderness and timidity of his heart from the proclamation of these terrible calamities. In the bitterness and agony of his grief, he cried out, “Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me, a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth. I have neither lent on usury nor men have lent to me on usury, yet every one of them doth curse me.”—ch. xv. 10.

The promise of Divine support, however, upheld him, and restrained the malice and revenge of his infidel persecutors. That he might not be involved in the persons of his children, in the disasters which he foretold, he was forbidden to marry. It was anguish enough for him to witness the distress of those not connected with him by ties of consanguinity. The tender and considerate mercy of the Divine Being whom he served, desired to spare him the torment of realising or anticipating, as the head of a family, the fulfilment of his own predictions.—ch. xvi. 3—5.

Josiah was mortally wounded in the battle with Pharaoh Necho, King of Egypt, in the year 610 B.C., and died immediately upon his arrival in Jerusalem. His death was the occasion of general mourning.

No one regretted the good king more than Jeremiah, who wrote an elegy, or Book of Lamentations, which was chaunted by female choristers as a dirge for many years. This book has perished, but a greater and sadder event subsequently occurred, on which the elegiac muse of Jeremiah was again exercised, in the imperishable strains of the Canonical Lamentations. The latter, too, contains a very touching allusion to the last good king who sat on the throne of David, the beloved protector of the inspired muse: “The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the Lord, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, ‘Under his shadow we

shall live among the heathen.'"—Lam. iv. 20. Such language shows, not only the depth of the Prophet's affectionate veneration for Josiah, but the sense of desolation and of mortal peril which it had brought.

"The shadow of his loss
Moved like eclipse darkening the land."

With the death of Josiah, the times became still worse in a religious point of view. That king had exercised a great influence for good over his people. The grand scale on which the Passover had been celebrated, the finding of the Book of the Law, the renovation of the Temple, and the zealous co-operation of Hilkiah and others, had enabled him to restore the outward framework of the national religion, and in some degree to palliate the deep and widespread spiritual ulcer which was consuming the national strength. The flood-gates of evil were now opened, and the corrupt and odious stream of idolatry and vice flowed fast and deep. Public and private immorality were encouraged by the example of the young monarch, whom the favour of the people placed on the throne in violation of the usual order of succession. With the coronation of Jehoahaz evil times set in for Jeremiah, and the death of Zephaniah, his fellow-prophet, which took place about the same time, increased the gloom and loneliness which now surrounded him. It was about this time, and shortly after Jeremiah had stood in the court of the Temple, and prophesied the overthrow of the city, and the miseries of the people during the "siege and straitness" which would overtake them, that Pashur, one of the Aaronic priests, seized him, and, after beating him, put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin.—ch. xx. Here Jeremiah remained till the next day, when Pashur released him, and received for his pains a forecast of his own fate, which must have materially

disturbed his repose—persecuting sceptic as he was. He was informed that God would henceforth know him, not by the name he had hitherto borne of Pashur, but by that of Misgor-Missahib, or the “fear encompassed;” that he should be a terror to himself and everybody near him; that he and all his friends should be taken captives to Babylon, and there find death and the grave in the midst of their enemies.

This incident seems to have exerted a strongly depressing influence on Jeremiah’s spirit, and he cried out in a grief almost verging on despair: “Oh! Lord, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived; thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed; I am in derision daily and every one mocketh me.” His faith was ready to fail, and he made up his mind to refrain from proclaiming those unacceptable truths which brought upon him so much persecution and suffering.—ch. xx. But, as David said, when he mused the fire burned—so Jeremiah found the word of the Lord was not to be restrained, and the pent-up impulses of Divine inspiration acted upon him as a consuming fire which could not be tolerated, and the Prophet “could not stay.” Notwithstanding this “woe is me if I preach not the gospel,” he bursts forth in bitter reproaches upon the day when he was born, and upon the man who had announced his birth. Job had given vent to the bitterness of his grief in words so similar, that we may suspect Jeremiah of having borrowed the phrases from the ancient patriarch.

Jehoahaz, or Shallum, after a short reign of three months, has been deposed by Pharaoh Necho and banished into Egypt. The throne is now occupied by Jehoiakim. With this monarch Jeremiah was commanded to seek an interview in the palace, and to promise him prosperity and blessing if he followed the path of righteousness and justice, or the alternative of disaster and captivity as the consequence of an oppo-

site course. The king was informed that his brother Shallum would die in the land of his captivity, and that, when he himself should die, he should be neither lamented nor buried, but be contemptuously cast out like the carcase of an ass.—ch. xxii. The result of this interview with the king is not mentioned. We can only draw the inference that no permanent impression for good was made, and no reformation produced. There is no evidence that any insult or injury was inflicted on the Prophet. It was otherwise with the next ministration which Jeremiah was ordered to undertake in this reign. It became his duty to stand in the court of the Temple, and address the multitudes as they came from all parts of Judea to worship in the Lord's house. The message which he had to deliver was, that unless the people gave heed to the words of the Lord, spoken through the mouths of the prophets, the Temple should become as Shiloh, and the city a curse to all the nations of the earth. No sooner had Jeremiah pronounced these words than a great tumult ensued. The priests and false prophets headed the multitude, and, yielding to a cruel and impious fury, rushed upon him with threats of instant death. The uproar in the court of the Temple attracted the notice of the princes in the king's palace. They hastened to the scene of the commotion, and sitting down, after the manner of judges, in the new gateway of the Temple, proceeded to inquire into its cause. The priests and the prophets took upon themselves the part of accusers. The allegation against Jeremiah was, that he had spoken against that house and that city, and he was therefore worthy of death. This opinion would have been gladly acted upon by the incensed mob, but a higher power than theirs was presiding over the affair, and restrained the bloodthirsty multitude. Jeremiah was allowed to speak in his own defence, and the defence which he made must ever form one of the most majestic and touching examples

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of humility and dignity embodied in language. He told them that he had simply spoken under the inspiration of the Lord. The message was the Lord's; as for himself, he was nothing, and was in their hands to do with him as might seem good. They must know, however, that if they put him to death they would add to their crimes the guilt of shedding innocent blood. The result of this appeal was, that both princes and people were struck with the rectitude and fidelity of the Prophet, and came to the conclusion that "This man is not worthy to die, for he hath spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God."—ch. xxvi.

We cannot read the above artless narrative without being forcibly reminded of a similar tumult, centuries afterwards, raised under similar pretences, against a faithful disciple of the same Lord, and attended with equal danger to the life of the preacher. When Paul was rescued from the ferocity of a mob in the same city, the conclusion to which the judge arrived was that nothing worthy of death or of bonds was laid to his charge.

The danger was not altogether removed, however, with the announcement of this decision, for certain elders stood up and harangued the people, adducing instances, on the one hand, in which prophets had uttered disastrous predictions concerning the city and the temple of Jerusalem with impunity; and, on the other, instances in which, though the prophets of evil had fled from the country, they had been pursued, brought back, and subjected to the penalty of death. It might yet have gone hard with Jeremiah, but his old and trusty friend Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, rescued him from his dangerous position.—ch. xxvi. 24.

The fourth year of Jehoiakim was a busy and eventful year for Jeremiah. He began in this year to foretell, with a distinctness and precision such as had

not marked his previous announcements, the special instrumentality by which the punishment of Jerusalem would be effected. He pointed out Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, as the destined scourge of Judah. This terrible king, whom the Lord described as "my servant," would come up with a formidable army and prevail against all opposition. Jerusalem and the cities of Judah and the king thereof, and the princes thereof, were to become a desolation, an astonishment, a hissing and a curse.—ch. xxv. At the same time the Prophet most touchingly appealed to the consciences of his hearers, reminding them of the unfailing solicitude with which God had striven to restore them to the paths of safety and peace, sending prophets and preachers to admonish and entreat them, "rising early and speaking, but they hearkened not nor inclined their ear to hear." He reminded them also that he had now been employed for nearly twenty-three years in the discharge of prophetic functions, entreating them in the name of the Lord to forsake their sins, turn to the Lord, and enjoy his favour and protection. But it was all in vain; the same melancholy words expressed the conclusion of every effort, "but ye have not hearkened." It is probable that this definite and special prediction led to Jeremiah being imprisoned. He has not informed us that this was the case, but we know that, shortly after it, Jeremiah was, to use his own words, "shut up."

The Divine forbearance with the Jews was not yet exhausted. It was determined to give the people yet one more opportunity to repent and escape the otherwise inevitable catastrophe. The most urgent expostulations and admonitions which Jeremiah had addressed to them, had fallen upon inattentive ears or incredulous minds. Possibly, if these inspired discourses were reproduced and presented to them in writing, a more solid and lasting impression might be produced. The goodness and condescension of God

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were never more conspicuously displayed than in thus providing for the indelible preservation of his revealed truth. How unceasingly thankful we ought to be for our Bible! It is a gift of inestimable value. By it the teachings of the Holy Spirit through the Prophets and Patriarchs of old are kept in perpetual freshness. The lives, actions and sayings of the holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, are rendered imperishable. Death hath no more power over them. More than this, through the Bible, Jesus, God in the flesh, lives immortal in his incarnate human life. We fondly trace it, and ponder over it; with reverent and burning hearts, we follow the footsteps of Christ, hang on his lips, speaking as never man spake; we delight in his marvellous works; with a distant awe we feel what sympathy we may or can with his incomparable sufferings, his agonising death; we rejoice with Him in his resurrection, and almost accompany Him in his glorious ascension to the heavenly dwelling-place.

Jeremiah had been the vehicle through whose tongue of fire the words of God had been poured forth in living power and eloquence upon the ears of the people. The "thoughts that breathe and words that burn," as they issued from his lips, had however proved but winged words. From the king on his throne, to the humblest member of the community, all had listened to his words of truth and love, fresh from the spirit, and perhaps, like Felix, they had trembled. But words are soon forgotten by inattentive, incredulous auditories. The impressions made had been evanescent. The addresses which had been delivered were now to receive an imperishable form. They were to be reproduced in writing and submitted to the king for perusal, with a view to their publication. Jeremiah was commanded to assume the office of an author, and arrange his discourses in a book, that no excuse might exist in either the assumed or real for-

getfulness of the warnings and exhortations that had been uttered. This commission was given to him whilst he was yet a prisoner—"Take thee a roll of a book," said his Divine Master, "and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel and against Judah, and against all the nations from the day I spoke unto thee, from the days of Josiah even unto this day. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them, that they may return every man from his evil way, that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin."—ch. xxxvi. Having received this charge, he sent for Baruch, the scribe, the son of Neriah, that he might perform the mechanical part of the work. We may infer from this, that the imprisonment of the Prophet was not very strict or severe, and that none of his acquaintance were forbidden "to minister or come unto him." Baruch therefore came and wrote what Jeremiah dictated. We may indulge our fancy by figuring to ourselves the scene. In the room of the prison, or the court in front, surrounded by lofty walls, a rude seat or stone bench, on which are seated two men; one of them furnished with a parchment roll and the implements of writing. The other sits in abstract communion with the Holy Spirit, which brings "all things to his remembrance, whatsoever I have said," uttering slowly and carefully words which his companion impresses with extreme care upon the parchment in the uncouth letters of the time. Thus was one of the most important of the books of the Holy Scriptures, full of the grandest truths, reaching forward in unfulfilled prophecy to ages and dispensations yet in the womb of the future, elaborated. "Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you," might have been appropriately subscribed to this production.

Having accomplished this momentous undertaking, the Prophet enjoins Baruch to take the roll and read it to the people in the Lord's house, on the day of the

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fast, the great day of atonement, viz. the tenth day of seventh month. Jeremiah would not have read his book by proxy if he could have done it himself. "But (said he) I am shut up; I cannot go into the house of the Lord, therefore go thou."—ch. xxxvi. Baruch did as he was bid, and read the book:—again the immutable counsel of God was expounded to the inhabitants of Jerusalem—again His pardoning mercy was offered to them.

How long Jeremiah remained shut up there appears no means of ascertaining. The restraint put upon him was probably removed soon after he had finished writing. At any rate we find him at liberty in the ninth month of the next year to that of his imprisonment, and on the alert in the prosecution of his Master's business. Something induced Jehoiakim to proclaim a fast to the Lord, and all the citizens and strangers who were in Jerusalem at the time were enjoined to observe it. Jeremiah seized the favourable opportunity for spreading a knowledge of the truth amongst the congregated people. Baruch was employed to read the roll which had been written the preceding year. Taking his stand in the chamber of Gemariah the scribe, in the higher court of the Temple, near the new gate, he recited in a loud voice, so as to be heard far and wide, the contents of the roll. Michaiiah, the son of Gemariah, was in his father's chamber whilst Baruch was reading, and having heard what was uttered, he immediately went to the king's palace, and making his way to the secretary's office, announced to the persons there what had been going on. Amongst the company were his own father and various other high personages of the household, all of sufficient rank or authority to enjoy the appellation of princes. To this company Michaiiah gave a general recital of what had been read to the people in the court of the Temple. Their curiosity was aroused, and either their interest or their fears were excited to

such an extent that they sent for Baruch to rehearse the contents of the roll to them. Baruch promptly answered their call. They perceived that what had been done was of too public a nature to be long hid from the king, and they concluded that their safest course was to make the king at once acquainted with the proceeding themselves. In doing this they were actuated by no unfriendly feelings towards the pair concerned in the production of the book. But they knew that the acquaintance of the king with the transaction would deeply imperil the safety of the Prophet and his scribe.

After making some inquiries as to the manner in which the book was produced, they exhorted Jeremiah and Baruch to provide for their safety in concealment. They took possession of the roll, and, leaving it safe in the secretary's office, lost no time in acquainting the king with the matter. Jehoiakim immediately sent a messenger, Jehoiada, to fetch the roll, and caused it to be read to himself. The king was seated in his apartment, enjoying the comfort of the fireside, whilst the princes stood respectfully about him. The stern and humiliating truths recorded in those divinely-inspired pages pierced, like deadly arrows, the proud and rebellious heart of the monarch. He could not brook the faithful and unflattering portrait which was there drawn of himself, and he proceeded to the daring act of open conflict with God himself. Seizing the roll ere the reader had gone through more than a few pages, he took a penknife, and, cutting the book into slips, committed them to the fire before which he sat. Although his companions were unscrupulous partakers in his scepticism, this act of open impiety was a length to which they could not go. They entreated him not to burn the sacred pages, but their entreaty was disregarded. When the king had thus wreaked his vengeance on the book, his resentment sought further satisfaction on the persons of its authors, and

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he despatched three of his officers to apprehend them. He had entered, however, into a contest with one mightier than himself, even the King of kings. They who had written the book were under the protection of the Omnipotent, who concealed them from the royal emissaries, and protected them from the wrath of the presumptuous monarch. The purposes of God were not to be frustrated; they would be carried out, despite the utmost opposition which men could raise. Jeremiah was commanded to procure a second roll, and write in it all that the former had contained, with many additions, and Baruch was again employed as his amanuensis. When the task was completed, Jeremiah was called to quit his hiding-place and read the writing to the king.

The association of Baruch with Jeremiah and the publication of his discourses caused him to share in the persecutions of his principal. He was cast down by the hardships which befell him, and bewailed the misery of his lot. Jeremiah was commissioned to admonish and comfort him. The admonition contained the memorable words—"Seekest thou great things for thyself, seek them not." The consolation embraced the promise, that in all the perils and vicissitudes he might encounter, his life should be spared.—ch. xlv.

The events of the succeeding six years during which Jehoiakim reigned, are passed over in silence by all the sacred historians. After the expiration of this period, Nebuchadnezzar came up against Jerusalem and seized him, with the intention of taking him captive to Babylon; but on receiving a large number of hostages, and an engagement on the part of Jehoiakim to pay an annual tribute, Nebuchadnezzar withdrew. Amongst the hostages delivered at this time were Daniel and the three children, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. For three years Jehoiakim complied with the terms of the contract which he had made with the

King of Babylon; he then revolted and was punished by a combined invasion of Chaldeans, Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites, who came up against Jerusalem, and caused him to be slain and cast out to the dogs and vultures, in fulfilment of Jeremiah's predictions.

Passing over the short reign of Jehoichin or Jeconiah, we come to the stormy time of Zedekiah, the last of Judah's roll of kings. It was probably very soon after the removal of Jeconiah by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon, and the accession of his brother, that Jeremiah witnessed the vision of the figs (ch. xxiv.); the sound figs indicating the expelled prince and his people, who should enjoy the favour and protection of God whilst in the land of their captivity, and should be brought again to their own land; and the naughty or decayed figs, the ruling monarch and his corrupt subjects, so corrupt and abominable that they should be rejected like rotten fruit.

In the early part of the reign of Zedekiah, the Prophet was directed to make bonds and yokes, and to put them upon his neck in token of that subjection which had been divinely decreed. He was required to send similar yokes to the Kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, and even of Tyre and of Sidon, by the ambassadors who came to Jerusalem, with a message that the Lord would make Nebuchadnezzar master of their territories, and that unless they submitted to the dispensations of Him who ruleth in the kingdoms of men, and giveth them to whomsoever He will, they should be punished with sword, famine, and pestilence till they were destroyed.

It would seem as if Jeremiah continued to wear this yoke for some time in public, as the following incident is stated to have taken place in the same year as the foregoing.

One of the false prophets, by name Hananiah, whose father was likewise a prophet, announced that the yoke of the King of Babylon was broken, and that

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within two years the captives and the spoils taken from the Temple should be restored. Jeremiah replied, in substance, that the issue would determine which of them was the true prophet; upon which Hananiah seized the yoke from Jeremiah's neck and broke it, reaffirming, in the hearing of all the people, the truthfulness of his own predictions; and, with this audacious lie upon his tongue, he took his departure. He did not long enjoy his wicked triumph; Jeremiah was despatched to give him a fearful warning. He was informed that, in the place of the wooden yoke which he had broken, an iron one should be substituted, and since he had attempted to delude the priests and the people by falsehoods and impious pretensions, his life would be forfeited within the year. Accordingly he died in the seventh month of the same year, because he had "taught rebellion against the Lord."—ch. xxviii.

But it was not only in Jerusalem that the false prophets were busy in disseminating lies and raising false hopes in regard to the national prospects. Those who had already gone into captivity were likewise the victims of similar pretenders. Jeremiah was therefore employed to write to them in their distant abode, and advise them to settle in peaceful conformity to the laws of their captors, cultivate industrial pursuits, establish family relationships by marriage and the training of their children, and patiently abide the dispensation of their Heavenly Sovereign. He was enabled to instruct them definitely with regard to the duration of their exile. "For thus saith the Lord," wrote Jeremiah, "after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you and perform my good word to you in causing you to return to this place."—ch. xxix.

These transactions derive additional interest from the reflection that Daniel was one of the captives to whom these inspired letters were addressed. We may

be sure that the pure and godly heart of Daniel was nerved with higher courage, resignation, and hope, by the faithful advice of his gifted countryman.

The political trouble which had been so clearly and emphatically announced by Jeremiah as the consequence of Judah's transgressions, now began to overtake them. At the commencement of the final disaster when Nebuchadnezzar came against Jerusalem, Zedekiah sent to Jeremiah requesting that he would pray to God in their behalf. Jeremiah told the king plainly that there was no escape for him from the power of the Chaldeans, and that his only chance lay in submission to the immutable decree of heaven. Soon after this, the Chaldean army removed from the vicinity of Jerusalem to quell Pharaoh Hophra, who had taken advantage of Nebuchadnezzar's expedition to Judea to attack him in the rear. Jeremiah left the city during the absence of the investing army, intending to retire to the land of Benjamin, probably to Anathoth, his native place. At the gate of Benjamin, however, by which he was departing, he was encountered by a captain of the guard, named Irijah, and seized as a traitor; he protested that the accusation was false, and that he was not falling away to the Chaldeans. Irijah was not satisfied, and brought his prisoner to the chiefs. The chiefs were exasperated, inflicted corporal punishment upon him, and committed him to prison. The prison at that time was in the house of Jonathan the scribe. After he had been many days closely incarcerated, Zedekiah sent for him, and asked if there were any word from the Lord. Jeremiah replied that there was, and that he should fall into the hands of the King of Babylon. At this interview he implored the king to release him from his dungeon, asserting that if the same rigour were persisted in, it would soon put an end to his life. He succeeded so far in his request that the king ordered him to be detained in the court of the prison,

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An interval of not long, but uncertain duration, occurred between the events above narrated and those which follow. Nebuchadnezzar has brought his army in the ninth year of Zedekiah, and laid siege to Jerusalem. Jeremiah's position was most embarrassing. The pertinacity with which he predicted the conquest of his nation by Nebuchadnezzar led the Jews to the belief that he was lacking in patriotism. His constant advice to submit to the foreign invader was attributed to treachery, and caused him to be regarded with suspicion and hatred. After his capture by Irijah and confinement in the court of Jonathan's house, as a deserter, it is probable that he again enjoyed a period of freedom. For in the tenth year of Zedekiah's reign, he states that he was confined in the court of the king's house, in consequence of having assured the king that the Lord would deliver the city into the hand of the Babylonish warrior, and that Zedekiah himself should be taken to Babylon. Some convictions of conscience for sin seem to have been produced on the minds of the people by the evident signs of divine chastisement which hovered over them. Those who held slaves endeavoured, by an act of justice or generosity in setting them free, to propitiate the offended Deity. The contagion of this public act spread even to the princes, and they also liberated their bondmen and bondwomen.—ch. xxxiv. It was not long, however, before the old covetousness and self-indulgence returned. The sacrifice had been made in a moment of compunction which soon faded away. They had begun to build a tower of honesty without first sitting down and deliberately counting the cost. When the need for sustained self-denial arose, their heroism was unequal to the claim; and they added to their former sin by cancelling an act of

grace which had its origin only in a laudable impulse. They reduced their liberated servants to a second bondage—an obdurate outrage on justice, which God visited with signal displeasure.

It was whilst Jeremiah was thus shut up in the court of the king's house that he gave a remarkable proof of his firm belief in the divine origin of his own predictions, an incontestable sign of his faith in the promises and declarations of Him with whom he professed to enjoy frequent intercourse. It was revealed to him that his cousin Hananiah would come and make a claim that he should redeem a certain field which belonged to his family in Anathoth. It is not stated that in this transaction there is anything different from an ordinary compliance with the ancient law practised in such cases, or that the claim of such a redemption, coinciding with the perilous condition of public affairs, was not genuine and straightforward. One can hardly avoid the suspicion that the transaction arose out of a selfish contrivance to convert a property which seemed on the point of being wrested by force from its occupants into a convenient and portable possession, available in the expatriation which seemed imminent. Be this as it may, we have in the ready compliance of Jeremiah the strongest testimony to his steady faith in the promises of God—promises which He had proclaimed, that the captivity of his people should come to an end in the course of seventy years; that then every family should return to its inheritance, and the land again resound to the voice of gladness, the voice of the Bridegroom, and the voice of the Bride.

When the deeds were drawn up and publicly signed and attested, the money paid, and all the needful forms completed, Jeremiah delivered the deeds to Baruch, that he might place them in an urn and deposit them in safety for future use. At the close of this solemn transaction, Jeremiah addressed the

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Almighty in prayer. He has left the prayer on record, and it is a noble example of reverent adoration and trusting faith. (Chap. xxxii. 17—25.) During this same imprisonment in the court of the king's house, Jeremiah was favoured with a revelation of those future blessings to the Church, by which the captivity of Judah and of Israel also should be terminated, and the land again inhabited by a happy and prosperous people.

Meanwhile the siege was being vigorously pressed by the Chaldeans, and Jeremiah was steadfastly exhorting his countrymen to yield to the revealed will of God, by submitting to their appointed conqueror. He never deviated from the assurance that their resistance would only add to their sufferings. But the only fruit of his exhortations was to exasperate the minds of the chiefs. They went to the king, and represented that the hands of themselves and the people were weakened by the tone of Jeremiah's appeals, and they prayed that he might be restrained from exerting an influence so prejudicial. The king felt himself too weak to oppose the desire of the chiefs, and replied that Jeremiah was in their hands. Having thus obtained power to dispose of him as they pleased, they lost no time in using it. In the court of the prison, where he was confined, was a subterranean dungeon, which was called the dungeon of Malchiah. This loathsome hole was deep and partly filled with mud, and into it these ungodly princes lowered the Prophet, in the hope that he would be suffocated. God raised him up a friend, however. There was in the king's house an Ethiopian eunuch named Ebedmelech. This man was too humane calmly to witness the treatment to which the man of God was subjected. He hastened to the king, and assured him that unless Jeremiah was taken up from the pit, he could not long survive. The king entertained a strong regard for Jeremiah, which did not

permit him to be accessory to his murder, and he ordered his black slave to procure the aid of thirty men, and lift Jeremiah from his perilous situation. These men executed the king's bidding, and by means of cords slung under his arms, padded with old rags, the Prophet was drawn up and restored to the more tolerable imprisonment of the court. (Chap. xxxviii.) Zedekiah was not able entirely to shake off the fear that Jeremiah's predictions might come true, and that he was endowed with a prescience of the future. Soon after the foregoing event, he sent for him, and requested him to give him a true answer to a question he wished to propose. Jeremiah had learnt caution by what he had suffered, and received a guarantee of his own safety as the condition of his candour. The king swore that his communication should not be to his prejudice. Jeremiah therefore proceeded to inform him that if he would surrender to the Chaldean monarch, he would secure his own safety and the salvation of the city, but if he continued to resist, the city would be burned with fire, and he should not escape. Zedekiah expressed a fear that if he surrendered, he would be mocked and ridiculed by those Jews who had already gone over to the Chaldeans. Jeremiah assured him that he should not be delivered to them, and besought him solemnly to follow the counsel he had given, as the only way in which he could avoid the direst calamities. The interview terminated by the king enjoining silence as to what had passed between them, for he knew that the princes would eagerly interrogate the Prophet on the subject. Jeremiah returned to the court of the prison, and remained there till the capture of the city. Nebuchadnezzar, who was not unacquainted with the character of Jeremiah, and the part he had taken in relation to public affairs, had ordered his captain of the guard to look after the safety of Jeremiah in the sack of the city, and permit him to go

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where he pleased. On being found in the prison of the king's palace, therefore, he was committed to the care of Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam; but it appears that in the confusion that ensued he was put into fetters, along with a multitude of other captives, and sent to Ramah. The emissaries of the king discovered him there amongst the crowd, freed him from his chains, and left him at liberty to select the place of his residence. He chose to remain with those of his people who were left in Judea, and proceeded to Mizpah, to place himself under the protection of Gedaliah, whom Nebuchadnezzar had made Governor of the Jews remaining in Judea.—ch. xl. Gedaliah appears to have been an upright man, but he did not long enjoy the honourable office to which he had been appointed. Treachery, to the existence of which he was unwilling to give credence, soon began its work. Johanan informed him that Ishmael had undertaken, at the instigation of Baalis, the King of Moab, to kill him; and begged permission to avert the danger by slaying the intended murderer. Gedaliah refused to harbour a suspicion of such baseness, and cast the imputation of falsehood upon Johanan.

Events, however, soon proved the truthfulness of Johanan's information. He had not exposed half the baseness of Ishmael, whose treachery, hypocrisy, and cruelty eventually marked him out as one of the most odious and depraved of mankind. Ishmael, with some confederates, came to Mizpah, and put to death both Gedaliah and all the Jews and Chaldeans who were there with him.—ch. xli. Two days after this crime, and before the news of it had spread abroad, there came a company of Jews from various towns round about, presenting all the marks of humiliation and mourning, to offer gifts and incense in the Temple. Ishmael moved out of Mizpah to meet them, in the guise of a person in deep grief, and begged them to

come to Gedaliah. They complied; and having thus inveigled them into the midst of the city, he put them to death, and threw their bodies into a pit. When he had in this way disposed of these inoffensive pilgrims, he collected the remainder of the people, and began to remove them into the land of the Ammonites. He was not, however, permitted to complete the enterprise. Johanan gathered together a number of willing followers, and pursued him. He overtook him at the Great Waters, or the Pool of Gibeon. Ishmael, with eight of his accomplices, escaped; but the rest of the people returned with Johanan, and apprehending that the King of Babylon might revenge the death of his lieutenant without much discrimination between the guilty and the innocent, they retired to a place near Bethlehem, intending to emigrate into Egypt.—ch. xli. 18. Before taking so important a step, however, they came to Jeremiah, and begged that he would pray to the Lord to enlighten them as to the results of carrying this proposal into execution.

Jeremiah promised to comply with their request, probably believing in the sincerity of their assertion that they would be guided by the will of God as to whether they should remain where they were or emigrate. Jeremiah prayed to the Lord, and awaited the answer for ten days.—ch. xlii. Then came the revelation of the Divine will, that they should remain in their own country, as subjects of the King of Babylon, with the promise that their compliance would be followed by happiness and prosperity. They were, at the same time, convicted of hypocrisy in requesting the intervention of the Prophet, whilst they were fully determined to flee into Egypt and seek the protection of Pharaoh. They were informed that their flight from Judea would plunge them into that famine, sword, and pestilence (ch. xlii. 22) the fear of which had impelled them to brave the Divine displeasure.

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This revelation of their baseness roused the indignation of these proud, stubborn men, and they retorted upon Jeremiah by accusing him of falsehood. Azariah and Johanan, being their spokesmen, declared that Jeremiah was merely a tool in forwarding the designs of Baruch to deliver them into the hands of the Chaldeans. Determined, at all hazards, to avoid this humiliation, they assumed the command, and compelled the remnant of the people who had been placed under Gedaliah to retreat into Egypt. Jeremiah and Baruch were forced to accompany them. They halted at a place called Tahpanhes, or by the Greeks Daphne.

Whilst in this place, Jeremiah was directed by the Lord to perform in the sight of his late travelling companions one of those expressive actions so often previously employed to impress lessons upon their mind. He was to take some large stones, and hide them in the clay of the brick-kiln that was near the entry of Pharaoh's palace.—ch. xliii. This done, he made the astonishing announcement that Nebuchadnezzar would come and pitch his tent on that very spot; that his presence would be attended with fire, sword, captivity, and death; that the pride and idolatry of Egypt would be destroyed, and that having arrayed himself with the land of Egypt as a shepherd with his garment, he would depart in peace. We may form some idea of the blank faces and blanched hearts with which this bold prediction was received. Never did poor self-willed mortals, flying in the face of Omnipotence, realise more terribly the old proverb, "Out of the frying-pan into the fire."

One more interview between the Prophet and these misguided people is recorded, and forms the closing narrative of Jeremiah's long labours on behalf of his countrymen. The scene is graphically related in his own words (ch. xliv.), and, by its grandeur, forms a fitting close to the great drama of his public life. He represents to them that their lot shall be worse than

that of their brethren of the Babylonian captivity,—that these latter should return to their own land, but of themselves none, except a few who should clandestinely escape. He paints in inspired colours the doom of Egypt by the sword of Nebuchadnezzar, in which they should be involved, and fully details the reason why these Divine judgments would overtake them. The impious reply which he received lifts, in some degree, the veil from the depravity, religious and moral, into which these people had fallen. They boldly asserted that the Queen of Heaven was a better protector than the Lord God, and that whilst they burned incense and poured out libations to her they were more prosperous and happy than when they served and obeyed the God of their fathers. The hardened audacity of this assertion drew from the Almighty a solemn oath that his name should no more be the watchword of his people in Egypt—that they should be given up to the consequences of their awful impiety; and finally said the Prophet, “Thus saith the Lord: Behold I will give Pharaoh Hophra, King of Egypt, into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life, as I gave Zedekiah, King of Judah, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, his enemy that sought his life.”

Here the curtain drops upon the life of Jeremiah, so far as it is recorded in the Scriptures. It is currently believed that he died shortly afterwards, by the hands of his countrymen, a martyr to his integrity and faithfulness in the discharge of his duty to them and to God.

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