

THE
BIBLICAL ILLUSTRATOR:

OR,

ANECDOTES, SIMILES, EMBLEMS, ILLUSTRATIONS, EXPOSITORY,
SCIENTIFIC, GEOGRAPHICAL, HISTORICAL, AND HOMILETIC,
GATHERED FROM A WIDE RANGE OF HOME AND
FOREIGN LITERATURE, ON THE VERSES
OF THE BIBLE.

BY

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NAHUM.

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INTRODUCTION TO NAHUM.

THERE are two sides to the character of God—two sides which yet are perfectly consistent and harmonious. At times He shows Himself most gentle and compassionate, ready to pardon wrong-doing, willing to admit the wrong-doer to His own fellowship and favour. At other times He is stern in His justice, inflicting punishment upon evil, visiting the crimes of men with the tribulation and anguish which are their due. There is no contradiction, as I have said, between these perfections of God. He is stable, consistent, immutable, although now He speaks in the thunder and the mighty rushing wind, and now in the still, small voice. For, first of all, He cannot but act differently toward different classes of men—different moods and conditions of soul. To the penitent heart that weeps bitterly over its sin, to the faithful servant who keeps well his Master's trust, He must of necessity reveal His mercy and love; it is not in His nature to shut such as these out from His favour. But to souls that are proud and wilful and wedded to their iniquity, what can God be but just and severe and terrible, a consuming fire, a hammer to break the flinty rock in pieces? He would forfeit His uprightness were He to deal leniently with these. And then, also, so far from mercy and judgment being irreconcilable the one with the other, there are seasons when the infliction of judgment is indeed the truest mercy. His own children will breathe more freely once their oppressor and antagonist is away; weak and yielding souls will be prevented from surrendering themselves to His will; and the world will be lifted up to a higher level. Very frequently mercy and justice are in reality synonymous terms. Such thoughts as these are awakened within us when we open this Book of Nahum. It is not a book which deals either with Israel or with Judah. It has no direct reference to the chosen people. It is concerned from first to last with the fate of Nineveh, the proud capital of Assyria. Jonah, the son of Amittai, had been sent thither by God about two hundred years before Nahum's time. And the Assyrian monarch and people of Jonah's day had opened their hearts to hear God's Word and to acknowledge His presence and authority. Seeing their sorrow and rejoicing at its manifestation, He had passed from the fierceness of His anger. But their penitence was of short duration. Soon they had grown haughty and sin-loving and cruel again. And God could bear with their tyranny and evil no longer. He bade His servant Nahum prophesy their speedy destruction. Jonah had been His messenger of grace to Assyria; Nahum is His messenger of judgment. I. It is exceedingly little that we know of THE PERSONAL HISTORY OF THIS PROPHET. To most of us he is simply a voice crying in the desert; we remember him by his words alone. But I think it is possible for us to fashion for ourselves some authentic picture of the man and his surroundings. There has long been debate as to the locality of his birth. "Nahum the Elkoshite," he is described in the opening of the book; but it is hard to decide what meaning should be attached to the epithet. The Christian father Jerome speaks of a village called Elkesai which lay in Galilee, and tells us that a few relics of it were pointed out to him by a dweller in the district. Such a testimony is undoubtedly

possessed of considerable value, for Jerome had his home for a great part of his life in Palestine, and was well acquainted with its villages and towns. And some expositors have found a confirmation of the theory that Nahum was a Galilean, born and brought up in the northern parts of the Holy Land, in another name which is familiar to us in connection with the history of One greater than the prophet—the name Capernaum. For Capernaum means “the village or hamlet of Nahum”; and who more likely to give it its distinctive title, it has been asked, than the ancient servant of God who proclaimed the downfall of his people’s enemies? It would be pleasant, indeed, to imagine the prophet moving about the very scenes which were afterwards to be hallowed by the presence of Christ; walking in prayer and meditation by the shore of the lake which the Saviour knew so well; spending the most of his days in those holy fields which six hundred years later were trodden by the Son of God. But however attractive such a theory may be, I cannot but incline to the other solution which has been suggested for the phrase, “The Elkoshite.” Travellers in the East tell us of a village called Alkush (Sir A. H. Layard describes this village and the supposed tomb of Nahum, in his *Nineveh and Babylon*) not far from Mosul, away in what was ancient Assyria, where the tomb of Nahum is pointed out at this day. The tomb is no doubt an erection comparatively modern; but at least it bears witness to the existence of an older belief that here, in the land of the alien and the oppressor, God’s prophet had lived and died. And there is that in the character of the prophecy which strengthens our conviction that Nahum was himself an exile in Assyria. Its descriptions are so graphic and vivid, so apparently painted from the life, that we can scarcely escape the conclusion that the writer is recounting what his own eyes have seen and his own ears have heard. He seems to have dwelt in the very heart of the country against which he proclaimed God’s judgment. It is true that this clear and definite knowledge of Nineveh and its inhabitants may have been supernaturally imparted to the prophet. But that is far from likely. For the most part, the prophets of the Lord deal with those sights and sounds, those persons and events, by which they are themselves surrounded. They read to men the lessons of warning or of comfort which the Holy Ghost enables them to gather in that world in which they live and move and have their being. Let us think of Nahum, therefore, as the son of a Hebrew family that had been carried captive to Assyria when the kingdom of the ten tribes was broken and destroyed. He was born among strangers who were harsh and cruel; but at home he breathed an atmosphere of love. For his name means “consolation”; and probably it describes the comfort which the child brought with him to the hearts of his parents. Outside, in the alien territory where they were forced to stay, they saw only high-handed wrong-doing and daily sin; but within the walls of their dwelling they had what compensated them for the oppressor’s wrong and the proud man’s contumely; they were cheered and strengthened as they looked on the boy whom God had sent them, and offered up their prayers for him, and hoped that he might yet do great things for his injured and afflicted people. When Nahum grew up to manhood he showed that he had the heart of a patriot throbbing within him. He loved and remembered the land of his ancestors. Bashan and Carmel and Lebanon were familiar names to him (Nah. i. 4), even although he had never looked on them with the bodily eye. And, in proportion as he took delight in that sweet and pleasant soil from which he and his had been banished, he loathed the tyranny and the manifold evil of the heathen who had triumphed over God’s heritage. He saw before him the splendour of Nineveh, and its ferocity and its luxury and its sensuality, and he hated it with a righteous hatred. The Latin satirist says that it is indignation which makes a man a poet; and Nahum’s exultant and pitiless words were prompted by his indignation against the empire which had robbed his fatherland of peace and prosperity and life itself. But if these were dark and awful words for the Assyrian, they were bright and soothing for the Israelite. They assured him of the opening of the prison-house and the dawning of a better day. He was indeed a poet—this old Hebrew. Many have remarked how terse and vigorous, how forcible and vivid and fervent, his phrases are. Very bitter and relentless he is towards his enemies; but we must remember that they were the enemies of God as well as his own, and that his was a religious enthusiasm. There is music of an inspiring and triumphant sort in all that he utters—music like that of the trumpet which calls to battle and victory. He depicts the fall of Nineveh as though he actually beheld it. He rejoices in its desolation as though it were present to his

eyes. There is energy in every verse. II. Let us look a little more particularly at THE WORK WHICH WAS GIVEN HIM TO DO. The Assyria which he knew was powerful in the extreme. The empire had attained the very summit of its splendour and prosperity. It had "multiplied its merchants as the stars of heaven." Its crowned ones, its princes and nobles, were "as the locusts" for number—as the locusts, also, in their destructiveness and their love of spoil. It seemed as if Nineveh had never been seated on a throne more secure and stable. We can fix pretty accurately the date of Nahum's prophecy from a historical reference which he makes in the course of it. Addressing the haughty city, which had no disquieting dreams of coming evil, he asks, "Art thou better than No-Amon that was situate among the rivers, that had the waters round about her, whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was of the sea?" Yet what a destruction, entire and irrevocable, had befallen her, as the prophet goes on to point out! "She was carried away, she went into captivity; her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets; and they cast lots for her honourable men, and all her great men were bound in chains" (iii. 8, 10, R.V.). Now, this triumph over No-Amon, which we are better acquainted with under the name of Thebes, was gained by Assyria itself. It was one of the achievements of King Assur-bani-pal that he crushed a dangerous revolt which had broken out in Egypt, and drove the leader of it from the country, and plundered Thebes and laid it waste. Its temples were hewed in pieces, and two of its obelisks were carried as trophies to Nineveh. Its people, as Nahum declares, were treated with the terrible barbarities of heathen war. And this victory over the city of Amon was won about the year 665 B.C.; so that the prophet, who is familiar with it, must have preached and laboured at a somewhat later period, perhaps about the middle of the seventh century before the coming of our Lord.¹ It was only the inspiration of God's Spirit which could lead any one to foretell, at an era when the Assyrian empire had reached its widest limits, that its overthrow was close at hand. To ordinary onlookers everything seemed to presage for it a long and a successful future; no ominous cloud had as yet appeared in the sky; no enemy too formidable to be met and overcome had shown himself. Assur-bani-pal² was not personally, indeed, a brave and fearless ruler, such as his predecessors Esar-haddon and Sargon had been. He was like the haughty and luxurious and boastful Sennacherib, who had led his armies against Hezekiah half a century before, only to see them "melted like snow in the glance of the Lord." But yet he had gained for Nineveh a glory which the city had never possessed formerly. It needed a Divine enlightenment to predict an issue so utterly improbable and so far beyond the ken of human foresight. And very speedily and very terribly the ruin came. Before Assur-bani-pal had been forty years dead his empire had ceased to be, and his rich and glorious capital had been blotted out from the face of the earth. Perhaps no part of Old Testament Scripture has had greater light thrown upon it by those excavations which have been carried on during recent years in Assyria than this short prophecy. As we read the records of the investigators, and thread our way in thought among the remains of Nineveh, and trace the after history of the deserted and forgotten site, we see everywhere the fulfilment of Nahum's righteous denunciations. Of the words which he uttered against the doomed city, there is none which has not come to pass. The Medes and the Babylonians were the chief assailants of the great empire, although its antagonists seemed to rise up from every quarter. So mighty a nation died hard. When its armies were routed in the open field the king³ made a final stand in the capital, and closed the city gates. The siege, as we learn from some tablets which survive from these days of mortal struggle, lasted over two years; for the walls were one hundred feet high and fifty feet thick, and had been impregnable hitherto. But at length the end came—came not in the way of ordinary warfare. A great rise of the Tigris brought about the fall of Nineveh, the flood undermining the fortifications. It was exactly as Nahum

¹ Nahum's date has been placed earlier by some, who regard him as a contemporary of Isaiah and belonging to the second half of the reign of Hezekiah. But on this supposition it is hard to explain the allusion to the capture and destruction of No-Amon.

² Assur-bani-pal is probably the "great and noble" Asnapper of Ezra iv. 10. We are better acquainted with him under his Greek name, Sardapanalus.

³ The last king of Nineveh was Esar-haddon II., called Sarakos by the Greeks. The fall of the city may be placed in the year 606 B.C.

had foretold, "the gates of the rivers had been opened, and the palaces had been dissolved." Entering the city through the breach which the torrent had caused, the besiegers soon made it "void and waste." Built only of sun-dried clay, its houses and temples quickly crumbled into dust.¹ We can well believe that, to many of the poor afflicted Israelites who heard them, Nahum's words seemed too good to be true; yet God has carried them out literally and in every detail. What a blessed deliverance this was which the seer beheld! Nineveh was as cruel as it was great. It was in reality what the prophet of Elkosh pictured it, a lion which "did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin." "The Assyrian annals," says Professor Sayce, who has made them his daily study, "glory in the record of a ferocity at which we stand aghast." And, no doubt, the captive Hebrews had felt in many ways the brutality of their conqueror; the godly among them, too, shuddered when they saw his molten images, his drunkenness, his lust, his exalting of himself against Jehovah. It was no mere vindictiveness which led them to wish and pray that the earth might be freed from a monster such as this—a monster which, like the Grendel that Beowulf slew, made the hearts of men everywhere sad and weary and hopeless. Rather it was the truest piety and the most genuine religion. How these sorrowful and yearning souls would welcome Nahum's prophecy! III. Can we gather ANY LESSONS FOR OURSELVES from Nahum and his prophecy? 1. One of them will be a lesson of the vanity and hopelessness of resisting God. Very impressively that truth is taught us by the words of the prophet, if they be read in the light of their fulfilment. The Nineveh of Nahum's day looked fair and strong, as though no evil were ever likely to befall it and no plague to come nigh it. But it had taken up arms against God. Its idol worship, its licentiousness, its pride, its cruelty towards His people, whom He had given into its hands to be chastened and not to be destroyed,—all these things made Him its enemy. And in conflict with such an Adversary even Nineveh could avail nothing; it dashed itself in vain against the bosses of Jehovah's buckler. Nay, He has utterly vanquished it; He has ground it to powder. What a tragedy there is in the history of every nation, and of every individual heart, that is opposed to God! Sooner or later the history closes in darkness and misery and ruin. 2. Again, we gather from Nahum's prophecy a lesson with regard to the motives which guide and animate God's government of the world. He rules it in the interests of His own people. There is something grand and sublime in the spectacle of the lonely Hebrew captive who stands up to face the great Assyrian tyranny, and to tell it that the destined hour for its fall is almost come. What was it that wrought within him such faith as this—a faith which "laughs at impossibilities, and says, 'It shall be done'?" It was the conviction that his Lord remembered still His own chosen generation, the seed of Abraham His friend. But such a confidence all God's sons and daughters should seek after and should cherish. Let them believe that He governs the world and controls its affairs on their behalf; that He has thought of their necessities in planning all the events which take place among men; that He cares more for the souls of His little ones than for the principalities, and powers, the thrones and dominions, of the earth. They dwell secure who find their home in Him. 3. Once more, we may learn from some of Nahum's words the supreme blessedness of leaning upon God. Now and then there is a lull in the thunder of his sentences, and his speech drops as the rain and distils as the dew—as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass. He forgets Nineveh for a little, and turns in pity and love to Israel. This is his language at one moment, "The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet. Who can stand before His indignation? and who can abide the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by Him." But, the next moment, how soft and sweet are the tones of his voice! "The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble, and He knoweth them that trust in Him." There is no more beautiful verse in all the Bible. And it is as true as it is beautiful. We should

¹ "Rich, in 1818, conjectured that the mounds of Kouyunjik, opposite the modern town of Mosul, concealed the ruins of Nineveh beneath them; but it was not until the excavations of the Frenchman Botta, in 1842, and the Englishman Layard, in 1845, that the remains first of Dur-Sargon, and then of Nineveh itself, were revealed to the eyes of a wondering world."—Professor Sayce, *Assyria: its Princes, Priests, and People*.

have no doubt of its truth—we who live after Bethlehem and Calvary and the grave in Joseph's garden, and who are familiar with the exceeding grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. (*Original Secession Magazine.*)

NAHUM'S RANGE AS AN INSPIRED TEACHER.—As to this prophet's rank in the series of inspired teachers, it is suggested that his message is meagre and his conceptions are narrow. He has nothing to say about Israel's Messianic character and future. He has no rebuke for her sinfulness and unworthiness. His soul is consumed with unreasoning indignation against Assyria, and he is devoid of that lofty conception of the world's government which enabled earlier prophets to recognise in Assyria Jehovah's scourge for His people's stubbornness and the chastening rod of His gracious discipline. In contrast to that large and religious interpretation of Providence, Nahum appears as the representative of a retrogression into narrow, national particularism. Now it is to be admitted that the form of Nahum's oracle lends itself to this misreading, but the spirit and aim of the prophet ought to have prevented it. Besides the wrong of Israel, more than once in his short utterance he presents Assyria as the oppressor of mankind, whose avenger Jehovah is (iii. 4, 7, 19). Nor even in the contemplation of his own people's injuries is the prophet's zeal vindictive and national. It is not revenge, but righteousness that demands the transgressor's downfall. It is not Israel's pride that is at stake, but God's honour; not the redemption of his people, but the vindication of his God, that is in question. With Nahum Nineveh's punishment is the guarantee of the world's Divine government, and his impassioned declaration of its downfall is the measure, not of his hostility to it, but of the struggle and triumph of his faith in God, and in God's kingdom. That being the single and simple issue present to his mind, he naturally does not even touch that aspect of the Assyrian enigma which explains its evil power over God's people and the world by their sinful failure to be what God would have had them be for their own happiness and humanity's good. (*W. G. Elmslie, D.D.*)

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NAHUM.

CHAPTER I.

VER. 1. *The book of the vision of Nahum the Elkoshite.*—*Nahum's book* :—Nahum writes a book. It was a curious thing to do in those days. It was a book of a vision, and therefore likely to be quite misunderstood ; for who has eyes that can see visions of the shadowy, ærial kind ? Only a visionist can read visions. There are some men who ought never to attempt to read poetry, because they kill it. They do not know that they are killing it, but their slaughter is none the less complete. There are persons who ought not to read the lighter kinds of literature, say even comedy itself, because they were born to live at the graveside, and never have caught a laugh on the wing. Only those who have the inspired heart can read the prophets, either major or minor, and understand what they are about,—not understand what they are merely saying, but understand what they are meaning. There is a common drift in all the prophecies, a set, a tendency in this great biblical movement. Unless you comprehend that tendency or movement you will be lost in the details of the dislocated parts. The Bible reveals God ; now let all the rest fall into proper adjustment under the influence of that dominant and ennobling thought. How will Nahum talk about God ? He will talk about God in his own way. If every man would do that we should have a new and grand theology, because we should have as many theologies as there are human beings reverently engaged in the profound study of God. Every man sees his own aspect of the Divine Being ; every man catches his own particular view of the Cross ; hence a good deal of the obstinacy that is found in theological controversy and religious disputation. (*Joseph Parker, D.D.*)

Ver. 2. *God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth.*—*The jealous God* :—There is in man a selfishness that is Divine. It is a singular fact, in our moral constitution, that often the tenderest feelings of our nature should also be the most selfish. Love, even apparently in its highest moods, is sometimes also most exacting and difficult of satisfaction. I have known a mother most jealous of the departure of a daughter's heart to its natural home and rest. When I have seen this, I have thought of the selfishness of God. God is infinitely selfish, for we may appropriately use that term. For selfishness may be celestial, and an attribute of benevolence. We do not, indeed, think much of love that cannot, in circumstances, be jealous ; such is but a cold, indifferent, impoverished affection. How can it be other than that the best natures of the universe must be most selfish ? Jealousy is not necessarily an infirmity. It may be a Divine emotion. The apostle speaks of a "godly jealousy." No doubt all our love is infirmity. The best, what we call the most purely unselfish, has its infirmity. I call that love of the highest which most intensely desires the well-being of its objects ; this is the selfishness of love. Jealousy is a passion that depends for its character upon the fuel that gives its flame. It is the sorrowing and pitying passion which would save, if it could, from the perdition and the doom, and unable to do so, or even seeking to do so, moves all its powers, takes all the minor emotions, faculties, and casts them into the flames of its love, bidding all blaze. This is

the apostle's "godly jealousy." And God is jealous. Do not think of Him as beneath the influence of that passion which sometimes, as envy, spite, and malice, disturbs our rest; still think of Him as, in a lofty sense, the jealous God. There are many terms applied to Him in Scripture which seem to anthropomorphise His character. "Angry," "repenting," "foreseeing." Whenever such terms are used, think of them as steps of Divine descent. We may be sure they do represent some qualities of the Divine nature on which it is important that we should reflect, and of which we should stand in awe. The meaning of words assists to the conception of things. Jealous is the same word as zealous, and both are derived from the Greek word *zeal, fire*; zeal is enthusiasm—moral fire; and jealousy,—what is jealousy but love on fire? Is not this the representation we constantly have of God? I do believe in the mercy, and gentleness, and goodness of God. I do believe that He who "knows our frame" does save His children from the alienation of eternity, even when the heart has so vehemently loved in time the children of time. But then you must take the consequences here of that too vehement love. God is jealous of sin, of all aberrations from Himself. He is jealous of love, of power, of knowledge. See how He is constantly reminding man of his weakness as He incarnates his strength; and God is constantly absorbing man's knowledge, power, and love to Himself. Divine love on fire, God is jealous! There is no love where there is no fire, but let it burn with the white, not with the red heat. Imagine no evil against God from this declaration of His Book. God is jealous, His love is on fire, the Holy Spirit is love on fire,—hell is love on fire. The one by gentle persuasion entreats; the other, by forcible compulsion, guards His holy ones. Thus His fire folds inward and outward; inward to bless, outward to punish—so a calm breath of holy life, a stormy fire of doom. (*Paxton Hood.*) **The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries.—Great sins bringing great ruin:—**I. **THAT THE GREAT SINS OF A PEOPLE MUST EVER BRING UPON THEM GREAT RUIN.** The population of Nineveh was pre-eminently wicked. It is represented in the Scriptures as a "bloody city," a "city full of lies and robberies"; the Hebrew prophets dwell upon its impious haughtiness and ruthless fierceness (*Isa. x. 7, 8*). Great sins bring great ruin. It was so with the antediluvians, with the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah. The principle of moral causation and the Eternal Justice of the universe demand that wherever there is sin there shall be suffering, and in proportion to the amount of sin shall be the amount of suffering. II. **THE GREAT RUIN THAT COMES PRESENTS GOD TO THE "VISION" OF MAN AS TERRIBLY INDIGNANT.** The passions of man are here ascribed to God. It is only when terrible anguish comes upon the sinner that God appears to the observer as indignant. (*Homilist.*) **National punishments part of God's moral government:—**I. **THE CERTAINTY THAT SIN WILL NOT REMAIN UNPUNISHED.** 1. The inevitable working of natural laws secures this. Physical, social, and spiritual evils follow sin. 2. The declared character of God secures it. He is a jealous God. II. **THERE IS NO RESISTING THE JUDGMENTS OF GOD.** His power is seen in nature. The rolling whirlwind, the dark tempest, the desolating storm are symbols of His wrath and of His might. III. **YET IN WRATH GOD REMEMBERS MERCY.** 1. There is a refuge for those who turn and repent. 2. No sins preclude hope. 3. Salvation is full and certain to the truly penitent. 4. Though the godly suffer trouble, they will be delivered from it. Their trials are only a discipline, if used aright. (*C. Cunningham Geikie, D.D.*) **God's judgments will be fulfilled:—**As you stood some stormy day upon a sea cliff and marked the giant billow rise from the deep to rush on with foaming crest, and throw itself thundering on the trembling shore, did you ever fancy that you could stay its course and hurl it back to the depths of the ocean? Did you ever stand beneath the leaden, lowering cloud, and mark the lightning's leap as it shot and flashed, and think that you could grasp the bolt and change its path? Still more foolish and vain his thought who fancies that he can arrest and turn aside the purpose of God. (*T. Guthrie, D.D.*)

Ver. 3. **The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked.—Mercy, omnipotence, and justice:—**Works of art require some education in the beholder before they can be thoroughly appreciated. There must be something in the man himself before he can understand the wonders either of nature or of art. Certainly this is true of character. By reason of failures in our character, and faults in our life, we are not capable of understanding all the separate beauties and the united perfection of the character of Christ, or

of God His Father. Men, through the alienation of their natures, are constantly misrepresenting God, because they cannot appreciate His perfection. This is especially true with regard to certain lights and shadows in the character of God, which He has so marvellously blended in the perfection of His nature, that, although we cannot see the exact point of meeting, yet we are struck with wonder at the sacred harmony. How can God be "slow to anger," and yet unwilling to "acquit the wicked"? Our character is so imperfect that we cannot see the congruity of these two attributes. It is because His character is perfect that we do not see where these two things melt into each other. I. THE FIRST CHARACTERISTIC OF GOD. "Slow to anger." 1. Because He never smites without first threatening. 2. But He is very slow to threaten. God's lips move swiftly when He promises, but slowly when He threatens. 3. When He threatens, how slow He is to sentence the criminal. 4. Even when the sentence against a sinner is signed and sealed, how slow God is to carry it out. Illustrate from case of Sodom. Trace this attribute of God to its source. He is "slow to anger" because He is infinitely good. And because He is great. II. THE LINK BETWEEN THE FIRST SENTENCE OF THE TEXT AND THE LAST. He is "great in power." He that is great in power has power over Himself. When God's power doth restrain Himself, then it is power indeed. III. THE LAST ATTRIBUTE IS THIS—"HE WILL NOT AT ALL ACQUIT THE WICKED." Never once has God pardoned an unpunished sin. Trace this attribute to its source, and you find it in this, "because He is good." (C. H. Spurgeon.) *The patience of God.*—I. IMPLIES GREAT POWER. Note—

1. This exquisite sensitiveness. He is sensibility itself. 2. His abhorrence of sin. It is the "abominable thing," which He emphatically hates. His whole nature revolts from it. He feels that it is antagonism to His will, and to the order and well-being of the universe. 3. His provocation by the world. 4. His right to do whatever He pleases. He could show His anger, if He pleased, anywhere, anywhere, or anyhow. II. His patience PRECLUDES NOT THE PUNISHMENT OF THE IMPENITENT. "And will not at all acquit the wicked." 1. To "acquit" the impenitent, would be an infraction of His law. He has bound suffering to sin by a law as strong and as inviolable as that which binds the planets to the sun. "The wages of sin is death." 2. To "acquit" the impenitent, would be a violation of His Word. 3. To "acquit" the impenitent, would be to break the harmony of His universe. If inveterate rebels were acquitted, what an impulse there would be given in God's moral empire to anarchy. Abuse not the patience of God; nay, avail yourselves of it. (Homilist.) *A discourse upon God's patience.*—Slowness to anger, or admirable patience, is the property of the Divine nature. This patience is seen in His providential works in the world. Consider—I. THE NATURE OF THIS PATIENCE. 1. It is a part of the Divine goodness and mercy, yet differs from both. It differs from mercy in the formal consideration of the object. Mercy respects the creature as miserable, patience respects the creature as criminal. Mercy is one end of patience. It differs in regard of the object. The object of goodness is every creature. The object of patience is primarily man. 2. Since it is a part of goodness and mercy, it is not an insensible patience. 3. It is not a constrained or half-hearted patience. 4. Since it is not for want of power over the creature, it is from a fulness of power over Himself. 5. The exercise of this patience is founded in the death of Christ. The naturalness of God's veracity and holiness, and the strictness of His justice, are no bars to the exercise of His patience. II. HOW THIS PATIENCE, OR SLOWNESS TO ANGER, IS MANIFESTED. 1. To our first parents. 2. To the Gentiles. 3. To the Israelites. In particular, this patience is manifest—(1) In His giving warning of judgments before He orders them to go forth. He speaks before He strikes, and speaks that He may not strike. (2) In long delaying His threatened judgments, though He finds no repentance in the rebels. (3) In His unwillingness to execute His judgments, when He can delay no longer. (4) In moderating His judgments, even when He sends them. (5) In giving great mercies after provocations. (6) All this is more manifest if we consider the provocations He hath. III. WHY DOETH GOD EXERCISE SO MUCH PATIENCE? 1. To show Himself appeasable. 2. To wait for men's repentance. 3. For the propagation of mankind. 4. For the continuance of the Church. 5. To manifest the equity of His future justice on righteous and wicked. For instruction—1. How do men abuse this patience! 2. The second use is for comfort. 3. For exhortation. Meditate often on the patience of God. (S. Charnocke.) *The God of providence a forbearing God.*—I. THE ADMIRABLE PATIENCE OF THE DIVINE BEING. The prophet adds a refer-

ence to the power of God, and His punishment of the wicked, in order to guard men against presuming on His forbearance. We need not stay to prove that slowness to anger is a property of God. Divine patience could not be displayed unless there were sin. There was abundant evidence of the Divine goodness before man transgressed; but none of the Divine patience. When our race rebelled, Divine patience displayed itself. There could be no forbearance, no long-suffering, in the sense in which we now use the word, unless there were the possibility of ultimate pardon. When the Almighty spares a sinner, He is even more wonderful than when He builds a universe. But the Divine patience is in no degree opposed to the justice and faithfulness of God. It leaves room for the exercise of every other attribute. II. THE MYSTERIOUS AND AWFUL CHARACTER OF DIVINE PROVIDENTIAL OPERATIONS. God has everything at His disposal; and He accomplishes His purposes, and works out the counsel of His own will, through a varied instrumentality. Our text, with its sublime and magnificent imagery, is full of consolation to the afflicted as well as terror to the impenitent. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*) And will not at all acquit the wicked.—*God both forgiving and unforgiving*:—Calvin's translation is, "Jehovah is slow to wrath, and great in power, and by clearing He will not clear." God is irreconcilable to the impenitent. He deals strictly with sinners, so as to remit no punishment. He will not clear by clearing, but will rigidly execute His judgment. There seems to be some inconsistency in saying that God is reconcilable and ready to pardon, and yet that by clearing He will not clear. But the aspect of things is different. The ungodly ever promise impunity to themselves, and in this confidence petulantly deride God Himself. The prophet answers them, and declares that there was no reason why they thus abused God's forbearance, for he says, By clearing He will not clear, that is, the reprobate: for our salvation consists in a free remission of sins; and whence comes our righteousness but from the imputation of God, and from this—that our sins are buried in oblivion? Yea, our whole clearing depends on the mercy of God. But God then exercises also His judgment, and by clearing He clears, when He remits to the faithful their sins; for the faithful, by repentance, anticipate His judgment; and He searches their hearts, that He may clear them. As then God absolves none but the condemned, our prophet here rightly declares, that "by clearing He will not clear," that is, He will not remit their sins, except He tries them, and discharges the office of a judge; in short, that no sin is remitted by God which He does not first condemn. But with regard to the reprobate, who are wholly obstinate in their wickedness, the prophet justly declares this to them,—that they have no hope of pardon, as they perversely adhere to their own devices, and think that they can escape the hand of God: the prophet tells them that they are deceived, for God passes by nothing, and will not blot out one sin, until all be brought to mind. (*John Calvin.*) *The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind, and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet.*—*The way of the Lord in the whirlwind and in the storm*:—Philosophers contemplate hurricanes as natural evils, and investigate the material causes of these elementary commotions. But Scripture raises us up to a higher sphere of contemplation, and presents to our minds the terrible operations of nature, under consideration of the works and judgments of the God of nature. He commands the storm, whirls the wind, rules the sea, and superintends the destructions of death. The literal sense of the text appears to have a foundation in fact, and may be traced to the terrible hurricane in which the God of Israel came down, and by a mighty angel destroyed the Assyrian camp before Jerusalem. 1. The way of the Lord in these elementary and violent commotions which have been described. (1) They are awaked and roused by the Word of the Lord. (2) They are directed by the will of God. (3) They are ruled by the providence of God. (4) They are restrained and moderated by the power of God. (5) They are calmed by the goodness and mercy of God. Application—1. The way of the Lord in whirlwinds and storms, and the illustrations of it, are proofs and demonstrations to the world of His existence and providence. 2. Exhibitions to our senses of the glory and terror of His majesty. 3. Declarations to the world that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. 4. Admonitions to the nations, to consider the miseries of war, and to settle among themselves those differences for which they have taken up arms against one another. 5. Calls to the inhabitants of the world, to turn from ungodliness and unrighteousness, and to serve the Lord with reverence and godly fear. Knowing the terrors, and knowing that they are coming upon all who know not God, and obey not the

Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, we would persuade you who are living in sin and unbelief, to foresee the great day of His wrath, to believe your guilt and danger, and to hide yourselves under His righteousness. (*A. Shanks.*) The clouds are the dust of His feet.—*What are the clouds?*—I. THE WAY OF GOD IS GENERALLY A HIDDEN ONE. When God works His wonders, He always conceals Himself. Even the motion of His feet causes clouds to arise. II. GREAT THINGS WITH US ARE LITTLE THINGS WITH GOD. What great things clouds are to us! Great things are they? Nay, they are only the dust of God's feet. III. THE MOST TERRIBLE THINGS IN NATURE HAVE NO TERROR TO THE CHILD OF GOD. Sometimes clouds are fearful things to mariners. But there is nothing terrible now, because it is only the dust of my Father's feet. IV. ALL THINGS IN NATURE ARE CALCULATED TO TERRIFY THE UNGODLY MAN. Sinner, hast thou ever seen the clouds as they roll along the sky? Those clouds are the dust of the feet of Jehovah. If these clouds are but the dust, what is He Himself? (*C. H. Spurgeon.*)

Vers. 3-6. **He rebuketh the sea.**—*God's power*:—Here is a description of God's power unrivalled in its sublimity and soul-stirring force. Power belongeth unto God. It is absolute, inexhaustible, ever and everywhere operative. "He fainteth not, neither is weary." His power is here presented in two aspects. I. AS OPERATING IRRESISTIBLY IN NATURE. 1. It works in the air. "The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet." 2. It works in the sea. "He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers." There is undoubtedly an allusion here to the Red Sea and the Jordan. "He holdeth the winds in His fists, and the waters in the hollow of His hands." His "way is in the sea," and His "path in the great waters." 3. It works on the earth. "Bashan languisheth, and Carmel and the flower of Lebanon languisheth." No spots in Palestine were more fruitful than these three. But their life and their growth depended on the results of God's power. Nor is His power less active in the inorganic parts of the world. "The mountains quake at Him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at His presence, yea, the world and all that dwell therein." God's power is seen in all the phenomena of the material world. How graphically and beautifully is this presented in Psalm civ. The fact that God's power is ever acting in the material universe is—(1) The most philosophic explanation of all its phenomena. The men who ascribe all the operations of nature to what they call laws, fail to satisfy my intellect. For what are those laws? The fact that God's power is ever acting is (2) The most hallowing aspect of the world we live in. God is in all. Then walk the earth in reverence. II. AS IRRESISTIBLY OPPOSED TO THE WICKED. "Who can stand before His indignation?" (*Homilist.*) *God's control over nature, and deliverance of His people*:—In these words there is a striking display of the power, the severity, and the long-suffering and mercy of God. I. GOD'S CONTROL OVER THE POWERS OF NATURE. With the terrible effects of His wrath. He ruleth in the heavens above, and in the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth. II. THE ESSENTIAL GOODNESS OF GOD'S CHARACTER, AND THE ALL-SUFFICIENCY OF HIS PROTECTION. Both the scenes of external nature, and the general condition of nations and individuals will, on the slightest reflection, convince you of the prevailing goodness of God. If there is any doubt on the subject, turn to the book of inspiration. III. THE MEANS WHEREBY MAN MAY AVERT GOD'S ANGER, AND SECURE HIS FAVOUR (ver. 7). "He knoweth them that are His." Trust in Him is the grand means to be employed. The faith that is wrought in your hearts by the Holy Spirit of God. This faith will work submission to His will, and repentance towards Him. This faith will lay hold of the stronghold that can defend in the day of trouble. This faith worketh by love. (*Hugh Hughes, B.D.*)

Ver. 6. **Who can stand before His indignation?**—*Repentance through fear*:—This and similar passages address themselves directly to our fears. The term "fear of God" in Scripture, does not always bear the same meaning. There is a filial fear, and there is a servile fear. Servile fear gives place to filial when God becomes known to us as our reconciled Father in Christ. We begin with the dread of God. The dread drives us to the Cross. Mistakes are often made as to that fear of God which we denominate servile. Christians are afraid of fear, looking with suspicion on any part which fear may have had in moving them to forsake evil ways, as if it were a base and ungenerous agent,

which ought not to have had share in the great work of conversion. Whilst so much of the Bible speaks of fear, fear cannot be without its use in religion. I. **WHAT MISAPPREHENSION MAY THERE BE IN REFERENCE TO THE USE OF FEAR?** Noah, in preparing the ark, is said to have been "moved with fear." It was dread of impending wrath. Fears may rightly move us to genuine and acceptable repentance. We are so constituted as to be just as accessible through fear as through hope. We feel that with the great mass of men we can make no way without appealing to their fears. Men must commonly be wrought upon by fear through what they are incurring rather than through what they are losing. We must come down upon them with tidings of disaster. Let a man continue his struggles and his endeavours even though he feel actuated only by fear, and in due time other motives shall gain sway in his breast. II. **THE LEGITIMATE USE OF SUCH AWFUL DENUNCIATIONS AS THESE IN THE TEXT.** Or the way in which threatenings ought to be employed by the preacher. St. Paul says, "Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men." Neither should the engine of terror be otherwise used by the present ministers of Christ. Threatenings are to be employed as inducements to the laying hold on the succour provided by Christ. (*H. Melvill, B.D.*)

Ver. 7. The Lord is good, a stronghold in the day of trouble.—Goodness a stronghold:—The great design of religion is to bring us to God and true blessedness. In order to this, there must be full and practical confidence in God,—submission to His providence and law,—unquestioning repose in Himself. The text, though not possessing the form of a promise, is a declaration concerning God Himself, which includes the whole system of promise. Such is God. If such is God, then happy the people that is in such a case; yea, blessed they whose God is the Lord. I. **"THE LORD IS GOOD."** 1. The expression reminds us of the absolute goodness of the Divine nature, and especially of the Divine benevolence. Whatever goodness there is in the creature is derived—God is its source; it is limited—in God it is unbounded; *dependent*—in God it is essential and independent; mutable—in God it is changeless. 2. The active character of the Divine goodness. He "doeth" good. In inanimate creation are displayed His perfections. All living beings look up to God. He universally provides. But we are of more value than many sparrows. And He cares for us. 3. God's goodness in its suitability to man's present condition. He is a sinner. Providential blessings continued. Evil tendencies of sin checked. A wisely ordered scheme of redemption; and hence, forbearance, salvation. II. **"A STRONGHOLD IN THE DAY OF TROUBLE."** Figure forcible in the East, where predatory expeditions are usual. God a "stronghold for defence of His people." Recollect what He is in Himself. All His attributes are employed for the benefit of His people. In the day of trouble they are shut up with God. III. **"HE KNOWETH THEM THAT TRUST IN HIM."** To trust in God implies satisfied persuasion He will be and do as He has said. Two results—we shall seek all good in Him. We shall abide with Him. Trust in God and doing good are ever conjoined—in nature as well as duty. (*G. Cubitt.*) *The goodness of God in seasons of calamity:*—This book is "The Burden of Nineveh." Nahum was contemporary with Hezekiah. The immediate design of the prophecy was to minister comfort to the afflicted and alarmed Jews; for the defeat of the enemies of the Church involves its deliverance. The name of the prophet indicates this design;—it signifies comfort or comforter. The text teaches that the Lord is good, even in seasons of calamity. 1. Such seasons are not only not inconsistent with the Divine goodness, but in various ways manifest it. There is always much affliction in the world. When we suffer under calamities, unworthy thoughts of God are apt to rise within us, and especially suspicions of His goodness. If we indulge these suspicions, they will alienate our hearts from God and His service, and prompt us to impatience, murmuring, and impiety. But they are not inconsistent with God's goodness. The punishment of transgression is not inconsistent with goodness. Days of judgment on us may be merciful warnings to others. They are often means of delivering and purifying the Church. They are instructors and monitors to future ages. 2. In seasons of calamity the Lord is good, for He reveals Himself to us as a stronghold, and invites us to flee to Him for safety and comfort. 3. In days of trouble the Lord is good, for He affectionately watches over all who honour Him with their trust. (*James Stark, D.D.*) *The Divine goodness a refuge in trouble:*—These words have been well compared to a burst

of sunshine on a cloudy tempestuous day. The prophet opens his commission with setting forth the terrors of the Lord. But on a sudden this appalling strain ceases. As though impelled by an inward feeling which had obliged him to look around for something to uphold him amid these terrors, he thinks and speaks of the goodness of the Lord. I. WHAT THIS GOODNESS IS. We are not to understand here the Divine purity, or holiness, but the benevolence, the kindness, the graciousness of the Lord. The goodness of God, taken in this sense, is that perfection of His nature which inclines Him to deal graciously with His creatures ; rich and happy in Himself, to give out of His riches and happiness, and make His creatures partakers of them, as far as their different capacities will admit. This goodness of God is, like every other perfection of His nature, infinite. By this I mean, it cannot be added to, it could not be greater. And His is holy goodness. It always moves and acts in conformity with His just and holy nature. Here it is that we make such mistakes in thinking of God. We take one of His attributes, and we look on it alone, as though God had no other attribute but that ; and then a mystery comes over His nature and doings. This goodness is also self-moved, spontaneous, free. It requires nothing in us to call it into exercise towards us ; it requires nothing whatever out of God to bring it into operation. It is not the Cross and work of the Lord Jesus that makes God good and gracious to us sinners. He was good and gracious to us before. It was God's love to us that found for us a Saviour. The Cross and mediation of Christ is the way the Divine goodness has opened for itself into our world. It is the channel through which it flows to us, not the fountain whence it takes its rise. II. WHAT THIS GOD OF GOODNESS IS TO HIS PEOPLE IN THE DAY OF THEIR TROUBLE. "A stronghold." This language conveys the idea of protection and defence. The countries in which the Old Scriptures were written were scenes of almost incessant warfare. Men were continually exposed to hostile inroads and invasions, and were obliged to have fortresses or holds to flee to for security. God is this refuge to the troubled soul in various ways. Sometimes keeping impending trouble off. At other times removing His people out of reach of trouble. More frequently giving them strength to bear their trouble. The prophet here intimates that the Lord's *goodness* shall be the stronghold, the strength and the support. The mere thought of His goodness is to be a consolation and a stay. III. WHAT ASSURANCE THEY WHO TRUST HIM HAVE THAT HE WILL BE THIS TO THEM. "He knoweth them that trust in Him." This brings the infinite knowledge of God to bear upon their case. When I make a living Being my refuge, when I fly to Him to protect me, it is clear that He must know I am come to Him for protection, and know too what my dangers are that He may shield me against them. He knows both us and our troubles. It is impossible for words to exaggerate the attention God pays to His suffering people. The mere act of trusting in God seems to be something spoken of here as something like a claim on His attention and care. Then if you are in affliction, encourage yourselves in the Lord your God. He is all-sufficient in Himself. Make Him the centre of your affections, desires, and consolations. Flee to Him to hide you. (C. Bradley.) *God a refuge*.—At Holyhead there is a splendid breakwater which cost a million and a half of money. Rising thirty feet above the waves it defies their utmost fury. We are not surprised that it should be built on so massive a scale, for in a great storm each wave strikes with the sledge hammer force of three tons to the square foot. Though a hurricane blow, and the sea be mountains high, shipping sheltered behind it ride in perfect safety. This is a type of the security God is to those who trust Him. *God is our refuge*.—A heathen could say, when a bird, scared by a hawk, flew into his bosom for refuge, "I will not kill thee, nor betray thee to thine enemy, seeing thou fliest to me for sanctuary" : much less will God either slay or give up the soul that takes sanctuary in His name. (W. Gurnall.) *Secure in God*.—Readers of Darwin will recall the description he gives of a marine plant which rises from a depth of one hundred and fifty to two hundred feet, and floats on the great breakers of the western ocean. The stem of this plant is less than an inch through ; yet it grows and thrives and holds its own against the fierce smittings and pressures of breakers which no masses of rock, however hard, could long withstand. What is the secret of this marvellous resistance and endurance ? How can this slender plant face the fury of the elements so successfully, and, in spite of storm and tempests, keep its hold, and perpetuate itself from century to century ? The answer has leaped to every lip : It reaches down into the still depths, where it fixes its grasp after the fashion of the instinct that has been

put into it, to the naked rocks; and no commotion of the waters can shake it from its fastenings. When a man has deep and inner clings to God, when the roots of his life go down and take hold on God, mere surface agitation and pressures will not overcome him. He may be floated here and there within a given sweep like a plant bosomed on the sea, and there may be times when it is very rough and the strain is great, but he will survive it all and preserve his integrity. (*F. A. Noble.*) *God's shielding love*:—Astronomers tell us that every year millions of meteoric bodies make their way towards our earth with a speed many times greater than that of the swiftest cannon-ball. These, beyond doubt, would strike the earth and destroy its inhabitants but for the air which surrounds it. That air, soft and yielding as it seems, offers so powerful a resistance to the swift motion of the falling meteors that they become vaporised through increased heat, and if they reach the earth at all, it is only in the form of minute meteoric dust. This physical fact has its counterpart in the spiritual realm. The influences of evil which assail the Christian as he goes through the world are often enough to crush and kill in him all spiritual life and joy and beauty, but round about him there is the atmosphere of the Divine love, and that love resists all evil, being as a consuming fire, keeping back from contact with the trusting soul everything that would destroy its purity and blast its blessedness. The love of God is a perfect protection to every Christian believer; with it around us we can walk with untrampling tread, knowing that no "weapon formed against us can prosper." (*Great Thoughts.*) *God a refuge*:—I once heard of a lonely traveller who sought to cross one of the western prairies. The only thing he had to guide him was a path that had been made by other travellers in the rank grass. But he had not gone very far before the snow began to fall, at first in scattered flakes, like large white feathers, but by and by with thick and blinding fierceness. He soon lost every trace of the path along which he travelled. He was lost, bewildered, and as the darkness began to gather around him he was greatly alarmed. He cried out for help, but the wild winds only laughed at him as he swept by. He was almost in despair when he saw through the blinding flakes a flickering light. Toward it he bent his exhausted energies. Stumbling and falling over the drifts that had accumulated here and there, he at length came to a settler's cottage. Can you imagine his thankfulness and joy when he found the storm behind him, in that friendly hut? He was safe. He was happy. In the moment of greatest peril he had found a refuge. Now that is just what God is to every traveller caught in the storm of life. If you but see the light that streams out from the windows of His palace, of His heart, and follow it, you will be safe from harm. The door of mercy is always open; the fires of His love and forgiveness are always glowing; the welcome which He gives is always abundant. *God's ways with friends and enemies*:—The sentiment of the passage is, that the same power which the Almighty displays for the destruction of His enemies, He employs for the protection of His friends. I. THE BENIGNITY OF THE EVER-BLESSED GOD. "The Lord is good." Goodness is associated with every idea it is possible to form of the Most High. Goodness is the perfection of His nature, the foundation of His actions, and comprehends all His other attributes. When His goodness supplies the needy, it is bounty; when it visits the miserable, it is pity; when it pardons the guilty, it is mercy; when it performs His promises, it is faithfulness; when it protects our persons, it is His power; when it orders events to our advantage, it is His wisdom; and when it converts and saves the soul, it is His grace. But where shall we look for its especial display? Not in providence but in redemption. His goodness here is love. This love is—1. Comprehensive in its objects. 2. Satisfying in its nature. 3. Exalting in its influence. 4. Perpetual in its existence. II. THE REFUGE HE AFFORDS HIS AFFLICTED PEOPLE. "He is a stronghold." 1. The distressing period to which the text refers. Such as national calamities; family trouble; soul trouble. 2. The refuge unfolded to our view. A stronghold, *i.e.*, a fortification, a place of strength and defence. III. THE APPROBATION HE EXPRESSES IN THEIR CONFIDENCE. "He knoweth them that trust in Him." It is supposed that we betake ourselves to the shelter which Divine goodness provides for our safety. A refuge, unless it be embraced, is no refuge at all. 1. What is the *trust* of which the text speaks? It is the fruit of faith. 2. What is the import of the term, "He knoweth them"? It is designed to express a distinguishing and an approving knowledge. He regards their confidence in Him with peculiar favour. (*J. E. Good.*) *How good God is!*—Two kinds of persons are spoken of here.

I. THOSE WHO ARE IN TROUBLE. 1. Trouble may be the result of our own imprudence. Or perhaps worse, of our sinfulness. 2. It may arise from family or business perplexities. Sometimes trouble is allowed to come and go unheeded. The rod is felt, but not the hand that brought it down. Sometimes trouble is received angrily or peevishly. It is very hard to contend against these feelings.

II. THE CHARACTERS THAT CALMLY WAIT FOR GOD; expecting some further development of His mind, and not venturing to judge according to present appearances.

1. Trusting in God supposes there is some occasion for trust. The work of faith is to trust in God when all outward things go wrong, and there is nothing but the Word of God to rely on. 2. Trusting in God is the highest manifestation of real principle. 3. Trusting in God is not an adventure. His revealed will puts a peradventure out of the question. (*W. G. Barrett.*) *The Lord's favour to those who trust in Him:*—The Bible abounds with the most sublime descriptions of God, and represents, in a variety of passages, His awful character and glorious perfections. On reading the description in the passage connected with the text it may appear to contain a contradiction. It may seem to represent the Almighty under two different characters. We may be ready to think that He cannot be at once “a jealous God” and “good, slow to anger.” There is no real difficulty. God is in Himself the same, infinitely glorious in all perfections. The seeming differences in His character arise from the different characters of those with whom He has to deal. In this respect His character, like the cloud which accompanied Israel, has a dark side and a bright side. To His adversaries He is a “jealous God.” To His people He is “rich in mercy.” The description here given—

I. OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD. “They that trust in Him.” Trust is often used for the whole of religion. It signifies a confidence in His power and faithfulness for protection and support, and for a supply of all things necessary to life and godliness. Things which characterise this confidence are—1. It is habitual. 2. It is practical. 3. It is a patient and persevering trust. 4. It is a solid and well-grounded confidence. Trust in God must be founded on His promise.

II. OF THE FAVOUR OF GOD TO HIS PEOPLE. 1. “The Lord is good.” God is goodness. Even His severity against sin is the effect of His goodness. 2. He is “a stronghold in the day of trouble.” The Lord’s people are not exempt from trouble. But if they have peculiar trials they have peculiar support under them. 3. The Lord “knoweth them that are His.” He sees, distinguishes, approves. Especially has He respect to them as putting their trust in Him. He sees the humble confidence with which they repose in His truth and faithfulness. Surely blessed are the people who make the Lord their trust. (*E. Cooper.*)

Vers. 7, 8. **He knoweth them that trust in Him;** but with an overrunning flood He will make an utter end of the place thereof. — *Opposite types of human character, and opposite lines of Divine procedure.*—**I. OPPOSITE TYPES OF CHARACTER.** 1. The friends of God. (1) They trust in Him. This is the universal character of the good in all ages. They trust His love ever to provide for them; His wisdom as their infallible guide; and His power as their strength and shield. (2) He acknowledges them. “And He knoweth.” This means, that He recognises them as His loyal subjects and loving children, His people. In Hosea xiii. 5 He saith, “I did know thee in the wilderness,” which means, “I did acknowledge thee and took care of thee!” The words imply the cognisance of special sympathy with the just. Here we have the enemies of God. “Darkness shall pursue His enemies.” Those who pursue a course of life directly opposed to the moral laws of heaven, whatever they may say, are His enemies. How numerous are God’s enemies! **II. Two opposite LINES OF DIVINE PROCEDURE.** God’s procedure is very different towards these two opposite classes of men. 1. He affords protection to the one. When the hosts of Sennacherib were approaching Jerusalem, Hezekiah, the king, under Divine inspiration, said to the people, “Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him: for there be more with us than with him. With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah, king of Judah.” Thus it is ever; God is always the refuge and strength of His people in times of tribulation. As a refuge He is—(1) Ever accessible. However suddenly the storm may come, the refuge is at your side, the door is open. “I will never leave thee,” &c. He is—(2) Ever secure. Once entered, and no injury can follow. He sends destruction to the other. “But with an overrunning

flood He will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue His enemies." The primary allusion here, no doubt, is to the way which Nineveh was captured by the means of the Babylonians. Conclusion—The grand question for every man to ask is, How do I stand in relation to God? (*Homilist.*) *The varied destinies of men:*—How various are the destinies of men! One goes to honour and life, another to disgrace and death. There are two lakes high up in the Alps, which lie so near that the bystander may throw a stone from the one to the other. Lago Blanco the one is named, or the White Loch, because it is of a light green colour; while its neighbour is Lago Nero, or the Black Loch, because it is dark and gloomy looking. But though they are so close, they are on different inclines of the watershed. Lago Blanco sends its overflow down to the Adriatic, but Lago Nero is connected with the Black Sea. I look at the one, and I think about Venice and sunny Italy; I look at the other, and I think about Sebastopol and the wintry Crimea. So I may be side by side in one home, in one business, in one Christian congregation, with a man who is yet on the different slope of the watershed. We receive the same messages of warning and of salvation. We enjoy much the same opportunities. But one of us believes God, and the other does not. One of us passes into glorious liberty, and the other into darkness and despair. Ah, let me watch in which direction I turn. (*A. Smellie, M.A.*)

Vers. 9, 10. What do ye imagine against the Lord?—*Sin*:—I. THE ESSENCE OF SIN IS SUGGESTED. It is hostility to God. It is opposition to the laws, purposes, Spirit of God. It involves—1. The basest of ingratitude. 2. The greatest injustice. 3. Impious presumption. II. THE SEAT OF SIN IS SUGGESTED. It is in the mind. Sin is not language, not mere actions. Sin is in the deep mute thoughts of the hearts. "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." III. THE FOLLY OF SIN IS SUGGESTED. It is opposition to Omnipotence. In opposing Him, remember—1. He will completely ruin you. 2. He will completely ruin you, whatever the kind of resistance you may offer. Fighting against God is a mad fight. (*Homilist.*) *Folly of opposing God*:—Sin, when it is mightiest and most successful, is transitory. Lord Rosebery has been telling us the story of Napoleon the Great. His energy, his intellect, his genius were such that he "enlarges the scope of human achievement." Once he "fought the Austrians for five consecutive days without taking off his boots or closing his eyes." "He was as much the first ruler as the first captain in the world." "Ordinary measures do not apply to him; we seem to be trying to span a mountain with a tape." Napoleon was the largest personal force that has come into the modern European world. But his career ended in defeat and exile. At forty-six the man who had dreamed of governing a continent was a captive. His conquests left no mark. The kings whom he made lost their thrones. France was beggared and exhausted by him. Why? Because God was not his God. "I am not a man like other men," he asserted himself; "the laws of morality could not be intended to apply to me." Therefore I will fear nothing, though wickedness seems to prosper for a time. Such prosperity has no permanence about it. It is better to walk humbly with God than to stand alone on the proudest eminence in the world. (*A. Smellie, M.A.*) While they be folded together as thorns.—*National undergrowth*:—Illustrate by the undergrowth in a great forest. It must be cut down before anything hopeful can be done with the soil. There is a national moral undergrowth: a brutal, vile, wretched population of a most repulsive and dangerous character. Ignorance, sensuality, violence, and irreligion, fostered and perpetuated by drunkenness, forms a dismal moral undergrowth, where human tigers watch for prey, where foul habits breed disease, where women lose all beauty and joy, and where children—the offspring of immoral parents—are like "a nest of unclean birds." What is to be done with this deadly moral undergrowth? Soft measures, easy-going, self-indulgent Christianity are of no use here. 1. Let us take increased care that good and precious seed shall be sown in the hearts of the young. This is of paramount and urgent importance. Take care of the little ones. 2. Seek to reach the people who never enter places of worship. 3. Endeavour to abate incentives to drunkenness. 4. Consecrate yourselves afresh to God, and the work of His kingdom. (*George W. McCree.*)

Vers. 11-14. There is one come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the Lord. a wicked counsellor.—*Corrupt kings*:—These words suggest a few thoughts

concerning human kings and kingdoms. I. HUMAN KINGS ARE SOMETIMES TERRIBLY CORRUPT. "There is one come out of thee, that imagineth evil against the Lord, a wicked counsellor." This evidently means Sennacherib, the king of Nineveh. II. CORRUPT KINGS OFTEN RUIN THEIR KINGDOMS. "Though they be quiet, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more." These words seemed to be addressed to Judah concerning the utter destruction that will befall their enemies, and their consequent deliverance from all fear from that quarter. It was here said they should be destroyed—1. Notwithstanding their military completeness. "Though they be quiet." The word "quiet" means complete. No doubt the military organisation, discipline, and equipment of Sennacherib's mighty army, as he led them up to attack Jerusalem, were as complete as the intelligence, the art, and the circumstances of the age could make them. Notwithstanding this, ruin befell them. 2. Notwithstanding their numerical force. "Likewise many." III. THE RUIN OF CORRUPT KINGDOMS IS A BLESSING TO THE OPPRESSED. "Yoke" here refers to the tribute imposed upon Hezekiah by Sennacherib. And so it ever is, when despotism has fallen, the oppressed rise to liberty. Conclusion—1. Realise the truth of prophecy. 2. Realise the importance of promoting education among the people. (*Homilist*.)

Ver. 15. Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings.—*Three things worthy of note* :—I. PEACE PROCLAIMED. Glorious to the ears of the men of Jerusalem must have been the intelligence that their great enemy was destroyed, that the Assyrian hosts were crushed, and now peace had come. A proclamation of national peace is "good tidings." But the proclamation of moral peace is still more delightful. "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the Gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom. x. 15). "My peace I give unto you, not as the world giveth give I unto you." II. WORSHIP ENJOINED. "O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows." "During the Assyrian invasion the inhabitants of Judah were cut off from all access to the metropolis; now they would be at liberty to proceed thither as usual in order to observe their religious rites, and they are here commanded to do so." 1. War disturbs religious observances. As peace in nature is the time to cultivate your ground and sow your seed, peace in the nation is the time to promote growth in religion and virtue. 2. In war men are disposed to make religious vows. III. ENEMIES VANQUISHED. "For the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off." (*Homilist*.) *Peace proclaimed* :—"At the close of the last war with Great Britain," says an American writer, "the prospects of our nation were shrouded in gloom. Our harbours were blockaded. Communication coastwise between our ports was cut off. Our immense annual products were mouldering in our warehouses. Our currency was reduced to irredeemable paper. Differences of political opinion were embittering the peace of many households. No one could predict when the contest would terminate, or discover the means by which it could much longer be protracted. It happened that one afternoon in February a ship was discovered in the offing, which was supposed to be a cartel, bringing home our commissioners at Ghent from their unsuccessful mission. The sun had set gloomily before any intelligence from the vessel had reached the city. Expectation became painfully intense as the hours of darkness drew on. At length a boat reached the wharf, announcing the fact that a treaty of peace had been signed, and was waiting for nothing but the action of our Government to become a law. The men on whose ears these words first fell rushed in breathless haste into the city to repeat them to their friends, shouting as they ran through the streets, 'Peace! Peace! Peace!' Every one who heard the sound repeated it. From house to house, from street to street, the news spread with electric rapidity. The whole city was in commotion. Men bearing lighted torches were flying to and fro, shouting, 'Peace! Peace! Peace!' When the rapture had partially subsided, one idea occupied every mind. But few men slept that night. In groups they were gathered in the streets, and by the fireside, beguiling the hours of midnight by reminding each other that the agony of war was over, and that a worn-out and distracted country was about to enter again upon its wonted career of prosperity. Thus, every one becoming a herald, the news soon reached every man, woman, and child in the city, and filled their hearts with joy."

CHAPTER II.

VERS. 1, 2. *He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face.—God the Vindicator of the oppressed*.—I. THE OPPRESSION OF THE CHOSEN PEOPLE BY THE ASSYRIANS. 1. This is expressed figuratively. "The emptiers have emptied them out" (ver. 2), had exhausted their resources, as the contents of a vessel poured out until every drain had been withdrawn, so had both Israel and Judah been impoverished by the Assyrians. "And marred their vine branches." Ancient Israel was often described as God's vineyard (Isa. v. 1; Psa. lxxx. 9). This vineyard the foe had ruthlessly invaded, casting down and injuring its fruit-bearing trees. 2. These figurative representations are sustained by historical fact. The more familiar we become with Assyrian history the more do we trace in that vast heathen power the prevalence of the haughty, overbearing spirit. Its rulers and people vainly supposed that national greatness consisted in the possession of might to be used in oppressing other nations and peoples. To be able to depict upon the walls of the palaces of Ninus battle scenes indicative of military triumph, accompanied by great spoil and cruel chastisement inflicted upon their adversaries, seems to have been their highest ambition. Their whole relationship to Israel and Judah was based upon this principle. The favoured of heaven, having forsaken their God, and hence lost His protecting care, turned in their exigencies to Assyria for aid, but only to find, in this supposed helper against their foes, a more powerful enemy. In this way the kingdom of Israel was first made tributary to Assyria by Paul (2 Kings xv. 17-20), and, soon after, its tribes were carried away into captivity by Shalmaneser (2 Kings xvii. 3-23), whilst the kingdom of Judah in like manner became compelled to acknowledge the lordship of Tilgath-Pilneser (2 Chron. xxvii. 16-21). Hezekiah sought to cast off the Assyrian yoke, but this only resulted in the nation, in Nahum's time, being brought into circumstances of extreme peril (2 Kings xviii. 13-17), and from which eventually supernatural help alone was able to deliver it (Isa. xxxvii. 36). II. DIVINE INTERPOSITION PROMISED ON BEHALF OF THE OPPRESSED. (Ver. 2.) Such interposition had in a measure but recently taken place (Isa. xxxvii. 36). "The angel of death" had "breathed in the face of the foe," and had caused "the might of the Gentile" to "melt like snow," and the oppressor to return humbled to his capital (Isa. xxxvii. 37). The time, however, for the complete and final interposition of heaven had not yet arrived. Still, it should come. The seer in rapt vision beheld it as though it had been then in operation, and for the encouragement of the oppressed he declared that the Divine eye observed all that was being endured, that the Lord Almighty still regarded them with favour (ver. 2), and would yet make them "an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations" (Isa. lx. 15). III. THIS DIVINE INTERPOSITION EVENTUALLY TO BE EXPERIENCED VIEWED AS CARRYING WITH IT THE ENTIRE OVERTHROW OF THE OPPRESSOR. (Ver. 1.) Asshur should in due course be brought low, and the yoke of bondage should fall from off the necks of the captives. In "the day of visitation"—1. Agents should not be wanting to carry out the Divine behests. The defection of the Assyrian general, the forces of the King of Media, and the overflowing of the Tigris, should all combine to bring about the accomplishment of the Divine purpose; and these forces are here personified as "the dasher in pieces" (ver. 1). 2. Resistance should be in vain. They might "keep the munition, watch the ways," &c. (ver. 1), but all to no purpose. The proud power must inevitably fall, and in its overthrow proclamation be made that it is not by means of tyranny and oppression and wrong-doing that any nation can become truly great and lastingly established, but by the prevalence in its midst of liberty, virtue, and righteousness. Nineveh in her downfall

". . . seems to cry aloud
To warn the mighty and instruct the proud
That of the great, neglecting to be just,
Heaven in a moment makes a heap of dust."

(S. D. Hillman, B.A.)

VERS. 3-13. *The shield of His mighty men is made red.—The downfall of Nineveh, as illustrative of the Divine and the human elements in revelation*.—There are two elements in the Bible, the Divine and the human. God speaks

to us in every page, nor does He speak the less emphatically, but all the more so, in that He addresses us through men possessing throbbing hearts, and who were passing through experiences like our own. The account given in these verses of the predicted ruin of Nineveh must be taken as a whole, and in the graphic picture here presented to us we have strikingly illustrated this twofold character of the Scriptures of eternal truth. I. THE ACCOUNT CONTAINED HERE OF THE PREDICTED OVERTHROW OF NINEVEH SERVES TO ILLUSTRATE THE DIVINE ELEMENT IN REVELATION. Nahum flourished in the reign of Hezekiah (B.C. 725-696), and Nineveh was destroyed between B.C. 609 and 606. He lived and prophesied thus say a hundred years before the occurrence of the events he so vividly described, and when the Assyrian power was in the zenith of its prosperity. His announcements were very distinct and definite, and by placing these and the records of secular historians given at a subsequent period side by side, we see how minutely the predictions of this seer have been fulfilled, and that hence, in making these, he must have been God's messenger, uttering, not his own thoughts, but those which had been communicated to him by "visions and revelations of the Lord." In chap. i. 10 we read, "For while they be folded together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry." The secular historian writes: "While all the Assyrian army were feasting for their former victories, those about Arbucos, being informed by some deserters of the negligence and drunkenness in the camp of the enemies, assaulted them unexpectedly by night, and falling orderly on them disorderly, and prepared on them unprepared, became masters of the camp, and slew many of the soldiers and drove the rest into the city" (Diodorus Siculus, bk. ii. p. 80). In chap. ii. 6 we read, "The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved." The secular historian writes: "There was an oracle among the Assyrians that Nineveh should not be taken till the river became an enemy to the city; and in the third year of the siege the river, being swollen with continual rains, overflowed part of the city, and broke down the wall for twenty furlongs. Then the king, thinking that the oracle was fulfilled, and the river had become an enemy to the city, built a large funeral pile in the palace, and, collecting together all his wealth and his concubines and eunuchs, burnt himself and the palace with them all, and the enemy entered at the breach that the waters had made, and took the city" (Diodorus Siculus, bk. ii. p. 80). In chap. ii. 9 the prophet, as though addressing the adversaries of Nineveh, said, "Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold: for there is none end of the store and glory out of all the pleasant furniture"; and the same secular historian already quoted informs us that the conquerors carried many talents of gold and silver to Ecbatana, the royal city of the Medes. No language could be more explicit than that in which Nahum predicted the total destruction of the city (chap. ii. 10-13, iii. 7, 15-17). The prophet Zephaniah used words equally plain (ii. 13-15). Their utterances would have appeared very strange to the Ninevites at the time they were spoken; as strange, indeed, as similar utterances would appear if addressed at the present time to the inhabitants of our own metropolis; but they were true, nevertheless, and the facts of history furnish abundant confirmations. For upwards of two thousand years after its overthrow Nineveh lay buried in the earth. II. THE ACCOUNT CONTAINED HERE OF THE PREDICTED OVERTHROW OF NINEVEH SERVES TO ILLUSTRATE THE HUMAN ELEMENT IN REVELATION. Holy Scripture is remarkable in its variety—not variety in purpose, for this is single throughout, but variety in expression. History, prophecy, poetry, parable, proverb, miracle, biography, vision, epistle, are all laid under tribute. As there is a Divine element in the Bible, so also there is a human element therein. Biblical critics are agreed in recognising "the classic beauty and the finished elegance" of the style of Nahum, and in assigning to this writer a place in the first rank of Hebrew literature. "The variety in his method of presenting ideas discovers much poetic talent in the prophet. The reader of taste and sensibility will be affected by the entire structure of the poem, by the agreeable manner in which the ideas are brought forward, by the flexibility of the expressions, the roundness of his turns, the delicate outlines of his figures, by the strength and delicacy, and the expression of sympathy and greatness, which diffuse themselves over the whole subject" (De Wette's Introduction). His description of the siege and fall of Nineveh, contained in this chapter (vers. 3-13), is wonderfully vivid. As we read the account, even at this distant date, the stirring scenes seem to live again, and to pass in review before us. We see the attacking warriors

in their scarlet attire and with their chariots armed with sharp instruments of steel (ver. 3), and the defenders of the city, suddenly startled, hastening their preparations, their chariots in the hurry jostling against each other in the streets, and the gallants summoned by the king hastening to the ramparts, which the foe is seeking with battering-rams to cast down (vers. 4, 5). We behold the overflowing of the river, facilitating the advance of the enemy, and paralysing the people by reason of the popular tradition now seemingly being fulfilled (ver. 6). We witness the inhabitants brought low in shame and dishonour, moaning like a captive woman (ver. 7), or fleeing for their very life in hopelessness and despair, conscious that resistance is vain (ver. 8). We view the spoiling of the city—the conqueror carrying away the gold and the silver to the Median capital, trophies of victory (ver. 9). Finally, we picture to ourselves the prophets of the Lord gazing upon the waste and desolation, reflecting upon the proud being abased, their offspring cut off, their gains confiscated, their boastful messengers silenced, and ascribing all the terrible reverses thus experienced to the righteous retribution of the Lord of hosts (vers. 10–13); and we feel, as we linger upon the scene thus graphically portrayed, that whilst rejoicing in this volume of revelation as having been given by inspiration of God, and as containing Divine lessons abounding both in encouragement and warning, we may well prize it also even on the lower ground of its literary merit, and heartily rejoice in the infinite variety of human powers and endowments here consecrated to the presentation of the loftiest and grandest spiritual teaching. (*Ibid.*)

Ver. 13. Behold, I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts.—*Man incurring the Divine displeasure*.—This attitude of God towards man—I. IMPLIES WRONG-DOING ON MAN'S PART. God is not thus adverse to man for naught. "His delights are with the sons of men" (Prov. viii. 31). Sin alienates man from God, and causes God to be righteously displeased with man. II. INVOLVES MAN IN PRESENT DISTRESS. Man cannot be at ease whilst under the ban of Jehovah. "In His favour is life" (Psa. xxx. 5). Separation from Him through sin means disquietude and unrest. "The worst troubler in the world is a wilful heart." "Conscience makes cowards of us all!" "The heart melteth, the knees smite together" (ver. 10). III. RESULTING IN ULTIMATE RUIN TO SUCH AS WILFULLY PERSIST IN SIN. God is "the Lord of hosts." All power is His. "Who shall stand when He is angry?" (Psa. lxxvi. 7). All have sinned, and hence have incurred the displeasure of Him who "is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," but in Christ, whose day the seers saw afar off, God is reconciled to man; so that the distress and ruin indicated can alone result from man refusing to be reconciled unto God. (*Ibid.*) *And the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard* (with chap. i. 15).—*The messengers of Nineveh and the messengers of Zion: a comparison*.—"And the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard" (ver. 13); "Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace!" (chap. i. 15). The messengers of Nineveh and the messengers of Zion are alluded to in these passages. A comparison of these respective messengers may prove suggestive and useful in its application to certain developments in these modern times. From the Second Book of Kings and the Second Book of Chronicles we learn that the heralds or messengers of Nineveh cherished the spirit of blasphemy with reference to the God of heaven. The faith of the pious Hebrews consisted in the recognition of the one living and true God, and of His providential care over all His creatures; and it was against this bulwark that the emissaries of Assyria constantly directed their assaults in words foul and filthy (see Rabshakeh's appeal to the Jews, 2 Kings xviii. 33–35; and his letter, 2 Chron. xxxii. 17). The great and distinguishing characteristic of the messengers of Zion was loyalty to the God of heaven. Their feet stood upon the mountains, and their voice proclaimed to the people, "Behold your God!" (Isa. xl. 9); "Thy God reigneth!" (Isa. lii. 7). In the present age there are messengers who boldly declare their non-acceptance of the teaching that recognises the Divine Being and His working, and who seek to disseminate their views, and in doing so are not particular if they blaspheme the God of heaven. And whilst there are such messengers in the world doing their injurious work, there are also those who are thoroughly loyal to the King of kings, who delight to show forth His praise, to tell the story of His love in the gift and work of Christ, and to seek to draw men in loving obedience to His authority and will. Note certain contrasts, then, suggested;

thus—I. CAPTIVITY IN CONTRAST WITH FREEDOM. The messengers of Nineveh approached Jerusalem, to which Sennacherib was laying siege, but they bore no tidings of liberty. They claimed full submission, and declared that even this must be followed by captivity in a strange land (2 Kings xviii. 31, 32). The assurance of ultimate deliverance came from the messengers of the Lord (chap. i. 12, 13). Sin is bondage. Transgressors are slaves. And scepticism has nothing to offer such by way of helping them to escape. Lo! the messengers of Zion come. They tell him of the great Father's unwearying love, the Saviour's obedience unto the death of the Cross, the energising and sanctifying Spirit ready to gird him with all-sufficient strength. II. STRIFE IN CONTRAST TO PEACE. The messengers of Nineveh to Judah had nothing conciliatory to convey; they told only of contention and strife. The assurance that peace should ultimately be enjoyed came to the anxious King of Judah from God's messengers, who published peace. The messengers of scepticism have no proclamation of peace to make. It is the privilege, however, of the messengers of Zion to proclaim those spiritual and eternal verities in which the heart may securely and tranquilly repose, and to point to him who can quell every storm and give rest unto the soul. III. GLOOM IN CONTRAST TO GLADNESS. Hezekiah and his people were in extremity; it was to them a time of "trouble"; but not a ray of hope came to them through the messengers of Nineveh. Their worst fears were confirmed; the foe was unrelenting. Their hope was in God, and in the words spoken by His holy prophets. So in the extremities of life—in sickness and sorrow, and especially at life's close, hope springs not from unbelief, but from the words God has addressed to us through His servants. The Gospel has no rival in such seasons. Scepticism has no voice then, or, if it speaks, it but deepens the prevailing gloom; but the good tidings God has revealed dispels our sadness and fills the soul with immortal hopes. Happy messengers who are thus enabled to "comfort all that mourn," &c. (Isa. lxi. 2). IV. SHAME IN CONTRAST TO HONOUR. The voice of all messengers who blaspheme the holy name of God "shall be no more heard," for God will put them to silence; but voices publishing His love and grace shall go sounding on through the ages,—the bright succession of proclaimers shall not cease. Growing numbers shall be raised up who shall find their way to all nations and kindreds and tribes, until the glad tidings shall reach every shore, and the knowledge of the Lord shall fill the earth (Isa. xi. 9). (*Ibid.*)

CHAPTER III.

VER. 10. Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity.—*Environments* :—These were certainly close environments; but whence had they come? From still closer ones, like those of pride and enervating habits among a luxurious people; from neglect of the higher demands of the spiritual life; from living too much on the lower plane, which prophets in all ages have warned against. It did not require miraculous power *then* to discern what causes would be sure to produce disintegration of a city or nation. It does not require any superhuman gift to-day. Every clear seeing mind knows that dissipation will make nations and individuals weak and easily overcome. Certain courses will tend to strengthen and fortify; opposite courses will produce final disaster. There is no power enduring and sufficient but the power of the Spirit; and if this be neglected there remains, of course, nothing with which to repel invasions. This is true of a single individual, or of many united. Not the force from without, but the weakness within, should cause apprehension. We have often seen good work done in overcoming environments. Hard, crushing, discouraging environments do not hinder brave spirits. There have been crises in the world's history when the massed power of dauntless spirit has finally swept away seemingly immovable environment. It is not in the nature of our surroundings to hold us caged for ever, or even for this life. There are no chains for the free spirit. Let us beware of the chains of pride, resentment, envy, of criticism and complaint, and break those that we can break. (*Mrs. E. M. Hickok.*)

VER. 17. Which camp in the hedges in the cold day.—*Locusts affected by the cold* :—Paxton and others have remarked that there is much difficulty in this

passage ; but to anyone who has attentively watched the habits of the locusts it is not only plain, but very striking. In the evenings, as soon as the air became cool, at Abeih, they literally camped in the hedges and loose stone walls, covering them over like a swarm of bees settled on a bush. There they remained until the next day's sun waxed warm, when they again commenced to march. One of the days on which they were passing was quite cool, and the locusts scarcely moved at all from their camps, and multitudes remained actually stationary until the next morning. Those that did march crept along very heavily, as if cramped and stiff ; but in a hot day they hurried forward in a very earnest, lively manner. It is an aggravation of the calamity if the weather continues cool ; for then they prolong their stay, and do far more damage. (*Thomson's "Land and Book."*)