

THE
PULPIT COMMENTARY,

EDITED BY THE
VERY REV. H. D. M. SPENCE, D.D.,
DEAN OF GLOUCESTER;

AND BY THE
REV. JOSEPH S. EXELL, M.A.

J O N A H.

Exposition
By REV. W. J. DEANE, M.A.,
RECTOR OF ASHEN.

Homiletics
By REV. PROFESSOR J. R. THOMSON, M.A.

Homilies by Various Authors.

REV. J. E. HENRY, M.A.

REV. G. T. COSTER.

REV. W. G. BLAIKIE, D.D., LL.D.

REV. A. ROWLAND, B.A., LL.B.

REV. D. THOMAS, D.D.

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THE BOOK OF JONAH.

INTRODUCTION.

§ I. SUBJECT OF THE BOOK.

THE Book of Jonah is not a prophecy, but an account of the prophet's mission to Nineveh to announce its speedy destruction. It is concerned chiefly with Jonah's own personal feelings and history in relation to this mission. Possessed with the national hatred of idolatrous Gentiles, and fearing that God, in his great long-suffering, might, after all, spare these Assyrians to whom he was sent, and that thus his prediction would be discredited and a heathen nation saved, he attempted to escape the unwelcome errand. Mingled with this apprehension there may have been a personal dread of ill treatment at the hands of the cruel and ferocious Assyrians, who would have little respect for an alien prophet, and would probably punish his pretensions with torture and death. But this consideration would have had small influence had his heart been right. He is bold enough when he comes to himself. He knew his duty, but at the present moment determined to avoid its fulfilment. Accordingly, he fled to Joppa and took ship for Tarshish. The providence of God followed him. A violent storm arose, and the crew of the vessel, surmising that it was sent by Heaven as a judgment, cast lots in order to discover who was the guilty person among them. Jonah, being thus designated, confesses the truth, and at his own earnest request is cast into the sea. He is, however, not drowned. A huge fish swallows him, and after three days vomits him forth, and he lands safely on the shore. He then humbly obeys the will of God, sets out, and executes his mission to Nineveh. The king of that city, having heard probably of his strange deliverance from the deep, and believing him to be a messenger from Heaven, ordered a general fast, and by timely repentance averted the threatened doom. Jonah, from national idiosyncrasies, grudging the mercy thus conceded to a heathen nation, showed his displeasure in a marked manner. A better lesson was taught him by a little incident. A gourd, under whose grateful shade he had sat the live-

long day, withered away, and left him exposed to the burning Eastern sun; and he grieved bitterly over the gourd. Then God shows him how unreasonable he is in lamenting for this plant, in whose growth he had no hand, which rose in a night and perished in a night, and yet in being angry that he, the God of mercy, should have pity on this great city filled with half a million of souls.

Of the moral corruption of Nineveh, which was the occasion of the threatened punishment, other prophets speak. "Woe to the bloody city!" says Nahum (iii. 1); "it is all full of lies and robbery; the prey departeth not;" "Upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually?" (iii. 19). "This is the joyous city," cries Zephaniah (ii. 15), "that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none else beside me." "The annals of Assyria," says Layard ('Nineveh and Babylon,' p. 631), quoted by Trochon, "are nothing but a register of military campaigns, spoliations, and cruelties. Their monuments display men of a calm and unmoved ferocity, whose moral and mental qualities are overborne by the faculties of the lower, brutal nature."

In the book before us we can trace three stages leading to the final lesson. The first is Jonah's conversion, with its various scenes, ending in his acquiescence in the Divine call and his second mission. Then follow the solemn annunciation to Nineveh, and the repentance of king and people. Lastly we have Jonah's displeasure at the non-accomplishment of the predicted overthrow, and the better lesson which God vouchsafes to teach him. These parts, and every portion of them, are replete with most important truths and types and figures. It is this didactic and symbolical character that has caused the book to be inserted among the prophets. In its history there is, indeed, concealed prophecy of the highest importance which our eyes are open to discern. To the Jew, perhaps, the chief lesson which it was meant to teach was the capacity of the Gentiles for salvation, and that God designed to make them partakers thereof. This was a truth hard to be learned. The Israelites had been often warned that the Gentiles were ordained to be the punishers of their disobedience and apostasy; hence they looked upon them as bitter enemies, incapable of salvation, and cherished all the prophecies concerning their final overthrow, overlooking or misinterpreting those that spoke of their conversion and entrance into the kingdom of God. The possibility of the admission of aliens to the privileges of Abraham's seed had now to be enforced. Other prophets enunciated this great truth in plain words or under dark sayings; Jonah acted it, expressed it in action. He was forced to show that it was his duty to sympathize with others who wished to turn to God; to help, not to impede, their efforts. He is made to exhibit the unreasonableness and impiety of a spirit like that of the elder brother in the parable of the prodigal son, who is jealous of the mercy bestowed upon the returning penitent. In his great candour he places even the heathen sailors in the category of possible believers: they cry to the Lord, fear him, offer sacri-

fice, and make vows unto him. So, in this view, the history is levelled against the bigotry and exclusiveness of the Jews which come forward so prominently in later times. God has compassion on all men; "In every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him" (Acts x. 35).

Another object of the history is to teach the nature and efficacy of true repentance. Under this head we are presented with the examples of Jonah himself and the Ninevites. Not that the prophet takes any pains to explain his own conduct or to soften its asperities. He deals with facts and results. The storm, and the lot that points him out as the guilty person on board the ship, awaken in him a sense of his crime in fleeing from his appointed work; the wonderful deliverance vouchsafed fills him with gratitude and remorse, and makes him ready, when restored to his office, to execute the renewed mission as God commanded. The repentance of the people at the mere announcement of Jonah is used by Christ himself to accentuate the obstinate impenitence of the Jews under unusual privileges and advantages (Matt. xii. 41). And to his own contemporaries the prophet, by this history, read a solemn, if silent, warning; he contrasts the submission of these Gentiles, who had so little light and knowledge, with the hardness and obstinacy of the Israelites, who had the Word of God and the light of his presence among them. It is as though he was using to them the words of Christ, "I tell you, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke xiii. 3), or enforcing the sad comparison that Isaiah (lxv. 1, 2) makes, "I have spread out my hands all the day long unto a rebellious people;" and "I am sought of them that asked not for me; I am found of them that sought me not." But there is another object in this history. It is a type and prophecy of the resurrection of Christ and the issues of that momentous fact. On this feature the Saviour himself shed clear light. "As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matt. xii. 40). The Jews themselves taught from this history the resurrection of the body. We can see, however, much more in it. Not merely the resurrection of the flesh, nor merely the resurrection of Christ, are here adumbrated; the Divine plan of salvation is unfolded, as expressed in the words of St. Paul before Festus (Acts xxvi. 23), "That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles." It was not till Jonah had, as it were, died and risen again that he preached repentance to the Ninevites. So Christ had said, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit" (John xii. 24); "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself" (John xii. 32). Thus after his resurrection Christ went forth in his Church to make disciples of all nations, and to embrace both Jew and Gentile in the kingdom of God. The mission of Jonah has its place in the gradual development of

this design; it gives a sketch of that picture which was one day to be filled up to perfection. By it, on the one hand, the Gentile learned something of the attributes of the true God—his omnipotence, justice, and mercy; and, on the other, the Jew was taught tolerance and charity, and the rigid spirit of pride and exclusiveness received a plain rebuke.

Some critics consider the book to have been written with an apologetic purpose, to show a correct view of the functions of the prophet and the characteristics of prophecy. Many prophecies had remained unfulfilled; many had received a very partial and indefinite fulfilment. Jonah's history emphasizes the truth that all such pre-announcements are conditional, and their issues are liable to be modified and altered by circumstances, and that such variations detract nothing from the Divine nature of the prediction.

It remains to mention another view of the mission of Jonah which considers it to have been of a political rather than a religious character (see Dr. Smith's 'Student's Old Testament History,' p. 468; and Kalisch, 'Bible Studies,' pt. ii.). According to this supposition, Jonah was sent to Nineveh to warn the king against attacking or interfering with Israel. The Assyrians at this time had made frequent inroads upon Syria, and it was probable that they would ere long turn their arms against Samaria. God's forbearance with his rebellious people had been markedly exhibited; lately he had given assurance that "he would not blot out their name from under heaven" (2 Kings xiii. 23), and now he sends a prophet to urge Assyria to desist from its meditated enterprise against Israel. In support of this notion it is argued that the crime of which Nineveh repented could not have been idolatry; for this certainly was not abandoned on account of the preaching of Jonah; and there is no evidence whatever of any religious reformation at this period. The only effect that is admissible is the relinquishment of a design which the king had learned was displeasing to a Divinity whom he saw reason to reverence. But all this is pure assumption. There is not a trace of any political bearing in the whole transaction. Jonah is bidden (ch. i. 2) to "go and cry against Nineveh; for their wickedness is come up" unto the Lord. And when at length he executes his mission, his only word is, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (ch. iii. 4). What need was there of fasting and sackcloth, if the only change desired was the abandonment of a certain military expedition? How could this people be held up as an example of repentance, if they only altered the direction of their arms at the prophet's request? No doubt the lust of conquest, and the cruelty, spoliation, and injustice to which it gave occasion were some of the sins which called for vengeance; but we have no ground for narrowing Jonah's mission to a prohibition of a threatened attack on Israel. The vices of a great and luxurious city, drunk with conquest and exulting in its material strength, were flagrant enough to draw down the vengeance of Heaven; and the providence of God is grandly displayed in offering a hope

of repentance to this great people by the word of a prophet from his own chosen nation.

§ II. AUTHOR.

There is no good reason to doubt that the hero, if not the author, of this book was that Jonah, son of Amittai, the prophet whose comforting prophecy was recounted in the days of Jeroboam the Second (2 Kings xiv. 25). The names of Jonah and Amittai occur nowhere else in the Old Testament, and it is incredible that there should have been two distinct persons named Jonah, both prophets, both sons of Amittai. Jonah means "a Dove;" Amittai, "True." Jerome, in his commentary, interprets Jonah to mean "Grieving;" but the former explanation is correct. From the signification of Amittai arose the very improbable opinion that our prophet was the son of the widow of Sarepta, whom Elijah raised to life, because she said, on receiving him restored at the prophet's hands, "Now I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in thy mouth is *truth* (*emeth*)" (1 Kings xvii. 24). Other suggestions, equally unfounded, are that he was the boy who attended Elijah to the wilderness, or the young man who was sent to anoint Jehu, or the husband of the Shunammite woman who extended hospitality to Elisha. Of the facts of Jonah's life nothing is known but what his own book supplies. The notice in Kings adds the only other piece of information about him which we possess, viz. that he was born at Gath-hepher, a place in Zebulun (Josh. xix. 13), about three miles north-east of Nazareth, separated by a wady from the traditional Cana of Galilee. It is identified with the modern village of *Mesheh*, and the monument of Neby Yunas, the Prophet Jonah, is still shown there. Another tradition places his tomb at Nineveh, but there is no ground for supposing that, after his mission was accomplished, he stayed on and died there.

As to the actual writer of the book, a grave controversy exists. Most modern critics of the advanced school unhesitatingly deny the traditional view, which regards the prophet as the author, though their arguments are not thoroughly convincing. For instance, doubts have been thrown on the genuineness of the book because it is written throughout in the third person. But there is nothing unusual in this. Classical scholars will recall the 'Anabasis' of Xenophon and the 'Commentaries' of Cæsar, concerning whose genuineness no question has ever been raised, though they are written in the third person. The same may be said of Thucydides, and Josephus, and Frederick the Great, as Hengstenberg has pointed out ('Auth. de Pent.,' ii. 107, etc.). We have many instances of the kind close at hand. Amos, in the midst of his prophecy, inserts the historical interlude concerning his persecution at the hands of Amaziah, in the third person (vii. 12, etc.). There are many passages in other prophets where the same use may be noticed; e.g. Isa. vii. 3; xx. 2, 3; Jer. xx. 1, 3; xxvi. 7, etc.; Dan. i.—vii.; Hag. i. 1, 3, 12; ii. 1, 10, 20. Besides this,

the candour of the history shows it to have been written by the person whose story it relates. It is true that the book does not profess to have been written by Jonah himself; but surely a Jewish writer, imbued with the national respect for the prophetic character, would never have allowed himself to exhibit a seer in such an unfavourable light. The bigotry, selfishness, petulance, and disobedience, which are so plainly attributed to Jonah, could have been set forth by no one but by himself. His weaknesses and errors are allowed to remain unexplained and unsoftened; the writer makes no attempt to put a favourable construction upon his failings; he leaves the prophet lying under God's reproof. Surely no one but himself would have done this; no one but himself could have shown this unique impartiality, this holy indifference to men's praise or blame. The calm, dispassionate narrative betrays one who is telling the story of his own actions, accurately and humbly, in order to teach a great lesson. The personality is wholly absorbed in this design. He writes for the instruction of others. He records his own weaknesses and prejudices as a warning to other prophets who should be placed in like circumstances. If we can get over other difficulties connected with language, history, etc., we shall not be unreasonable in regarding Jonah as responsible for the narrative, though it may have been modified by a subsequent editor. We may thus regard the story as being the confession of his repentance, the token that he sincerely grieved for his fault, and desired to make amends by exhibiting it in its full heinousness with its punishment and consequences.

We gather the character of Jonah from his own words and actions. He is narrow-minded and prejudiced; a bigoted patriot, incapable of taking a comprehensive view of his unexampled mission. He thinks more of himself and his own reputation than of the moral good of those to whom he is sent; he would rather let the heathen perish than see them repent and spared, and so bring discredit upon his prediction. So that his prophecy held good, he cared nothing for the fate of the Ninevites; compared with the maintenance of the veracity of the prophetic utterance, the overthrow of a heathen city was of small account. Instead of at once obeying, he reasons and looks to consequences. With the utmost trust in God's mercy and loving-kindness, he is not satisfied with blindly following the Divine leading, but must interpose his own self-willed action, as though he had more zeal for God's honour than God himself had. It is not, perhaps, fear for his own safety that holds him back. He is bold enough to be willing to incur death as an atonement for his fault. But in his eager desire to uphold the honour of God, he shrinks from a task which may give occasion for the heathen to exult over a God who threatens but does not strike. Yet, with all his faults, his narrow insularity, his rash impetuosity, his hasty anger, Jonah's is a grand character, and may be compared with that of St. Peter, which in many respects it greatly resembles. His faults were those of his era and his country; his virtues were such as God loves in every age, such as we Christians do well to

learn and to emulate. We may grieve for his self-will and capriciousness and bigotry; we may strive to imitate his truth and honesty, his courage and zeal.

§ III. DATE.

The date of the historical Prophet Jonah is determined chiefly by internal evidence. We have seen that he is the prophet whose message is mentioned in 2 Kings xiv. 25. Speaking of Jeroboam II., the historian says, "He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gath-hepher." Of this "word" we have no further knowledge; but it seems to have been uttered or remembered at a time of great national distress; for the account proceeds (vers. 26, 27), "For the Lord saw the affliction of Israel, that it was very bitter: for there was not any shut up, nor left at large, nor was there any helper for Israel. And the Lord said not that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven: but he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash." Whether the affliction named belongs to Jeroboam's time or to a period antecedent, it is plain that Jonah prophesied either in the very early part of that king's reign or before his accession. The date of Jeroboam's reign, as now corrected by Assyrian chronology, is B.C. 799—759, or, as others say, B.C. 790—749; and he seems to have won his great victories over the Syrians soon after he came to the throne, when that people were weakened by the constant attacks of the Assyrians. The state of things depicted in ver. 26 of the above-cited chapter is found to have existed in the time of Jehoahaz, when the King of Syria oppressed the Israelites: "Neither did he leave of the people to Jehoahaz but fifty horsemen, and ten chariots, and ten thousand footmen; for the King of Syria had destroyed them, and had made them like the dust by threshing" (2 Kings xiii. 4, 7). Such a crisis called for an assurance of God's protection; and it may well be believed that the prophecy of Jonah was then uttered to comfort the despairing people in their dire necessity. It is thus parallel to the celebrated prediction of Elisha, when, in his last sickness, he sent for Joash, the father of Jeroboam, and gave him promise of three victories over the Syrians (2 Kings xiii. 14—19). Probably after Elisha's death Jonah came into greater prominence as a prophet of the Lord, and his words were treasured up and remembered. From these considerations we are warranted in setting his date at B.C. 800 or a little earlier, among the first of the minor prophets, somewhat senior to Amos and Hosea.

As to the time of his arrival in Nineveh, nothing can be *exactly* settled. The Assyrian annals record no event which throws light on the matter. From B.C. 810 to 781 the throne was occupied by Vul-nirari, or Iva-lush, or Rimmon-nirari, as his name is variously read by different interpreters. This monarch made various military expeditions, which he recounts in his

annals. Among them he mentions the conquest of the land of the Hittites, Phœnicia, the cities of Tyre and Sidon, the land of Omri, the kingdom of Israel, Edom, and the Philistines. These probably merely acknowledged his superiority by the payment of an annual tribute. His successor, Shalmaneser III. (B.C. 781—770), had great difficulty in maintaining his position against the rising power of Armenia, though he found time for one attack on Syria. The following period, during the reigns of Asshur-danil and Asshur-nirari, or Asshur-lush, up to B.C. 750, was one of internal commotion and distress, and allowed no leisure for foreign conquest. It is very probable that Jonah's mission was executed towards the close of Jeroboam's reign, when the Assyrian monarchy was weakened by revolt, and the country was suffering from plague and famine. Both king and people were thus more disposed to listen to the warning of a man of God, and to endeavour to avert imminent ruin by timely, though superficial, repentance. Possibly, too, the preaching of Jonah may have synchronized with the famous eclipse which happened on June 15, B.C. 763, as mentioned in the Assyrian records, and which was regarded as a very evil omen.

Some critics, who cannot away with the miraculous portion of this book, have endeavoured to throw discredit upon it by assigning to it a date later than Jonah's time, some giving it a post-exilic origin, others assigning it to the Maccabean age. They seek for proof of this assertion in the language employed, and in the use made of the Psalms in Jonah's prayer. The complete refutation of this hypothesis may be seen in Keil's and Dr. Pusey's commentaries. We here need only say that the so-called late Aramaisms cannot be proved to be unknown to the earlier Hebrew, and the only non-Hebraic word, *taam*, is a Syriac expression which Jonah heard at Nineveh in the sense of "decree," and introduced into his own narrative. The phrases in the prayer (ch. ii.), which are also found in the Psalms, are either taken from those written by David and his contemporaries, which, of course, were well known long before Jonah's day, or (in the case of the two in ver. 7 and ver. 2) may have been borrowed by the authors of the Psalms (Ps. cxlii. 3; cxx. 1) from Jonah. And as to the statement in ch. iii. 3, that "Nineveh was an exceeding great city," from which Kuenen deduces the inference that the book was written after its destruction, we need only remark that the observation is introduced parenthetically, to explain the reason for the time that the prophet took in traversing it, and that it merely asserts that, at the period of Jonah's visit, Nineveh was of large extent. Such criticisms have no weight, and, as Dr. Pusey says, perhaps somewhat too harshly, "are founded, not on the study of the language, but on unbelief."

§ IV. GENERAL CHARACTER.

The Book of Jonah is a history, not a prophecy; it is inserted among the prophets, partly because its author bears this title (2 Kings xiv. 25), but chiefly because of its didactic and symbolical purpose. But in it there is

no moralizing, no reflection; it is simple narrative, verging here and there into poetry, as in the prayer from the fish's belly, and where the subject suits such variation. The tale is told graphically, and has quite a dramatic interest, advancing in regular stages to the conclusion, and leaving an impression upon the mind as though its various scenes had been enacted before the eyes of the reader. There is not a word too much; all that is essential to the understanding of the transaction is said, and nothing more. There is no trace of additions, interpolations, various authorities. The prayer (ch. ii.) bears the stamp of genuineness, being not a cry of repentance or a petition for preservation, which a forger or romancer would have introduced, but a thanksgiving, an expression of hope and trust, which alone suits the prophet's character (Schegg). There is a wonderful simplicity in the narrative, though it deals largely with the supernatural. The miracles of the fish and "the gourd" are introduced naturally. Such interpositions of God need no explanation in Jonah's view; they are the not unusual workings of Providence, such as he had heard of in the case of Elijah, such as happened often to the great Prophet Elisha. All is unforced, uniform, plain; vivid, indeed, and picturesque, but without effort, and effective rather from its truth, reality, and naturalness, than from elevation of language or rhetorical artifice.

The miraculous element in the book has led many critics to doubt its historical character, and to consider it as romance, allegory, or parable. The miracles, they say, are so prodigious, so wanting in sufficient motive, as to be utterly incredible, and to prove that the writer manifestly intends his work to be regarded as a fiction with a didactic purpose, like some of those writings which are preserved in our Apocrypha. Others see in it only a dream; others, again, regard it as a Jewish adaptation of a Greek or Babylonian myth; others explain away the supernatural portion of the story, as *e.g.* that Jonah was saved by a vessel which was called, or bore as its emblem, a sea-monster. Against all these suggestions we must place the fact that the work comes before us as history; and we need very strong arguments to dislodge us from this position. Such, however, are not produced; and we should have heard nothing of them were it not for the unbelief in the supernatural which underlies all such criticism, or a tendency to reject, *primâ facie*, all narratives which do not meet the standard of evidence which modern critics set up and worship. Of course, there is in itself nothing repugnant to reverence in considering the book as an inspired allegory intended to set forth certain great spiritual truths, as, for instance, the temporary death of the Jewish nation and its resurrection anew to a national existence (Wright, 'Biblical Essays,' p. 70); but does the work confirm such view? We think not.

In the first place, it is plain that the Jews themselves regarded the book as historical. Tobit (xiv. 4—6, 15) bases his advice to his son upon the certainty of the fulfilment of Jonah's prediction. Josephus ('Ant.' ix. 10. 1, 2) recounts the story as containing all that is known of the Prophet

Jonah. The details are quite in keeping with the localities and the date of the narrative. This will appear in the course of the Exposition. The mention of the size of Nineveh and the extent of its population is proved by recent investigations to be perfectly correct. Could our blessed Lord have referred to Jonah's incarceration in the fish's belly as a sign of his own three-days' sojourn in the grave, had the story been an allegory and nothing more? Could he further have used the comparison of the Ninevites' conduct with that of the men of his own time, had the former been an imaginary people existing, for the nonce, only in fiction? Critics may say that Christ was speaking uncritically and merely using an illustration from a well-known allegory (comp. Ladd, 'Doctrine of Scripture,' i. 67, etc.), but they forget the full bearing of this reference. As Perowne puts it forcibly, "The future Judge is speaking words of solemn warning to those who shall hereafter stand convicted at his bar. Intensely real he would make the scene in anticipation to them, as it was real, if then present, to himself. And yet we are to suppose him to say that . . . the fictitious characters of a parable shall be arraigned at the same bar with the living men of that generation."

Again, if the book is a parable, why is the didactic purpose not presented more prominently and directly? If an allegory, can any example be produced of a sacred canonical writer using prodigious miracles as the vehicle of his teaching? In a narrative of facts the psalm (ch. ii.) is introduced naturally; it is given as composed by Jonah under the circumstances related. In an allegory it is quite out of place, marring the unity of the work, and intruding an element which does not harmonize with the other parts. And if a person had to be selected on whom to hang this fictitious narrative, is it conceivable that the Jewish author should have fixed on an eminent and well-known prophet to represent in so unfavourable a light? Would he have been so wanting in common reverence as to affix to a celebrated man of God these traits of disobedience, waywardness, folly, narrowness, and peevishness? Plainly, the only way to account for the prophet being represented in this light is to consider that he acted in the way mentioned, and that the book is the plain narrative of his conduct, whether in its present form written wholly by himself, or partly by some later editor from his record.

Lastly, the miraculous portion of the story is not dragged in unnecessarily, and is not unparalleled by other transactions in Holy Scripture. Jonah's mission was unusual and most important; both the prophet himself and those with whom he was brought into contact needed to be convinced that God's providence was ordering all things, and that the powers of nature and the destinies of men were at his absolute disposal. The storm, the fish, the repentance, the gourd, are parts of this Divine lesson; and where God interferes there must needs be the supernatural. We must doubt the miraculous element in the histories of Elijah and Elisha, if we dispute the reality of the wonders in the biography of Jonah.

That was an age of miracles. God was manifesting his power against idolatry, and showing himself as the Guide and Support of his servants. Some prophets proclaimed him by word, some by action. Among the latter Jonah takes his natural place. Assyria had a great future before it. It is not improbable that on its repentance at the preaching of Jonah depended its continued existence and its subsequent pre-eminence. It was ordained that the Semitic people of Assyria should prevail over the children of Ham in Egypt. This would not have been the case had Nineveh's fall not been postponed for a time. Though Jonah saw not the full bearing of his mission, and, regarding it in a narrow, prejudiced spirit, tried to avoid its execution, really it was a factor in the world's history, and momentous issues hung thereon. Hence arose the extraordinary exhibition of supernatural agencies. As in the era of Moses and Elijah, and in the early days of Christianity, a great crisis demanded a baring of the Almighty's arm and evident tokens of his interference in the affairs of men.

§ V. LITERATURE.

The Book of Jonah has been published in Chaldee, Syriac, Æthiopic, and Arabic, with glossaries by Professor W. Wright. Among commentaries on the book may be mentioned those of Ephraem Syrus; Basil; Theophylact; Calvin, 'Lectures'; J. Brentius; Luther; J. Ferus (1554, often reprinted); Dereser (Bonn, 1786); Kaulen, 'Lib. Jonæ Proph.' (1862); Bishop Hooper, 'Sermons'; Archbishop Abbott, 'An Exposition' (1600, 1845); Gerhard, 'Annotationes' (Jena, 1676); Pfeiffer, 'Prælectiones' (Leipzig, 1686); Leusden, with the commentaries of Jarchi, Aben-Ezra, Kimchi, and Jophi (Utrecht, 1692); Von der Hardt, 'Ænigmata Prisci Orbis'; Helmstedt (1723); Grimm, 'Der Proph. Jon. übersetzt' (Düsseldorf, 1789); H. Martin (London, 1866); W. Drake, 'Notes'; Redford, 'Studies' (1885); Kleinert (Bonn, 1871); Archdeacon Perowne, in 'The Cambridge Bible for Schools.'

§ VI. ARRANGEMENT OF THE BOOK IN SECTIONS.

The four chapters into which the book is divided make four natural divisions of the whole work.

Part I. (Ch. i.) The mission of Jonah. His disobedience and punishment.

- § 1. (Ch. i. 1—3.) Jonah is sent to Nineveh; he tries to avoid the mission, and takes ship to Tarshish.
- § 2. (Ch. i. 4—10.) A great storm arises, which the crew discover to have been sent on account of Jonah's sin.
- § 3. (Ch. i. 11—16.) At his own request, Jonah is cast into the sea, which immediately becomes calm.
- § 4. (Ch. i. 17.) He is swallowed alive by a great fish, and remains in its belly three days and three nights.

Part II. (Ch. ii.) Jonah's prayer and deliverance.

- § 1. (Ch. ii. 1—9.) Jonah, in the belly of the fish, offers a prayer of thanksgiving for his rescue from death by drowning, in which he sees a pledge of further deliverance.
- § 2. (Ch. ii. 10.) The fish casts him up on the shore.

Part III. (Ch. iii.) Jonah's preaching in Nineveh; the repentance of the Ninevites.

- § 1. (Ch. iii. 1—3.) Sent again to Nineveh, Jonah obeys the command.
- § 2. (Ch. iii. 4.) He delivers his message.
- § 3. (Ch. iii. 5—9.) The Ninevites believe God and repent.
- § 4. (Ch. iii. 10.) The threatened destruction is averted.

Part IV. (Ch. iv.) Jonah's displeasure, and its correction.

- § 1. (Ch. iv. 1—4.) Jonah is grieved at this result, and complains of God's clemency.
- § 2. (Ch. iv. 5.) He makes a hut outside the city, and waits to see the issue.
- § 3. (Ch. iv. 6, 7.) God causes a plant to spring up in order to shade him from the sun; but it soon withers away, and leaves him exposed to the scorching rays.
- § 4. (Ch. iv. 8—11.) His grief for the loss of the plant is made the occasion by God of showing his inconsistency and pitilessness in murmuring against God's compassion for Nineveh with its multitude of inhabitants.

THE BOOK OF JONAH.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER I.

VERS. 1—17.—Part I. THE MISSION OF JONAH. HIS DISOBEDIENCE AND PUNISHMENT.

VERS. 1—3.—§ 1. *Jonah is sent to Nineveh to cry against it; but he tries to avoid the mission, and to this end takes ship to Tarshish.*

VER. 1.—Now; or, and. Some have argued from this commencement that the Book of Jonah is a fragment, the continuation of a larger work; but it is a common formulary, linking together revelations and histories, and is continually used in the Old Testament at the beginning of independent works; e.g. Josh. i. 1; Judg. i. 1; 1 Sam. i. 1; Esth. i. 1; Ezek. i. 1. *Jonah the son of Amittai* (2 Kings xiv. 25). (See Introduction, § II.)

VER. 2.—Nineveh, the capital of the kingdom of Assyria, is first mentioned in Gen. x. 11, as founded by Nimrod. It stood on the left bank of the river Tigris, where it is joined by the Khosr, opposite to the present town of Mosul. The Assyrians had already become known in Syria. In B.C. 854 Shalmaneser II. had defeated at Karkar twelve kings confederate against him, among whom is reckoned Ahab King of Israel. Long before his time, Tiglath-Pileser I. had made a great expedition to the west, captured a town at the foot of Lebanon, and reached the coast of the Mediterranean Sea. Jehu was compelled to pay tribute to the Assyrians; and Rimmon-nirari, who reigned from B.C. 810 to 781, held the suzerainty of Phœnicia, Samaria, Edom, and Philistia. Jonah, therefore, knew well what his country might expect at the hands of this people. *That great city.* It is thus called in ch. iii. 2, 3; iv. 11; and the epithet is added here in order to show to Jonah the importance of his mission. The size of Nineveh is vari-

ously estimated according to the sense attached to the name "Nineveh." This appellation may be restricted to Nineveh proper, or it may comprise the four cities which lay close together in the immediate neighbourhood of each other, and whose remains are now known as the mounds of *Kouyunjik*, on the south-west, directly opposite to Mosul; *Nimrud*, about eighteen miles to the south-east; *Karamless*, twelve miles to the north; and *Khorsabad*, the most northerly, about the same distance both from Karamless and Kouyunjik. Khorsabad, however, was not built till some hundred years after Jonah's time (Schrader, 'Keilinschr.,' p. 448). These cities are contained in an irregular parallelogram of some sixty miles in circumference. The following account of Nineveh proper is derived from Professor Rawlinson, 'Ancient Monarchies,' i. 252, etc.: "The ruins consist of two principal mounds, Nebbi-yunus and Kouyunjik. The Kouyunjik mound, which lies nearly half a mile north-west of the others, is very much the more considerable of the two. Its shape is an irregular oval, elongated to a point towards the north-east. The surface is nearly flat; the sides slope at a steep angle, and are furrowed with numerous ravines worn in the soft material by the rains of some thirty centuries. The greatest height above the plain is ninety feet, and the area is estimated at a hundred acres. It is an artificial eminence, computed to contain 14,500,000 tons of earth, and on it were erected the palaces and temples of the Assyrian monarchs. The mound of Nebbi-yunus is at its base nearly triangular, and covers an area of nearly forty acres. It is loftier, and its sides are more precipitous than Kouyunjik, especially on the west, where it abutted on the wall of the city. The mass of earth is calculated at six and a half millions of tons. These two vast mounds are both in the same line, and

abutted on the western wall of the city, which was some two and a half miles in length. Anciently it seems to have immediately overhung the Tigris, but the river has now receded to the west, leaving a plain of nearly a mile in width between its bank and the old rampart which evidently once followed the course of the river-bank. The western wall is joined at right angles by the northern rampart which runs in a straight line for seven thousand feet. At its other extremity the western wall forms a very obtuse angle with the southern, which impends over a deep ravine, and runs in a straight line for about a thousand yards, when it meets the eastern wall, which is the longest and the least regular of the four. The entire length of this side is sixteen thousand feet, or above three miles. It is divided into two portions by the stream of the Khosr-su; which, coming from the north-west, finds its way through the city and then across the low plain to the Tigris. The town is thus of an oblong shape, and the circuit of its walls is somewhat less than eight miles, and the area which they include is eighteen hundred acres. This, at the computation of something less than one hundred inhabitants per acre, would ascribe to Nineveh a population of one hundred and seventy-five thousand souls" (Rawlinson, 'Anc. Mon.' i. ch. i.). Cry against it. The message is given in ch. iii. 4. Thus the knowledge of the true God is made known among the Gentiles. Their wickedness; i.e., as Pusey notes, their evil-doing towards others, as in Nah. iii. 19 (see Introduction, § I.). Is come up before me, and appeals for punishment, as Gen. iv. 10; xviii. 20, 21; Septuagint, 'Ἀνέβη ἡ κραυγὴ τῆς κακίας αὐτῆς πρὸς μέ, "The cry of its wickedness is come up unto me."

Ver. 3.—*Tarshish*; probably, *Tartessus*, a Phœnician city on the south coast of Spain, and therefore in the opposite direction to Nineveh. He was sent to the far east; he flees to the distant west. From the presence of the Lord; literally, from the face of Jehovah. This may mean, from God's special presence in Jerusalem or the Holy Land, as banishment from Canaan is called "casting out of his sight" (2 Kings xvii. 20, 23; xxiii. 27); or, from serving the Lord as his minister (Deut. x. 8), Jonah preferring to renounce his office as prophet rather than execute his mission. The former seems the most natural explanation of the phrase. Kimchi says that Jonah supposed that the spirit of prophecy would not extend beyond the land of Israel. He could never have thought to escape from God's all-seeing eye. His repugnance to the duty imposed upon him arose partly from national prejudice, which

made him loth to interfere in Gentile business, and partly, as he himself says (ch. iv. 2), because he feared God's compassion would spare the Ninevites on their repentance, and that thus his prediction would be discredited, and mercy shown to heathens already inimical to Israel, if not known to him as the future conquerors of his people. *Joppa*. This is the modern *Jaffa* (called *Japho* in Josh. xix. 46), a town on the seacoast thirty miles in a north-westerly direction from Jerusalem. "Jaffa," says Dr. Thomson ('The Land and the Book,' p. 8, etc.), "is one of the oldest cities in the world. It was given to Dan in the distribution of the land by Joshua, and it has been known to history ever since. It owes its existence to the low ledge of rocks which extends into the sea from the extremity of the little cape on which the city stands, and forms a small harbour. Insignificant as it is, and insecure, yet, there being no other on all this coast, it was sufficient to cause a city to spring up around it even in the earliest times, and to sustain its life through numberless changes of dynasties, races, and religions, down to the present hour. It was, in fact, the only harbour of any notoriety possessed by the Jews throughout the greater part of their national existence. To it the timber for both the temples of Jerusalem was brought from Lebanon; and no doubt a lucrative trade in cedar and pine was always carried on through it with the nations who had possession of that goodly mountain. Through it, also, nearly all the foreign commerce of the Jews was conducted, until the artificial port of Cæsarea was built by Herod. . . . The harbour, however, is very inconvenient and insecure. Vessels of any considerable burden must lie out in the open roadstead—a very uneasy berth at all times; and even a moderate wind will oblige them to slip their cables and run out to sea, or seek anchorage at Haifa, sixty miles distant. . . . The roadstead is liable to sudden and unexpected storms, which stir up a tumultuous sea in a very short time. . . . The landing also is most inconvenient, and often extremely dangerous. More boats upset, and more lives are lost in the breakers at the north end of the ledge of rocks that defend the inner harbour than anywhere else on this coast." Went down into it; ἀνέβη [ἐνέβη, Alex.] εἰς αὐτό, "went up into it" (Septuagint). Went on board; or, as Jerome says, sought a hiding-place in the ship (comp. ver. 5). With them. With the crew. Jonah had told them (ver. 10) that he was flying from God's service, but, knowing and caring nothing about Jehovah, they took him on board when he paid his fare, and thought nothing of his private reasons for joining them.

Vers. 4—10.—§ 2. *Jonah's foolish flight is arrested.* In the midst of his fancied security God sends a great storm, and the ship is placed in imminent jeopardy. The crew try all means to save the ship, and at length cast lots to discover by this means for whose sake the tempest has been sent. The lot points out Jonah as the guilty person.

Ver. 4.—Sent out; Septuagint, ἐξήγειρε, "raised;" literally, *cast forth, or hurled*, a great wind, like the Euroclydon of Acts xxvii. 14, and what is called nowadays a Levant. Pusey quotes Josephus's account of the harbour of Joppa and the neighbouring sea, which, he says, is rendered very dangerous by the sudden rise of "the black north wind" ('Bell. Jud.,' iii. 9. 3). Here we see wind and storm fulfilling God's word (Ps. cxlviii. 8). As Tertullian says—

"Si Dominum in terris fugiens, invenit in undis."

"Flying the Lord on earth, he found him in the sea."

Was like to be broken; literally, *thought to be dashed in pieces*. Wordsworth contrasts the living consciousness and apprehension of the ship with the lethargy of the prophet now lying fast asleep in the hold (ver. 5). Septuagint, ἐκινδύνευσεν τοῦ συντριβῆναι, "was in danger of being broken up."

Ver. 5.—The mariners (*mallaachim*). Those who have to do with the *salt* sea. The word is used by Ezekiel (xxvii. 9, 27, 29). Cried every man unto his god. They were either Phœnicians from different localities, or men of various nations; hence the multiplicity of their gods. The heathen are represented throughout the book as devout and sincere according to their lights. They cast forth the wares; Septuagint, ἐκβολὴν ἐποίησαντο τῶν σκευῶν, "cast out the furniture, or wares," as Acts xxvii. 18, 19; Vulgate, *miserrunt vasa*. They threw overboard probably both all spare tackling and movables, and the cargo. The freight may have been corn, which was exported in considerable quantities from Joppa (comp. Ezek. xxvii. 17), or manufactured articles from Tyre, which were exchanged with Spain for silver and other metals. To lighten it of them; literally, *to lighten from against them*; i.e. to ease the ship of its burden, or to ease them of their trouble, as Exod. xviii. 22. The LXX. takes the former interpretation, τοῦ κουφισθῆναι αὐτῶν, "that it might be lightened of them;" Vulgate, *ut alleviaretur ab eis*. The sides of the ship. The innermost parts (*interiora*, Vulgate) of the ship; τὴν κοιλίην (Septuagint); "the hold" (comp. 1

Sam. xxiv. 3). Jonah hid himself there before the storm arose. The Hebrew word for "ship" (*sephinah*) is found nowhere else, and, probably from its derivation (*saphan*, "to cover"), implies that the vessel was decked. He lay, and was fast asleep; ἐκθέρυσε, καὶ ἐπερχε, "was asleep and snoring" (Septuagint); *dormiebat sopore gravi* (Vulgate). The word used implies a very deep sleep, as that of Sisera (Judg. iv. 21) or of the Assyrians (Ps. lxxvi. 6). He was fatigued and worn out with mental anxiety, and now being, as he thought, secure, and longing for solitude, he lay down to sleep, unconscious of danger. Contrast this sleep in the storm with that of Christ (Mark iv. 38), and that of the apostles who slept for sorrow (Luke xxii. 45).

Ver. 6.—The shipmaster; literally, *the chief of the rowmen*; Vulgate, *gubernator*; Septuagint, ὁ πρῶτος, "the look-out man." The captain. What meanest thou, O sleeper? How canst thou sleep so soundly when our danger is so imminent? If thou canst help us in no other way, at least ask the aid of Heaven. It was the duty of a prophet of the Lord to take the lead in prayer; but here the prophet's stupor is rebuked by the heathen's faith. Call upon thy God. The sailors' prayers had not been answered, and they arouse Jonah, noting something special about him, perhaps his prophet's dress, or observing that he was an Israelite, and therefore a worshipper of Jehovah, of whose power they had heard. If so be that God will think upon us. They use the word "God" with the article, ὁ *Elohim*, as if they had, in spite of their polytheism, a dim notion of one supreme Deity. Vulgate, *Si forte recogitet Deus de nobis*; Septuagint, ὅπως διασώσῃ ὁ θεὸς ἡμᾶς, "that God may save us." From the apparent use of the Hebrew word (*ashath*) in Jer. v. 28 in the sense of "shining," some translate here, "if perchance God will shine upon us," i.e. be favourable to us. But the meaning given in the Anglican Version is best supported. So the psalmist says, "The Lord thinketh upon me" (Ps. xl. 17), implying that God succours and defends him.

Ver. 7.—Finding the storm still violent, the crew come to the conclusion that it is sent by Heaven in punishment of some crime committed by one on board; and they proceed to cast lots to discover the guilty person. Jonah doubtless had meantime complied with the captain's request, but, as the sailors saw, without visible effect. The belief that temporal calamities are often connected with the presence of culprits, and are sent in judgment, is found in classical authors. Thus Plautus, 'Rudens,' ii. 6. 21—

"Pol minume miror, navis si fracta est tibi,
Soelus te et soeleste parva quæ vexit bona."

"Little I wonder if the ship is wrecked
Which carries thee and thy ill-gotten
wealth."

(Comp. Æschylus, 'Electr.' 1354; 'Theb.' 598; Horat., 'Carm.' iii. 2. 26, etc.) The misfortune of the Israelites at Ai was consequent on the sin of Achan (Josh. vii.). Let us cast lots. (On the Christian view of "lots," see Dr. Pusey's Commentary, pp. 270, 271.) Jerome says here, "The fugitive was taken by lot, not by virtue of the lots, especially of the lots of heathen men, but by the will of him who guided the uncertain lots." For whose cause; Septuagint, *τίνος ἕνεκεν*. The unusual nature of the tempest showed them that it was sent in judgment. Commentators cite the story of Diagoras told by Cicero ('De Nat. Deor.' iii. 37). The lot fell upon Jonah. Prov. xvi. 33, "The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord" (comp. 1 Sam. x. 20, etc.; xiv. 41; Acts i. 26).

Ver. 8.—The mariners having, as they supposed, discovered the culprit, proceed calmly to investigate his guilt; amid the roaring of the tempest and the peril that surrounded them, they give him every opportunity of clearing himself or confessing his crime. For whose cause. Some manuscripts of the Hebrew and the Greek omit this clause as unnecessary; but, as Keil remarks, it is not superfluous, the sailors thereby wishing to induce Jonah to confess his guilt with his own mouth. In their excitement they crowd question upon question, asking him about his business, his journey, his country, his parentage. Jerome notes the pregnant brevity of these inquiries, and compares Virgil, 'Æneid,' viii. 112, etc.—

"Juvenes, quæ causa subegit

Ignotas tentare vias? quo tenditis? inquit.
Qui genus? unde domo? pacemne huc fertis
an arma?"

"Warriors, what cause constrained you thus
to tempt

A path untrodden? Whither are ye bound?
What is your race? Where dwell ye?
Peace or war
Come ye to bring?"

(Comp. Hom., 'Od.' i. 170.) What is thine occupation? His occupation, they thought, might have been one to excite the wrath of the gods; or his country and family might have been exposed to the hatred of Heaven; hence the succeeding questions.

Ver. 9.—I am an Hebrew. This is the name used by foreigners in speaking of Israelites, or by Israelites in speaking of themselves to Gentiles (see Gen. xiv. 13; xxxix. 14; xli. 12; Exod. i. 16; 1 Sam. iv.

6, for the former use; and for the latter, Gen. xl. 15; Exod. ii. 7; iii. 18). Convinced that God had miraculously pointed him out as the culprit on whose account the storm was sent, and goaded by the stings of conscience, Jonah loses all his previous indecision and spiritual stupor, and in a manly and straightforward way confesses the truth without disguise. The LXX., reading differently, renders, *Δούλος Κυρίου εἰμι ἐγώ*, "A servant of Jehovah am I." This makes a tautological statement with the next words, and leaves one of the sailors' questions unanswered. I fear the Lord. I worship, reverence (*σέβομαι*, Septuagint) Jehovah, who is not a local deity like the false gods whom you adore, but the Creator of heaven and earth, the Maker and Ruler of sea and dry land. So Abraham calls the Lord the God of heaven (Gen. xxiv. 7), and Daniel (ii. 37, 44) uses the same expression (comp. Ps. xvi. 5; Jer. x. 11).

Ver. 10.—Exceedingly afraid. They understand now the greatness of Jehovah and the terrible risk incurred by one who offends him. There was a widespread acknowledgment of the power of Jehovah among the heathen (see Exod. xv. 15; Josh. v. 1; 1 Sam. iv. 7; and comp. Judith v. 21). Why hast thou done this? better, What is this that thou hast done? (Gen. iii. 13). This is not a question of inquiry, for he had already told them that he had fled from the presence of the Lord; but rather an exclamation of horror and amazement at his folly and sin. That one who worshipped the Almighty Creator should disobey his command seemed to them outrageous and inexcusably criminal. The prophet does not spare himself in giving the history of the transaction. To be thus rebuked by heathen sailors must have added to the poignancy of his remorse. The presence of the Lord (see note on ver. 3).

Vers. 11-16.—§ 3. On hearing Jonah's confession, the sailors appeal to him, as a worshipper of Jehovah, to tell them what to do to him that the storm may cease. He bids them cast him into the sea, which, after some demur and after renewed efforts to escape, they proceed to do. Upon this the storm immediately abates.

Ver. 11.—What shall we do unto thee? They recognize that the tempest was sent as a judgment on account of Jonah's sin; at the same time, believing him to be a prophet of Jehovah, under whose wrath they were suffering, they ask his advice in this emergency; if it was a crime to receive him, what shall they do to him to expiate the offence and to appease the anger of God?

That the sea may be calm unto us; literally, *may be silent from upon us*, so as no longer to bear down upon us (comp. Mark iv. 39). **Wrought, and was tempestuous**; literally, *was going and was tempestuous*; Septuagint, *Ἐπορεύετο καὶ ἐξήγειρε μάλλον κλύδωνα*, "The sea was moving and lifting the surge still more;" Vulgate, *ibat et intumescerebat*. That is, according to the Hebrew idiom, "grew more and more tempestuous" (comp. Exod. xix. 19; Prov. iv. 18).

Ver. 12.—Jonah, brought to a better mind, perhaps divinely inspired, pronounces his own sentence. "I know," he says, "that the fault is mine, and deserves death, therefore take me up, and cast me forth into the sea." He will not be his own executioner, but will patiently bear a death righteously inflicted by others, whose safety he was endangering by his continued presence.

Ver. 13.—The generous sailors, however, are loth to execute this sentence on a prophet of the Lord, and make a supreme effort to reach the land, and thus obviate this severe alternative. **Rowed hard**; literally, *digged* (Job xxiv. 16; Ezek. xii. 7); Septuagint, *παρεβιάζοντο*, "used violent efforts." They endeavoured to force their way through the waves with oars, as the use of sails was impracticable. The expression is like the classical phrases, *infindere sulcos*, *scindere freta*, *arare aquas*, and our "to plough the main." To the land; to get them back to land. The wind was off shore, and they had taken down the sails, and tried to row back to the harbour. *Τοῦ ἐπιστρέψαι πρὸς τὴν γῆν*, "to return to the land" (Septuagint). The sea wrought (see note on ver. 11).

Ver. 14.—They cried unto the Lord. They prayed no longer to their gods, as before (ver. 5), but unto Jehovah, the God of Jonah. **Let us not perish for this man's life**. Let us not incur death for taking this man's life. They seem to know something of the Noachio law that punished murder (Gen. ix. 5, 6). **Lay not upon us innocent blood**. Charge us not with the guilt of shedding innocent blood (Deut. xxi. 8). **For thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee** (1 Sam. iii. 18). The whole affair has happened according to thy will. The tempest, the lot, the sentence, are all the working of thy providence. The prophet throughout brings into prominence the contrast between the behaviour of these heathen and his own, and would teach his nation a lesson thereby.

Ver. 15.—They took up, with a certain reverence. **Ceased from her raging**; literally, *stood from its anger*; Septuagint, *ἔστη ἐκ τοῦ ὀργᾶν αὐτῆς*, "stood from its tossing." The sudden cessation of the storm showed that it had been sent on Jonah's account, and that the crew had not sinned by exe-

cuting the sentence upon him. Usually it takes some time for the swell to cease after the wind has sunk: here there was suddenly a great calm (Matt. viii. 26).

Ver. 16.—**Fear'd the Lord**. They recognized the supernatural element in the transaction, and conceived an awe and fear of Jehovah, who had wrought these wonders. **Offer'd a sacrifice unto the Lord**. Many commentators think that they sacrificed on reaching shore, as they had thrown the cargo overboard, and would have had no animal to offer. The Chaldee renders accordingly, "They said that they would offer sacrifices." But the text implies that they sacrificed immediately on the cessation of the storm. They may naturally have had some animal on board fit for offering. **And made vows**. Vowed to make other offerings when it was in their power. Henderson compares Virgil, 'Æneid,' iii. 403, etc.—

"Quin, ubi transmissæ steterint trans
æquora classes
Et positis aris jam vota in litore solves."

"And when thy fleet bath safely crossed
the seas,

And, raising altars on the shore, thy vows
Thou shalt perform."

It has been supposed that these sailors embraced Judaism and became proselytes. At any rate, they showed themselves in the light of believers on this occasion.

Ver. 17.—§ 4. *Cast into the sea, Jonah is swallowed alive by a great fish, in whose belly he remains unharmed three days and three nights*. **Had prepared**; Septuagint, *προέταξε*, "appointed;" so in ch. iv. 6, 7, 8 (comp. Job vii. 3; Dan. i. 10, 11). The fish was not created then and there, but God so ordered it that it should be at the place and should swallow Jonah. The prophet seems, from some expressions in his psalm (ch. ii. 5), to have sunk to the bottom of the sea before he was swallowed by the fish. **A great fish**; Septuagint, *κῆτος* (Matt. xii. 40). There is nothing in the word to identify the intended animal, and to call it "a whale" is simply a mistranslation. The white shark of the Mediterranean (*Carcharias vulgaris*), which sometimes measures twenty-five feet in length, has been known to swallow a man whole, and even a horse. This may have been the "great fish" in the text (see Dr. Pusey on Jonah, pp. 257, etc.). **Was in the belly of the fish**. God used the natural agency of the fish, but the preservation of Jonah's life in the animal's belly is plainly supernatural. It is, indeed, analogous to the life of the child in its mother's womb; but it has besides a miraculous element which is unique, unless it was an actual death and revivification, as in the case of Lazarus. Also God ordained this

transaction as a type of the resurrection of Christ. Three days and three nights; i.e., according to Hebrew usage, parts of the days and nights; i.e. one whole day, and parts of the day before and after this. Jonah was released on the third day (comp. Matt. xii. 40 with 1 Cor. xv. 4; and Esth. iv. 16 with v. 1). The historical nature of this occur-

rence is substantiated by Christ's reference to it as a figure of his own burial and resurrection. The antitype confirms the truth of the type. It is not credible that Christ would use a mere legendary tale, with no historical basis, to confirm his most solemn statement concerning the momentous fact of his resurrection.

IIOMILETICS.

Ver. 2.—*A city's sin.* By its very nature sin is individual, personal; for it is the estrangement of the spiritual being and life from God. Yet, as men live in communities, and as these communities possess moral qualities and habits determined by the character of the component units, there is such a thing as the sin of a tribe, of a city, of a nation. This is more obvious when it is remembered that states are personified in their rulers and representatives, whose words and actions must be taken as those of the community at large. The Scriptures, from the record of the Tower of Babel downwards, exhibit national responsibility as connected with national error and unfaithfulness. Among the lessons of this Book of Jonah, this lesson regarding a nation's moral life and accountability is not the least valuable.

I. A CITY'S SIN IS COMPATIBLE WITH ITS POLITICAL GREATNESS. Nineveh was "that great city." It was situated upon the noble river Tigris; it boasted a splendid and ancient history; it was of enormous extent, being, according to the historians, eighteen leagues in circumference; it had a population reckoned by hundreds of thousands; in short, it was one of the greatest and most famous of the cities of the ancient East, and was the capital of one of the most powerful of kingdoms. Recent discoveries have familiarized us with the civic life of the population of the city of Nineveh. Yet the wickedness of Nineveh was great. Magnitude, population, wealth, luxury, splendour, power,—all are, alas! consistent with forgetfulness of God, and with rebellion against his authority who is King of kings and Lord of all the nations upon earth. How signally was this the case with pagan Rome! And are there not cities in professedly Christian lands, the abodes of power and of pleasure, whose sin cries aloud unto God?

II. A CITY'S SIN IS OFTEN DISREGARDED BY HUMAN OBSERVERS, AND EVEN BY RULERS. The citizens take pride in their "gorgeous palaces," their "solemn temples," in magnificent public works, in stately ceremonies, in all the complicated apparatus of civilization, luxury, refinement, and enjoyment. The men in authority are content if outward order is observed, if regulations of police are respected, if the reports of health are satisfactory, if trade flourishes. But it is often forgotten that beneath this outward show of prosperity there may exist moral corruption and religious indifference, or even defiant infidelity. God may not be glorified; he may be hated and disobeyed. And yet no concern may be awakened, no contrition felt.

III. A CITY'S SIN IS OBSERVED BY THE ALL-SEEING God. What graphic language is this, "Their wickedness is come up before me"! Under this old Hebrew idiom a great religious truth is discernible. Nothing escapes the notice of him who searcheth the hearts of the children of men. Not only so. God looks upon the sins of the citizens, not as a statistician or a politician might look. He is *grieved* with men's irreligion; he is "angry," i.e., "with the wicked every day." We must not attribute to the Deity any emotions which would be unworthy of a human ruler. But it is not derogatory to God, it is honouring him, to think of him as distressed and dissatisfied with human rebellion, and to remember that his regard is that of a wise and righteous Ruler, who is concerned for the spiritual state of those whom he rules for their own good and for his glory.

IV. A CITY'S SIN MUST BE MET BY A RIGHTEOUS TESTIMONY, REBUKE, AND WARNING. It must not be forgotten that men's sins are often attributable to evil example, to common custom, to the force of habit, to forgetfulness and carelessness. For this reason is it needful that the preacher of righteousness should exhibit a just and lofty standard of national and individual virtue; that he should faithfully expose and denounce prevailing errors, follies, and injustice; and that he should remind men of

their amenability to the tribunal of an Omniscient and Almighty Ruler. There is too little of this frank and fearless treatment of social corruption; the pulpit is to blame for this; and it is to be desired that Christian preachers should hear the Word of the Lord bidding them go and "cry against" the wickedness of great cities, and warn the citizens of the ruin they are bringing upon themselves. And above all is it important that the wicked should be summoned to repentance, and that the penitent should be directed to that Saviour who is the assurance of Divine pity, and the channel of Divine forgiveness, to all who come to him with contrite sorrow and with lowly faith.

Ver. 3.—*Fleeing from the Lord.* There is something wonderfully simple in this language, and something wonderfully childish and *naïve* in the action here described. Yet when Jonah, who should have gone eastward, turned his face towards the west, when he went down to the port of Joppa and took ship for Tarshish, though he was acting in a way sinful in itself and most disastrous for him, he was teaching for all time and for all readers of Scripture a lesson of human infirmity which is to us chiefly precious as preparing the way for a lesson of human repentance and of Divine forgiveness and acceptance.

I. THE MOTIVE WHICH LEADS MEN TO WISH TO FLEE FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD IS BAD. There are various impulses which may tend to drive men away from the all-searching eye of the Supreme. Some, like Jonah, may wish to avoid a service to which they cherish repugnance, for which, perhaps, they feel personally disqualified. Others may wish to hide their sins from One who, they know well, must regard them with displeasure. In any case, though the degree of culpability may vary, the motive is unworthy. The child should hide nothing from the Father; the Christian should never ask—Where shall I hide from thy presence? but should rather rejoice in the nearness, the interest, the favour, of his Maker and Saviour.

II. THE METHOD WHICH MEN ADOPT IN ORDER TO FLEE FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD IS ABSURD. Change of place cannot take us out of the territory of the Omnipresent King. Jacob found that when at Bethel; the Lord was in that place, though he knew it not. Jonah learned that God's hand held in its hollow the raging sea; the same hand that fashioned the dry land from which he fled. It is now more common for those who would flee from God to betake themselves to the society of the profane, the licentious, the ungodly; thus they seek at least to banish the thought of God, if they cannot escape from his all-regarding eye.

III. THE IMPOSSIBILITY OF FLEEING FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD IS OBVIOUS. That is to say, obvious to all who reflect upon the nature and the attributes of the Eternal. And it is well that all who are tempted to wish that relations between themselves and their Creator were suspended should reflect upon this impossibility. In God we live and move and have our being. We may forget him, but he does not overlook us. We may be out of harmony with his highest purposes, but we cannot cease even for one moment to be subjects of his kingdom, whether contented or discontented, loyal or rebellious.

IV. THE CONSEQUENCES OF ENDEAVOURING TO FLEE FROM THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD ARE AFFLICTING. In his favour is life. It is well to walk in the light of the Lord. They who depart from God forsake their true happiness. The presence of the Lord of all is necessary in order to strength and success in our work. A messenger from God above all men needs the consciousness of the Divine favour; for him to flee from God is to sacrifice his life, to throw up his vocation, and, except God have mercy upon him, to destroy his spiritual prospects.

V. GOD'S FORBEARANCE AND COMPASSION MAY BRING BACK THOSE WHO TRY TO FLEE FROM HIM. The narrative tells not only how Jonah fled, but how God followed him; how God did indeed chasten his servant, but did not forsake him; how Providence overruled his sinful conduct and secured his spiritual good. We need not despond, even if we have, as it were, turned our back upon God. "He restoreth our soul." He so reveals his grace that, instead of fleeing from his presence, we come to find in that presence fulness of joy.

Ver. 4.—*Nature and God.* There is a Hebrew directness and energy in this language describing the storm which overtook the unfaithful prophet. Some would

be satisfied to say that we have here simply a poetico-theological expression descriptive of a natural phenomenon. But surely the Hebrew idiom here employed is the vehicle of a great truth. The Lord does send the wind and raise the tempest; and the Lord also calms the waters and stills the storm.

I. THE ATHEISTIC VIEW IS THAT NATURE IS A REALITY AND GOD A FICTION. Many scientific, and non-scientific, readers too will say—The storm did arise, but this was in accordance with natural laws, and there is no room and no need for the hypothesis of a Deity. Facts are facts, and regularities and uniformities are undeniable; but with explanations, with personal agencies, we have nothing at all to do.

II. THE PAGAN VIEW IS THAT NATURE IS THE OUTWARD EXPRESSION OF THE PRESENCE AND ACTIVITIES OF INNUMERABLE DEITIES. According to the heathen, the sea and the land, the woods and the fountains, had their several deities, whose actions accounted for all changes. In the tempest, Jonah's fellow-voyagers cried every man unto his god. The mood of the deity might vary, his purpose might change.

III. THE SUPERSTITIOUS VIEW IS THAT NATURE IS GENERALLY INDEPENDENT OF GOD, BUT IS SOMETIMES VISITED BY A DIVINE INTERFERENCE. When all things proceed in an even course, it is supposed that there is no need to presume a Divine presence. But when anything happens which is unusual, this is taken to be an evidence of the interposition of a superior Power. The calm is Nature's work, the storm is God's. A capricious, arbitrary Providence is the superstitious man's deity.

IV. THE RATIONAL AND RELIGIOUS VIEW SEES GOD IN AND BEHIND NATURE IN ALL HER CHANGES. God is the Author of Nature's laws. "The sea is his, and he made it; and his hands formed the dry land." Divine purpose, intelligence, wisdom, benevolence, are to the thoughtful and pious mind manifest in all the scenes and operations which Nature presents to us. We need not be pantheists, and identify God and Nature, in order to see and to glorify God in all his works.

Ver. 6.—*Danger and devotion.* The conduct of the seamen, who themselves, when encompassed by danger and when threatened by death, both called upon their gods and besought Jonah to imitate their prayers and vows, may have been superstitious in its accessories, but it was certainly right in principle.

I. DANGER REMINDS US OF OUR OWN POWERLESSNESS. In the presence of the great forces of nature—the hurricane, the earthquake, the volcano—man feels his own physical feebleness and helplessness. He is mightier than all these forces in that he can think and feel, purpose and act, whilst they blindly and unconsciously work out a higher will. But in his body he is incapable of resisting, of measuring himself against, these tremendous powers.

II. DANGER REMINDS US OF THE UNCERTAINTY AND BREVITY OF HUMAN LIFE. By some "accident" from without, or by some "disorder" within, the life of the body will certainly be brought to a close. The lightning may smite or the waves may swallow up the healthiest frame—may close the most useful and beneficent life. The treacherous sea, as in this narrative, threatens to engulf the mariner and the passenger.

"To thee the love of woman has gone down,
Brave hearts and true are gathered to thy breast."

III. DANGER DRIVES THE SINNER TO SEEK GOD'S MERCY. To many the hour of peril is the only hour of prayer. Lips that have only used the name of the Eternal Majesty in ribald profanity, when white with fear utter that name in earnest entreaty for pity and for deliverance. When human help is vain, then the godless call upon the great Helper, God. How worthless such prayer often is experience sadly teaches. "The river past, the saint forgot." Yet it is well that men should be awakened, however rudely, from their self-sufficiency and false security.

IV. DANGER DRAWS FORTH THE CONFIDENCE AND THE PRAYERS OF THE PIOUS. How many are the records of shipwreck which tell of the peace and trust, the fortitude and hope, of the true Christian, when those around have abandoned themselves to despair! He who believes the gospel knows that God "thinks upon him," and knows that he so thinks upon his own for good. It *may* be that an unexpected deliverance will be wrought; but it *will* be the case that, whatever the Father above may suffer to happen to the body, the soul shall be safe in heavenly keeping unto life eternal.

Ver. 9.—*A good confession.* What an insight this story gives us into the life and habits of travellers in ancient times! Curiosity is always entertaining; but the inquisitiveness of these seamen bound for Tarshish, as they questioned their passenger regarding his occupation, his race, and his religion, is a revelation of their character, and affords an opportunity to the prophet to avow his religious faith. Jonah was not willing to obey God; yet he was not slow to confess God. There is much to admire in his language.

I. IT WAS AN INTELLIGENT CONFESSION. God is to many little more than a name; religion merely a form of words. There are those who are satisfied to name the name of their hereditary deity. Jonah's acknowledgment was accompanied by statements which prove his faith to have been something more than traditional. He described the Jehovah whom he worshipped as the God of heaven, the Maker of the sea and of the land. The words remind us of the opening of the Apostles' Creed. To confess God truly is to recognize his attributes and his method of dealing with the sons of men. It is not enough to utter mechanically a form of words.

II. IT WAS A BOLD CONFESSION. Instead of being alarmed by the dangers of the deep, the prophet seemed now to recover the self-possession which he had lost. In the presence of the angry elements and the anxious sailors, and above all in the presence of the Lord of nature and of man, Jonah confessed his God. Was there in this conduct something of the spirit embodied in the words, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him"?

III. IT WAS A REVERENT CONFESSION. "I fear the Lord;" i.e. revere, worship, and honour him. They who know him aright may well offer to him the veneration and adoration which angels delight to present. Who would not fear his great Name? Alas! that the name of God should ever pass irreverent lips!

IV. IT WAS, HOWEVER, A CONFESSION WHICH WAS INCONSISTENT WITH THE PROPHET'S CONDUCT, AND WAS THEREFORE HIS CONDEMNATION. How was it that he, who so honourably confessed his God in the tempest, had fled from that God, and disobeyed his plain commands? Could he use this language and not feel that it censured himself for so acting as he had done? It is well that we should verbally acknowledge God, that we should sincerely confess his right over us. But it may be that when we recite our Creed, and make our confession, we shall learn to think of our frequent inconsistencies with the profession which we avow. The knowledge of God may bring us to the knowledge of ourselves; and confession may lead to penitence, and so to reconciliation.

Ver. 12.—*Self-sacrifice.* Whatever difficulties the facts of this narrative may occasion in the mind of the reader, it must be admitted that it abounds with principles of the deepest interest and value. How could the lesson of self-devotion, of self-sacrifice, be more impressively taught than in the language of Jonah recorded in this verse? The unquestionable realities of federal human life, and of substitutionary suffering and sacrifice, are brought before us in a vivid and impressive form.

I. DIVINE PROVIDENCE APPOINTS THAT THE WRONG-DOING OF MEN SHOULD INVOLVE SUFFERING TO THEIR FELLOW-CREATURES. "For my sake," said Jonah, "this great tempest is upon you." No observer of human life can doubt that the greatest sufferers are not always the greatest sinners; they are often those who are brought into trouble, sorrow, and affliction through the conduct of those connected with them. The child suffers for the father's sins; the wife, for the husband's improvidence; the people, for their rulers' selfishness and negligence. We may not be able to explain this fact, we may not be satisfied with explanations of it which other people accept; but it would show an ignorance of human life to question its reality.

II. THE SAME PROVIDENCE APPOINTS THAT SUFFERINGS WILLINGLY UNDERGONE BY MEN SHOULD BE THE MEANS OF BENEFIT TO OTHERS. "Cast me forth," said Jonah, "into the sea; so shall the sea be calm unto you." Here again we are brought into contact with an undoubted fact in human society. The sufferings, hardships, and self-denial of parents are the means of comfort, culture, and well-being to their children. Great men benefit society by means of their labours, their self-sacrifice. Few persons reap a harvest of gladness and peace and prosperity, the seed of which has not been sown with toil and with tears. It is the highest exercise of patriotism

to devote one's self to death for the country's weal; and the highest exercise of benevolence, when called upon by duty, to die for the welfare of humanity.

III. BOTH THESE PRINCIPLES ARE MOST CONSPICUOUSLY EXEMPLIFIED IN THE SACRIFICE OF OUR DIVINE REDEEMER. 1. The sins of men brought Jesus to the cross of Calvary. 2. The sufferings of Jesus bring men to the enjoyment of the Divine favour. "By his stripes we are healed."

Vers. 13, 14.—*Effort and prayer.* It has always been acknowledged that there was in the conduct of these heathen sailors something peculiarly generous. Although they believed themselves to have been brought into danger by the companionship of Jonah, although he himself invited them to cast him overboard and so secure their safety, this they would not do until they had exhausted every means of deliverance.

I. IN TIMES OF DIFFICULTY AND DANGER WE ARE SUMMONED TO EXERT ALL OUR POWERS FOR OUR ESCAPE AND PRESERVATION. There is a false piety which is true fatalism, which is content with prayer and indisposed to effort. But such is not the piety sanctioned in Scripture. Courage, effort, perseverance,—these are the qualities which are always mentioned with commendation. In fact, effort is the use of the natural powers with which our Creator has endowed us, the employment of the means which Providence has put within our reach. In striving for safety and for success men are honouring God. Endeavours may be unsuccessful, but it is better to fail while doing our very best than to fail by sloth and negligence.

II. IN TIMES OF DIFFICULTY AND DANGER THERE IS NO RESOURCE SO PROPER AND SO PRECIOUS AS PRAYER. The conduct of these heathen sailors, as here described, is beyond all praise. What they did was to put forth every effort for their own and their fellow-voyager's safety, and then to commend themselves to the guidance and the mercy of the Most High. With their slender knowledge they could not have prayed with much intelligence; but they prayed with much good feeling towards man, with much submission towards God, and with much fervour. The lesson is obvious. Whilst we can work it is well to work in a prayerful spirit, with dependence upon God. When we can no longer work, when human effort is of no avail, then it is well to call upon God and to leave ourselves entirely in his hands.

Ver. 16.—*Fear, sacrifice, and vows.* Times of danger are often times of devotion; but times of deliverance are not always times of thanksgiving. It is to the credit and honour of these seamen that when the storm ceased they acknowledged Jehovah as the Author of the calm, as the God of salvation. Three aspects of religious exercise are here presented to us.

I. REVERENCE. We cannot say that there was no superstition in the feelings and the conduct of these mariners. Probably the piety of most good men has an element of superstition. In any case, they feared the Eternal, feeling themselves to be in the presence and at the disposal of him who holds the waters in the hollow of his hand.

II. SACRIFICE. It was a thank offering, no doubt, which they presented. If they were sincere, this sacrifice was a symbol of the consecration of their whole nature, their whole life, unto God.

III. VOWS. Mercy experienced in the past should lead to the expectation of mercy in the future. The season of deliverance is a suitable season for resolutions and for vows. But be it remembered, "Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay."

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—*A despicable deserter.* "God looketh on the heart." And none but God can. It is an obscure and tortuous place—"deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Its chaos and darkness, transparent to the Divine Spirit, are impenetrable to any creature's eye. Even the new heart is not all new. Persistent among the grace-germs are *bacteria* of sin, inseparable and morbid. In Jonah this baneful combination is obvious. He neither loved God supremely nor his neighbour as himself. If he had, the action here recorded could never have been

done, nor the feelings which prompted it have found a home in his heart. To fly from *God's* service because it involved the helping of *men* is a course consistent it may be with grace, but only with grace alloyed, inchoate, and overlaid with the mind of flesh.

I. IN *GOD'S ARMY* IT IS EITHER DESERTION OR DUTY. "Jonah rose up to flee from the presence of the Lord." There was a Divine presence from which Jonah was not so ignorant as to attempt escape. He shows familiarity with the Book of Psalms (ch. ii. 2—9), and doubtless knew with the psalmist (Ps. cxxxix. 7—10) that there was no place outside God's omnipresence. But there was a special presence of God in the land of Israel. He was present in gracious hearts, and in the ordinances and offices of the Church. This special and gracious presence Jonah, like Jacob (Gen. xxviii. 16), seems to have considered peculiar to the Holy Land. He had a notion probably that the institutions arising out of it were purely local also, and that flight to heathen Spain would break the spiritual connection and void his prophetic office. His flight was "not from God's presence, but from standing before him as his minister . . . he renounced his office" (Pusey). And the act was logical in one aspect, however criminal. Enlistment in God's service means something. It is not playing at campaigning. It is not a kind of spiritual autumn manœuvres, which merely give spice to a periodical outing. It incurs responsibility and involves obedience.

"I slept, and dreamed that life was beauty.

I woke, and found that life was duty."

That all must find who are spiritually awake. There is work for all, and his task for each. And it has got to be done. In the Divine code stand the regulations of the service, and they are not to be trifled with. Idleness is out of the question; insubordination is not to be named. Jonah felt this. "He rose up to flee." He could not point-blank refuse, and stand his ground. Do something he must, when the word went forth. He will not preach, and so he has got to fly. It is so always. A man cannot remain at his post and strike work. The eye of the Master would look him through, and his presence compel obedience. The mutineer is in the same hour a deserter. He can maintain the one character only by adopting the other. Our spiritual duties arise out of our spiritual relations, and are at the same time their necessary expression. The alternative with us is "both or neither." Refuse God's work, and you put yourself out of his service.

II. BIGOTRY IS AN INEVITABLE WEAKENER OF THE MORAL SENSE. Some think Jonah refused to summon the Ninevites to repentance for fear they might take him at his word. Their reformation just now would not have suited his views. As heathen he disliked them, and as wicked he could use them as a foil for wicked Israel. Nineveh penitent, on the other hand, after one Divine warning, would have contrasted strongly with Israel impenitent after centuries of prophetic appeal, and he dreaded the repentance which would have been the occasion of such a damaging comparison. But this is clearly an exaggeration of Jonah's feeling in the matter. No prophet of God, no servant of God, could connive at sin against God in order to the destruction of men. To do so would be incompatible altogether with the religious character. Still, Jonah would have been more or less than a Jew if he had not been a bigot. He would not wantonly have compassed Nineveh's ruin. But being a bigot, and an egoist as well, he was so indifferent to the fate of the heathen city as to be ready to sacrifice it rather than risk the lowering of his own prophetic reputation. In all this we see the tokens of a weakened moral sense. Bigotry is an unequalled hardener of the heart. It is narrow, cold, sour, and carping. It denies or belittles all good outside its own ecclesiastical circle. Whilst blind to extern religious excellence, it is indifferent to extern religious attainment. It takes covert pleasure in the sins and weaknesses of rival Churches; it would regard their failure and collapse with mean complacency; and it would almost as lief see men remaining in sin as reformed by effort not its own. The tendency to look every man and Church on our own things is a natural one, and grows. And it necessarily involves the other tendency, its obverse, to look away from the things of others. This is the very antipodes of the "mind of Christ." That believes in the dignity of man as man. It sets a unique value on human life. It regards the question of a human destiny as one of stupendous interest. It makes the securing of it a personal concern. It never asks, "Am I my brother's keeper?" for the

fact is with it an axiomatic truth. Loving its neighbour as itself, its moral attitude inspires its active one—"do good to all." It regards life as wasted if not lived for men, and the time as lost in which it does not "save some."

III. INGLORIOUS DUTY IS MOST IN DANGER OF BEING LEFT UNDONE. Jonah had an idea how his mission would end. As a prophet, he knew that Nineveh would repent, and on repentance be spared, his prophecy to the contrary notwithstanding (ch. iv. 2). And the prospect was humbling to his self-love. The affair could bring him little credit. He was simply to deliver an empty threat, a threat the utterance of which would serve God's purpose, and so prevent the necessity of carrying it out. How was he to get up a prophetic reputation by performing such a task? Warnings heeded and predictions fulfilled are the chief credentials of a prophet. The first is, both in itself and in its practical results, by far the more important. But the second is more of a personal interest to the prophet as involving his credibility more directly. Hence in proportion as he is "yet carnal" and self-seeking it will bulk more largely in his regard. A Paul could say, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord," and mean it thoroughly. But the perfect self-sinking of the apostolic rule was an unsecured height to the egotistic prophet. He wanted a name and official distinction more than the exhibition of God's mercy and the reformation of wicked men. Accordingly, he refused to assume an equivocal position, although he knew, and because he knew, it would lead to these prime results. And servants his counterparts are still found in God's work. The men who "do good by stealth, and blush to find it fame" no doubt exist. But the blushes traceable to this source are a small proportion of the blushes current. He has reached a high spiritual level who so lives to God that personal considerations are as nothing in his work. Position and visibility, to say nothing of considerations more sordid still, are elements in the situation, hard to keep subordinate, harder still to ignore, when the Christian worker is making choice of fields. A place in the most distant mission field may single out a worker from the crowd, and the missionary pioneer finds temptations to pose before the Church as strong as beset the brightest metropolitan star. The large giver, moreover, or the great organizer, has as many temptations to self-seeking as either. It is so through all departments of activity and in all the walks of life. The work that brings fortune and fame will have thousands competing for a chance to do it. The only duty in practical danger of being shirked is the duty to be followed into obscure places, and done with only the eye of God to note our faithfulness.

IV. RETREAT FROM GOD IS RESOLUTE, AND AIMS AT ENTIRE ISOLATION. Jonah started at a run. He evidently meant to get away, and threw all his energy into the effort. He went, too, in a direction exactly the opposite of the one in which he had been sent. God had said, "Go north-east," and he went south-west. He set out, moreover, for the remotest place he knew of, Spain being the "far West" of those early times. He went about it also in the most business-like way, going to Joppa, the great seaport, and booking a berth on one of the great ships of Tarshish, to break which was the *magnum opus* of the east wind (Ps. xlviii. 7). All which things are no doubt an allegory. The sinner's drawing near to God is done at a snail's pace. Loving this sinful world, he hangs back long before he starts. Answering feebly as yet to the drawing of grace, and breaking cord after cord in the tearing of himself away, the motion toward God at first is slow and painful, like that of a weak oarsman against a rapid stream. But like a stone down hill, and drawn by mighty gravitation, the motion away from God is by leaps and bounds (Rom. vii. 19, 22, 23). You have seen at the docks the seamen straining at the windlass, as, after minutes of strenuous effort, they have pulleyed a bale of merchandise high in air. And you have seen, when they let go the winch, how swiftly the handle flies and, as the rope unrolls, the bale comes rushing down. And such is retrogression in contrast to progress in the religious sphere. So much more quickly do men fall than rise, that a few days' backsliding is enough to neutralize the growth of years. Then so opposite to God is the sinful heart that its departure from him is absolute turning back. Swerving would be bad, aberration would be worse, but regression is worst of all; and such is religious backsliding. It is spiritual tergiversation. The renegade turns his back on right, and takes a way the very opposite. He obeys Satan and follows sin, the antipodes respectively of God and God. If God's way be light, his is darkness; if upwards, his is downwards infallibly,

Then there is no spiritual half-way house. God in his mercy may arrest him on the way, but the renegade starts for Tarshish, the spiritual remotest point. A stone detached from the house-top has no stopping-place short of the ground. Turn your back on God and heaven, and Satan and hell are, humanly speaking, your destination. Moreover, defection from God is not an aimless drifting, but intelligent and of purpose. It is a course wittingly taken and studiously kept. The deteriorated moral nature presses head and hand into its service, to survey and construct the road by which it would reach the shrine of its chosen idol. At the Joppa of occasion, advisedly sought, is chartered the ship of ways and means, to bring us to the Tarshish of accomplished sin, the goal of our godless hearts.

V. A MAN WILL ALWAYS FIND CIRCUMSTANCES FAVOURABLE TO THE COURSE HE HAS RESOLVED TO TAKE. Jonah found a ship about to sail to his destination, got accommodation on board, and had the means to provide a berth. Things seem as if arranged on purpose to facilitate his flight. Had it been otherwise, we sometimes think the prophet's "Hegirah" might have been stopped earlier, and a good deal of suffering saved. But that would be a shallow philosophy of human action. Physical surroundings cannot thus shape our moral course. Intelligence makes its own use of them all. Purpose is formed; action is decided on; and then the circumstances are examined to see what mode of action they can most easily be made to help. The ship, the berth, and the passage-money to Tarshish were available to many besides Jonah, yet he only prostituted them to the purpose of shirking duty. They lent themselves to his project, because the project had, in the first place, been adjusted to them. So if a thief finds an open window, and no policeman in sight, the circumstances are said to favour a burglary. If a would-be murderer finds the same state of things, then we say the circumstances favour assassination. But if a man who would neither kill nor steal finds them so, they favour no project of his, and so are either put right or passed unheeded. Circumstances favour neither good nor evil particularly, but each man makes use of those that fit his own purpose, and passes the others by. We hear often of wicked men who are the victims of circumstance. And there are some such, no doubt. But the cases are fewer and logically weaker than you might think. Here are two country youths apprenticed in town among a godless set. One turns out a profligate, and friends pity him and say, "He got into bad hands: what better could we expect in such a place?" But the other, with the same surroundings exactly, turns out, as often happens, an honest tradesman and a godly man. And if you examine you will find that he has honest men for his friends, and Christian people for his associates, and enjoys beneficial influences in every relation of life. In other words, he is in a new set of circumstances altogether, favourable to the religious life, and which his own conduct has drawn around him. The circumstances have not made the men, but the men have practically made the circumstances. And so we reason out the truth which God reveals, "To the pure all things are pure," etc. (Titus i. 15). We are greater than our environment. "Each man creates his own world. . . . The soul spreads its own hue over everything; the shroud or wedding garment of nature is woven in the loom of our own feelings. This universe is the image and counterpart of the souls that dwell in it. Be noble-minded, and all nature replies—I am divine, the child of God; be thou too his child and noble. Be mean, and all nature dwindles into a contemptible smallness" (Robertson). "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." To you and me the world will be a new world when we are new creatures in Christ. It is not what it was, but a transfigured thing, when we view it "the eyes of our understandings being enlightened," and make all its elements tributary to a new life in Christ.—J. E. H.

Vers. 4—10.—*An effective hue and cry.* We see here a man who ought to run for God endeavouring to run away from him, and also how he speeds. The flight was illogical, a fatuous attempt to get outside the sphere of omnipresence, as much of our sin is a practical endeavour to get, or imagine ourselves, beyond the cognizance of omniscience. And it was made in the blindness of egoism and carnal self-will—the qualities which are generally to be found at the bottom of ministerial unfaithfulness to the message of God. A lorry off the lines attracts attention, when a whole train on

them might pass unnoticed. A large proportion of the heterodoxy extant originates in or is exaggerated by a desire to catch the public eye. The evil it does to the souls of men will go on so long as there are nominal servants who have a private interest dearer to them than the Master's work. And the personal disappointment and suffering and failure of the prophet are the experiences bound to be repeated in all cases of spiritual renegadism like it.

I. THEY RUN HARD WHOM GOD'S JUDGMENTS CANNOT OVERTAKE. Jonah scarcely hoped to get away from God. But he did expect to get away from his work. It lay north-east, and he went south-west. He was determined not to be near the place where duty lay, lest by any chance he should be compelled to do it. In this he succeeded for the time, and he succeeded still more fully in getting morally and spiritually away from the Most High. Not depths of sea or wilds of desert could have taken him so far from God as the moral elements implied in that flight. But he found that desertion, however possible, can never be satisfactory. God's authority is not to be run away from. He makes storms his artillery, and thunders after the run-away. He makes heathen sailors his officers, and captures him in his flight. He makes a fish's belly his dungeon keep, and puts him in durance there. Do not for a moment dream of evading God. If you run away from his spade, you run against his sword. You can run away from sobriety, but not from the white liver and empty purse and premature grave that drunkenness brings. You can run away from purity, but not from the debilitated frame, and the cloyed appetite, and the hell of a strengthening lust with failing power to feed it. You can run away from charity, but not from the heart-hardness and bitterness and gnawing unrest of all loveless souls. Disobedience accomplished means judgment on the way, and judgment on the way means judgment ahead of the transgressor, and waiting for him as the angel for wretched Balaam (Rom. ii. 3).

II. THE JUDGMENTS SENT AFTER THE GUILTY OFTEN FALL ON THE INNOCENT AS WELL. "Sin," says Chrysostom, "brings the soul into much senselessness." It brought Jonah to think that he could play off nature against its God, and escape him by the help of his own winds and tides. It brought him to pit one of the great ships of Tarshish—the East Indiamen of that time—against God's east wind (Ps. xlviii. 7). But mighty merchantman or tiny skiff, it is all one to the hurricane's blast. The prophet, so far from getting out of trouble himself, got others into it (vers. 4, 5). The sailors suffered fatigue and alarm; the ship-owners suffered loss of freight; other vessels near suffered dilapidations; indeed, many interests were harassed before Jonah himself was reached. That is the rule with all sin. In almost every offence against the second table of the Law our neighbour suffers first. Then, after the offender begins to suffer, his suffering in turn involves the family and social circles in which he is. The spendthrift's poverty, the debauchee's disease, the felon's disgrace, go down infallibly to children, and it may be children's children. Sinning against God you are indirectly sinning against man, and sinning against one man, you are practically sinning against all his friends and all your own. Such a following of evils does the transgressor drag after him in an ever-lengthening train.

III. THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN THE OCCASION OF GREAT PUBLIC EVIL ARE OFTEN THE LEAST CONCERNED ABOUT IT. Jonah was the coolest man on board while the big storm was raging. It was due to him, sent after him, meant to arrest his thought and step, and yet, when hardy sailors were frightened, and ignorant heathen were driven to pray, the erewhile God-fearing landsman was making himself comfortable below, and curled up fast asleep. So the men who provoked the Flood were cool and calm about it, even when Noah and his family were flying to the ark. To the Sodomites also righteous Lot, preparing to fly the coming doom, seemed but as one that mocked. The hardness produced by recent rebellion had not yet worn off. The murderer does not regret his crime nor fear the gallows while his blood is up. The excitement sustains him for a time in reckless disregard of both. But when he has had time to cool down and think, when he gets the cold iron on his wrists, and sees the outer world through iron bars, when dreams recall his victim's death-struggle or forecast the scaffold and the dangling rope, then his crime begins to look like itself, and his doom to put on its proper terrors. Jonah was still in the earlier stage. He did not see his sin yet, and he was too hot and rebellious to fear the punishment. After sin and

before repentance there is an interval of unnatural insensibility, and in this interval Jonah's sleep was taken. It is a horrid sight to see judge and jury and the court affected to tears, and the criminal as hard as iron. Yet that is the analogue of a state into which we have only to defy God in order to fall.

IV. A PRAYERLESS BACKSLIDER IS AN ASTONISHMENT EVEN TO A HEATHEN. (Ver. 6.) The skipper, a responsible man, and pious according to his lights, thinks Jonah, sleeping there in the crash of the storm, must be either sick or mad. Prayer, whether to false gods or the true, is a universal and instinctive religious act. And so when the great wind-guns began to boom and the billowy mitrailleuses to roar in chorus, when the helpless vessel tossed like a log and creaked and strained as about to break, then began every man to cry unto his god. Even the heathen could see that it was the thing to do, and the time to do it; and when the only worshipper of the true God aboard lies silent and indifferent, the captain and crew are alike astonished. Yet it is just what a little knowledge of the human character in its relation to spiritual things would lead us to expect. The iron that has been heated soft, and cooled again in water, is harder than ever. The process has simply tempered it. So the man who has been softened in the fires of grace, and plunged again into the waters of sin, is a harder man than he was at first (Heb. vi. 4). There are Canas and Chorazins among us, and it will be more tolerable for the Tyres and Sidons in the judgment than for them.

V. IT IS IN THE ORISES OF LIFE THAT FALSE CONFIDENCES FAIL AND THE TRUE GOD COMES TO THE FRONT. The captain sees appeal to his own gods to be vain, and he surmises that prayer to the God of Israel might be more successful. "Call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us." He knew of the true God as distinguished from the gods many whom he served, but only in extremity does he think of approaching him in prayer. The other gods were fair-weather deities, good enough so long as you wanted nothing from them. But only the God who holds the winds in his fists will serve now. And thus, in a new sense, the extremity of man is the opportunity of God. Beliefs, moralities, observances, are made so many substitutes for the Christ of God. And they do to live with after a fashion. But you never knew a man to die comfortably with them. The last hour is apocalyptic. It unveils things. The bubble of conceit in personal merit bursts. The filthy rags fall off. The soul is flung naked, loathsome, undone, before the majesty of God. Take God in Christ for your trust this hour, and you will never know the withering curse on him that "maketh flesh his arm."—J. E. H.

Vers. 11, 12.—*A voluntary surrender.* Matters so anomalous up to this point are beginning now to resume their normal aspect. The prophet had been behaving in a most inconsequential and erratic way. His flight had been utterly out of character. He ran away from a duty in the doing of which piety would have met philanthropy, and both have had ample scope. His sleep through the storm which his own sin provoked, when death was imminent, and even the heathen sailors called in terror on their gods, was, if possible, more eccentric still. Most unaccountable of all, perhaps, was the declaration, "I fear the Lord," so sincerely made when in the very act of setting his command at naught. But now the craze is passing off. Like the prodigal at a corresponding stage of his career, we see the prophet coming to himself. The reign of law is coming back, and mind and conscience and will fall into line and begin to act by rule. These verses exhibit to us the workings of the backslider's mind in his return to God. We see—

I. THAT CALAMITY HAS COMPELLED HIM TO THINK. The sinner is seldom logical. If he were, he would be a sinner no longer. There are no valid premisses to which a sinful act will stand in the relation of a conclusion. If Jonah had reasoned out the matter before he started on his flight, he would not have started at all. He adopted on impulse a course the folly of which a single moment's consideration would have shown. And he avoided this consideration as long as he could. It was only the impossibility of getting further that compelled him to face the question, "Why did I come so far? And was it wisely done?" It is almost invariably the practical results of a line of conduct that lead us to examine as to its intrinsic wisdom. We consult our taste in the first instance. What promises immediate pleasure or profit comes to

our judgment so highly recommended by the fact, that few questions are asked. No one supposes that the drunkard takes the moral, economic, or hygienic measure of his disastrous habit before he forms it. He has a lively feeling that it is pleasant, and suits his taste, and he waives the consideration of other points till a more convenient season. It is only when his habit has brought misfortune that he really faces the question whether it is a good one or not. With his mouth full of the bitter fruit, he naturally begins to form an idea of the character of the tree. If the fruiting had never come, the appraising would have been left undone. There is to every sinner a day when he cannot but think. He is happy if the needs-be overtakes him at the outset of his straying ere yet return has become impossible.

II. THOUGHT HAS CONVINCED HIM OF SIN. We can read a sense of guilt in every word of the arrested fugitive. His mind has awaked. In thought he has faced the situation. And his thought has not been barren. It has brought forth conviction. It would have been weak indeed if it had not. The fact of sin is patent to ordinary intelligence. And so to a certain extent is its demerit. To declare its existence and quality is the function of natural conscience; and what is conscience but reason dealing with moral truth? Of course, its diagnosis of sin is inadequate. The awful demerit of sin done against an infinite and holy God cannot be reached by mere force of thinking. It takes an enlightened eye to see it as it is, an opened heart to realize the whole truth regarding it. You must know God, in fact, in order to know sin, which is an offence against him. This, no doubt, Jonah did. There was a mote for the time being in his spiritual eye, but it had been opened once for all to see God. He came, therefore, to the contemplation of his sin with a measure of spiritual insight. And all may come to it similarly furnished. Obey the call of Scripture to "consider." Make a sincere attempt to examine yourself. Turn your eye inward, desiring honestly to know yourself as sinful in God's sight. You won't be left to your own unaided efforts and to failure. God awaits the beginning of such action to strengthen it. He awaits the attempt at such action to help it. He waits the aim at such action to move to attempt it in the strength of grace. It follows from the connection between wanting and getting in the spiritual sphere—"examine, and you shall know;" for the Spirit convinces the world of sin, and that by guiding into all truth the searchers after its hidden treasures.

III. CONVICTION HAS DRIVEN HIM TO CONFESS. There is a natural egoism in men that is unfavourable to confession. You get it out of them only by a difficult process as men get water out of a still. And the reasons of this are obvious. One is that men are more or less unconscious of their own moral state. They do not realize sin. They deem it an outrage to have guilt charged home. In the impudence of their unconsciousness they would bandy words with God himself (Mal. iii. 8). Here is evident failure to discern the sinfulness of sin. And failure is due as much to pride as to incapacity. Men are naturally prejudiced in their own favour. Faults that others see well enough they ignore, or weakly disapprove what others utterly condemn. They abide in darkness because they hate the light (John iii. 19). Given a man who cannot see his sin if he would, and who would not if he could, and you have a case in which confession need not be named. Even grant a measure of conviction, and confession does not necessarily follow. When sin is realized in a certain degree, the sinner's tongue is unloosed, and he tells it out with shame to God. But it does not follow that he will do it before his fellow-men. That means a great deal more, is harder to do, and more reluctantly done. It is greater humiliation. It involves stronger reprobation. It implies deeper self-abasement. When it is honestly done confession may be held to be at its intensest; in fact, to be true and adequate. Jonah's repentance had now come to this advanced stage (vers. 10, 12). "When the whip of God and the rod of his justice had overtaken Jonah, so that he now sees heaven and earth to be against him, down comes his proud heart: the sleeper now awaketh; the runaway crieth, *Pecavi*; contrition and confession come now tumbling upon him" (Abbot). Confession of our faults is an essential part of true repentance. To deny them is to lie, to conceal is to bolster up. When a transgressor is either sullenly silent or volubly apologetic, he has not broken with his sin. He could bear to speak the truth about it if he had definitely cast it off. Hence God makes confession a criterion of sincerity and a condition of pardon (Lev. xxvi. 40—42; Jer. iii. 12, 13).

Hence, on occasion of sin, Aaron (Numb. xii. 11), and Saul (1 Sam. xv. 24), and David (2 Sam. xii. 13), and Josiah (2 Kings xxii. 11, 13, 19), and Rehoboam (2 Chron. xii. 6, 7, 12), and Manasseh (2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13), and Hezekiah (2 Chron. xxxii. 26), and Peter (Mark xiv. 72), and others whose sincerity Scripture certifies, whilst it records the fact of their pardon, made free and heart-stricken confession of their fault before God and men. Sin confessed means sin discovered and reprobated and disowned. The man flings it off in the very act, declares himself at once its victim and foe. There is philosophy, therefore, and the fitness of things in the Divine deliverance, prescription and promise hand in hand, that "whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy."

IV. HIS NEW ATTITUDE TOWARD SIN INCLUDES WILLINGNESS TO SUFFER FOR IT. The world is sometimes surprised and puzzled by a voluntary confession of murder. The self-accused criminal has been hitherto undetected and secure. People may have had their suspicions, and drawn their inferences, but it was impossible to trace the crime home. Yet at last, when investigation had been given up, and the very memory of the crime died out, the murderer comes of his own accord, confesses his crime, and delivers himself up to justice. And, the wonder and puzzlement of shallow people notwithstanding, the act is perfectly logical. The anomaly is not that he has delivered himself up at last, but that he did not do it at the first. There is an instinctive sense of justice in a man, that recognizes the unfitness of a sinner going scot-free. He feels that sin produces a moral derangement which cannot continue, and which it takes punishment to readjust. He feels at war with the nature of things until this has been done. He thinks if he had once endured the penalty the balance of things would be restored, and a foundation for future peace be laid. And he actually finds it so. The very fact of telling out his guilt has already lightened the load, and there is a new restfulness in the thought that now he is going to make some amends. *It is to this principle that the doctrine of the cross appeals.* In Christ crucified the demand of our nature for punishment proportioned to our sin is met. We see our transgressions avenged on him, in him our penal responsibilities met, and our full amends made. Our faith in Christ is, in one aspect, our instinctive clutching at the peace of the punished minus the preliminary pain. The same principle disarms and softens chastisement. Humility feels it is deserved. Intelligence sees it is necessary. And godly sorrow for sin welcomes it as a key to the dwelling of peace from which transgression had strayed. A willingness like Jonah's to accept the meed of sin is no mean criterion of our attitude towards it, and of our whole moral bent.

V. HE THOUGHT THAT THE EVIL CONSEQUENCES OF HIS SIN COULD ONLY BE REMOVED BY HIS ENDURING ITS PUNISHMENT. There was a feeling among the sailors that some action must be taken in reference to Jonah (ver. 11). Their present relation to him had involved them in a storm; what but a new relation to him could bring the calm? And the prophet himself is of the same opinion. He considers himself the mountain which attracts the storm, and that, if he were cast into the sea, its great occasion would be gone. What is this but the practical application of a revealed principle, "He that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done"? The axiom applies to the righteous and the wicked alike, if in a different sense. The sin of wicked Saul is visited with punishment as final rejection and ruin. The sin of righteous David is visited with punishment as fiery trial eventuating in a contrite heart. Heathen Philistia and chosen Israel sin in almost equal degree, yet "the remnant of the Philistines" perishes (Amos i. 8), whilst "the remnant of Israel" is by suffering saved (Isa. i. 8; Rom. ix. 27; xi. 5). And among natural and spiritual men alike the principle holds, cutting this way and that, with double edge: for believing sin, "the rod;" for unbelieving sin, "the sword;" for all sin, wrath in God and anguish in man (Rom. i. 18; ii. 9). A recognition of this fact would solve some mysteries of suffering, and put an end to many "offences" and complaints. A man sins in his youth against God, and others, and his own body. By the grace of the Spirit he is brought in a little to repentance and the higher life. Is, therefore, his wrong-doing undone? By no means. In some physical ailment, in some raked-up imputation, in some injured fellow-creature, it rises before him when his hair is white. And he is surprised at this. He thought that, after repentance and pardon, his sin was done with for ever. But it is not so. Sin once done cannot be undone. It leaves its mark on the sinner—in

mind, or body, or estate, or social relations, but leaves it inevitably somewhere. The wood from which a nail has been drawn can never be as if the nail had not been driven. The nail-hole is there, and there remains, do what we will. When, as with Jonah, the sin is against God directly, it has no physical concomitant, and the punishment in its physical aspect can show no connection with it. But it is neither more nor less the doing of God and the result of sin on that account. And, although in regions out of sight, a radical and natural connection still exists between penalty and crime. Its moral necessity and significance and tendency remain the same. Hence the certainty of its coming and the folly of striving to evade its stroke. Not till law natural and moral has had its amends, and all injured interests been recouped, can escape for the law-breaker come. Come then it fitly and fairly may, and come then, and only then, it will (1's. lxxxix. 30—33). 1. *It is not enough to confess sin in general, we must confess it in particular.* There is a kind of impersonal guilt which many will freely acknowledge, by whom personal guilt is altogether ignored. If we say generally, "Your nature is corrupt," they will own it without hesitation and without emotion. If we say, "Your conduct is bad," they will deny the impeachment and resent it. That was not Jonah's way. He unaffectedly confessed guilt as to the matter in hand. And it is not the way of true conviction. You confess and deny in one breath; deny in the particular what you confess in the general; which amounts to saying that a certain number of whites will make a black. But the fact is your acknowledgment is mechanical and formal, and therefore worthless. The denial, on the other hand, is intelligent and in earnest, and the deliberate expression of your mind and feeling. Accordingly, your confession as a whole means just what it says, and that is—nothing. 2. *Mercy should move us to confession of sin as strongly as judgment.* Who will say that it was altogether the severity of God in punishing at last, and in no degree his goodness in refraining till now, that led the prophet to repentance? Not so speaks the Scripture (Rom. ii. 4). Mercy touches a bad heart and breaks it, a cold heart and warms it, a closed mouth and opens it. That is its normal, and ought to be its actual, effect on you. Your mercies have been neither few nor small. They supply a basis for the inspired appeal, "We beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God," etc. They supply an impulse more than adequate to bring you to the kingdom. If you have resisted them, what will persuade you? The resources of grace have been well-nigh expended. God's time of striving has almost run out. Strive to enter while you see the gate ajar, or the clang of its closing bolts may be the knell of your immortal soul.—J. E. H.

Vers. 13—16.—*Storm-stilling extraordinary.* We see in this passage, under favourable circumstances, the workings of the heathen mind in its first glimpses of God. And the study is one of lively interest, and important withal. The sailors have, innocently and involuntarily, been made actors in a drama that is not unlike to turn out a tragedy. A stranger, pursued by the vengeance of his (to them) unknown God, has got on board their ship, and mixed them up in his troubles to the extent of bringing them to the very brink of death. From their standpoint it was rather a hard case. They might well have felt resentment and given the cold shoulder to the not guiltless occasion of their evil plight. Their prudence, their considerateness, their conscientiousness, and their ultimate devoutness are qualities that come on us as an agreeable but complete surprise. There is a philosophy of these qualities, however, which it will be worth our while to endeavour to trace out.

I. **THEY SHOWED AN ENLIGHTENED REGARD FOR HUMAN LIFE.** They might well have been excused if, in imminent danger of death through the guilty Jonah's presence in their ship, they had jumped at his proposal to throw him overboard. They knew, for he—an inspired prophet—had told them, that he had deserved it by his crime, and that to do so would calm the sea forthwith. Yet they make no movement in that direction, but redouble their efforts at the oar in their last desperate attempt to reach the land. This course was unlike a heathen crew. Heathenism has always been reckless about shedding blood. It is the Bible that teaches, and believers in it who recognize, the sacredness of human life. Its command, "Thou shalt not kill," is illustrated and enforced by its history and entire legislation. The murderer was to suffer death, though he should be dragged to it from the very horns of the altar (Numb. xxxv. 31; 1 Kings ii. 29). The very ox that took a human life must die, and might

not be eaten (Exod. xxi. 28). Even the man who slew another by misadventure made his life forfeit to the avenger of blood if he were caught outside the city of refuge (Deut. xix. 5). Blood, in fact, according to Scripture, must have blood (Gen. ix. 5, 6). There is no other satisfaction for it. The value of it cannot be expressed in any earthly currency. Even the whole world is no compensation for a lost life (Mark viii. 36). Those principles find little place in the consciousness of heathendom. It is filled with "the habitations of cruelty." You will get no heathen nation in any age exhibiting either in private life or public an adequate sense of the inviolability of human life. It is evident that in the case before us the sailors have been impressed by the Divine portents on the occasion, and under their impulse act for a time on a higher than the heathen plane. Not in their heathenism, but in the theism it is for the time in contact with, must we look for the explanation of their humane and generous conduct. The knowledge of God is early and inevitably practical. By it "grace is multiplied," and the "pollutions of the world" escaped (2 Pet. i. 2; ii. 20).

II. THEY RECOGNIZED THE BELIEVING LIFE AS SPECIALLY SACRED. It will be conceded that, other things being equal, the life of a believer is more important than that of an unbeliever. Not only has it elements and functions which are all its own, but these are intrinsically more excellent than any others. God treats it as precious in a peculiar sense (Ps. lxxii. 14; cxvi. 15), keeping count of the very hairs of his people's heads (Matt. x. 30), and using (1 Cor. iii. 21, 22; 2 Cor. iv. 15), and even sacrificing, the lives of the wicked for their preservation (Isa. xliii. 4). He also safeguards it by a double rampart of threat and promise. The death or the hurt of the saints he will avenge with punishment worse than death (Luke xviii. 8; Matt. xviii. 7); whilst even a cup of water to the least of them shall meet with eternal recognition and reward (Matt. x. 42; xxv. 40). Of the inviolable sacredness of the saint's life the sailors had evidently an intuitive idea. "Although himself accuse himself, and lay his fault plain before them, although winds and waves did confirm it, although the lot thrown did assure it, although in words he did desire to be cast into the water, yet those who should have done it do so ill like of the matter, that if sails or oars can serve they will back again to the land—rather leave their intended journey than use any violence towards him" (Abbot). It was not on the score of his humanity merely that Jonah was so tenderly dealt with. The hurricane, the power and wrath of God speaking in it, Jonah's revealed connection with both, his acknowledgment and denunciation of his fault, and the meek manhood of his offer to die that they might live, were all circumstances to awe and soften them. "Disobedient though he may be, Jonah they perceive is God's prophet, and his servant still. Revering his God, they respect him. They feel that it is a solemn thing to have to do with anything that this God marks as his own—marks as his own even by his displeasure. Hence they pause" (Martin). This is godliness in its normal operation, and realizing its "promise of the life that now is" by surrounding it with an invisible yet inviolable guard.

III. THEY SHAPED THEIR CONDUCT IN THE EMERGENCY AS FAR AS POSSIBLE BY GOD'S. "Thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee" (ver. 14). They would have spared the prophet's life had the thing been possible. It is only when Providence fights against them, and logically shuts them up to it, that they accept the inevitable, and throw him overboard. As their words imply, they "assume that to be righteous which God will have to be done; and because they see him will it, and that he will take no nay, therefore they know it is just, and accordingly yield unto it" (Abbot). The rule of right is God's will. The expression of this in a particular case supersedes the general law. "Thou shalt not kill" and "Thou shalt not steal" are canons in the universal moral code. Yet Abraham would have killed Isaac, and Samuel killed Agag, whilst Israel spoiled the Egyptians at the command of God. Then, from the general law forbidding homicide, was excepted the whole class of cases in which it was necessary for self-defence; and to take spoil in war, or as much food from a neighbour's field as would save the life, was excepted from the general law forbidding theft. On the same principle the execution of Jonah was legalized by the expressed will of God to that effect, and became to the sailors an act of simple duty. And their course was exemplary. Obedience to God is the highest morality. Whatever is done so is done well. It may seem anomalous and unfit. But that is only on the surface. Some of the finest passages in literature are least obviously conformable to grammatical rule.

The conformity is there, and in the highest sense; it is only the tyro who cannot see it. So with actions done in the highest moral plane. The actor is too intent on doing what God says to look after the minor congruities. But the thing he does has an essential and fundamental rightness which lifts details into a new connection where they also become appropriate. "Whatsoever the Lord saith, that will we do." The men who accentuate the "whatsoever," and do it honestly, are seldom favourites with the crowd, but they have scaled the loftiest moral heights, where the voice of human opinion is neither listened for nor heard.

IV. THEY FOUND DELIVERANCE IN FOLLOWING GOD'S LEAD. (Ver. 15.) Attempts at escape in every other direction were made persistently, but all in vain. The ship-lightening, the prayers to idols, the strenuous rowing, were so many exercises in the bootless task of fighting against God. Against the wind and tide of his purpose no human power can sail. "God was pursuing this matter to his own appointed issue, and would allow no effort, however well meant, to baffle his purpose" (Martin). This obvious fact the sailors are compelled at length to recognize. Reluctantly they give up their unavailing struggle, and take the course to which all along events had been conspiring to shut them up. And on the instant the face of affairs is changed. The elemental war is hushed in peace. The hurricane in which earth and heaven reeled becomes the calm as of a tropical night. The waters which had "gaped at their widest to glut him" swallow their prey, and forthwith cease their raging. How easy the end if we only take God's way! How swift the transition from impossibility to attainment! Yet it is just the transition from man's way to God's. Have we not all experiences on which by analogy the event may throw light? Aiming at a legitimate object, we adopt what seems to us a fitting course. But we never get on in it. Disappointment awaits us at every step. Disaster springs on us from every covert. It seems as if men and things were joined together in a universal conspiracy to balk us. Discouraged at last, and bitter at heart, we take without definite intention or expectation a step in a new direction, and which circumstances seem to thrust upon us; and lo, before we are aware, and almost without an effort, our object is attained. God works, not against means but with them, not apart from means, but by them; yet everywhere and always he works his own will in his own way. As we recognize that way and take it, are we on the moral rectilinear—the shortest line between our present and God's future.

V. THEY ARE FINALLY WON TO GOD'S SERVICE BY THE EXHIBITION OF HIS CHARACTER. In the incidents of the day the sailors read a revelation of God. "The storm they clearly saw was in his hand; a reason for it, they saw, was in his heart. And that reason they saw as clearly as they saw the storm. His hand they saw was almighty. His heart they saw was righteous. They even became executioners of his wrath. It was a solemn initiation into the knowledge of his name" (Martin). And what but the revelation of God's character wins men to his service everywhere (Ps. xxxvi. 7; Rev. xv. 4; 2 Cor. v. 14, 15)? Conversion has many elements leading up to and meeting in it. There is the truth, the instrument in all saving change. There is the Holy Spirit interpreting the truth and bringing it home. But there is something else to which both refer. The power of the truth, even as applied by the Holy Ghost, must lie in the subject-matter of it, and that subject-matter is God (John v. 39; Rom. i. 16). God is the Infinite Beauty. God made manifest means men attracted, all minds dazzled, and all hearts won (Ps. ix. 10). His character commands confidence and challenges fealty. He is one whom to know is to trust, whom to see is to love and choose. It is on this fact that inspiration founds in a familiar maxim of the kingdom (John xvii. 3). Knowledge of God is salvation, for every saving grace inheres in it or goes with it.

VI. THEIR RELIGIOUS LIFE GAVE EVIDENCE OF ITS GENUINENESS BY FOLLOWING SCRIPTURAL LINES. (Vers. 14—16.) Prayer, fear, sacrifice, and vows;—what essential element in religious life or worship do not these exercises cover (Acts ii. 21; Heb. ix. 22; Ps. iii. 10; Isa. xlv. 5)? In prayer is the coming to God for the things that are his gift if they come at all. In sacrifice is the coming symbolically by atonement, the only coming to which blessing is promised. Fear epitomizes the attitude and line of action in which practical religion may be summed up. A vow is a testimony that the ideal life is consecration—a pledge that they will freely give who have received so

freely. We wonder at the propriety and fitness of the sailors' entire action. They had no Bible. They learned nothing from the prophet. Yet they took a distinctly scriptural course. They rendered God service in God's appointed way. Does it not seem as if they were somehow taught by his Holy Spirit; their minds enlightened, their hearts renewed, their activity shaped by almighty grace? As to salvation without the Bible, we must say, with a leading Reformation Symbol, that "there is no ordinary possibility" of it; but might it not be going too far to say that it is absolutely and in the nature of the case impossible? The rule is "salvation by faith, and faith by hearing;" but if the rule does not cover the case of infants, why must it be taken to cover that of all other human beings? The mere light of nature is doubtless insufficient to give saving knowledge of God; but saving enlightenment can hardly be held impossible in a mind to which God has access direct. Humility and charity will alike refuse to mark out a path for him whose "footsteps are not known." *It is ill trying to make the voyage of the religious life with a spiritual Jonah on board.* Yet the Church is full of such would-be navigators. There is the Jonah of a demoralizing occupation—occupation having to do, e.g., with gambling, or betting, or drunkenness, or fraudulent manufacture, and it must be thrown overboard or the ship of personal religion will go down. There is the Jonah of some pet sin, which, like Herod to Herodias, we cling to and prefer to Christ; and if we would escape the lake of fire we must "pluck it out and cast it from us." There is above all the Jonah of an unbelieving heart. Men will have a religion without self-surrender; will do anything and everything but yield themselves to God. Yet they must do this, or all else is vain. Unbelief is in its nature fatal, cuts off the dead soul from its life in Christ. We ask you one question—Will you give yourself now and here to Christ? If you answer, "Yes," you are a saved man. If you answer, "No," we need pursue the inquiry no further, for heaven is as inaccessible to you as if Christ the Way to it had never come.—J. E. H.

Ver. 17.—"*The sign of the Prophet Jonas.*" God sees the end from the beginning. He means it from the beginning. He is moving towards it from the beginning. There are no isolated events. Each is connected with a series leading up to it. The series is so long that we cannot see its earlier steps, much less observe their direction. But nothing is surer than that from the first they have a trend toward that one which is their ultimate effect. In proof of this we have only to select a series on which we have the light of Scripture, such as that leading up to the work of Christ. There are many such series. One leads up to his birth, another to his education, another to his sufferings, another to his death; and so on. And these series lead up to it in various ways. There is a prophetic series, and a typical series, and a contributory series, and a causal series. And there are events which lead up to it in two or three of these capacities at once. Such an event is the one recorded here, as the New Testament Scriptures repeatedly affirm. Consider this event—

I. AS A MIRACLE. It was clearly outside the natural order. The shark or other sea-monster was "prepared" by God. It swallowed Jonah, contrary to its habit, without crushing him between its teeth. He remained alive in its stomach for days, contrary to all known physical laws. He was cast out safely on land, contrary to all natural probabilities. Seeing, as he could not but see, God's hand in the whole thing, Jonah would learn from it: 1. *The Divine resistless purpose.* Throwing off allegiance, he fled from duty like a man resolved on any terms to get away. But God went after him in a way that showed he meant to have his work done. The fugitive was stopped by wind and wave and conspiring circumstances as by an adamantine wall, impossible to break through. He knew now that God was a God who cannot be balked, and who will have his way. The same lesson we all need to learn. Much rebellion arises out of a half-conscious expectation that God at last will give way, and our disobedience be all condoned. And half the afflictions we suffer are to cure us of our wilfulness and conceit of irresponsibility. They teach us that God's arm, not ours, is strongest—that his will, not ours, must rule. When we have appropriated and endorsed the sentiment, "Not as I will, but as thou wilt," our life-sky will clear, and the thunder-clouds that threatened a deluge will discharge themselves in fertilizing showers. 2. *The Divine consistent character.* Severity was conspicuous up to the point of the prophet's immersion.

After that everything spoke of goodness. There are qualities in God fitted each in its own way to move men to his service (2 Cor. v. 11; Rom. xii. 1). They moved Jonah. His humble, believing, thankful prayer in the monster's maw is a revelation of their effect on his moral nature. And godly lives the world over and all history through are effects due to the same cause (Ps. vii. 17; Rom. ii. 4). Severity and goodness are just Divine moral excellence facing two different ways (Rom. xi. 22). Both have the same infinitely glorious perfection behind them, and are forceful with its inherent essential energy. 3. *The Divine effective way.* God had not interfered in the matter of Jonah's disobedient flight until things had gone a certain length. He allowed him to reach Joppa, and get on board a ship, and start for Tarshish. The sinful act was completed before the punishment began. But the moment it was morally complete the stern "Thus far and no further" was spoken. And how masterly the strategy, and resourceful the strength of God appeared! The elements, the lower animals, and man alike become his ministers, and stop the runaway before and on either side. And then the measures as a whole are so exactly yet variously apposite to the purpose of checking insubordination, and compelling execution of the original command! Jonah would know more about the God with whom he had to do, and the considerations moving to implicit obedience, than he ever knew before. It is not in the Divine dealings as an exhibition of mere force, but of force directed unalterably to ends of justice and mercy, that their chief disciplinary value lies (Rom. ii. 2; iii. 3—6; xi. 22). Men are moved by them in proportion as God's perfections come out in them and shine.

II. AS A TYPE. On this point we have for an interpreter Christ himself (Matt. xii. 40). "Jonah was in the fish's belly, so was Christ in the grave; Jonah came forth from thence, so did Christ rise again; his (Christ's) rising doth bring our rising, his resurrection ours, because he was the firstfruits of all those that do sleep (1 Cor. xv. 20)" (Abbot). The analogy between Jonah's sojourn in the deep and Christ's in the grave is such as to fit one to be a type of the other. The analogy holds: 1. *In the time of the sojourn.* It was three days in each case. In the case of Christ we know that two of these days were incomplete. He was buried in the evening of the first day, and rose on the morning of the third day. Rhetorical speech is necessarily in round numbers, and our Lord states the truth broadly without attempting to elaborate details. Why three days was the period fixed on either in type or antitype we cannot tell. It is pertinent to notice, however, that three and four are mystic numbers, and together make up seven, the number of perfection. Then three days were sufficient, and no more, to establish the fact of death in the case of Christ, and the reality of the miracle of preservation in the case of Jonah. Details of Scripture are important because they record details of a Divine procedure which are purposeful through and through. 2. *In the capacity in which each sojourned.* Jonah was in the fish's belly as Christ was in the grave, in payment of the penalty of sin. Moreover, each by accomplishing this saved men from death. "Each of the processes is an atonement, an expiation, a sacrifice, pacifying the Divine Judge, satisfying Divine justice, abolishing guilt, restoring peace, effecting reconciliation" (Martin). But here the analogy ends. The type suffered for sins of his own, the blessed Antitype for sins of others. The type saved men from death of the body, the Antitype saved them from death eternal. Well might he say, on a memorable occasion, "a greater than Jonah is here"! 3. *In the analogous experience of the two.* The experiences were not identical. Christ literally "died and rose again according to the Scriptures." Jonah did not actually die and rise. But he did virtually. His natural life was forfeit, and was only saved by a miracle equal to that of resurrection. His life in the deep was a supernatural life, and, therefore, practically a new one. Indeed, he applies the words "hell" (*Sheol*) and "corruption" (*shachath*) to his condition, the same words which Scripture applies to Christ's sojourn in a state of death (ch. ii. 2—6; Ps. xvi. 10; Acts ii. 31). He uses them doubtless in a figurative sense, but by using them at all he treats himself as virtually a dead man. Like those of Hezekiah and Lazarus and the widow's son (Isa. xxxviii. 5; John xi. 44; Luke vii. 15), the life of Jonah from that hour was God-given and new. So may be your life or mine. If God has saved you alive when men despaired of your recovery, or when but for some interposition which we call an accident it was forfeit by natural laws, then you are even as Jonah, and your remaining life, like his, is in a special sense and measure consecrate (Rom. xii. 1). 4. *That with each it was*

the gate to a new life. The life of Jonah after his virtual resurrection was a new one, and greatly higher than the old. He emerges from the sea a new man, in a new relation to God, with a new purpose of heart, and a new life-career opening out. "His old life is cancelled; all its guilt obliterated; all its evils interruptive of Divine fellowship and blessing abolished—left behind in the depths of the sea. He is dead to the past; and it has no more hold on him, no more evidence against him, no more wrath in store for him" (Martin). A prominent element in this new life was the preaching to Gentile Nineveh. But for it that heathen city would have perished for lack of knowledge. So also the resurrection-life of Christ is new (Rom. vi. 10). Living always to God, he lives to him now in a new sense. "He was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father." And as he rose no bond of law kept hold on him any more; no condemnation laid its taint upon him any more; the glory of his Father's unmingled and eternal favour shone upon him now for evermore; and in his Father's favour he had life, his risen and eternal life" (Martin). In short, the risen Saviour's life is life in a new sphere, and a new relation and to new purpose. By that life, moreover, he enters the door which by his death he opened (Eph. ii. 11—17)—the door of access to the Gentile world (Matt. xxviii. 16—20; Acts i. 5—8). The risen Saviour gives the Scriptures to be preached to the ends of the earth, and the apostles and teachers to preach them, and the Spirit to apply them, and the Church to embody them in her Christ-like life. And thus is negotiated a wider repentance than of Nineveh, and with greater results. "God hath also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."

III. AS A SIGN. A sign is a miracle viewed from the evidential standpoint, a Divine work regarded as authenticating a Divine truth. Jonah's entombment served this purpose (Matt. xii. 39). 1. *It was a sign to the Ninevites.* (Luke xi. 30.) Jonah in Nineveh would be full of his unparalleled adventure. He would tell the people of his virtual death and rising again by the hand of God. And would not the amazing story credential the prophet as beyond dispute the messenger of God? He would declare to them how the miracle of judgment which had consigned him to the deep had been, if possible, outdone by the miracle of mercy which had saved him "from the belly of hell." And would he not be thus a sign at once of God's resistless vengeance on sin, and his unspeakable mercy to the penitent? From such a God the Ninevites would know what they had to expect in the one character and in the other. 2. *It was the archetype of the sign of the resurrection.* (Matt. xii. 40.) The miracles of Christ were all signs. The effect of them was to certify his Divine mission, and bring men to faith in his Name (Matt. xxvii. 54; John xi. 45). On many, however, they were practically thrown away. The Jews clamoured for a sign, while signs were being wrought before their very eyes. To this blind demand of insuperable unbelief there would be one further concession. The sign of the Prophet Jonah would be repeated in the Person of Christ by the resurrection on the third day. This was an unchallengeable sign of the Divine mission of our Lord (Rom. i. 4). If the dead One rose, then undoubtedly that dead One must have been the Son of God (1 Cor. xv. 14). The resurrection of Christ was the Father's sign-manual to the Son's claim to a Divine character and an accepted work. It was a sign, too, of the Divine attitude toward sin. Taken in connection, as it must be, with the death and burial, the whole was, like Jonah's miraculous experience, a graphic attestation of wrath against sin, removed as soon as satisfied, but inappeasable till then. If God "spared not his own Son," whom will he spare? If the sin laid on Christ is punished to the full, how much more the sin that remains on the sinner! And then, if Christ rises into a new life the moment his assumed connection with sin ends by death, shall not we, dead to our sin by the body of Christ, be raised together with him to "walk in newness of life"? The sign of the Prophet Jonah is everything to us. It means Christ credentialed, salvation finished and attested, and a sure hope springing of the resurrection unto life.

1. *See how far God's judgments may follow deserters.* Generally they include misfortune, often sickness, and sometimes death. The principle is that they must be efficacious, and so they go on till they reach their object. The distance you have gone away from God is the measure of the length to which his judgments will follow you (Col. iii. 25). 2. *See how easily God can turn the destroyer into a preserver.* Instead of killing Jonah, the fish saves his life. The Divine afflictive agencies operate in like manner. They wound only to heal; destroy the flesh "that the spirit may be saved

in the day of Jesus Christ." Your judgments are your mercies. Let the Divine mercy they reveal be your call to the duty you owe, your recall to the service you forsake (Ps. lxxxix. 30—33; Rev. iii. 19). 3. *Realize the high things to which this sign of the Prophet Jonas calls you.* The death of Christ was for the death of your sin, his life from the dead for the life of your soul (Rom. vi. 4; Eph. v. 14).—J. E. H.

Vers. 1—3.—*Jonah's call and flight.* "Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying," etc.

I. THE MAN. Jonah is introduced without a word of explanation, except (implicitly) that he was a prophet of the Lord. So also Elijah (1 Kings xvii. 1). Their previous history is assumed. God's servants are treated as all waiting on him to receive his orders, so that "he says to this one, Go, and he goeth, and to another, Come, and he cometh." This is the true idea of servants; they "look unto his hand" (Ps. cxxiii. 2); "stand in his house" (Ps. cxxxiv. 1); "stand before him" (Jer. xv. 1). We have a little more information about Jonah (see 2 Kings xiv. 25). In the New Testament we have a twofold view of Jonah—a sign to the Ninevites (Luke xi. 30, 32), and a type of Christ (Matt. xii. 40). This book is short, but of remarkable interest. "It is long and it is short; short if we respect the smallness of the volume, but long if we respect the copious variety of excellent observations that are therein to be found: as the horribleness of sin, which was able within forty days to pluck down an utter desolation on so famous a city as Nineveh was; God's love in forewarning them that dwell in that place that they might be spared; the prophet's foul fall, and his strange punishment for it; his offwardness from God, and God's favourable inclination evermore to him; the regard which the King of Nineveh and his people did bear to God's judgments when they were denounced; the free pardon of the Lord and his remitting of their sin upon their repentance" (Archbishop Abbot).

II. THE CALL. 1. *Its source.* Directly and clearly from God—the only source of spiritual authority—an authority not to be gainsaid or trifled with. Unlike any other authority, to it implicit obedience is due.

"Theirs not to make reply;
Theirs not to reason why."

2. *Its rousing note.* Arise! Implies summons to unusual exertion—the commission that follows needs great energy—it is not to be executed in a listless frame—"wherefore gird up the loins of your mind." Some duties are of such a kind that unusual self-excitation is needed for them (see Heb. xii. 1). "The very first word he hears is 'Arise.' It is a word used before another verb as a term of excitement. Arise! I know you have difficulties, in yourself, in your people, in the mission to Nineveh; arise, therefore, gird up your loins, stir up thy strength and go!" (Rev. A. Raleigh, D.D.). How differently has the command to arise been dealt with by different men! Moses hesitates, pleads off, at last agrees (Exod. iv.). Jeremiah urges his youth (i. 6). Paul confers not with flesh and blood (Gal. i. 16). Our Lord sets his face steadfastly to go up to Jerusalem (Luke ix. 51). 3. *Its sphere.* "Go to Nineveh, that great city." The prophet is sent outside the boundaries of Israel; he is a foreign missionary—the first foreign missionary after Elijah, who was sent among the Phœnicians. The field is Nineveh, probably the greatest and richest city of the world at that time. As missionary to Nineveh, Jonah occupies a remarkable position—through him God is to assert his claim as the God, not only of the Jews, but of the whole earth. He is to declare himself Lord of Nineveh and of all countries, and summon its inhabitants to their allegiance to him. "Suddenly, without note or warning, without preface, without explanation, assuming sovereign state as God Most High over all the earth; Jehovah, remanifesting, if not reassuming his universal supremacy, conducts, on the scale of most amazing miracle, a movement of his ceaseless government, as it extends over all nations; and that it may not fail to compel the attention of all succeeding ages, he adorns that movement with the most marvellous and romantic incident, with one of the most striking if not perplexing developments of human character, especially as occurring in a man of God, and with the symbolic death and resurrection of the agent under whose hand that movement is conducted—a death and resurrection on the very type of Messiah's; for Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, even as the

Son of man was three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (H. Martin, D.D.). 4. *Its purport.* "Cry against it; for its wickedness is come before me." "He must cry against Nineveh, not whisper in the ear as if it were to one, not speak softly as to a few, but cry as unto all: this is a general proclamation. This word 'cry' is used in Scripture when men are fast asleep and lulled in their sins, and awake not with a little; so that as Elijah said to the Baalites, they were to 'Cry aloud, because Baal might be sleeping, and must be awaked;' so the minister must cry aloud, that men may be raised from their drowsiness in sin" (Abbot). "The wickedness of Nineveh" consisted in pride, ambition, oppression, cruelty, sensuality. The Ninevites were very merciless, and practised most horrible cruelties on captives, even of the highest rank. This wickedness had come before God, denoting that it had become full (Gen. xv. 16), therefore intolerable. Yet to this merciless people Divine mercy was to be shown. Great cities apt to become great in sin—the power of sin becomes concentrated—one sinner encourages another—sin can be more easily hid—or, it may become very shameless—it is the duty of God's servants to cry against the wickedness of such cities, their drunkenness, licentiousness, greed, sabbath-breaking, etc., and proclaim God's wrath against their sins.

III. THE CALL REFUSED. Jonah fulfilled the command to arise—but not to go against Nineveh. He shrinks from duty—"He should have risen to cry, but he rose to fly" (Abbot). His reasons were probably various—one is afterwards referred to by him (ch. iv. 2). Shirking duty because it is irksome and disagreeable, is too common. In ordinary life, irksome employments, when not patiently accepted, breed negligence, idleness, drunkenness, love of illicit pleasure, etc. Here is a lesson for the young—at school, or when beginning business or trade. In religious life, disagreeableness of duty is often a stumbling-block—often makes us unfaithful; we neglect to warn others because the task is disagreeable. As the remedy for this, learn to regard duty ever as the command of God, who will strengthen and carry through all who trust him. "Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the Lord." He could hardly have believed that Tarshish was out of God's presence, but he acted as if he thought so. It was away from his *immediate* and manifested presence. There is a tendency in many to act as if God were in some places, not in others—as if God were in the church or religious meeting, but not in the market-place, and as if they might act there as his enemies act. Edmund Burke said the humanity of England was "a thing of points and parallels." Some break the sabbath abroad as they would not do at home. Many fly from the company of godly people, because not willing to think of God. Lurking unbelief in this. Omnipresence of God a lesson for both old and young. God is sometimes represented by conscience. Fatal is the wish to escape from God—it would be to leave all that is bright, holy, gladdening, for ways of darkness, filth, misery. If we say to God, "Depart from us" (Job xxi. 14), he will say to us, "Depart from me" (Matt. xxv. 41). Jonah's effort to escape from God's presence seemed successful—"he found a ship going to Tarshish." Providence seemed to favour him; but this was a narrow view—providence must be interpreted widely. "We cannot expect smiles of approbation from Heaven any longer than we can say with Abraham's servant, 'I being in the way'" (Jones of Creaton). "So he paid the fare thereof." He had the money ready—another apparently favourable providence, and he paid it at once, for men do not grudge expense to carry out their own will, however reluctant often to spend it to carry out God's. See the costliness of sin—yet the devil's taxes are usually paid cheerfully. Picture Jonah afloat in the Mediterranean—his conflicting feelings—relief, yet no relief—like a modern criminal escaping to America, with an evil conscience and dread of the telegraph—his expedition insane. "Whither can I go from thy presence?" (Ps. cxxxix.). No hiding from God (Jer. xxiii. 24; Rev. vi. 16). Only hiding-place in God (Ps. xxxii. 7). The great lesson is this—indefeasible obligation of God's will, and man's alienation from it and disposition to resist it (Rom. vii.). Hence the need of watching and prayer: "Teach me to do thy will!"—W. G. B.

Vers. 4—6.—*The fugitive arrested.* "But the Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken," etc. "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!" God is never at a loss for means of conquering opposition and bringing erring men to their senses—he arrests Balaam

by means of a sword, David through a parable, Peter by a look, the Philippian jailor by an earthquake, Jonah by a storm. All nature is at his command. "The whole world full of invisible couriers, robed and ready for their service."

I. THE STORM SENT OUT BY GOD. Connection between the physical and moral world is so adjusted that the former accomplishes purposes of moral government. Storms in a sense are results of fixed law, yet instruments of Divine will—"stormy wind fulfilling his word" (Ps. cxlviii. 8)—fitted to show men their helplessness and dependence—to reprove them for rebelling against him whose their breath is, and whose are all their ways. Many things else have same purpose—illness, frustration of plans, etc. "In the day of adversity, consider." Sin often causes storms—"in one's heart, in families, in Churches, in towns, and in nations (Jas. iv. 1)" (Jones). The storm was adjusted so as to answer precisely the purpose of God. The ship was not actually broken, but like to be broken—literally, "thought to be broken"—vivid image, as if creaks and groans were those of a living thing, as if the ship itself dreaded destruction.

II. CONDUCT OF THE MARINERS. "Then the mariners were afraid." Mariners usually an intrepid race—"a stiffer kind of men than most are"—are now afraid. Fear drives to prayer. In a storm the forces against man are overwhelming; in such a case fear becomes inevitable, and prayer an instinct. "No man," it has been said, "was ever an atheist in a shipwreck." Herein is testimony to the existence of God—man in conscious helplessness invokes a higher Power. The mariners took a double course—they both prayed and used the means available for the safety of the ship. 1. They cried *every man to his god*. Ignorance and superstition may mingle with more genuine feelings. "I think we have no ground for uttering one word of reproach or blame against these men. They would contrast but too favourably with many a ship's crew that sails out of London or Liverpool. These poor heathen men prayed to their gods. Many a British sailor only swears and curses by his. They did what they could. They were true to the best instincts of the human mind" (Raleigh). The prayer of fear is not necessarily the prayer of faith; fear may be the beginning of a godly life, but is not its essence; love is the essence of true religion and of true communion with God; "perfect love casteth out fear." If fear sets us at first to pray for ourselves, our families, our Church, our country, it must advance to something higher. 2. "They cast forth the wares that were in the ship into the sea, to lighten it of them." How worthless are all earthly possessions in comparison of life! "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, he will give for his life;" "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own life?" There are moments when utter worthlessness of all earthly things irresistibly flashes even on the worldly mind. Would that men thought oftener of this! Contrast the security of the Christian treasure—immovability of the Christian hope.

III. CONDUCT OF JONAH. "But Jonah was gone down into the sides of the ship; and he lay, and was fast asleep." Apparently he avoided prayer when the mariners took to it—he could not pray. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me;" "Your sins have separated between you and your God." A guilty conscience makes prayer impossible, till a break-down takes place, and contrition bursts out. Note the misery of Jonah—he cannot bear to see the men praying while he himself cannot pray—he goes down to the sides of the ship. "The most wretched man in the world is the man who is afflicted, and cannot pray." He was fast asleep. This was not unnatural—he had been under a great strain; now comes a recoil. Sisera slept in the tent of Jael—the disciples in the garden of Gethsemane. Jonah's sleep was not a sign of insensibility, but a proof of the terrible constraint under which he had been acting. He had utterly exhausted himself in his struggle with God, and the very storm cannot keep him awake. Yet surely this was a strange sight—the heathen mariners praying, and the servant of God sleeping. This, indeed, was typical of the purpose for which God had sent him to Nineveh, viz. that the repentance of Nineveh might be a reproof to Israel; so the prayers of these heathen were a reproof to Jonah—he was provoked by jealousy by them that were not God's people. Sometimes the Church is rebuked by the world; at least a contrast to the crooked ways, cross temper, and ungracious talk of professing Christians is sometimes found in the integrity, gentleness, and charity of some who make no profession. Earnestness of heathen in their religious observances is often a reproof to Christians. "Why should the Church allow the world to bear away the palm in reference to any one element of excellence whatsoever—candour,

courtesy, charity, kindliness, large-mindedness, liberality, self-denial, any virtue whatsoever? Why should there be one single department of what is good—good in any sphere, moral, physical, social, scientific, concerning which the world can with any show of fairness profess to school the Church, or say, Stand aside, for we are more at home here than you?" (Martin).

IV. CONDUCT OF THE SHIPMASTER. The absence of Jonah in time of prayer had arrested attention, and was felt to be strange and unseemly. Even the world expects Christians to do their duty. Shipmaster reproves him sharply, cries aloud against *him*, "What meanest thou, O sleeper?" for his sleep was not the sleep that God gives to his beloved. A rebuke often applicable still to many other classes—to all at ease in Zion, to neglecters of the great salvation, to open transgressors, to worldlings, to forgetters of God, to those who think not of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come! "Arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not." Jonah is called to prayer—earnest prayer; he must "arise"—a recumbent attitude not suitable for such prayer—rather the attitude of Jacob wrestling at Peniel. A reason is given why Jonah should pray, but a hesitating reason, "if so be"—if there be even a chance of prayer prevailing; this is very different from the full assurance of faith. Faith knows that God will hear, and that he ever thinks upon his own, and that they cannot perish, in the deepest sense of the word. "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and they shall never perish." The name and work of Christ, unknown to this mariner, give confidence in prayer. The heathen mariner is here the preacher to the prophet, not the prophet to the mariner. "Let us listen to his awakening call. These words of his *have* aroused many a sleeper besides Jonah. . . . Hear them, sleeping soul, to-day. What meanest *thou*, O sleeper?—sleeping here in this great battle-field, where souls are lost and won? In this vineyard of noblest work, where God-given talents are doubled or forfeited for ever? In this treacherous sea of life, girt round with storms which might so easily break the strongest ships that float? What meanest thou?—sleeping now, with noonday lights above thee, and about thee men who strive and men who pray? . . . While the gates of heaven and hell stand open, the murky shadows of the one gathering in deeper folds, the joy-bells of the other waiting to peal?" (Raleigh). Oh the unreasonableness of spiritual sleep—sleep of unbelief—sleep of backsliding! "Now it is high time to awake out of sleep" (Rom. xiii. 11).—W. G. B.

Vers. 7—10.—*The fugitive convicted.* "And they said every one to his fellow, Come, and let us cast lots, that we may know for whose cause this evil is upon us. So they cast lots, and the lot fell upon Jonah," etc. The prayers of the mariners, and Jonah's prayer, if indeed he tried to pray (although that is hardly likely; see ch. iv. 2, "*Then* Jonah prayed"), led to no abatement of the storm. God's purpose was not to be accomplished in that way—Jonah was not to be restored in so easy a manner. But prayer may *seem* to be unanswered while it is answered—it is a link in a chain. A much more profound discipline had yet to be passed through in order that Jonah might be restored and the great purpose of his mission to Nineveh attained. Let us trace the next steps in the development of the providential plan.

I. THE MARINERS RESOLVE TO CAST LOTS. (Ver. 7.) This is a striking step. They might have given themselves up for lost, perhaps drowning their feelings, as sailors have often done, in intoxication (if that be not an exclusively modern practice); but they resolved to make another effort to save their lives and their ship. This proceeded on the belief that this storm was caused by some man's sin; and to find out who was the offender they determined to cast lots. A dangerous generalization, to ascribe a calamity to one man's sin, though in this case correct. Perhaps there were unusual circumstances in the storm that led them to reason thus. "If anything should happen *strangely*, as while we are in this mortality we may very well expect, we can take no better course than these shipmen presently to fear lest iniquity be the author of it" (Abbot). Casting lots was a peculiar device to ascertain a secret; *religious* use of lots, however, is very different from the careless appeal to the lot often made (see Josh. vii. 16; 1 Sam. x. 21; Acts i. 26). The lot becomes legitimate only when all the ordinary methods of settling a difficulty have failed, and nothing remains but to make a solemn appeal to God.

II. THE LOT FALLS UPON JONAH. Picture his anxiety while the lot was being cast—his despair when it fell on him. This seems to have brought him to a sense of his sin: it was God's voice, "Thou art the man!" Jonah now broke down, prostrated by the little arrow from God's quiver. In walking through a hospital after a battle, two remarks are sometimes made—How easy to kill! and—How difficult to kill! Some bodies almost entire, yet killed; some fearfully shattered, yet alive. So we say—How difficult it is to humble! and—How easy it is to humble! difficult for man, easy for God; man may reason, expostulate, apply truth, yet the offender may not in any degree be touched by it. A word, a look, a lot from God, makes one quite prostrate and helpless. What a power of rebuking and prostrating God may use at the last day!

III. JONAH QUESTIONED. All eyes are fixed on Jonah with eager curiosity to ascertain what he had done. The running fire of questions indicates desire for light on the strange transaction. They were chiefly anxious to know his *crime*, his *occupation*, and his *country*; either his personal guilt, or the guilt connected with his occupation, if it was an unlawful one, or with his country, or with his people; for there might be some horrible sin, perhaps committed of old by the people of his country, exposing them and him through them to the wrath of the gods. Why did they not act at once on the decision of the lot, and throw Jonah overboard? Probably they desired confirmation of it; it must be a painful transaction, and they would like more authority for the step they were to take. It would be satisfactory to get Jonah to confess. It might throw light on the origin of storms, and be a useful hint for the future.

IV. JONAH'S ANSWER. The nobler aspect of Jonah's character now comes out—perfect ingenuousness and honesty; he knows his fate—death stares him in the face—yet there is no shrinking or fencing of any kind. He tells them: 1. He is a Hebrew, a member of the race that had so much to do with the powers above. 2. The God whom he worships is the God that made the sea and the dry land, and has absolute power over both. 3. He has fled from his presence, has offended him, and now God is showing his displeasure. Humiliating position, yet not without a certain grandeur—Jonah under the rebuke of God, his own conscience, and the heathen mariners. In reference to the mariners, he who might have been expected to bring them blessing has brought them trouble. His mouth is shut; he can say nothing for himself. There is something very striking in his undergoing the condemnation of the *mariners*. He had been afraid, apparently, of the bad opinion of the Ninevites, and had shunned his commission; but now he encounters the bad opinion of the mariners—with nothing to fall back on—his conscience and his God both against him. Yet there is a grandeur in his honest confession, in his attitude of thorough humility; there is a noble truthfulness now about him; he conceals nothing, though he must be the victim.

V. EFFECT ON THE MARINERS. They were exceedingly afraid. They felt a sense of the reality and nearness of a supernatural power—the power of the God who made the sea and now raises it in storm. The supernatural must be always very impressive—must have subduing effect whenever God is felt to be near, as in time of pestilence. The men now felt God near, in character of the righteous, holy Judge, punishing an offender—not like heathen gods, jesting at sin, but in terrible earnest against it. They seemed to have been impressed, and converted to God, for the soul may move very rapidly; deep impressions may be made very suddenly in time of great excitement. A great lesson to Jonah; if these rough heathen sailors were so deeply impressed by the fear of God, might not the Ninevites have been so too? They said to Jonah, "Why hast thou done this?" Strange aspect of sins of God's servants in eyes of world! God's servants have no cloak for their sins. The question must have cut Jonah to the quick. He could only echo it in blank amazement—Why *have* I done this? Observe the hollowness of all apologies for sin in the hour of judgment; sin, however sweet in the mouth, is bitter in the belly; "lust, when it is finished, bringeth forth death." The horror and misery of the ship's company are a type of the effects of sin, of one sin, by a servant of God. "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins." O sin, what a monster art thou! what tragedies come out of thee! how dost thou involve others in ruin, as the drunkard's family! God give us a true sense of it, and teach us to hate it in every form, and guard against its minutest seeds, lest, like the dragon's teeth, they breed against us hosts of armed men! Let each one often put

the question, in reference to his sins, "Why hast thou done this?" Sinned against God and man, and against thine own soul, and against thine own children? Better we should put the question and answer it in time, than wait till God puts it in the day of judgment.—W. G. B.

Vers. 11—17.—*The offender sacrificed.* "Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us? for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous," etc. A new stage of spiritual progress has been reached—yet the sea not calm. There had been prayer—but no calm followed; now there is frank confession of sin, and doubtless repentance, and acknowledgment of God even by the men, but the sea still wrought, and was tempestuous. Was it "no use" to pray and repent? No; but God's plan was a large one, not yet completed. See the danger of impatience and despair when a blessing is delayed: "Though the vision tarry, wait for it."

I. JONAH IS MADE HIS OWN JUDGE. "Then said they unto him, What shall we do unto thee, that the sea may be calm unto us?" They seem to have felt, "There is one God, and Jonah is his prophet." Fearing God, they recognized the claims of his servant, and appealed to him to pass judgment on himself—"What shall we do unto thee?" Doubtless they had their own ideas, but they respected him as a prophet, and were slow to lay hands on him, and thought that, as a servant of God, he would know best what would appease his wrath. "I see chiefly in this language an appeal to the true God and the true man. Wherever the knowledge of God is clearly and truly communicated, heathenism and idols have no chance. . . . Let God be clearly known as he is revealed, and, with very few exceptions, men cannot *but* believe on him. . . . So, too, when the true man appears among men, although it may be, as in this case, coming out of untruthness and unfairness, staggering back through the storm and penalty that he may at least die in the right way, men must yield that man reverence. The image of God is shining in him once more. He is a living and true man—son of the living and true God—'What shall we do unto thee?'" (Raleigh).

II. THE SELF-IMPOSED SENTENCE. "Take me up, and cast me into the sea." The coward now become a hero shows a noble and self-sacrificing spirit—contrast to former spirit. And now comes to the front the instinct of retribution. Jonah does not propose that he should be granted an opportunity to go to Nineveh and execute his commission; he felt that he was causing death to others—it was just that he should die to prevent them from dying: "I know that for my sake this great tempest is upon you." But he will not be his own executioner: "Take me up, and cast me into the sea." No man is entitled to take away his own life; no countenance either in nature or in Bible to suicide. Jonah's death must be a judicial act, executed by others. "Cast me forth into the sea, for that is the will of God; it is my will also, for I cannot endure to see you in such danger and distress any longer on my account. You have already lost your goods because of me, and you have been for some time in peril of your lives; that you may suffer no more, take me up, and cast me into the sea" (Jones).

III. ANOTHER PULL FOR LIFE. "Nevertheless the men rowed hard to bring it to the land." These men gain upon us—rough seamen by profession, tinged by Oriental barbarity in all likelihood, they become generous, and eager to save Jonah. Jonah's humility, candour, and ready self-sacrifice had impressed them: "They rowed hard to bring the ship to land." A self-sacrificing spirit draws men's hearts—turns the heathen—Livingstone's influence with natives of Africa due in no small measure to this feature—remember the self-sacrifice of our Lord: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." "Every good thing in our spirit and action has a tendency to reproduce itself in others who are in any way related to it, especially, of course, if it is called forth for their advantage. Jonah is true and noble at length. The sailors, having responsive qualities in themselves, are nobler for his nobleness, are more self-forgetful because, when the moment of stress came, he did the noblest thing a man could do for fellow-men—offered his life for theirs" (Raleigh). Another step is thus gained in moral progress—"the men" have become full of reverence toward God, and full of regard for his prophet—but to no purpose apparently; "for the sea wrought, and was tempestuous against them." A sacrifice is indispensable. (In the men "pulling hard" some have found an emblem of sinners trying to save themselves before they resort to God's way of sacrifice; but this lesson seems far-fetched.)

IV. THE MARINERS PRAY TO GOD. "Wherefore they cried unto the Lord, and said, We beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee," etc. The tender conscience and devout feeling of the mariners are very remarkable. Observe: 1. Vehemence of their prayer: "They cried"—they beseech God once and again. 2. They appeal to God's justice: "Let us not perish for this man's life." 3. Their concern for life: "Lay not upon us innocent blood." Shedding of blood was little thought of in those times—massacre of innocent and guilty alike were common enough. 4. Their submissiveness to God: "For thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee." Thou hast shown thy sovereign will in the past; let it rule us now. Most profitable lesson for us all: "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Prov. iii. 6). Especially in reference to any step that, once taken, cannot be recalled. For if they threw Jonah overboard, it was an irrevocable act.

V. JONAH IS CAST FORTH. "So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging." They took him up, tenderly and respectfully, not pitching him overboard in a tumultuous manner. The prophet offers no resistance; one great heave, and he is engulfed; in a little moment the sea closes on him—the men gazing after him with sorrowful, anxious faces, thinking, perhaps, "Poor man! where is he now?" It is an awful testimony to the righteousness of God; one offence has forfeited Jonah's life. No wonder they are anxious. But their anxiety does not last long; God reveals himself at once, and very wonderfully: "The storm ceased from her raging." The men are relieved from a double anxiety—anxiety about the storm, and anxiety whether or not they have done right. "Thus died Jonah, to them, at least, the death of a criminal pursued by justice; yet the death of a repentant and righteous man; in death triumphing over death; committing himself to God in singular meekness and faith; acknowledging the justice of his doom, and relying on Divine pardon and protection; committing his body to the sea and his soul to the God whom he feared, the God of heaven, and of the sea, and of the dry land" (Martin).

VI. THE EFFECT UPON THE MEN. At last the storm ceases. What neither prayers, nor repentance, nor the change in the mind of the men had accelerated by one iota comes at once and completely after the sacrifice of one man. Fresh token of nearness of God; but not this time vindicating his justice or executing his wrath; showing his mercy and his love. Great power of mercy and love to move the heart: "The men feared the Lord exceedingly." Awed by his presence, reassured by his mercy, they "offered a sacrifice unto the Lord, and made vows;" showed their deep sense of obligation, and took steps to keep it up. The vow was probably to be performed at some future time. Thus they took precautions against evanescence of grateful feeling—a useful lesson. Men "soon forget his mercies;" vows tend to keep sense of them alive in after-times.

VII. JONAH NOT LOST. "The Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah." "Praise the Lord from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps." God had shown himself the Lord of inanimate nature; now he shows himself Lord of animate nature. The storm had been his messenger; now his messenger is the fish. This is duly in accordance with the idea of God which the whole transaction and the whole book present. Jehovah claims to be not only the God of the Hebrew, but the God of Nineveh, and of the whole earth. He is the God of heaven, "which hath made the sea and the dry land." "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof;" "So is this wide and great sea, wherein go things creeping innumerable, both large and small beasts." He shows his sovereignty over the land by "preparing a great fish." He bends it to his own purposes—makes the devouring monster a means of protection and preservation. The whole story has a supernatural air. If the presence of the supernatural be once admitted, the *form* of miracle is a mere matter of detail. Objections arising from the apparently grotesque character of this miracle are obviated if it be considered that God wished to convince Jonah of his power to protect and preserve him even in Nineveh, amid hordes of furious enemies, roused perhaps to fury by his message. He that had protected him in the body of the fish, surging up and down through the depths of the stormy sea, was able to protect him at Nineveh. The unusual character of Jonah's mission justifies an unusual miracle. God's manifold resources of preservation—Noah in the ark—Moses in the cradle of bulrushes—Elijah by the ravens—Jesus by flight into Egypt—Paul through his nephew finding out conspiracy. Many more are found in Christian

biography. All the powers of nature, all creatures rational and irrational, men, devils, and angels, are subject to him; and now subject to Christ: God "hath put all things under his feet, and given him to be Head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."—W. G. B.

Ver. 1—ch. iv. 11.—*Characteristics of Jonah.* The weaknesses, the secrets of character, as well as the possibilities of a man are discovered in life's crises. Jonah's great mission to Nineveh has revealed him to us; and who can tell how much it revealed him to himself?

I. HE WAS A MAN OF STERN TRUTHFULNESS. This book was virtually written by him. This is the testimony of antiquity; is attested by some linguistic peculiarities in the original, and by the striking details in the narrative, that only could have been known to Jonah himself. Sad and monitory is that narrative; but be it remembered that *he* writes it. And mark *how*. He conceals nothing, extenuates nothing; says the bitter worst about himself. There is no effort at explanation, no colour of apology, no relieving light. If his conduct *should* be a warning, *let* it be a warning. It is not difficult to "speak truth" to and about others. It is agreeable even to some. But to "speak truth" about *one's self*—there is the difficulty. Truth about one's wrongdoing, one's wrong spirit. The black truth, without any attempt at apology or explanation. Few can do it. Jonah did it. How men hide themselves from themselves! How they tone down their evil deeds! Their sin is not as other men's. Not so with Jonah. He seeks not, even covertly, mercy from the reader. Enough for him to "find mercy of the Lord."

II. HE WAS A MAN OF IMAGINATION. He is ever in triumphant exaltation or despairing depression; ever in extremes. And a very little matter could remove him from one to the other. To the imaginative life has brighter lights and deeper shadows than to other men; quicker transitions, darker sorrows. Sorrows, too, are *imagined* that never come. Something is missed; it is deemed lost; hence vexation and annoyance. All needless; the thing is soon found. A friend is expected, is delayed; all kinds of disasters are fancied to have befallen him. Oppressive, foolish fancies! A temperament this that often hinders from action. Molehills swell into mountains, and little bushes into burly lions. That seems in some cases even to exonerate from action; men so enamoured of deeds *imagined*, that the deeds in reality are never done. Men sunken into mere day-dreamers. Every temperament brings its own special temptation. And the imaginative, so easily gladdened or saddened, need much to pray for "the peace of God." We can rest from the undue excitements and wearing vexations of imagination as we "rest in the Lord."

III. JONAH WAS A MAN OF NARROW RELIGIOUS SYMPATHIES. His selfish care for his prophetic reputation, fearing lest the preservation of the Ninevites should stigmatize him as a false prophet, made him cruel. His intense uncharitable patriotism made him long for the destruction of Nineveh, his country's enemy. Patriotism that binds us to our birthland, the scenes of memory, and of our nation's history, is well. But it is sadly, terribly *ill* when a man thinks that he can only truly love his own country by longing for the humiliation and harm of all others. God is the God of *all* the nations; the gospel is for "every creature"—is to be passed on by us to those as yet unblessed by us. The story of Jonah warns us against the narrowing influence of professional and national feeling. How noble, in the comparison, is Paul, willing for Israel's sake to be "accursed," and yet the apostle of the Gentiles!

IV. JONAH WAS A MAN OF AN IRASCIBLE TEMPER. Uncorrected, it may be, in early life. Correction always comes sooner or later; better sooner than later. He was one soon angry, and who could be *very* angry. Not a pleasant man to live with. A complaining man, and fond of something to complain of. Fretful, dark, moody. Quick in a quarrel, and one who dared to quarrel with God's goodness. A man with a spirit of contradiction, who stood by what he said. "Did I not say so? I said it in my own country." Unlovable Jonah! A man's temperament is with him from the beginning, and abides with him, through all changes, to the end. But temper can be corrected, and become better; be uncorrected, and become worse. It is to be watched; resisted with "all prayer," if evil. Let temper, as well as cares, be carried to God. *He* can subdue it, curb its anger to peace, charm its darkness to cheerfulness.

V. WITH ALL HIS SIN, JONAH WAS A SERVANT OF THE LORD. The "root of the matter" was in him. We have gleams in this dark narrative of the better nature within him. Pleasant to believe that his later life (of which we have no record) was calm with a patience and beautiful with a charity unknown before; that "at the eventime there was light." Here, through all time, he is seen as the great *missionary*-prophet, and as, of all the prophets, the great Christ-type. On earth he had much to learn—much concerning his own folly, impatience, sin; much of God's wisdom, forbearance, perfection. And *now*, clear from sin, is he not learning the lesson still? For to know God is the blessed lesson of eternity. And its song (as was Jonah's here) is, "Salvation is of the Lord." In that song may we join at length and for ever, with him and all "the goodly fellowship of the prophets"—G. T. C.

Vers. 1, 2.—*Jonah God's messenger.* In these words we have important instruction as to God's messengers.

I. THEIR CONTINUITY. The first word of this book is the Hebrew conjunction "and:" "And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah." Thus begin other books of the Old Testament. How significant! The Divine messages stand not alone; they are connected with those sent before. So with the Divine messengers. Did the word of the Lord come to Abraham, Moses, Elijah? And also to Jonah! He shows poorly in comparison with them, yet he too was in "the goodly fellowship of the prophets." We may have slight gifts and narrow opportunities, *still* we may be God's messengers and in the line of the greatest of the past. Each humblest Christian worker can say, "To me also is this grace given."

II. THE DIFFICULTIES OF GOD'S MESSENGERS. Jonah had many. This was a *novel* work to which he was bidden. A *great* work—one man to warn the millions of Nineveh. A work he could devolve on no other, and in which he was to have no human helper. He had to say a "hard saying." Not a sermon *concerning* Nineveh—that he could have preached at home; nor *to* Nineveh; but with fearless cry *against* it—the city of violence, of manifold vengeance-clamouring wickedness. But his great difficulty was within him, in an unwilling mind that soon revealed itself in rebellious life. We too have difficulties as God's messengers. In the way we have to go, the people we have to address, their callous unconcern in the message we have to bear—"warning every man." But *our* greatest difficulty is within. To be promptly obedient. Not to hesitate, delay, argue against. Oh, to watch against the reluctant will! *There* is the fatal evil. No audible voice, such as may have come to the prophets, do we need to-day. The Spirit of Christ is with us, speaking in Scripture-illuminated conscience, and in the fresh strong convictions of the soul. Let us hear and promptly heed them, willing to bear or do all to which he calls.

III. THE PRIVILEGE OF GOD'S MESSENGERS. With all his faults Jonah is clothed with honour. He carried God's messages to men; he was "Jonah the prophet." We too may bear his messages, and by every right word and true deed *are* doing it. How privileged thus are we! Then let us "*arise, go.*" Let nothing hinder, remembering *whose* servants we are. "Arise, go" to cottage, school-class, bed of the afflicted, to warn, entreat—in all bearing God's messages; to business, to do it as in Christ's very presence; to scenes of rest, by purity and cheerfulness to witness for God the All-holy, the All-happy One; to trials, temptations, to be in Christ's strength stronger than all of them. "Arise, go to" all the work given you to do, and go to *finish* it: to sorrows, that through them you may reach the realms of rest; to death, through it to arrive at the land of life; through all to *him* our Master and Lord. "Where he is there we shall be also."—G. T. C.

Ver. 3.—*Jonah the fugitive.* I. THE MOTIVES THAT IMPELLED HIM TO FLIGHT. We cannot know *all* that prevailed with him. If we knew just *where* the call found him, and "the spirit of his mind," *then* we might be less surprised at his flight. Had he been "restraining prayer"? yielding to self-indulgence? or falling to the idolatry of his own judgment—confident that he knew his own powers, what he could best do, where best labour? *not* in all things seeking that higher wisdom which is our only safe and unerring guidance? Anyway, such a man as Jonah falls only by little and little. There are many steps to reach a spiritual catastrophe. Let us be warned, then,

against the *first* steps, however secret, that lead from God. Among the things that wrongly influenced him to flight we may suppose: 1. The *novelty* of the work. To be a prophet to a heathen people, to go to them as God's messenger, was striking into a new line of duty. How different from work in Israel amid familiar surroundings! 2. It was work afar off, involving a long journey of several hundred miles. Those, too, were days of slow travelling, and Jonah too, perhaps, a poor traveller. 3. The difficulties of the work would only be beginning when Nineveh was reached. That he, a solitary man, a foreigner, should, in that city of insolent pride and pitiless violence, denounce judgment upon it, was indeed a stupendous work—something to *do and* to shrink from. 4. His little success at home was not encouraging. Jeroboam may have been quickened by his prophecies to military effort and victories, but Jeroboam was still an idolater. And idolaters, as a whole, were his people. What can Jonah expect, then, in Nineveh? 5. But if the Ninevites repented, then (for they would surely be saved) Jonah would be discredited. "He had foretold doom, and, lo! deliverance." 6. *Why* should Nineveh, Israel's enemy, be spared? All the small blind patriot in Jonah kindled into revolt against the work to which he was bidden. *Let* Nineveh perish! And have we no excuses for flight from duty? Such a *novel* work, or so new to us! So far away from all our experiences! Beset with countless difficulties! Amid dangers, too, perhaps! And little likelihood of success in it! *Must* the work be done? Then others must do it! Excuses may be many, valid *reasons* there can be none, for neglecting the duty which God bids us to do.

II. THE FAVOURABLE-SEEMING CHARACTER OF CIRCUMSTANCES IN JONAH'S FLIGHT. He left Gath-hepber; went down to the coast. No accident stopped him. In Joppa no illness delayed him. The sea was peaceful. He found just the ship he wished, and bound *whither* he desired. There was room for him on board. He had money enough for the passage; "so he *paid* the fare." He went aboard. What could be better? Not into the book of providence must we look to know the right way from the wrong. In *themselves*, prosperity is no proof of the Divine favour, nor adversity of the Divine displeasure. We have a "sure word" to guide us. And had Jonah tested his conduct by God's word, he would have *known*, in spite of all that seemed favourable, that he was going "the way of transgressors." Have you success in wrong? It is none the less wrong. *Things* are not really, permanently favourable if *God* is unfavourable. Are we right with him? Then *all* things, storm as well as shine, shall be right with us. "Even the *night* shall be light about us."

III. JONAH'S SPIRITUAL DEGRADATION IN FLIGHT FROM DUTY. "He went down to Joppa." *Literally*, down from the mountains of Zebulun, down to Joppa, and, having secured his berth, "*down into it.*" *Spiritually*, how he had been going down! *Down* from his moral elevation as a prophet. *Down* from the heights of *fellowship*. *Down* from the highlands of *peace*. *Down* from Divine service in which he had been as "upon the top of the mountains." *Down*, ever less noble, beautiful, Divine! Men may "go up" in society, wealth, local influence, and yet morally be *going down*. By every act of duty *done* we ascend; by each *neglected* we morally *descend*. Having the Word of the Lord, may we have his *Spirit* too, that daily we may cheerfully respond to the heavenly voice that says, "Come up higher!"—G. T. C.

Vers. 4—6.—*Jonah reproved*. I. A TEMPESTUOUS PROVIDENCE REPROVED HIM. Jonah, aroused, creeps on deck. What a scene met him! The sea in horrible tumult. The fury of the wind. The ship

". . . up and down
From the base of the wave to the billow's crown!"

The bronzed sailors wondering what would be the end! The storm is reproving him. No miraculous wind, perhaps. *Still*, God's servant with strong reproof: "Guilty Jonah, awake! arise! return! To thy God; to thy work! Duty may be left; it can never be escaped till *done!*" *Sleep* had been a part of his flight. Now he was awake. Was conscience awake? *Could* he think? *What* did he think? Or was he *still* escaping from *himself* in the very tumult of the tempest that came to awake him? To not a few *life* is like a long slumber. Thought, imagination, love, are asleep; their noble possibilities awake only to the gains and joys of this little spot of earth and fleeting

day of time. But not without reproving storms, of loss, trouble, affliction, bereavement. It is well that the man suffer loss that he be not lost. The voice of circumstances is the voice of God.

II. THE EXAMPLE OF THE SAILORS REPROVED JONAH. They, each man of them, prayed. Each to his favorite god. Earnestly, with faith in the efficacy of prayer, they "*cried every man unto his god.*" Prayerless Jonah (how can the backslider pray?) is reproved by those praying sailors. Their prayer is one of ignorance, ignorant earnestness. He has no prayer at all; and he, too, a prophet of the Lord! And how the heathen's passionate cries to his god rebuke *our* restraint of and coldness in prayer! How the full-hearted earnestness of (it may be) the illiterate Christian reproves our heartless accuracies and formal worship! How the backslider is shamed by the cry of the penitent! "*Arise, call upon thy God!*"

III. THE APPEAL OF THE CAPTAIN REPROVED JONAH. *He*, respectful in all his surprise and suppressed indignation, goes down and *himself* awakes Jonah. A heathen, he is faithful in all his ship. Not man or boy aboard but he calls to prayer. And even the strange passenger must be called as well. A *pattern* master this. He had a religious as well as secular care for those under him; was not ashamed to show his earnest spiritual interest in this strange Hebrew. A pattern for all masters and mistresses on sea and land. Jonah should have been reprove, and he is reproved; a teacher, and is being taught; prayerless, when he should have been leading others in prayer. "*What meanest thou, O sleeper?*" Thou, backslider to-day, why sleep? Awake to thy peril! Call upon the great Deliverer! He will think upon you. His thought shall be salvation. You shall not perish.—G. T. C.

Vers. 7-10.—*Jonah detected.* I. JONAH DETECTED BY THE LOT. *Heathens* cast that lot; *still* the disposal of it was of the Lord. *He* guided the fateful token, and so it fell to Jonah. Now that the Divine Spirit is given to those that seek him, we are released from dependence upon the indications of the lot. But still by things as little-seeming as lot-casting, backsliders are discovered to themselves if not to others. A cock-crow detected the recreant Peter. And now by some memorial of better days, an old letter perhaps, a book inscribed with a once-cherished Christian name, or a time-yellowed ticket of Church-membership, the backslider is self-detected. Oh the upbraiding days that are no more! Oh, reproaching light of the irrevocable years! Now he has sinned away the light, has grieved out of his heart the joy of the Lord. "*The lot fell upon Jonah,*" and he was detected.

II. JONAH DETECTED BY THE SAILORS' MANY QUESTIONS. "*Thine occupation?*" A prophet! But so faithless to the prophetic call, so unworthy of the prophetic name! "*Whence comest thou?*" From Gath-hepher; from high, if perilous, mission to Nineveh, seeking, as he tells them, to flee from the presence of the Lord, to escape (how guilty! how futile!) from the great universal presence. "*What thy country?*" The land of privilege, the Holy Land! "*Of what people art thou?*" Of the people of God, the people chosen to be the depository of the Divine truth, and the witnesses to the Divine character. Questions these to go home. Backslider, "*what thine occupation?*" You have been, it may be, a Christian worker, a teacher of the young, a speaker of the truth. And not now. Why not? "*Whence comest thou?*" From a pious early home? From scenes of Christian activity and service that miss you, that know you no more? "*What thy country, thy people?*" A citizen of this Christian country, with such opportunities to be a Christian man and to *do* Christ's work among men, and yet you act as if gospel light had never shone to you, as if the news of salvation had never sounded in your ears.

III. JONAH DETECTED BY THE SAILORS' UNANSWERABLE QUESTION. "*Why hast thou done this?*" was the question that pierced deepest of all. It was unanswered. Jonah could not attempt excuses, and *reason* for his flight there was none. Backslider, *once* you could find time for Christian service; you had joy in it; you were a blessing; you were blest. Not so now. You have withdrawn from Christian work. "*Why hast thou done this?*" What valid reason can you give? Once you were in fellowship with God's people. Not so now. The world's spell is on you. You are intent on making a position, pushing the fortune of your family; pleasure is your pursuit, ambition your aim. But were you not happier in the former days than in these?

“Why hast thou done this?” Once you tasted that the Lord was gracious; now you are far out on the godless, reckless deep, where there is no peace. Why is this? “Speechless” you must be. For such guilty flight *reason* there can be none.—G. T. C.

Vers. 11—16.—*The sailors' conduct.* Look at those swarthy sailors. They were among Jonah's teachers; they, too, may be among ours. From age to age in this chapter they sail the sea—Jonah's friends; ours also if we will let them be, having much to say to us if we have but ears to hear. Mark—

I. THEIR REVERENCE. There is nothing rough and rude about them. The storm has subdued them. What they hear from Jonah affects them. Is it not the hour of their conversion? They cease from idolatry and worship Jehovah. Hearing of Jehovah as God of heaven, earth, and sea, they were “exceedingly afraid.” He must indeed be the Lord! And that Jonah should have sought to flee from him! “What shall we do unto thee?” they ask; for through Jonah they would learn the will of God concerning him. They have no grudge against him, no scorn for him, no words of insult, no deed of violence. They reverence his God, and so show kindness to him. A pattern in this to us. Have we an offending brother—one who has offended us? Let us wrong not ourselves, nor wrong him, the better man in him, by bitterness. The wrong-doer will have self-reproach enough, bitter memories enough.

II. THEIR SELF-DENYING GENEROSITY. Those sailors did what they could to save the prophet. When Jonah was at his best they were at *their* best. His unselfishness called out theirs; their nobility answered to his. Thus is it ever. Be kind, pure, generous, and you will help others to show kindness, and to be pure and generous. What inspiration is there in goodness! Supremely is this seen in our blessed Lord. What an encouragement to copy him that we may quicken others!

“Honour to those whose words or deeds
Thus help us in our daily needs,
And by their overflow
Raise us from what is low.”

III. THEIR PRAYERFULNESS. As heathens they had “given themselves to prayer.” Hearing of Jehovah, they pray to him. They cannot save Jonah; but before they do the deprecated deed “they cried unto the Lord”—*all* of them, earnest, importunate. They recognized God in this series of events; they would be submissive to him; they would be clear of this man's blood; they would take no step without prayer. Nor let us. Let it be the “key of the morning and the bolt of the night.” When have we *not* requests to offer? needs to be supplied? When do we not need God?

IV. THEIR GODLY FEAR ATTESTED. At the sight of the sudden great calm “the men feared the Lord exceedingly.” Their fear, their faith, evidenced itself. By “a sacrifice unto the Lord” they expressed in act thankfulness for the past and present; by their “vows,” their resolution of service in the time to come. As *from themselves* must have come the knowledge of the sacrifice offered and vows made, we may believe that that sacrifice to Jehovah was the first of many, and that the vows made were paid; otherwise they had not cared to have remembered or spoken of them. In these days of Christian light may we offer a *daily* sacrifice of our time, means, faculty, influence, to him who for us “even dared to die,” and in *his* strength perform the many vows that we have made.—G. T. C.

Ver. 17—ch. ii. 10.—*Jonah's “De profundis.”* Here the prophet is, as he is called in the Koran, “the man of the fish.” God had pity on him, and sent him into an awful school-house that he might “come to himself.” A strange character was his, and a strange chastisement came upon him. God's power was his keeper—his power “who hath a bridle for the lips of every disease, and a hook for the nostrils of death.” The external history of the man through that imprisonment is unwritten. Not so the history of his heart.

I. SEE JONAH AT PRAYER. He had slept in the ship; he is awake in the fish. He prays; he feels his misery; he sees his sin. The *man* is awake. In the terrible darkness of adversity he longs for the light of the Lord. In what *solitude* was he! Far from light of day, human voices, human sympathy. Yet *there* he could pray. We can

pray anywhere. Jeremiah could pray in the miry pit, Daniel in the lions' den, and Jonah in the fish amid the paths of the seas. He was in sad and extreme case. He was as a dead man out of mind; yet he can pray. What distress is ours? Our hopes may be "ready to perish." But think of Jonah! He could have recourse to prayer. So can we. The greatest of all was Jonah's Friend. In losing his liberty he has found his God. He prays "unto the Lord his God." "O Lord my God" (ver. 6), he cries. We, too, have the greatest of all as our Friend. None need despair with such a Helper.

II. JONAH'S PRAYER WAS A CRY. Whether a vocal cry or not, it was the cry of his soul. In this second chapter we have a well-arranged prayer. If not the exact order, we have here the *substance* of the requests he cried unto the Lord. What agony and horror may be in a human cry! In cries from the sea when perishing men call for a lifeboat! Jonah cried to God. What tears in his words! what distress in his tones! What hope for him, as "out of the belly of hell" (the unseen world, the place of the dead) he cried? Already he seemed numbered with the dead. The sense of God's displeasure was the soul of his affliction. "All thy billows and waves passed over me." Was God *favourably* there? "I said, I am cast out of thy sight." That was the pang. He had sought to escape God's presence; now he mourned the Divine absence. He had no enjoyment in his prayer, yet it was accepted. The prayer of agony ends in the voice of singing.

III. JONAH'S PRAYER WAS ONE OF FAITH. "I will look again," he said—mentally look again—"toward thy holy temple." How much the "temple" included—the Law, worship, sacrifices! towards these he looked, and thus overcame his fears. Down there, in those depths, in that living tomb, by that "look" this man becomes one of the heroes of faith. He, too, like a prince prevailed. That look was seen. God was pleased with it, and accepted it. Still God sees a look when the *soul* is in it. Though no word be spoken, we can look unto him and be saved.

IV. JONAH'S PRAYER WAS ONE OF THANKFULNESS. In this prayer he recalls and makes his own words from the Book of Psalms. Some of the old cries of David became the new cries of Jonah. And, marvellously preserved, his prayer was praise; and, in view of his deliverance, he vowed unto the Lord. And his vow was kept. The very subsequent writing of this chapter warrants our belief of that. And what of the vows *we* have made in times of peril? "Vow and pay." Say, "I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back."

V. JONAH'S PRAYER WAS ONE OF UTTER DEPENDENCE ON GOD. Such was his spirit, such his prayer. With "salvation is of the Lord" it ended. And by that he seems to have meant that he left all with God. He was in the best hands. In his own time and way God would save him. If he will, creatures will act contrary to their natures, as did this fish in not hurting Jonah. If God had "prepared" or appointed; and now its work was done, the prophet penitent, saved not only from death, but also from trusting in "lying vanity," "the deceitful promise of his own will and his own way," no longer "forsaking his own mercy," even God, but cleaving to him. Now "the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited Jonah upon the dry land." And the prophet is a saved man—saved body and soul, the word, his creed and *Te Deum*, upon his lips, "Salvation is of the Lord." Still, "he must save, and he alone." Jesus, and no other, "shall save his people from their sins."—G. T. C.

Ver. 17 with ch. ii. 10; iii. 3 (cf. Matt. xii. 39—41).—*Jonah a prophetic sign of Christ.* I IN BOTH WE SEE A MARKED JUDGMENT OF GOD. The storm, the detection, the punishment, were all from God. Jonah was the sinner on board. Christ, "without sin," "became sin for us." He suffered at the hands of wicked men; yet "the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all." "He was wounded for our transgression." The vast world-vessel went plunging on to destruction, the storm unappeased while the sin was unpunished. On!—

"When lo! upon the reeling deck a weary stranger stands,
And to the dark devoted crew stretches his suppliant hands;
From the face of God, from the face of God, from the face of God ye flee;
'Tis the blast of the breath of his nostrils that shakes this stormy sea.
But take ye me and cast me into the troubled deep,
And the wrath that is roused against you will be pacified, and sleep."

Yes, he is our Peace! "For the transgression of my people was he stricken."

II. JONAH, IN HIS BURIAL, WAS A SIGN OF CHRIST. Very unlike was the sea-monster bearing away the prophet to the rock-tomb that received the body of our Lord; yet in this they were alike, that they had been *unused* as tombs before. *Prepared* were both for the event that has made both eternally memorable. "The Lord had prepared" the fish. *Joseph*, unwittingly acting out the Divine purpose, had prepared the rock-hewn tomb. He may have meant it for himself. God meant it for his Son. This Isaiah had foretold: "He made his grave with the *rich*." The time of Jonah's and our Lord's burial agreed. So our Lord's resurrection on the third day was "according to the Scriptures"—to his own word, and his predictive type. Jonah, cast into the deep, seemed done with. An end of *him*! So, to many, with Christ, when the loving Marys and "those lords of high degree" bore him to the tomb. In his living tomb Jonah miraculously lived. And though Christ's body was dead, where was *he*? *Still* living; "doing good;" preaching the glad tidings in the unseen world (1 Pet. iii. 19).

III. JONAH'S RESURRECTION WAS A SIGN OF CHRIST'S. God "spake unto the fish," and it cast the living prophet to the shore. So "God raised from the dead" the Lord Jesus. Thus he *reversed* the marked judgment that, in suffering and death, had come upon his Son. He was now "highly exalted" as Prince and Saviour. Moral resurrections attest Christ's. "Witnesses to Christ's resurrection" are all saved men and women. They are "risen with Christ;" and by his Spirit rise.

IV. JONAH'S MISSION TO THE GENTILES WAS A TYPE OF CHRIST'S. Jonah was sent to the Ninevites. Christ arose to be a Saviour "to the uttermost parts of the earth." To all nations. For every creature. His mission—by many voices and ministers—is going on. *Its* continuance declares *his*. Its moral victories—over ignorance, superstition, sin—attest *his* royal and almighty power. "All power hath been given unto me." *Jonah himself*, raised from such a grave, was *the sign* to the Ninevites. *Christ* is the Sign of Christianity. Often, alas! spoken against and rejected. Happy those—only those—who accept and glory in him!—G. T. C.

Vers. 1, 2.—*The call of Jonah*. We may fairly identify Jonah, the son of Amittai, with the prophet who preached in Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II. (see 2 Kings xiv. 23—27). His name signifies "a Dove," and it well expressed his mournful and brooding temperament. Amittai means "the Truth of God," and it has been wisely said by a great Puritan divine, "I would that truth were every preacher's father." The narrative is exceedingly simple, and the Hebrew remarkably pure; while the lessons taught by the book are of profound significance, and far in advance of those we might have expected in that age of the world's history. The revelation of God's infinite goodness shines radiantly throughout. 1. He was merciful to the *Ninevites*, who were regarded as being outside the covenant; but were warned, converted, and saved. 2. He was merciful to *Jonah*, not cursing him for his wilful disobedience, but preserving him from peril into which his own foolish precipitancy had plunged him; graciously giving him a new commission in spite of his failure; teaching him gently, after a sinful outburst of temper; and closing the narrative of his life by a question of infinite tenderness. 3. He was merciful to the *sailors*, who had been heathen all their lives, but who, on turning towards him, found his deliverance near and complete.

I. THE PROPHET'S CALL. "The word of the Lord came unto Jonah." 1. *It was a Divine call*. Without it no service should ever be attempted; with it no service should be avoided. To go and preach to Nineveh would never have arisen as a conception of duty in the heart of a patriotic Israelite in those days. The generosity of the thought was Divine, not human. We, too, should listen for the words of our God, and wait for his commission. If we are true Israelites, we shall not precede the cloud, but follow it. The attitude of those who would be true prophets should be that of Samuel, when he said, "Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth." 2. *It was a secret call*. Jonah was not commissioned by courtiers, or by ecclesiastics, or by a popular assembly. Probably his proposed expedition was unknown to all of these. It is a frequent experience with a Christian to get instruction as to what he should do, when he enters into the closet, shuts to the door, and prays to the Father who seeth in secret.

II. THE PROPHET'S SPHERE. Nineveh was at this time in the zenith of its glory. Rich, corrupt, and godless, it was the centre and focus of evil. 1. *The sphere was dangerous*. Even in these gentler times, and amidst more phlegmatic people, moral

courage is required by those who rebuke popular sins. But an Eastern mob would be likely to handle very roughly any foreigner who dared to threaten their city for its sins. Jonah had no fear of this, however, and so far sets a noble example of heroism. 2. *The sphere was uncongenial.* These Ninevites were dreaded and hated by the people of Israel. Even under the Christian dispensation we see frequent evidences of national jealousy and antipathy, which prevent willingness to benefit other nations; and many a man would be rebuked as unpatriotic who earnestly sought the well-being of foreigners. How much more intense was such a feeling under the former dispensation! But God had room in his Fatherly heart for other peoples besides the race he had chosen for a peculiar purpose. Whenever the elect nation came into contact with others, God gave to those others some revelation of himself. He revealed himself to the Egyptians through Joseph and Moses; to the Philistines, through the sacred ark; to the Assyrians, through Elisha; and to Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, through Daniel. Those who are inspired by God's Spirit overlook the barriers of race. The apostles did so, and were glad that God had given even to the Gentiles repentance unto life. Personal prejudices and dislikes may also sometimes hinder us in carrying on our divinely appointed work. Let us pray for willing minds and obedient hearts, that uncongenial spheres may be bravely filled.

III. THE PROPHET'S DUTY. 1. *He was to denounce the wickedness of the people.* Both Nahum and Zephaniah refer to the sins of Nineveh. Its inhabitants were luxurious, riotous, addicted to witchcraft, cruel, and idolatrous. Sins vary in form, but not in nature. The vices of our own time we should specially denounce with unsparing courage. 2. *He was to proclaim the nearness of God.* They knew not the truth revealed to Jonah: "Their wickedness is come up before me." Similar was the statement made about the murder of Cain and the sin of Sodom. God sets all our sins in the light of his countenance. 3. *He was to announce a coming judgment.* "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (ch. iii. 4). 4. *He was to be ready to receive and convey every message God gave him.* "Preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." This should be the constant attitude of all religious teachers.—A. R.

Ver. 3.—*The prophet's disobedience.* Scripture never seeks to palliate the sins of the saints, but reveals them in all their wickedness. Jonah's disobedience is exhibited in the strongest light, as being resolute and prompt, following immediately on the Divine command. He had been told to make his way to Nineveh, which lay north-east of his home, and he instantly started in the opposite direction, being determined to go as far west as he could. He "went down" from the mountain district of Zebulun, where he lived, "to Joppa"—now known as Jaffa, a port on the Mediterranean. There he found a vessel on the point of sailing for Spain, which was much larger and safer than the ordinary coasters, as we may judge, not only from the length of the voyage undertaken, but from such a verse as this: "Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind;" the destruction of these great vessels by storm being evidently considered a special proof of Divine power. Tarshish was an ancient city of Spain, proverbial for its wealth, and was the exporter to Tyre, to Judæa, and other lands, of silver, iron, tin, and lead. It was known to the Greeks and Romans as Tartessus. In that distant place, mingling with the crowds which thronged its streets, occupied by the fresh strange scenes which would surround him, Jonah hoped to escape from his duty and to drown the voice of conscience. His folly and sin are suggestive of warning to all who are tempted to disobey their God.

I. MANY, LIKE JONAH, FLEE FROM THE WAY IN WHICH GOD WOULD HAVE THEM GO. The expression, "to flee . . . from the presence of the Lord," should be rendered "to flee . . . from being before the Lord," i.e. from standing in his presence as his servant. Jonah knew perfectly well that he would never be beyond the reach of God's sight and power. The truths celebrated in Ps. cxxxix. he sincerely believed. But he resolved no longer to act as God's messenger and prophet. He felt sure that his message of warning was meant to bring Nineveh to repentance, and that then the merciful God would spare the city, which, with far-seeing prescience, the prophet perceived would be the destroyer of his country. If the sins of its inhabitants were so great, they deserved to die; and if their growing power was shattered, he cared not how, a threatening danger would be averted from his native land. Just as some Englishmen, jealous of

the rising power of the United States, would not have lifted a finger to avert its destruction in the late civil war, so Jonah felt about Nineveh. He determined that he at least would not be the messenger to avert its destruction; so he fled as far as he could from the appointed sphere. Examples of similar conduct are to be seen amongst us. 1. *God calls men to private prayer.* They hear of its benefits; they are conscious that it is a duty and a privilege. Yet they avoid solitude, or they plunge into an interesting book, or they yield themselves to sleep, just when the opportunity comes for praying to the Father who seeth in secret. 2. *God calls men to his service.* The work requires to be done, but they shut their eyes to it, or they leave it to others, or so absorb their time in business that God's service is neglected. 3. *God calls men to give themselves to him.* At times they are almost persuaded to be Christians. But they leave the sphere in which good influences surround them, and wander away into the far country as the prodigal did.

II. IT IS NOT ALWAYS EASY TO AVOID THE GOD-APPOINTED WAY. Jonah felt that he could not remain where he was. He wished to divert his mind by travel, and to make it so difficult to journey to Nineveh that he could quiet his conscience in Tarshish by saying, "The distance is too great." Money, time, and trouble were necessary to his disobedience. Every wrong-doer has had some such experience. Around most of us God mercifully puts a protecting hedge of holy influences, which it is difficult and painful to break through. Those who are brought up in Christian homes do not find it easy to snap the bonds of love which have held them, and to get rid of the sacred memories of a hopeful childhood. They feel shocked and ashamed when they first witness scenes of vice and hear words of evil. Doubts and fears trouble them, especially at the beginning of a downward course, though all too soon they learn even to rejoice in iniquity. All such feelings and associations are among the God-appointed means for saving us from sin.

III. GOD DOES NOT RESISTLESSLY STOP THOSE WHO ARE DETERMINED TO GO WRONG. Jonah had no accident on his journey down to Joppa. He found the very ship he wanted at anchor in the harbour. He paid the fare and embarked for his destination, and when the anchors were raised and the vessel sailed out to sea, he felt that he had nothing more to do but wait, while the breeze that filled the sails would soon carry him to a distant land. Those who mean to leave the ways of unrighteousness do not meet with insuperable difficulties. They may be sometimes troubled with self-reproach, but meantime outward circumstances may appear even to favour their downward progress. If only they can stifle convictions and cast scruples to the winds while they resolutely make their way to scenes of gaiety and sin, God will work no miracle to prevent them. And the time may come when even the inward monitor is silent; for God's voice has been heard saying, "Ephraim is joined to his idols: let him alone."—A. R.

Vers. 4—6.—*The Divine interposition.* When man forsakes God, he who is infinite in mercy does not forsake man. No sooner had Adam fallen than Divine love planned a scheme of redemption. Through all the ages the voice of God has been summoning men to repentance; and in the fulness of time his only begotten Son came to seek and to save that which was lost. He deals as lovingly with individuals as with the race. Jonah was an example of this. Had a favourable voyage taken him to his destination, or had a sudden tempest drowned him in the depths of the sea, we should only have known of him as a disobedient prophet. But God dealt mercifully with him. He sent a tempest which aroused him from lethargy, brought his sin before him through the remonstrances of heathen, provided for him a means of escape, and gave him a new commission as his servant. These are the facts we should now consider.

I. GOD SOMETIMES SENDS A STORM TO AROUSE A WRONG-DOER. On entering the ship, Jonah went below deck; partly, no doubt, to avoid curious inquiries, and partly to rest after the long and hurried journey he had taken. Soon he sank into a heavy sleep—fit emblem of the lethargy of sin. The tempest, or rather its effect on the sailors, aroused him. Many have experienced tempests within or in their outward life which have led them afterwards to say, "He restoreth my soul." Anxieties have been so terrible, that in an agony the convicted have cried, "Lord, save, or I perish." Illness has come so suddenly, and death has seemed so near, that the awakened soul has asked, "What shall I do to be saved?" The forsaking of friends, the death of rela-

tives, the failure of business, have been employed by God again and again to arouse moral thoughtfulness, and save the soul from destruction. Let us learn the lessons which such tempests can teach us. "What meanest thou, O sleeper? Arise, and call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not."

II. GOD EMPLOYS UNLIKELY AGENTS TO BRING A WRONG-DOER TO REPENTANCE. The man who uttered the words just quoted was a heathen shipmaster, whom a Jew would despise as a Gentile dog or as an ignorant idolater. Yet but for him Jonah might have slept on till the vessel foundered. It has often been so. Naaman, the distinguished Syrian general, was taught by a slave-girl. David was instructed by Abigail. The Pharisees and scribes were rebuked by the hosannas of little children in the temple. God chooses the foolish things of the world to confound the wise, and weak things to destroy things which are mighty. If we see no reason for fear or for seriousness in the tempest of life, he may arouse us by means we despise. A single phrase in a sermon which is far from eloquent, a leaflet or tract without any pretension to literary charm, an earnest word from an inferior in rank or education, the trustful prayer of a lisping child,—may be used of God, as was the summons which came to Jonah from a superstitious heathen.

III. A MAN MAY BE IN GREAT DANGER WITHOUT BEING CONSCIOUS OF IT. Jonah slept. Perhaps he dreamed of happier days and of distant scenes. These seemed real to him, but the realities actually around him—the storm, the ship, the sailors—were as if they did not exist. He did not know his danger, and had forgotten in sleep his sad disobedience. Even to the sailors his sleep seemed the result of infatuation or of senselessness, and they asked (not, "What meanest thou?"), "What aileth thee, O sleeper?"—as if there was something abnormally wrong with him, as indeed there was. But more strange, more fatal, is the sleep in which so many lie who believe themselves to be awake. Shrewd in business, eager in pleasure-seeking, successful in study, all that they see appears for the time to be the only reality. But, like Jonah, they are in dream-land. Heaven and hell, death and judgment, an enemy of souls, and a Saviour from sin, are recognized by others, not by them. Urge all such to awake, and arise from the dead, that Christ may give them light. "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation."

IV. GOD'S WAY OF SALVATION IS THE ONLY ONE. It was useless for the sailors to row hard in the hope of bringing the ship to land, and equally useless for them to cast the cargo overboard. There was no safety for them or for Jonah except by the way ordained by God. Strange as it seemed to them and to us, Jonah, in all his sinfulness and helplessness, was to be cast into the sea, where none but God could save him. If the story has no other lesson, it at least teaches us the impotency of human effort to battle successfully with the storms of life. The struggles some make in their unaided strength to win salvation are vain as the efforts of these who "rowed hard to bring the ship to land." The endeavour to get rid of besetting sins without prayer for grace is as ineffectual as the casting overboard of the burden in the ship. A simpler, stranger, means of salvation is provided for us. As Jonah was cast helpless and alone into the sea, for God to save in his own way, so we are called to such implicit trust as will prompt us to cast ourselves wholly upon Christ, in whom we shall find eternal rest.—A. B.

Vers. 1—3.—*God speaking to man in mercy, and man fleeing from God in disobedience.* "Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me." This is a strange book. It is not the record of a dream, nor the sketch of an allegory, but the history of a man written by himself. True, he speaks in the third person; but so did many of the old prophets, so did the Apostle Paul, and so have many great men. Intellectual children are prone to use the personal pronoun *I*; great intellectual men prefer writing of themselves in the third person. Speeches and books bristling with *I* are generally the effusions of little souls. We have here his name and that of his father, the one signifying "Dove," and the other "the Truth of God." Names of old were sometimes commemorative, sometimes predictive. Names now signify little. Men by great and noble deeds can, and often do, throw into the commonest names a meaning that will radiate through centuries. In these words we have

two things worthy of attention—God speaking to man in mercy, and man fleeing from God in disobedience.

I. GOD SPEAKING TO MAN IN MERCY. 1. Here he *speaks*. "The word of the Lord." His word to Jonah, like his word to all men, was *clear, brief, weighty, practical*. 2. Here he speaks to an *individual*. He speaks to all men in nature, conscience, history; but in sovereignty he singles some men out for special communications. In times past he spake "unto the fathers by the prophets." 3. Here he speaks to an individual for the sake of a *community*. "Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city." Why does God call it a "great" city? To men it was considered "great"—great in numbers, pomp, pretensions, masonry. But to God it could only be great in *sin*, for sin is a great thing to God; it is a black cloud in his universe; it is the "abominable thing" which he hates. For the sake of this city, in order to effect its moral reformation, and therefore to save it, Jonah receives a commission. "Arise," shake off thy languor, quit thyself for action, go down to this city, and "cry against it." Be *earnest*. The danger is great, near at hand, and approaching every minute. Observe here two things: (1) Man's distinguishing faculty. What is that? The power to *receive*, to *appreciate*, and to *work out* the ideas of the Infinite. No other creature on earth has this power. (2) God's method of helping humanity. God enlightens, purifies, and ennobles man by man. We have this "treasure in earthen vessels."

II. MAN FLEEING FROM GOD IN DISOBEDIENCE. "But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish, from the presence of the Lord." Here is a threefold revelation of man. 1. His *moral freedom*. God did not coerce Jonah, did not drive him to Nineveh. He merely commanded him to go, and Jonah resisted the Divine command. Man has the power to resist God—a greater power this than can be found in all the heavenly orbs or in the whole history of material organisms. This power invests man with all but infinite importance, links him to moral government. "Ye do always resist the Spirit of God." 2. His *daring depravity*. He dares to attempt extricating himself, not only from his obligations to God, but from his very "presence." Alas! men have not merely the power but the disposition to oppose God. This is their guilt and their ruin; it is what men are doing everywhere, trying to break the shackles of moral responsibility, trying to elude the Infinite. 3. His *egregious folly*. See the folly. His endeavouring to escape from God was: (1) Not merely an impulse, but a *resolution*. Had it been a sudden wish, it would have been bad. But here is a resolution. He "rose up." He rallied and marshalled his energies. (2) Not merely a resolution, but an *effort*. He "went down to Joppa." The probability is that he went with the greatest speed to Joppa—the Jaffa of our day. Though a descent, it was rather a long journey, and would take him two or three days. When he reached the spot, how long he was about the quays in search of a suitable vessel! (3) Not merely an effort, but a *persevering* effort. It was not one, or two, or three spasmodic efforts, and then over. He continued his journey from his home to Joppa, then he searched on the quays for a vessel; and when he found, as he thought, a suitable vessel, he "paid the fare thereof." Ah! what fares men pay in the career of sin! And when he had paid the fare thereof, he "went down into it," and there he thought himself safe. How inexpressibly foolish was all this, not only in the nature of the case, but according to *results*! All the efforts, as the sequence shows, not only proved futile, but brought him to the utmost distress.

CONCLUSION. The two things that you have in these verses are always going on—God in mercy speaking to man, and man in terror fleeing from God. Oh, how wrong, how foolish, the attempt to flee from the Infinite! "Whither shall I flee from thy presence?"—D. T.

Ver. 6.—*A rousing voice to moral sleepers*. "What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not." The incident referred to in the text is this—Jonah was sent to Nineveh on a mission of mercy, sent to warn the corrupt population of their impending doom, and to call them to immediate repentance. The Divine message was not to the prophet's mind; he was displeased, and instead of going direct to Nineveh, he went down to Joppa, and found a ship going to Tarshish. He paid the fare, embarked, and hasted away. While on the deep a terrible tempest arose. "The Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a mighty tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken." As

the tempest raged Jonah was asleep, "fast asleep." So the shipmaster came to him and said unto him, "What meanest thou, O sleeper?" etc. *Moral indifferentism* is the curse of the world. Three practical appeals to the morally indifferent are suggested.

I. JONAH WAS IN IMMINENT PERIL. So are you. It is said that the ship was "like to be broken." The perils of shipwreck have often been graphically depicted; but they surpass the conceptions of all but those who have struggled in their ghastly horrors. But what are the perils of material shipwreck to the perils of a corrupt and disobedient soul? To have the body buried in the depths of the ocean is a trifle compared with the burial of the soul under the black, booming billows of moral depravity and guilt. The buried body becomes unconscious of its position, and sleeps itself into the calm bosom of its mother nature; but the soul becomes burningly conscious of its terrible situation, and struggles in vain to rise from the abyss. What is hell? I know not. I want no rolling thunders of Divine vengeance, no material fires burning on for ever, to impress me with its awfulness. A soul buried in the black ocean of its own depravity, with a conscience intensely alive to its hopeless condition, struggling in vain to release itself, is the hell of all hells. Careless sinner, you are in danger of this hell! Your moral circumstances will soon be changed, a tempest is brooding, it increases with every sin. Every star in your heavens will soon be extinguished, and the sea on which you are now gliding along will be lashed into fury and will engulf you in ruin.

II. JONAH WAS UNCONSCIOUS OF HIS PERIL. So are you. Whilst the tempest was raging and the vessel ready to sink, he was "fast asleep." Careless sinner, you are unconscious of your danger! You say to yourself, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. If you were aware of your position, you would give no sleep to your eyes, no slumber to your eyelids. 1. Jonah's unconsciousness was *foolish*. So is yours. How unwise was the prophet to sleep under such circumstances! He should have been on deck, alert, all ear and eye, and with hands ready to grapple with the emergencies of the terrible hour. But your folly is greater, inasmuch as your peril is more tremendous. 2. Jonah's unconsciousness was *wicked*. So is yours. For the sake of his companions on board, he ought not to have been "fast asleep;" it indicated a shameful lack of interest in his fellow-men. Your indifferentism is wicked. You ought to be spiritually alive and awake, not only for your own sake, but also for the sake of those around you who are in similar peril.

III. JONAH HAD A MESSENGER TO WARN HIM OF HIS PERIL. So have you. "The shipmaster came to him, and said unto him, What meanest thou, O sleeper? arise, call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us, that we perish not." There are certain points of analogy between this "shipmaster" and the godly ministers that are warning you. 1. He believed in the *existence and power of God*. So do they. "Call upon thy God, if so be that God will think upon us." Great dangers seldom fail to strike the idea of God into the hearts of men, whatever their creed or character. This man believed, not only that a God existed, but that that God had raised a tempest, and had the power to subdue it. The Christly men that warn you every Sunday from the pulpits also believe in this God. 2. He believed in the *efficacy of human prayer*. So do they. The shipmaster said to Jonah, "Call upon thy God." Whatsoever speculative scientists may say about prayer, one thing is clear—that it is an instinct of the soul, not a mere doctrine of the Bible; it is a law of nature, not a mere ceremony of religion. What soul does not pray when in conscious contact with overwhelming dangers? Your ministers believe in prayer; they pray for you, and urge you to pray for yourselves. 3. He believed it to be *his duty to sound the warning*. So do they. What right had he to interfere with the sleeping prophet, to break his slumber, and to summon him to prayer? The instincts of nature authorized him, nay, bound him to do so. Your ministers have a right to warn you; they are bound to warn you. They are commanded to "cry aloud, to lift up their voice like a trumpet." Do you say, when godly men speak to you about your moral condition, "What business have they to interfere? My soul is my own; if I choose to throw it away, what matters it to them?" It does matter to them. You are not your own, you are not an isolated unit, you are a member of the spiritual universe; you have, therefore, no right to be dishonest, corrupt, ungodly, and throw your soul away. You were made to serve the universe, not to curse it; you cannot sin without injuring others. Every true man is bound to protest against your

conduct, and to demand from you, in the name of God and this universe, an *immediate* reformation.

CONCLUSION. The following fact, recorded in the 'Biblical Treasury,' is worthy of note as an illustration: "A traveller who was pursuing his journey on the Scotch coast, was thoughtlessly induced to take the road by the sands as the most agreeable. This road, which was safe only at low tides, lay on the beach, between the sea and the lofty cliffs which bound the coast. Pleased with the view of the inrolling waves on the one hand and the abrupt and precipitous rocks on the other, he loitered on the way, unmindful of the sea which was gradually encroaching upon the intervening sands. A man, observing from the lofty cliffs the danger he was incurring, benevolently descended, and arresting his attention by a loud halloo, warned him not to proceed. 'If you pass this spot, you will lose your last chance of escape. The tides are rising. They have already covered the road you have passed, and they are near the foot of the cliffs before you; and by this ascent alone you can escape.' The traveller disregarded the warning. He felt sure he could make the turn in the coast in good time; and, leaving his volunteer guide, he went more rapidly on his way. Soon, however, he discovered the real danger of his position. His onward journey was arrested by the sea; he turned in haste, but to his amazement he found that the rising waters had cut off his retreat. He looked up to the cliffs; but they were inaccessible. The waters were already at his feet. He sought higher ground, but was soon driven off. His last refuge was a projecting rock; but the relentless waters rose higher and higher; they reached him; they rose to his neck; he uttered a despairing shriek for help, but no help was near, as he had neglected his last opportunity for escape. The sea closed over. It was the closing in upon him of the night of death."—D. T.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER II.

VERS. 1—10.—PART II. JONAH'S PRAYER AND DELIVERANCE.

VERS. 1—9.—§ 1. *Jonah, in the belly of the fish, offers a prayer of thanksgiving for his rescue from death by drowning, in which he sees a pledge of further deliverance.*

VER. 1.—Then Jonah prayed. These were his feelings when he sank in the waters and while he lay in his mysterious prison; he may have put them into their metrical form after his deliverance. The grammatical arrangement, and especially the language of ver. 7, seem to speak of a deliverance already experienced rather than of one expected. As this "prayer" does not suit an allegory, and as no one but Jonah could have known its substance, we have here an argument for his authorship. It is rather a thanksgiving than a prayer—like that of Hannah (1 Sam. ii. 1). When he realizes that he was saved from drowning, he uttered his gratitude, and saw that he might hope for further rescue. How he passed the three days we cannot tell; some have thought he was unconscious; but this is, perhaps, hardly consistent with the notice of his "praying," and with the action of his great Antitype, who, during his sojourn in the unseen world, "preached to the spirits in prison" (1 Pet. iii. 19). **His God.** He

acknowledges Jehovah as his God. He had proved himself his by inspiration, by chastisement, and now by mercy (Pusey). The following prayer contains ample reminiscences of the Psalms, which would be familiar to a devout Israelite. Those quoted are mostly what have been considered to belong to David's time, if their date is really ascertained. But it is a matter of controversy, incapable of settlement, whether Jonah or the psalmist is the original.

VER. 2.—He introduces the prayer with the fact that he cried to God in distress and was heard. **By reason of mine affliction; better, out of my affliction.** This may be a reminiscence of Ps. cxx. 1 or Ps. xviii. 6; but from such coincidences nothing can be established concerning the date of the book. Like circumstances call forth like expressions; and the writers may have composed them quite independently of one another. **Hell (Sheol).** The unseen world (Ezek. xxxiii. 21). He was as though dead when thus engulfed (comp. Ps. xviii. 5). **Cried I (Ps. xxviii. 1, 2). Thou heardest my voice (Ps. cxxx. 1, 2).**

VER. 3.—He describes his danger and distress. **Thou hadst cast; rather, thou didst cast,** the sailors being the agents of the Divine will. Septuagint, ἀπέρριψας. **The deep; βάθος, "depths" (Septuagint); Exod. xv. 8. In the midst; literally, in the heart; Septuagint, καρδίας θαλάσσης; Vulgate, in**

corde maris. This defines more closely the previous expression. The floods; literally, the river. This may mean the current (as in Ps. xiv. 2), which in the Mediterranean Sea sets from west to east, and, impinging on the Syrian coast, turns north; or it may have reference to the notion, familiar to us in Homer, which regarded the ocean as a river. All thy billows and thy waves; πάντες οἱ μετεωρισμοὶ σου καὶ τὰ κύματα σου, "all thy swellings and waves" (Septuagint); omnes gurgites tui, et fluctus tui (Vulgate). The former are "breakers," the latter "rolling billows." The clause is from Ps. xlii. 7, Jonah transferring what is there said metaphorically to his own literal experience, at the same time acknowledging God's hand in the punishment by speaking of "thy billows" (comp. Ps. lxxxviii. 6, 7).

Ver. 4.—Jonah confesses that he at first fully expected death; but faith and hope soon triumphed over despondency. I am cast out of thy sight. This was his thought when what is mentioned in ver. 3 happened unto him. The words are a reminiscence of Ps. xxxi. 22, altered somewhat to suit Jonah's circumstances. The psalmist says, "I said in my haste." Jonah says simply, "I said," without any limitation; and for "I am out off," Jonah uses, "I am cast out." Septuagint, ἀποσπῶμαι—a strong term, implying banishment with violence. Out of thy sight; literally, from before thine eyes; i.e. from thy protecting care (comp. 1 Sam. xxvi. 24; 1 Kings viii. 29). He who had fled from the presence of the Lord in Canaan fears that he has forfeited the favour of God. Yet I will look again toward thy holy temple. I will turn in prayer to that holy place where thou dost manifest thy presence. The Jews were wont to turn towards Jerusalem when they prayed (comp. 1 Kings viii. 30, etc.; Dan. vi. 10; Ps. xviii. 6; xxviii. 2). Some think that Jonah expresses a hope of worshipping again in the temple; but the turn of expression in the text hardly warrants this. Others refer the term to the heavenly temple, as they do in ver. 7; Ps. xi. 4; xviii. 6.

Vers. 5, 6.—In parallel clauses, Jonah describes still more vividly the horrors that surrounded him.

Ver. 5.—Compassed me about. Not the same word as in ver. 3. Septuagint, περιέχθη μοι, "was poured around me." Even to the soul; so as to reach his life (comp. Ps. xviii. 5; lxi. 1, 2; Lam. iii. 54). The depth closed me round about. The verb is the same as in ver. 3, translated there, "compassed me about." Vulgate, abyssus vallavit me. The weeds (*soph*); sea-weed. Jonah sank to the bottom before he was swallowed by the fish. The LXX. omits the word.

The Vulgate gives *pelagus*, which is probably derived from the fact of the Red Sea being called "the Sea of Suph," the term being thence applied to any sea.

Ver. 6.—The bottoms of the mountains; literally, the cuttings off, where the mountains seem to be cut off by the ocean floor; the roots of the mountains. Εἰς σχίσμας ὀρέων, "the clefts of the mountains" (Septuagint); Ps. xviii. 15. The earth with her bars; as for the earth, her bars were about me; return to it was shut out for me; the gate by which I might return was looked behind me. He adds, for ever, as it was to all appearance, because he had no power in himself of returning to earth and life. Yet; in spite of all, I am preserved. From corruption (*shachath*); as Job xvii. 14; de corruptione (Vulgate); so the Chaldee and Syriac; Septuagint, Ἀναβήτω ἐκ φθορᾶς ἡ ζωὴ μου (Alex.), Ἀναβήτω φθορὰ ζωῆς μου (Vatican), "Let my life arise from destruction;" or, "Let the destruction of my life [i.e. my destroyed life] arise." Jerome refers the word to the digestive process in the fish's stomach; it is probably merely a synonym for "death." The marginal rendering, "the pit," i.e. Sheol, is also etymologically correct (comp. Ps. xxx. 3). My God. He thankfully acknowledges that Jehovah has proved himself a beneficent God to him.

Ver. 7.—His prayer was heard. When my soul fainted within me; literally, was covered—referring, says Pusey, to that physical exhaustion when a film comes over the eyes, and the brain is mantled over. The clause is from Ps. cxlii. 3 or cxliii. 4. I remembered the Lord. That was his salvation (Ps. cxix. 55). He turned in thought to thine holy temple (ver. 4), the sanctuary where God's presence was most assured, like the psalmist in the wilderness (Ps. lxi. 2), or like the exiles by the waters of Babylon when they remembered Zion (Ps. cxxxvii.).

Ver. 8.—Jonah contrasts the joy and comfort arising from the thought of God with the miserable fate of idolaters. They that observe (Ps. xxxi. 6); court, pay deference to, reverence. Lying vanities; Septuagint, μάταια καὶ ψευδῆ, "vain things and false." Idols (comp. Jer. xviii. 15; Hos. xii. 11; 1 Cor. viii. 4). Their own mercy; i.e. their state of favour with God—the mercy shown to them, as "the mercies of [shown to] David" (Isa. lv. 3); or God himself, the Fountain of mercy and goodness (Ps. cxliv. 2). Henderson translates, "forsake their Benefactor."

Ver. 9.—But I—who know better than idolaters, and who have learned a new lesson of trust in God—I will sacrifice. Pusey notes that the Hebrew denotes rather, "I fain would sacrifice," as it de-

ponded, not on him, but on God, whether he was able to worship again in the Holy Land. His sacrifice of thanksgiving (Lev. vii. 12, etc.) should be offered with prayer and praise (Ps. xlii. 5). That which I have vowed (Ps. l. 14; lxi. 13). Salvation is of the Lord. This is the conclusion to which his trial has brought him, the moral of the whole canticle (Ps. iii. 8; cxviii. 14, 21; Rev. vii. 10). The LXX. and the Vulgate join this clause to the preceding, thus: "That which I have vowed I will pay to the Lord for my salvation." This is tame, and not in strict accordance with the Hebrew.

Ver. 10.—§ 2. *The fish casts up Jonah alive on the shore.*

Ver. 10.—*Spake unto the fish.* The punishment having done its work, the fish is impelled by some secret influence to eject Jonah on the dry land, on the third day after he was swallowed (ch. i. 17). Some, who regard the Book of Jonah as an historical allegory, see in these three days an adumbration of the period of the Babylonian captivity, during which Israel was buried in darkness, and from which she rose to a new and happier life. They compare, as referring to the same transaction, Jer. li. 34, 44 and Hos. vi. 1, 2 (see Dr. C. H. H. Wright, 'Exegetical Studies,' pp. 53, etc.). Upon the dry land. Probably on the coast of Palestine, whence he had started.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 1.—"*Out of the depths.*" Never surely was prayer offered in so strange a place as this! Men have often prayed upon the sea, but Jonah is represented as praying from the ocean depths.

I. NO PLACE IS UNSUITABLE FOR PRAYER. It is well to pray in stately cathedrals and in consecrated chapels, in the humble meeting-house and at the "domestic altar." But the persecuted have prayed upon the remote hillside, and in "dens and caves of the earth." And let it be remembered, that God's will is that "men should pray everywhere, lifting holy hands" to heaven. In the thronged street, the busy market, the legislative hall, the court of justice, in the field of battle, and upon the island where the shipwrecked mariner finds a refuge,—in every place God may be sought and found. If Jonah cried "out of the fish's body," and was heard, is there reason for silence, for refraining from prayer, in any spot where we may find ourselves?

II. ACCEPTABLE PRAYER PROCEEDS FROM NECESSITY. There are those who have never prayed before, who have been driven to supplication by their needs. And many, whose prayers have often been formal, have learned to pray in earnest when they have been plunged into the overwhelming ocean of affliction. None ask so urgently as those who are in want; and one purpose of Providence in permitting men to suffer need may well be this—to call forth entreaties and supplications which shall be sincere, profound, and urgent.

III. ACCEPTABLE PRAYER IS THE OFFSPRING OF A SUBMISSIVE MIND. Rebellion, and even murmuring, are incompatible with a prayerful spirit. It proves that Jonah was not wholly bad that, in his affliction, he did not resent the Lord's treatment, he did not "kick against the goad." He rather behaved and quieted himself as "the weaned child." It is well to acknowledge that justice and mercy are in all the Lord's dealings with his people. Many have been taught by experience to say with the psalmist, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray;" "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." Trouble is not designed to lead God's people to cry *against* the Lord, but *unto* the Lord. To complain is both foolish and sinful; but they are happy who endure.

IV. ACCEPTABLE PRAYER IS THE UTTERANCE OF FAITH AND HOPE. Even in the depths of the sea Jonah did not lose his faith in the oversight, the care, the goodness of the Lord. He believed that the Lord had overwhelmed, and that the Lord could rescue him. He who brought him into the depths could bring him out of the depths. The believing prayer which the prophet is recorded to have offered in his extremity is a model to all those who because of their iniquities and transgressions have been afflicted. Have faith in God, and hope in his mercy—such is the lesson which this verse teaches.

V. PRAYER FROM THE DEPTHS IS HEARD IN THE HEIGHTS AND ANSWERED. Jonah's subterraneous, subaqueous dungeon became a temple. God was present when his servant prayed. When submission and faith took the place of disobedience and

rebellion, the Most High was willing to deliver the captive, to pardon the sinner, to employ again the unfaithful fugitive.

Vers. 2, 3.—*Affliction and prayer.* Doubtless the language of this psalm of thanksgiving was the result of subsequent meditation, for it is evidently a studied composition, resembling in passages several of the sacred Hebrew odes. But the sentiments were those actually experienced by the prophet when in the most humiliating position. In his experience was much which may prove very instructive and helpful to ourselves.

I. DEEP AFFLICTION. The language of ver. 3, literally descriptive of Jonah's state and sufferings, is tinged with poetical feeling, and, like similar passages in the Psalms, is emblematic of the afflictions which, at some periods of human life, are the appointed experience of God's people. The deep waters of trouble must be passed through; the mighty billows must roll over the spirit. Sorrow submerges and apparently overwhelms even the child of God; how much more the impenitent and disobedient!

II. EARNEST PRAYER. How, indeed, can prayer be other than earnest, if it be offered from "the belly of hell"? Those afflictions are, indeed, a blessing which prompt such supplications as those which came from Jonah's lips. Far from human succour, and perhaps from human pity, the afflicted lift their voice, and cry, by reason of their afflictions, unto the Lord. There is something very instructive in the language used by Jonah, attributing his affliction to the Being upon whom he was calling, "Thou hadst cast me into the deep, . . . thy billows and thy waves passed over me." In this way the distressed may learn the lesson which the wisdom and the love of God would teach.

III. GRACIOUS DELIVERANCE. When in Scripture it is said that God hears, we may usually understand more than is expressed. He hears to answer, to rescue, to save. The Omnipresent did not lose sight of his servant even when he was beneath the waves of the ocean; and the All-gracious was not inattentive to his supplication, though offered from the depths where weeds were about the suppliant's head. If there are those who fear lest their situation or their circumstances should shut them out from the regard and interest of the Supreme, they may well take courage when they think of the experience of the prophet, who called upon the Lord from the depths, and was heard and was delivered.

Ver. 4.—*Looking toward the temple.* It is remarkable that in two passages of this prayer the prophet should allude to the temple. Although he was from Northern Palestine, and lived whilst Judah and Israel were distinct kingdoms, it does not seem open to question that his allusion is to the sacred edifice at Jerusalem, where Jehovah manifested his presence and favour, and received the worship of his people. Yet the temple must have been referred to, not so much as a material edifice, as in the light of the symbol of the manifestation of the presence and the favour of the Most High.

I. TO LOOK TOWARD THE TEMPLE IS TO BE REMINDED OF THE EXISTENCE OF GOD. As the sight of a house may remind us of the friend who dwells there, as the sight of a palace may lead us to think of the king,—so to look toward the temple is to look to God. Jonah may have been tempted to say, "There is no God;" or, "If there be a God, he regards not me." When he turned in heart to the temple, such thoughts vanished, and God's existence became a reality to him.

II. TO LOOK TOWARD THE TEMPLE IS TO SEEK THE FAVOUR OF GOD. The temple was the place where sacrifices were offered and accepted; where God showed himself to be gracious to his covenant people, where sin was pardoned, and the penitent sinner was received into acceptance. And Jonah knew, even from the very commission he was unwilling to fulfil, that God delighted in mercy, and was long-suffering and compassionate. He had incurred Divine displeasure, but he began to feel that he was not beyond the reach of Divine commiseration and help.

III. TO LOOK TOWARD THE TEMPLE IS TO EXPECT THE DIVINE INTERPOSITION AND DIRECTION. The pious Jews sought Jehovah in his house, consulted the oracle, invoked guidance, implored blessing. And when Jonah directed the gaze of his heart towards the dwelling-place of his God, it was with the well-formed expectation that, however impossible it was for him to make a way of escape for himself, God would

surely do this upon his behalf. There is no depth from which he cannot lift us; no recess from which he cannot draw us forth; no sorrow of which he cannot relieve us; no sin which he cannot pardon. Of how many of God's people may it be said, "They looked unto him, and were lightened, and their faces were not ashamed"!

Ver. 7.—Remembering the Lord. The circumstances in which Jonah was placed were such as give very peculiar value and interest to this declaration. And it appears that this act of recollection was the turning-point in his experience; for hitherto his troubles had increased, whilst henceforth his prospects began to brighten.

I. THE OCCASION OF THIS REMEMBRANCE. 1. External adversity may have prompted him to a kind of remembrance which in his prosperity he had not cultivated. 2. Mental exhaustion and distress caused him to realize his helplessness, and the vanity of expecting human aid. When his "soul fainted within" him, then he called to mind the God whom he had disobeyed.

II. THE CHARACTER OF THIS REMEMBRANCE. 1. Jonah, no doubt, remembered God's commands and his own rebellion. 2. He must also have remembered the revelation of Divine mercy which had been vouchsafed him. And whilst the former recollection must have awakened penitence, this may well have shed into his soul a ray of hope.

III. THE FRUIT OF THIS REMEMBRANCE. 1. It prompted to prayer. They who forget God will not call upon God; but they who remember his promises may well lift up their hearts to him. 2. It was thus the means of securing the Divine regard and the Divine deliverance. God heard the prophet's cry, though uttered from the ocean's depths, and when he heard, he came to the rescue of his servant. "The Lord is mindful of his own." We may for a time forget his faithfulness, but when we call to mind his nearness and his grace, he remembers us even in our low estate.

Ver. 8.—The vanity of idolatry. Jonah had been brought into association with idolaters in the person of the mariners of the ship out of which he had been cast. It may be that this fact accounts for the reference in this passage to those who worship other gods than the Lord. The more he experienced the faithfulness and goodness of Jehovah, the more was he convinced that there was none other entitled to reverence, confidence, and prayers.

I. THE DESCRIPTION HERE GIVEN OF IDOLATERS. They are such as "observe lying vanities." The Hebrews, whether pious or not, were monotheists, and regarded with contempt the idolatrous superstitions of their neighbours. The language of irony occurs in several places of Old Testament Scripture when allusion is made to the impotence of the gods of the nations. Yet it may be profitably remembered by ourselves, who may have no immediate connection with professed idolaters, that whatever men substitute for God, as the law of life and the object of devotion and trust, will surely deceive all those who put their faith therein.

II. THE FATE HERE FORETOLD OF IDOLATERS. Their "mercy," their "goodness," is the God whom they forget, and to whom they are so infatuated as to prefer the "lying vanities" here censured. They who quit the Lord prepare for themselves a terrible fate. In God is salvation; out of him is destruction. There is something appalling in the doom which is here described as overtaking those who, when the Saviour may be found, turn their back upon him, in order to seek and to serve other gods. Such are said to "forsake their own mercy." They act against their highest interests; they refuse the richest blessing; they abjure their truest Friend.

Ver. 9.—Piety triumphant. The remarkable fact connected with this sublime hymn of confidence and adoration is this—it was uttered while deliverance was yet in the future. The prophet sings of God's goodness while he is still experiencing God's chastisement, and promises offerings whilst the favour which they are to acknowledge is as yet in the future. In these closing words of the hymn there is a tone of exultation and of triumph, which evinces singular confidence and singular hope.

I. THANKSGIVING. There are some circumstances which render gratitude natural and easy. But it is a triumph of faith when the afflicted can acknowledge the good hand of God, when they can discern mercy in chastening, when they can see the hand of a Father in the hand that smites. One thing is certain—whatever be our position,

our experience, we owe gratitude as a debt due to him who is ever forbearing and gracious.

II. SACRIFICE. According to the religious customs of his country and his age, the prophet vowed to offer an outward expression of his loyalty and gratitude to God, by presenting a sacrifice in the temple or at some consecrated altar. His life had been spared; his deliverance was near; he looked forward to an opportunity of "offering burnt offerings" upon the altar of Jehovah. The spiritual reality of which such an act is the symbol is the consecration of heart and life unto the God of all grace and salvation.

III. PRAISE. Thanksgiving looks mainly to the benefits received; praise, to the Bestower. "Salvation unto the Lord!" such is the joyful and adoring cry with which this hymn is brought to a close. It is well, when we have acknowledged favour and long-suffering enjoyed, to turn away from ourselves, and to fix our thoughts, our sentiments of affectionate and adoring devotion, upon him whose attribute is mercy, and whose work is salvation.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—4.—*A unique oratory.* "Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God," etc. The key-note of this passage is struck in the first verse. It is the fish, by God's hand made Jonah's preserver instead of his destroyer, that inspires the praise-prayer of the whole chapter. God did not come to help till the prophet had, in imagination, faced the worst; but still he came in time. In the very moment of imminent death he stepped in a Deliverer. And he delivered in his own inimitable way. Natural laws cannot serve his purpose, and he accomplishes it against them. "The ravens furnish Elijah's table; the lions are tame and quiet while Daniel is in the den; the violence of fire is gone when believers are in the furnace; the sea, which acts according to its nature towards Pharaoh and his host, is a wall on the right hand and on the left to Moses and to Israel; and the devouring shark preserves Jonah's life" (Rev. Thomas Jones, *in loc.*). And now the prophet realizes that God, after all, is his Friend. He is bringing life out of the jaws of death, converting the voracious sea-monster into a kind protector. And thus, by judgment and mercy in turn, the obdurate heart is broken, and the sturdy apostate brought to his knees and the praise-song of the restored. We see here—

I. HOW AFFLICTION OPENS THE MOUTH WHICH SIN HAD SHUT. Jonah's defection was deliberate and persistent. Not for a trifle would he cry, *Peccavi!* Not by an ordinary obstacle would he be arrested in his course. He seceded most determinedly. He kept his purpose in unabated strength, through a forty-mile tramp on foot. He overcame difficulty with resourceful energy. He slept calmly, going on his way, amidst the crash of an appalling hurricane. He sat sullen and made no sign when even heathen sailors called upon their gods, and wondered at his self-composure. But flesh is flesh, and at length the word came true, "In their affliction will they seek me early." God has weapons that pierce even armour of proof. The invasion of fiery serpents did it for incorrigible Israel (Numb. xxi. 7). The cut of the Assyrian slave-lash did it for graceless Manasseh (2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13). The death of Bathsheba's child did it for David, after a great crime and a whole year of impenitent hardness (2 Sam. xii. 13, 16). The Babylonish exile did it for Israel, as Isaiah expresses, "Lord, in trouble they have visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them." And the experiences of a shark's interior did it for Jonah. He would not surrender sooner, but resistance is out of the question now. The victory rests with God. The fires of his judgment have softened the apostate's iron will. Yet not the Divine severity only, but severity and goodness together have operated here as "the medicine of the mind." It was not imminent death alone but this with miraculous life out of death that broke the hideous spell, and opened the lips so stubbornly sealed. It is a wrong way of looking at things to contrast, where both have operated, the value of severity and goodness as motive powers in the religious sphere. Neither probably would be effective by itself. The severity before the goodness did not conquer, and

neither, probably, would the goodness, had not the severity gone before. The effect does not flow from the last of the series of its causes, but from the series as a whole.

II. HOW A REVIVING FAITH CAN TRIUMPH OVER SENSE. To sense the prophet's case was desperate. On the platform of natural laws the circumstances forbid hope, and would logically shut the mouth of prayer. Yet their effect is directly the reverse. The prophet only begins to pray at the moment when all seems past praying for. And this is the paradoxical but characteristic way of faith. It triumphs over sense, reverses its verdict, overbears its testimony, realizes in actual possession its theoretic impossibility. "Take the case of Abraham and the character and commendation of his faith. 'Against hope he believed in hope.' Appearances were all against him. Sensible realities all contradicted, and in themselves alone destroyed, his expectation. Had his hope rested on sense, on reason, on nature, on time, it must have failed and sunk for ever. But he did not rest on nature. He did not argue. He believed; and his faith destroyed the hope-destroying power of sense" (Rev. Hugh Martin, D.D., *in loc.*). It is the business of your faith and mine to do likewise. We are surrounded by influences and circumstances altogether adverse to the attainment of our soul's salvation. Lusts are strong. Tempers are violent. Habits are tenacious. Example is corrupting. Toil is engrossing. Pleasure is ensnaring. The world, alike when it smiles and frowns, is our soul's foe. But faith is there—keen-eyed conquering faith. It sees through opacity and discovers the invisible. And it knows things very different from what they seem. Beneath the currents of sense, whose trend is away out to sea, it discerns the tidal wave of unseen influence moving in steady flow toward the celestial shores (2 Cor. i. 9; iv. 8—11). God, in his wise and stimulative dealing, "may clothe all circumstances and all his dispensations towards us with appearances of opposition and hostility, in order that we may flee to the anchor of his pure and simple Word, and lean on it without any other help, or rather against all adverse power" (Martin).

III. HOW NATURALLY PRAYER CLOTHES ITSELF IN THE WORDS OF SCRIPTURE. Jonah's prayer was original in the sense that the thoughts called forth the words. But the words themselves are largely borrowed from the Psalms. Most of these had then been written, and, as the Church's Psalter, would be familiar to a prophet of God. And naturally his devotional feelings appropriate their inspired and so fitting words. His prayer "is the simple and natural utterance of a man versed in Holy Scripture, and living in the Word of God" (Keil). What Scripture says is best said. It contains at once the warrant and the definition of prayer, and the actual words in which it was offered by holy men of old. What more natural or fitting than that a man should use these for himself as at once unerring and appropriate! "Let the Word of God dwell in you richly." There is nothing else can support faith, or so well formulate its prayer. And then as to the Psalms, where in Scripture is there to be found such a concentrated wealth of devotional matter as there? "They appear to me a mirror of the soul of every one who sings them" (Athanasius). "The Psalter deserves to be called the praise of God, the glory of man, the voice of the Church, and the most beneficial confession of faith" (Ambrose). "Not without good grounds am I wont to call this book an anatomy of all parts of the soul, since no one can experience emotions whose portrait he could not behold reflected in its mirror" (Calvin). The artist goes to the Louvre, and the scholar or antiquarian to the British Museum, because he finds there the objects he studies in greatest variety and profusion. And so the pious, in search of devotional materials of the most precious kind, resorts inevitably to the Book of Psalms. There are found portrayed, as from the life, the hopes and fears, the moods and frames, the faith and ardour, of their own soul. There they find words that interpret their case and express the very spirit of their aspiration. And so in all time, and over all the world, the saintly praise and pray and vow "with the words of David and Asaph the seer."

IV. HOW POINTEDLY GOD PUNISHES DEFECTION BY ENDORSING IT. Jonah was a spiritual deserter. He struck work, abandoned his post, and so practically vacated his office and abjured God's service. He seemed resolved to have done with the whole thing. And he succeeded but too well, as now to his cost he feels. God has taken him at his word. Figuratively speaking, he has got the "Chiltern Hundreds." He is

no longer prophet of God, or servant, or companion. His punishment rises on him in the likeness of his sin. He has fled from God, and now he complains of the separation. "I am cast out of thy sight," i.e. banished from covenant territory, the sphere of God's protection and care. So with Peter. He says, "I know not the Man," and he is virtually and formally a stranger from that moment. Only after three times confessing the Lord whom he had three times denied is he spiritually reinstated, restored to forfeited office, and authorized to feed the sheep. This is a terrible aspect of spiritual renegadism. God accepts it as an accomplished fact. You break away, and are let go. You forsake God, and he casts you off. It is a fearful power this you have of putting a whole infinity between yourself and God, between your sin and his righteousness, between your want and his gifts, between your desolate heart and his everlasting consolations. Yet it is a power proper to a moral being, a power it is of the insignia of your manhood to have, and yet an utter renunciation of it to use.

V. HOW THE REMINISCENCE OF A FORMER FELLOWSHIP HELPS TO DRAW BACK TO GOD. Jonah could look back to a gracious state and consciousness. He had walked in the light of God's countenance. He knew the joy of his presence and the life in his favour. As part of the thought, "I am cast out from before thine eyes," these things would come up to mind. He must remember their quality in bewailing their loss. And they were a fragrant memory, the very cream and flower of the goodness he had tasted. Would they not bulk large among the influences drawing the wanderer back? "As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the Word, . . . if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious." Yes! there is the secret. If a man has come and tasted, he will be moved to come back and feast. The final apostasy from God of a true believer would be against the nature of things. "His seed remaineth in him." The life that has had God in it once can never be without him again. The void would be intolerable. And so, like the child that for a time has left its mother's knee, the backslider has survivals of precious memories that bring him back to God.

VI. HOW THE TEMPLE IS THE CENTRE OF THE RETURNING PENITENT'S REGARDS. (Ver. 4.) The temple was the national meeting-place with God, the spot which "he had chosen to place his Name there." "There was the mercy-seat, the ark of the covenant, and the Divine presence; there the tribes of Israel met to worship the Lord, and there the God of Israel came to meet and bless his people. No wonder Jonah's eyes should be fixed on this house, which was the glory of all lands, the sun in the world of mercy, and the centre of true worship" (Jones, *in loc.*). In the spiritual sphere worship underlies work. When Jonah ceased to labour, he had already ceased to pray. As in every case of suspended animation, it was failure of the heart's action that had paralyzed his hand. And now the converse process begins, and first of all pulsation is re-established. The heart resumes its normal action and beats for God. To approach him in worship, and resume fellowship with him in his holy ordinances, is the first sacred exercise to which his hope springs. It is so always. The stay-at-home Christian is never a worker for God. No heart for the sanctuary, no hand for the plough. The very breath of the religious life is to say, "My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?" 1. *Wherever you are, God has placed you.* Jonah says, "Thou hast cast me into the deep . . . thy billows and thy waves passed over me." Privilege and calamity are both God's. He sends them, and bounds them, and is revealed in them. Judgments viewed as accidents have no disciplinary value and no moral aspect. The rod is reforming only when we see it in our Father's hand. 2. *You cannot be in any place where it is not fitting you should seek God.* Jonah cried out of "the belly of hell." What pit, then, is so deep, what fall so low, what evil case so desperate, that in it and from it we may not call on God? "Is any afflicted, let him pray;" "Whosoever shall call on the Name of the Lord shall be saved." 3. *God is again "my God" in the thought of the returning penitent.* (Ver. 1.) With the child's reawakened love comes back the revived filial instinct. God is "my Father" to the prodigal from the moment he comes to himself. Blessed be his gracious Name, that such things can be! If you have renounced the life for self, you may call God your own this hour. The thought is a new backbone to faith. God "waits to be gracious." He is with you the moment you wish it, and for you the moment you submit, and yours in present possession the moment the soul's appropriating hand is stretched forth.

“O Saviour, precious Saviour,
Whom yet unseen we love;
O Name of might and favour,
All other names above:
We worship thee, we bless thee,
To thee alone we sing;
We praise thee and confess thee,
Our holy Lord and King.”

J. E. H.

Vers. 5—10.—*Deliverance waiting on the assured hope of it.* It is an obvious remark that all men are ingenuous with God. There is no thought of trying to mislead his judgment or escape his lidless eye. They know that he knows them, knows them truly, knows them thoroughly. Accordingly, when religious profession is false and religious converse is suppressive, and other religious acts are hollow and formal, secret prayer, if it be offered at all, is both honest and open. Only tell us what a man says into the secret ear of God, and you have told us all that is in his heart—have revealed what microscope could not detect, nor scalpel lay bare. It is in this way that our text is apocalyptic. It unveils for us the inner life of Jonah as this is done by no other portion of his book. And the revelation raises him not a little in our estimation. It shows him at bottom a regenerate and saintly man. It reveals a beaten path between his soul and God's throne, a path unused during a wayward hour, but resorted to instinctively when disaster has come and has sobered him into thought. Learn here—

I. THE ESSENTIAL SOLITUDE OF SUFFERING. (Vers. 5, 6.) We find matter around us of different degrees of density, from the light volcanic ash to the heavy metallic ore. But men of science tell us that no material substance is absolutely solid. In the closest-grained rock, in the diamond itself, the ultimate particles are not in actual contact. They approach each other inconceivably close, but when attraction has brought them thus far, a mysterious repulsion intervenes and forbids that they should altogether touch. This fact of the material world has, no doubt, its counterpart in the world of spirit. There is an individuality about the soul that cannot be destroyed. We may be united to others by the closest ties. We may be of one mind, and one heart, and one taste, and one aim. We may thus approach men and be approached by them on many sides, and feel in union, and, to many effects and purposes, be in union with each other. But it is plain that we never coalesce, never actually touch. The shock of personal disaster proves this. Then all ties seem loosened and fall away. Friends drift apart. We are thrown in upon ourselves. Others cannot follow us into the depths. We are in a relation to the event into which no one else can come. In the last appeal we have to meet it alone. It was so with Christ (John xvi. 31, 32). Disciples, friends, kinsmen,—with none of them could the Redeemer share the pangs of death. He had to die alone. Even the earlier thought, “I am not alone, the Father is with me,” gave way in the hour of mortal agony to the question of sore amaze, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” It was so with Jonah. He was pressed by a feeling of utter isolation. The depths closed over him. The earth with her bars was about him. This he felt, and in proportion as he felt it did he realize that he was cut off from his kind, engulfed in the horrors of a living grave, and left to face them all alone. “I shall die alone.” “Yes; and alone you live. No soul touches another soul except at one or two points, and those chiefly external—a fearful and lonely thought, but one of the truest life. Death only realizes that which has been the fact all along. In the central deeps of our being we are alone” (F. W. Robertson).

II. THERE IS AN ANTICIPATIVE POWER IN ALL TRUE FAITH. (Vers. 7, 9.) Jonah's prayer has really no petition in it. It becomes in the offering a song of praise. Still in the shark's maw, with the sea grass around his head, and going down through the deep sea caves to the foundations of the mountains, he speaks as a man delivered, and knowing only occasion of thanks. This is the grand attitude and achievement of faith. It sees the end from the beginning. It expects the end because there has been a beginning. It anticipates the end at the beginning, and deals with it as an accomplished fact. “Thou hast brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God.” “I know nothing more sublime in all the range of recorded human utterances. What

could dictate assured and triumphant language like this, but marvellous, miraculous faith? His deliverance is not yet come; yet faith speaks of it as if it were. O noble faith! it is in thy power to bring in the deliverance that is still future, with the sweetness of that which is already present, and the sureness of that which is already past" (Rev. Hugh Martin, D.D.). This quality of Jonah's faith appeared also in that of Paul. Crying for deliverance from indwelling sin, he forestalls the event, and prepayes the thanks (Rom. vii. 24, 25). So surely is prayer answered, so infallibly does needed help accrue, that from an adequate faith the gratitude may go up when as yet the blessing has not come down. And there is this prophetic realizing power in all faith. It "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." It carries in its head the jewel of hope; and where the one reaches the other shines. Faith trusts God that he can do all things, and hope looks for the doing of them. The potential deliverance seen by faith becomes actual deliverance in the eye of hope. And so to the believing soul "the things that shall be" already are, and the present is bright with the borrowed light of not yet risen suns.

III. IT IS JUST IN THE MOMENT OF REALIZED HELPLESSNESS THAT THE THOUGHT OF GOD COMES TO A SOUL. (Ver. 7.) Jonah, as is evident, had up till now forgotten God. Not only so, but he had deliberately driven and persistently kept him out of his thoughts. The bursting of a fearful storm impressed him so little that, if left alone, he would have slept it through. The rude piety of the sailors, calling every man upon his god, sent no responsive thrill through him. The captain's reproachful summons to arise and pray was disregarded or ignored. Even the ominous lot-casting, on the issue of which his life hung, was watched with apparent calm. His self-possessed and iron obstinacy died hard. But it died. Angry Omnipotence will not be denied; and God took measures that not even Jonah's hardihood could survive. The prophet broke down. Flesh and heart failed together. And then he came back to first principles, and remembered God. God, if they knew it, is the one need of human hearts. "Every finite spirit is inherently related to the Infinite, in him to live, and move, and have its being. It wants the knowledge of God, the society of God, the approbation of God, the internal manifestation of God, a consciousness lighted up by his presence, to receive of his fulness, to be strong in his might, to rest in his love, and be centred everlastingly in his glory" (Horace Bushnell, D.D.). But the natural man has no idea of this. Conscious of incompleteness, he knows not in what it consists. And he prescribes at random for his own case. He absorbs himself in business, he struggles up the path of ambition, he plunges into mad indulgence, he runs breathless from sensation to sensation, seeking rest and satisfaction, and finding none. Everything gets stale and tiresome, and the soul finds itself unprovided for and orphan still. Not seldom the man spends his days thus in feverish search of good, and dies unsatisfied and unfed at last. But sometimes, in the providence of God, disaster comes at this stage. He is losing his idol. He is being robbed of all he loved, or abandoned of all he trusted in. He is being brought to the grave's mouth by a resistless Providence. It becomes with him a question of God's help or none. And shut up to it thus, he chooses it, albeit only as a last resource. "I cried unto the Lord with my voice. In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord" (Ps. cxvi. 3, 4). This is the natural history of the soul's resort to God. It is the last resort. All other help has been tried and found wanting before the sinner turns to him. What grace, that he waits till then! that while every conceivable earthly nostrum is being tried, the Balm of Gilead is kept in store, and is available in the extremest hour! Truly a God "long-suffering and slow to wrath, and plenteous in mercy," is our God, who wearies not at our long wandering, and welcomes even the latest return.

IV. THE SIGHT OF GOD AND THE SIGHT OF SIN INVOLVE EACH OTHER. (Ver. 8.) Jonah had lost sight of God and of his own guiltiness together. In his conduct up to this point we see the most astounding oblivion of both. And now the two matters come to mind together, suggesting a logical connection between them. And so there is. Sin is a conscious offence against God. Its antagonism to him is its essential element. Accordingly, the sense of it will come and go with the thought of God, and will be adequate as this is adequate. You cannot remember the offence and yet forget the offended Being. Neither can you realize God as near and cognizant without a consciousness of your moral attitude toward him. The thought of sin and the thought of

God, in fact, bring up each other. And not only is the fact of sin, but the extent and evil of it are revealed in the revelation of God. Contact with the plumb-line betrays the curve in the bowing wall. So, side by side with God's ideal holiness, sin looks itself and looks its worst (Job xlii. 5). When a man sees his sinfulness, he has also, as the condition of it, got a glimpse of God. To Jonah his late conduct seems nothing now but the pursuit of lying vanities. He had no fruit in it. Every promise of good it held out had been falsified. He had not escaped. He had not improved matters in any way. He had only intensified existing evils and involved himself and others in new troubles. And that is a true picture of sin the world over and all history through. It is a following of delusive phantasies, and a running away from our own mercies. Its prospective blessings burst like bubbles in our hands—the hands that, but for it, would have been full of the choicest gifts of God.

V. THE RECEIVING OF SPIRITUAL GOOD IS FOLLOWED BY A DESIRE TO MAKE SOME RETURN. (Ver. 9.) Gratitude is a universal duty, and ought to be a universal grace. All men receive blessing from God, and as a consequence owe him thanks. Of the gratitude due, however, they fall far short. Some good things come *incognito*, and are thus received unthankfully. Other good things, God's free gifts, are traced to some earthly source, and so produce no thankful feeling. And then the multitude of life's mercies, so obviously Divine, are yet so common that their origin is forgotten, and they are received as a matter of course. But spiritual gifts can never be ungratefully received. They are too conspicuously gracious to be taken as a matter of right. They are too immeasurably great to be lightly deemed of. They involve the gift of a new heart itself, in which gratitude is a native growth, because grace has made it God-like. There are no thankless Christians. Ingratitude possibly means the spiritual nature absent or in abeyance, and points, where we find it, to previous spiritual forcement. Such forcement Jonah had suffered during the continuance of his rebellious freak. Now that religious principle had resumed the sway in his soul, the gratitude is restored that had been exiled during the spiritual interregnum. And everywhere and always the heart that has been blessed to saving effect is one in which infallibly is mooted the question of making grateful return.

VI. DIVINE DELIVERANCE IS ALWAYS TIMED TO ARRIVE WHEN THERE IS RIPENESS FOR IT. (Ver. 10.) Deliverance any sooner would have been too soon. It would have anticipated repentance, and so have left the erring prophet unreclaimed. It would, in fact, have defeated the object for which the entire disciplinary course had been adopted. It could not therefore occur in a divinely ordered life-history. God's providence never counterworks his scheme of grace. The one is adjusted to the other. His backsliding Jonahs are converted before his disciplinary whales vomit them forth. See you to the repentance, and God will see to your relief. Refining silver, at a certain stage the molten metal becomes for an instant so still and bright that the refiner can see his image in it as in a glass. And this, it is said, is the moment to pour it out, to anticipate which or delay beyond it is to spoil the whole experiment. In the visitations of his hand, God sits, we read, "as a refiner and purifier of silver," to "purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver" (Mal. iii. 3). No fear that he will spoil the process by taking you out of the fire a single moment out of date. He will keep you under discipline till he sees his image in your purified soul, and in that moment precisely will remove his hand.

"He that from dross would win the precious ore,
Bends o'er the crucible an earnest eye,
The subtle searching process to explore,
Lest the one brilliant moment should pass by
When, in the molten silver's virgin mass,
He meets his pictured face as in a glass.

"Thus in God's furnace are his people tried,
Thrice happy they who to the end endure.
But who the fiery trial may abide?
Who from the crucible come forth so pure
That he whose eyes of flame look through the whole
May see his image perfect in the soul?"

(J. Montgomery.)

J. E. H.

Vers. 1—7.—“*De profundis* : ” *distress and prayer*. “Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish’s belly,” etc. Unexampled position of Jonah—no details given, and hints somewhat obscure; evidently he retained measure of consciousness, but for how long we know not—seems to have been conscious of moving through the water before being swallowed by the fish—miracle of his preservation corresponds to that of the three Hebrews in the furnace (Dan. iii. 27), or of the burning bush (Exod. iii. 2, 3)—element of apparent destruction becomes supernaturally element of preservation—this record of his feelings composed after his deliverance—a record of the conflict of sight and faith—to sight, the situation desperate—faith pierces to the unseen, finds support, and finally triumphs. The prayer is a singular combination of midnight darkness and noonday light.

I. THE SITUATION. Described in many expressions, some of awful intensity: “By reason of mine affliction;” “out of the belly of hell;” “in the deep, in the midst of the seas;” “The floods compassed me about, all thy billows and thy waves passed over me;” “out of thy sight;” “The depths closed me round about, the weeds were wrapt about my head;” “I went down to the bottom of the mountains, the earth with her bars were about me for ever.” Situation seemed absolutely hopeless—physical surroundings the most frightful ever known—each, too, appeared a token of Divine displeasure—apparently as little hope for the soul as for the body.

II. ITS SOURCE—FROM GOD. For it was not a chance that had befallen Jonah; it was all God’s doing: “*Thou* hadst cast me into the deep; all *thy* billows and *thy* waves passed over me.” God had pursued him ever since he turned his back on him; raised the storm against him; caused the lot to fall on him; cast him into the deep; entombed him in the fish; shut him up, as it were, in despair. Yet he utters no word of reproach; God is justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges (Ps. li. 4).

III. CONSTERNATION OF HIS SOUL. The first effect was to paralyze him. “I said, I am cast out of thy sight;” “My soul fainted within me.” Horrors of his situation unexampled, escape impossible; shut up a helpless prey to the most appalling forms of destruction—Omnipotence itself crushing him: “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

IV. THE DAWN. “When my soul fainted within me I remembered the Lord.” The darkest hour of night is that which precedes the dawn—out of the very depths of helplessness and desolation faith begins to rise. Far more beautiful than the fabled sight when the goddess of beauty rose from the ocean foam is the sight of Jonah’s faith rising from the depths, both literal and spiritual. The moment of *utter helplessness* is often the turning-point in spiritual experience—at first, in justification (Rom. iii. 19, 21), afterwards in recovery from backsliding (Hos. ii. 14), and in sanctification (Rom. v. 20).

“Nothing in my hand I bring;
Simply to thy cross I cling;
Naked, come to thee for dress;
Helpless, look to thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die!”

1. In “remembering God,” Jonah recognized him as “the Lord his God;” his by national covenant, by personal choice (the fruit of Divine grace), and by his prophetic call and consecration; his, though he had attempted to flee from his presence, for does he not say, “Turn, O backsliding Israel, and I will heal your backsliding” (Jer. iii. 12, 22)? The God who first chose him in all his unworthiness must have an interest in him still. So the psalmist cried; so Jesus afterwards in the like spirit, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” 2. He looked towards God’s temple. Why? Because of the promise virtually given to Solomon (1 Kings viii. 38). He builds on God’s word, “Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope” (Ps. cxix. 49). He thinks of the temple, the sacred ark, the mercy-seat, the overshadowing cherubims, the promise to Moses, “There I will meet with you, and I will commune with you from above the mercy-seat” (Exod. xxv. 22). He takes hold of this—steadies his soul upon it—shaking off the impression of his horrible surroundings, and enters into peace. What a change!—the belly of hell turned into the gate of heaven, the howl of despair changed into the hallelujah of delight.

See here an encouragement to spirit of faith—in Jonah all lights extinguished except faith—in lowest depths, “let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.” Even when we are the authors of our own troubles, when we are in the depths by reason of sin, *nil desperandum!* “O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but *in me* is thy help.”—W. G. B.

Vers. 2—10.—*Triumph, thanksgiving.* “And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice,” etc. This is one of the most striking instances in all Scripture of the benefit of believing prayer.

“Lord, what a change within us one short hour
Spent in thy presence will prevail to make!
What heavy burdens from our bosom take!
What parched lands refresh as with a shower!
We kneel, and all around us seems to lower;
We rise, and all, the distant and the near,
Stands forth in sunny outline, brave and clear.
We kneel, how weak; we rise, how full of power!
Why therefore should we do ourselves this wrong,
That we are ever overborne with care?
That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us in prayer,
And joy, and strength, and courage, are with thee?”

(Trench.)

In the brighter part of Jonah's prayer we notice his—

I. GRATEFUL RECOGNITION OF PRAYER AS ANSWERED. (Vers. 2, 7.) Happy effect of *certainty* as to this. There are grounds for such certainty: 1. When prayer is offered *trustfully*, poured as into the ear of a Father, who has promised to hear such prayer. Answer to be *expected*, since God is true and never can deceive us. 2. When the evil dreaded is actually averted, or the benefit asked is sent. Unbelief says it would have been so at any rate; faith says, “My prayer came in unto thee, into thine holy temple.” 3. When the heart is filled with a sense of the goodness and love of God and his trustworthiness even before the answer comes, it may be felt that the prayer is heard. Confidence in God as Hearer of prayer is a most valuable Christian grace—ever associated with deep humility—infinately removed from presumption and boasting.

II. HUMBLE ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF PAST GUILT AND FOLLY. (Ver. 8.) “They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy.” This is what he had done. Human devices contrary to will of God are “lying vanities;” empty, they bring no satisfaction; lying, they promise peace and safety, but bring misery and horrible troubles. So Eve found, so Pharaoh, so Israel when they went after ways of heathen. So Jonah himself. So all who forsake Fountain of living waters and hew out to themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water. Worldly devices to get happiness apart from God are indeed “vanity of vanities.” Soul of man cannot be satisfied with husks. For God's servants to follow them is to forsake their own mercy. It is for prodigal son to change father's house for society of rioters and harlots: “Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about” (Ps. xxxii. 10). The way of duty is ever the way of safety, peace, and comfort; neglected duty is a sure forerunner of trouble; an evil conscience can never be the harbinger of sweet content.

III. PUBLIC EXPRESSION OF THANKSGIVING AND CONSECRATION. (Ver. 9.) Sacrifice—thanksgiving—vows. This is to be done openly and publicly at the proper place. No concealment by Jonah of what had taken place. He would at once proclaim his own guilt, and declare himself a monument of God's grace. Genuine repentance carries spirit of self-abasement, conscious indebtedness to God—eagerness to be more consecrated to him. The spring of this feeling—“salvation is of the Lord.” God's saving mercy keeps alive in redeemed hearts the sense of infinite obligation, and prompts to every suitable recognition. No other spiritual dynamic like this—all active obedience, all the labour of love, all patient endurance spring from this; whatever our mercies, we have the duty of grateful remembrance of them, and active consecration to

God in connection with them. *Jonah is disintombed* (ver. 10). "And the Lord spake unto the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land." At length the purpose of the chastisement is served, therefore it is removed. The great fish continues under God's control, and having carried Jonah safely through the deep, deposits him on the dry land. "As you see the foamy track the creature leaves behind gradually melting into the quiet green of the sea; as you turn and look at the prophet, washing himself from the filth of his living grave, and then standing upon the shore, inhaling the fresh breeze, rejoicing in heaven's blessed light, and—to prove and feel himself alive, to make sure that all was not a dream—shouting, perhaps, in a loud voice, 'Salvation is of the Lord,' say, 'God helping me, I shall never despair. Never. For I see that the heaviest judgment may ripen into mercy. The darkest night may have a morning. The deepest grave has a resurrection-portal. A voyage wrapped in whirling storm, and horrible with engulfing dangers, may yet end in safety on a sunny shore'" (Raleigh). *Jonah a sign*: 1. *To the Ninevites*. His history a twofold picture-lesson to them. (1) Of the consequence of spurning the authority of the God of the Hebrews; for he is no local deity, but Lord of earth and sea, of all creatures and all their actions, and has showed he could signally punish and humble Jonah on the very element to which he had betaken himself for safety from this God. It was before this God the iniquities of Nineveh had come. How must he view these? (2) Of the pardoning, restoring, and preserving mercy of God to the penitent—God not inexorable—if Nineveh should repent, it, like Jonah, would experience God's mercy. 2. *To the men of Christ's generation*. (1) *In his humiliation*. The Jews asked of Christ a sign (Matt. xii. 40)—some great display of power in the heavens. He refused; the only sign to be given would be precisely opposite, viz. that of Jonah—a sign not in heaven, but beneath the surface of the earth. As Jonah suffered humiliation for his own sin, so Jesus would suffer humiliation for the sin which he bore. Reality of his Messiahship was to be shown in his death and burial, and continuing for the same period as Jonah under the power of death. Divine, saving power of Jesus is connected with his humiliation as Sin-bearer. "As if Jesus had said, 'The signs which are to discover themselves in me are to grow darker, and not brighter: they are to be derived, not from the heavens above, but from the depths beneath—from the very chamber of the dead; yet am I not less on that account the Ambassador of Heaven; yea, surpassing Jonah in the depth of my humiliation, I still more surpass him in the dignity of my character; and the inhabitants of the heathen city, which repented at his preaching, will assuredly rise up in judgment to condemn the impenitent of this generation'" (Fairbairn). (2) *In his exaltation*. This view is rather implied than expressed by our Lord. Jonah escaping from the fish is a type of Christ rising from the dead. The Ninevites were moved to repentance by means of the type; they must have heard Jonah's history and been greatly impressed by it. The Jews had the antitype—the literal resurrection of Christ from the dead, but were not moved by it. Herein is a great lesson for all—listen to the Divine Messenger, who liveth and was dead, and is alive for ever, and hath the keys of hell and of death! "Though our Lord's pointing to the sign of Jonah, with the assurance that no other would be given them, might at first seem to betoken only trouble and disaster to his mission, yet the more thoughtful and discerning minds would not fail to discover, on further reflection, that there was also couched under it a promise of encouragement and success far beyond anything that had hitherto appeared. He was to become to the world the sign that Jonah was to Nineveh only when he entered on the resurrection-life, and in his Name repentance and remission of sins were preached to the people. And hence the great stress laid upon the fact of the resurrection by the first heralds of the gospel, and the wonderful effect produced by it upon those who heard them, not simply on account of the proof it afforded of the truth of Christ's pretensions to be the Son of God, but also, and still more, for the impressive attestation, the living witness it gave of the placability of God, and of the holy earnestness of his desire that sinners would repent and live. Precisely as in the case of Jonah, though in a manner unspeakably more solemn and affecting, the things that had befallen Jesus and the condition in which he now presented himself through his ambassadors to the people, were seen to be a singular and most magnificent provision of love on the part of God to reach their consciences, and to avert, ere it might be too late, the doom of condemnation which Divine justice had suspended over their heads" (Fairbairn).—W. G. B.

Ver. 2.—*The value of affliction (as seen in Jonah's prayer).* It: 1. Brings the man to himself. To soul-consciousness, to God-consciousness. When "in the shadow of a great affliction, the soul sits dumb." Chastened, he feels his need of chastisement, and knows from whom it comes. "*Thy waves*;" "*thy billows*;" 2. Brings the consolation of Scripture to the man. From various psalms of sorrow (now remembered) Jonah quotes. By sorrow he enters into the sorrows of others. Affliction "opens up the mine of Scripture, before seen only on the surface." 3. Brings the man to God. He "cries" to him. He comes to him. He feels that "sorrow's crown of sorrow" is in being "cast out of God's sight." 4. Brings the assurance of salvation to the man. Thus, divinely blest, affliction is good. The soul, then, triumphant over trouble, can exclaim, "Salvation is of the Lord;" "O Lord my God."—G. T. C.

Ver. 8.—*"Lying vanities."* 1. Vanities. Vanities are vain things—things that deceive. Such are idols. All things are idols that men trust out of God. Jonah had *his* idol—it was his false love for his country. How many idols!—ambition, pride, strength, wealth, influence, self, self-will. And men *observe* them as gods. But they are all "lying." They deceive. Their promises fail. *One only* is "faithful who has promised" us happiness. 2. The consequence of observing these lying vanities. Men who observe them "forsake their own mercy." How much they leave! Mercy! It is to all; but not to all alike. "Their own." In turning to any idol, men forsake God, "whose property is always to have mercy."—G. T. C.

Ver. 9.—*Thankfulness.* "Thankfulness opens the door of mercy, sets God's goodness free to be good to us, prepares us to receive blessing." It should be cultivated. It should be expressed. "*The voice of thanksgiving.*" Jonah was thankful. He had strong reason indeed to be. He *paid* the vows he had made. "*Be ye thankful.*" Every mercy is an incentive to thankfulness. And God's mercies, "new every morning and repeated every evening," and pauseless in their coming, "cannot be reckoned up." And all crowned by the gift of Christ. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable Gift." "Thanksgiving is thankslaving."

"Let never day nor night unhallow'd pass,
But still remember what the Lord hath done."

G. T. C.

Ver. 7.—*The prophet's prayer.* The contrast which Jonah depicts between his own conduct and that of the heathen with whom he came in contact is very unfavourable to himself. He appears as a coward fleeing from his duty, and cruel enough to prefer that the Ninevites should be destroyed rather than that his accuracy should be impugned. But the idolatrous sailors prayed in the storm as best they could, and they were humane enough to try to save him, even after they had been told to cast him overboard (ch. i. 13). It is not only noteworthy that Jonah wrote thus, but also that a book which compared a Jew so disadvantageously with the heathen should have been preserved by the Jewish people, who were notoriously proud and bigoted. Describe the event narrated in the preceding chapter. Point out the use our Lord made of it to typify his own death and resurrection. Pass on to apply the prophet's experience to what is represented by it among ourselves.

I. THE NEGLECT OF APPOINTED SERVICE IS A SIN. The command given to Jonah was plain enough, but he wilfully disobeyed it. Some of the excuses he may have made to conscience may be profitably suggested. 1. "*I have already done my share of service; let another undertake this.*" He had faithfully conveyed his message to King Amariah, and had doubtless proved his fidelity on other occasions, but he shrank from this new summons from God. Past service does not relieve us of present responsibilities. The indolence or the failure of others will not justify us in ignoring duty. 2. "*It is useless to preach to the Ninevites; they would laugh me to scorn.*" Ignorant of the true God as they were, it certainly was hardly to be expected that they would humble themselves before him at the bidding of a stranger preaching in their streets. Yet often those we deem to be the most hopeless are the most ready to listen. Even if they were not, it is at our peril that we refuse to obey a God-given impulse to speak to

them. 3. "*These Ninevites are the foes of my country; let one of their own citizens be raised up to warn them.*" National hostility and personal prejudice have done much to hinder God's work in all ages.

II. SUCH SIN IN GOD'S PEOPLE IS FOLLOWED BY CHASTISEMENT. 1. *Chastisement does not always follow sin.* Sometimes it precedes and prevents it. Paul's thorn in the flesh was sent, not because he was exalted above measure, but lest he should be. But often an affliction is intended to bring a sinner to a right state of mind about sin already committed. 2. *Chastisement gives us time to think.* Jonah acted on impulse, and hurriedly fled to Joppa. When cast into the sea he imagined that all was over with him; but when he was miraculously preserved he had opportunity to reflect on his own wrong-doing and on God's marvellous mercy. So the ill health which prevents work, the family affliction which keeps us within doors, the failure which sets us free from an accustomed sphere,—give us time to think of neglected duties and to recover strength by prayer. 3. *In chastisement God is near.* Jonah felt that he was not beyond Divine help. "My prayer came in unto thee." Compare Peter in prison, and Paul in the storm, and John in Patmos, and Bunyan in jail. Listen to the words of Bradford, "I thank God more of this prison and of this dark dungeon than of any parlour, yea, than of any pleasure ever I had; for in it I find God, my sweet God always." Jonah was cast out as Adam was from Paradise, and as Job was from his home, that he might learn, through prayer, to suffer and be strong.

III. CHASTISEMENT, RIGHTLY RECEIVED, BRINGS ABOUT REPENTANCE. 1. *In order to this it was necessary for Jonah to recognize God's hand in this event.* He felt it was not the result of chance nor of human action. Hence he does not say, "The sailors cast me into the deep," but "*thou*" (ver. 3); nor does he speak of "the waves and billows of the sea," but "*thy billows and thy waves*" (ver. 3). We too must learn to look beyond second causes, such as an unfortunate step or a man's injustice, and see God as the Disposer of all events. 2. *This thought led Jonah to true repentance.* He did not despair, although there seemed no hope of deliverance. He did not pray to be delivered from danger, but earnestly thanks God for his rescue from the sea, and praised him in the belly of the whale that he had been so good and merciful. The reality of his repentance was shown in this, that he gratefully and bravely did the work he had formerly refused. His vow made in trouble was faithfully kept. Pliny advised one who wished to please the gods to be the same when well as he had vowed to be when sick. A lesson for us.

IV. SUCH REPENTANCE UNDER CHASTISEMENT LEADS TO ACCEPTABLE PRAYER. His prayer shows that he had not given up hope, that he still believed that Jehovah was his God, and would do what was best with him. Strangely and soon the prayer was answered.

CONCLUSION. *We may obtain mercy as Jonah did.* We may find that the very instrument of death becomes the preserver of life, as the great fish proved an ark of safety to Jonah; and as he was cast upon the shore, so a trouble may cast us on the shore of duty, and death will cast us on the shore of heaven.—A. R.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER III.

VERS. 1—10.—PART III. JONAH'S PREACHING IN NINEVEH; THE REPENTANCE OF THE NINEVITES.

VERS. 1—3.—§ 1. *Jonah is sent a second time to Nineveh, and obeys the command.*

VER. 1.—The second time. He is forgiven and restored to his office, and the commission formerly given is renewed. Commentators have supposed that he went up to Jerusalem to pay his vows, and that the

word of the Lord came unto him there. But all unnecessary details are omitted from the account, and we know nothing about this matter. The beginning of the next verse, "arise," seems to imply that he was then in some settled home, perhaps at Gath-hepher.

VER. 2.—That great city (see note on ch. i. 2). Preaching; rendered "cry" in ch. i. 2; Septuagint, κήρυγμα. This time the proclamation is unto it, as interested in the message, not "against it," as doomed to destruction (Pusey).

Ver. 3.—*Arose, and went.* He was now as prompt to obey as formerly to flee. *Was;* i.e. when Jonah visited it. Nothing can be argued from the past tense here as to the date of the composition of the book. It is a mere historical detail, and cannot be forced into a proof that Jonah wrote after the destruction of Nineveh. An exceeding great city; literally, *a city great to God*; πόλις μεγάλη τῷ Θεῷ (Septuagint); great before God—in his estimation, as though even God must acknowledge it. So Nimrod is called (Gen. x. 9) “a mighty hunter before the Lord;” and Moses, in Acts vii. 20, is said to have been “beautiful to God.” The expression may also mean that God (Elohim, God as Governor of the world) regarded this city with interest, as intended in the Divine counsels to perform an important part. For he is not the God of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles (Rom. iii. 29). *Of three days' journey;* i.e. in circumference—about sixty miles (see note on ch. i. 2). Or the writer may mean that it took Jonah three days to visit the various quarters of this huge place. The area of the vast quadrangle containing the remains of the four cities comprised under the name *Nineveh* is estimated by Professor Rawlinson at two hundred and sixteen square miles. We ought, however, to omit Khorsabad from this computation, as it was not founded till Sargon's time, B.C. 710.

Ver. 4.—§ 2. *Jonah, undeterred by the danger of the enterprise, executes his mission at once, and announces the approaching destruction of the city. Began to enter into the city a day's journey.* Jonah commenced his day's journey in the city, and, as he found a suitable place, uttered his warning cry, not necessarily continuing in one straight course, but going to the most frequented spots. At the time of Jonah's preaching the royal residence was probably at Chalah; i.e. Nimrud, the most southern of the cities. Coming from Palestine, he would reach this part first, so that his strange message would soon come to the king's ears (ver. 6). *Yet forty days.* “Forty” in Scripture is the number of probation (see Gen. vii. 4, 12; Exod. xxiv. 18; 1 Kings xix. 8; Matt. iv. 2). The LXX. has, ἔτι τρεῖς ἡμέραι, “yet three days,” owing probably to some clerical error, as writing γ' instead of μ'. St. Augustine (‘De Civit.’ xviii. 44) endeavours to explain the discrepancy mystically as referring to Christ under different circumstances, as being the same who remained forty days on earth after his resurrection, and who rose again on the third day. *Shall be overthrown.* This is the word used for the destruction of Sodom (Gen. xix. 25, 27; Amos iv. 11). The prophet appears

to have gone on through the city, repeating this one awful announcement, as we read of fanatics denouncing woe on Jerusalem before its final destruction (Josephus, ‘Bell. Jud.’ vi. 5. 3). The threat was conditional virtually, though expressed in uncompromising terms. In the Hebrew the participle is used, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh overthrown,” as though he saw at the end of the specified time the great city lying in ruins. One sees from Isa. xxxvi. 11, 13, that Jonah could readily be understood by the Assyrians.

Vers. 5—9.—§ 3. *The Ninevites hearken to the cry of Jonah, believe in God, and repent.*

Ver. 5.—*Believed God; believed in God,* which implies trust and hope; Vulgate, *crediderunt in Deum*. They recognized Jonah as God's messenger; they recognized God's power as able to execute the threat, and they had confidence in his mercy if they repented. This great result has seemed to some incredible, and has occasioned doubts to be cast upon the history. But, as we have seen in the Introduction, Jonah's mission occurred probably at a time of national depression, when men's minds were disposed to expect calamity, and anxious to avert it by any means. Other considerations led to the same result. They had heard much of the God of the Hebrews, much of the doings of his great prophets Elijah and Elisha; and now they had in their midst one of these holy men, who, as they were informed, had been miraculously preserved from death in order to carry his message to them; for that it was thus that Jonah was “a sign unto the Ninevites” (Luke xi. 30) seems most certain. They saw the Divine inspiration beaming in his look, dictating his utterance, animating his bearing, filling him with courage, confidence, and faith. The credulity with which they received the announcements of their own seers, their national predilection for presages and omens, encouraged them to open their ears to this stranger, and to regard his mission with grave attention. Their own conscience, too, was on the prophet's side, and assisted his words with its powerful pleading. So they believed in God, and proclaimed a fast. Spontaneously, without any special order from the authorities. Before the final fall of Nineveh, the inscriptions mention, the then king ordered a fast of one hundred days and nights to the gods in order to avert the threatened danger (see a note by Professor Sayce, in G. Smith's ‘History of Babylon,’ p. 156). Put on sackcloth (comp. Gen. xxxvii. 34; 1 Kings xxi. 27; Joel i. 13). The custom of changing the dress in

token of mourning was not confined to the Hebrews (comp. Ezek. xxvi. 16).

Ver. 6.—**For word came; and the matter came;** ἡ γὰρ ῥήσις καὶ λόγος, "the word came near" (Septuagint). The tokens of penitence mentioned in ver. 5 were not exhibited in obedience to any royal command. Rather, as the impression made by the prophet spread among the people, and as they adopted these modes of showing their sorrow, the news of the movement reached the king, and he put himself at the head of it. The reigning monarch was probably either Salmanser III. or one of the two who succeeded him, Asshur-danil and Asshur-nirari, whose three reigns extended from B.C. 781 to 750. His robe (*addereth*); the word used for the "Babylonish garment" in Josh. vii. 21. The magnificence of the Assyrian kings' attire is attested by the monuments. **Sat in ashes** (comp. Job ii. 8; Esth. iv. 3).

Ver. 7.—**He caused it, etc.; literally, he caused proclamation to be made, and said,** i.e. by the heralds. The decree. The word used here (*taam*) is an Accadian term, which had become naturalized in Assyria, Persia, and Babylonia, and was applied to a mandate issued with royal authority. It is found in Dan. iii. 10, 29; iv. 6; Ezra iv. 8, etc. Jonah introduces it here as being the very word employed in describing the proclamation. **And his nobles.** The monarchs of Assyria were absolute; and if the king in the present case associated the magnates with himself, he did it in an humility occasioned by alarm, and because he saw that they were of the same mind as himself (comp. Dan. vi. 17). **Saying.** The decree extends from here to the end of ver. 9. **Man nor beast;** i.e. domestic animals, horses, mules, distinct from herd and flock. These great cities contained in their area immense open spaces, like our parks, where cattle were kept. The dumb animals were made to share in their masters' fast and sorrow, as they shared their joy and feasting; their bleating and bellowing were so many appeals to Heaven for mercy; the punishment of these innocent creatures was a kind of atonement for the guilt of their lords (comp. Hos. iv. 3; Joel i. 20; and note how the brute creation is said to share in the happiness of paradise regained, Isa. xi.). The commentators quote Virgil, 'Ecl.' v. 24, etc., where, however, the point is that the grief of the shepherds hinders them from attending to the wants of their flocks. Herodotus (ix. 24) mentions an instance of the Persians cutting the manes and tails of their horses and mules in a case of general mourning (comp. Eurip., 'Alcest.' 428, etc.; Plut., 'Alex.' 72).

Ver. 8.—**Let man and beast be covered**

with sackcloth. As we put trappings on horses in funerals. The LXX. wrongly makes this verse give an account of the execution of the edict instead of being part of the edict itself; thus: "And men and beasts were clothed with sackcloth," etc. **Cry mightily;** i.e. let man cry mightily; Septuagint, ἐκρενῶς, "with intensity;" Vulgate, *in fortitudine*. **Let them turn every one from his evil way** (Jer. xxv. 5; xxxvi. 3, 7). The edict recognizes the truth that outward acts of penitence are worthless without moral reformation—a truth which the Jews themselves had been very loth to admit (see Isa. lviii.). **And from the violence that is in their hands.** The acts of violence that their hands have committed (Job xvi. 17; Ps. vii. 3). This is the special sin of the Assyrians, always grasping after empire, oppressing other nations, and guilty of rapine and avarice at home (see Isa. x. 13, 14; xxxvii. 24, etc.; Nah. ii. 11, 12; iii. 1).

Ver. 9.—**Who can tell?** (2 Sam. xii. 22). An expression of hope that the Divine wrath may be averted by the timely repentance. It is the same form of words as in Joel ii. 14, "Perhaps God would thereby indicate that he had himself put it into their mouths" (Pusey; comp. Jer. xviii. 11). **If God;** i.e. the one God, whom the king and his people now acknowledge as supreme, like the idol-worshippers at Carmel, when they fell on their faces, crying, "Jehovah, he is the God" (1 Kings xviii. 39).

Ver. 10.—§ 4. *God accepts this repentance, and the threatened destruction is averted. God saw their works.* There is no notice in the inscriptions of this "repentance," or of any change in the polytheistic worship of the Ninevites. But the existing records of this period are singularly meagre, and show a state of calamity and depression, of internal commotions and famine. Nor is it usual in the monumental history to find mention of any events but wars and the execution of material works; moral reformations are not recorded. **God repented of the evil** (Exod. xxxii. 14). This is an anthropopathic mode of speaking; God acted as if, taking man's view of the transaction, he repented. The sentence was conditional, as Jonah well knew (ch. iv. 2), in accordance with the great principle laid down in Jer. xviii. 7, etc., viz. that if a nation against which sentence is pronounced turn from its evil way, the sentence shall not be executed. God does not change, but he threatens that man may change (see note on Amos vii. 3; and observe the same principle applied to individuals, Ezek. xxxiii. 8, 13—16). **He did it not.** The evil day was postponed. This partial repentance, though it was not permanent and made little lasting impres-

sion on the national life, showed that there was some element of good in these Assyrians, and that they were not yet ripe for destruction. It has been considered to be a proof of the unhistorical character of the Book of Jonah that no mention of any of the incidents is made in the Books of Kings and Chronicles; but there is nothing strange in

this. Those records never touch external politics except as closely connected with Israel's fortunes; and, derived as they were from national annals, it would have been unnatural for them to have narrated events happening so far away, and not likely to be introduced in the documents on which their history was founded.

HOMILETICS.

Ver. 2.—City preaching. In Palestine there were no great cities. The population was scattered through pastoral regions or gathered in small and unimportant towns. This fact gave a character to the national life of the Hebrews and to their national religiousness. It was a strange experience for a Jew like Jonah to be brought into contact with city life upon a grand, colossal scale. We modern Englishmen are more familiar with this development of human existence and activity. We need to study the relations of religion to city life, its occupations, temptations, and opportunities.

I. THE PREACHER IN A GREAT CITY NEEDS TO HAVE HIS IMAGINATION AND HIS HEART FILLED WITH AN IMPRESSION OF ITS MAGNITUDE AND IMPORTANCE. In the view of the Almighty all things earthly may well seem diminutive; yet Jehovah is represented as commissioning Jonah to preach unto Nineveh—"that great city." The population, the wealth, the industry, the political importance of a metropolis should be pondered by one who is required to discharge a public ministry among its inhabitants. Thus he will be more likely to rise to the due height of seriousness, of sympathy. He who labours in "an exceeding great city" needs to fill his soul with a conviction of the spiritual necessities and the spiritual possibilities of such a population.

II. THE PREACHER IN A GREAT CITY NEEDS TO FULFIL A MINISTRY OF WITNESS. "Cry unto it the cry." Such is the exact language in which Jehovah commissioned his servant. In the university, the private chapel, the select and cultivated congregation, there may be room for argumentative, emotional, poetical, or philosophical preaching. What a great city needs is a voice, a cry, a preaching, in the proper sense of that word. A plain and powerful witness to man's sin and need, to God's grace and power to save, a summons to repentance and surrender,—such is what the population of a great city for the most part needs.

III. THE PREACHER IN A GREAT CITY NEEDS AN UNMISTAKABLE DIVINE COMMISSION AND MESSAGE. "The preaching that *I bid thee*,"—such was to be the burden of the prophet's utterances. It is only the Word of the Lord which should be proclaimed by the minister of religion in any position, in all circumstances. But when standing in the midst of a great metropolis, how can a man, justly sensible of his own ignorance and powerlessness, proceed in his ministry, unless he is assured that the Lord has sent him, unless he can commence his testimony with the preface, "Thus saith the Lord?"

Ver. 5.—National repentance. No doubt repentance is an individual exercise of heart; yet when the bulk of a community is pervaded by similar sentiments, it may be a national exercise also. Such seems to have been the case with the population of Nineveh; Jonah's witness was believed by one and by another, until belief became general; and, as penitence, fear, and supplication spread from man to man, the city seemed moved by one common impulse, leading the whole population to the feet of God.

I. SUCH REPENTANCE BEGINS IN FAITH. The inhabitants of the great city credited the message of the Hebrew prophet; that is, they believed that the Supreme Ruler and Judge was displeased with them because of their sinfulness; that they were liable to the punishment which the godless, the vicious, the criminal deserve; and perhaps also that, notwithstanding their dangerous condition, there was some hope for them in the Divine mercy, if they would but turn unto God. Certainly the gospel of Christ does not ask the sinner to yield his belief merely to the tidings of God's justice and holiness; it invites him also to give credence to its offers of salvation.

II. SUCH REPENTANCE MANIFESTS ITSELF IN CONTRITION AND IN ALL THE SIGNS

OF SINCERE REGRET AND DISTRESS BECAUSE OF SIN. There is something very affecting in the spectacle of a nation mourning and lamenting because of a great bereavement, when an honoured sovereign, a trusted minister, a mighty warrior, passes away. But the pathos and the moral significance of that national mourning are far greater which is prompted by a general consciousness of sin, by a conviction of national wrong-doing, by humiliation before an omniscient and righteous God. The tokens of such contrition, as recorded in the text to have been displayed in Nineveh, were appropriate to that time and community, and accorded with the customs of the East. But whatever be the manifestations of sorrow, the first essential is that it be real, as in the sight of the heart-searching God.

III. SUCH REPENTANCE PERVADES THE WHOLE COMMUNITY. In most cities are individuals who sigh and cry for the abominations done by the people. Even a few are as salt to preserve the mass from corruption. For the sake of a very few a city may be spared the doom deserved. But a nation in mourning for sin is a sight as sublime as it is affecting. Nineveh is in this respect an example to other sinful cities. The king led the way, and his subjects followed. Even the least, the lowest, joined in the solemn act of penitence. Such repentance is indeed repentance unto life; it cannot be unheeded or unrewarded by Heaven.

Ver. 6.—*A king's contrition.* It is an illustration of the power of truth, of the commanding majesty of the faithful and fearless preacher, which we witness in this narrative. An unknown Hebrew, with nothing to recommend him, nothing to enforce attention, comes to a foreign city, passes through the public places, reproaches the citizens for their sins, denounces destruction upon the inhabitants as the punishment due to them because of their wickedness. And what is the result? Is it neglect, or derision, or incredulity? On the contrary, the people feel the justice of the rebukes, acknowledge their ill desert, humble themselves before God, and entreat mercy, forbearance, pardon. What a testimony to the reality of the moral law, to the authority of conscience! Jonah preaches, and the king of a mighty empire divests himself of the insignia of power and rule, abases himself before God in sackcloth and ashes!

I. KINGS ARE SOMETIMES THE LEADERS OF THEIR PEOPLE IN SIN. Surrounded by everything that can minister to selfish gratification, beset by flatterers, possessed in some instances of absolute power, it is not to be wondered at that the occupants of thrones are often the foremost in cruelty, in vice, in self-indulgence. They may be to blame, but in a just estimate their perilous circumstances will be considered. Their temptations are many, and their faithful friends are few.

II. KINGS ARE ACCORDINGLY SOMETIMES RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MISERIES OF THEIR SUBJECTS. When royal ambition has led to culpable warfare and slaughter; when headstrong purposes have issued in national disaster, impoverishment, and disgrace; when luxury in palaces has entailed hunger upon the occupants of hovels;—in such cases sovereigns have a terrible account to render to him who is no respecter of persons, who is King of kings and Lord of lords.

III. KINGS ARE SUITABLY EMPLOYED IN HEADING EVERY ELEVATING AND PROFITABLE MOVEMENT. Happily there are many examples of such conduct on the part of those occupying the very highest stations. Institutions and agencies for imparting knowledge, for refining life, for relieving suffering, are better deserving the "patronage" and the attention of royalty than schemes of pleasure or methods of destruction.

IV. WHEN KINGS AS WELL AS SUBJECTS HAVE SINNED IT BECOMES ALL TO UNITE IN SACRIFICES OF CONTRITION AND IN VOWS OF REFORMATION. The frank, dignified, right-minded conduct of the King of Nineveh raises him in our esteem. No man is disgraced by admitting his faults. And every man, even though he be a king, is in his right place when low on his knees in penitence and in prayer.

Vers. 7, 8.—*Ceremonial and moral repentance.* It must have been a striking and picturesque spectacle that was presented by Nineveh when the decree of the king and nobles was carried out, when a general fast was observed, when sackcloth and ashes were worn by man and beast, and when general prayer ascended in a mighty cry to Heaven. But to the reflective mind it must have been still more interesting to observe the population turning from their evil ways and refraining from acts of violence,

I. THE OUTWARD SIGNS OF PENITENCE AND CONTRITION ARE GOOD WHEN, AND ONLY WHEN, THEY ARE THE EXPRESSION OF GENUINE FEELING AND PURPOSE. We feel this to be the case with reference to ordinary human sorrow. The mere garb and semblance of mourning, being but conventional, is of little value. It is felt to be appropriate when the mourner can say—

“I have that within which passes show,
These but the trappings and the signs of woe.”

How much more do the religious interest and value of “sackcloth and ashes,” “fasting and prayers,” depend upon the sincerity of the emotions thus expressed!

II. RESOLUTIONS TO REFORM AND AMEND ARE THE BEST EVIDENCE OF THE GENUINENESS AND ACCEPTABLENESS OF REPENTANCE. It is very much to the credit alike of the prophet and of those to whom he preached, that the Ninevites should have felt and expressed the absolute necessity of moral amendment in order to the enjoyment of forgiveness, favour, and acceptance with God. There must have been something searching in Jonah’s preaching, and something very responsive in the heart and conscience of the Ninevites, to have produced such a state of mind as that here indicated. It is especially observable that the citizens turned “every one from his evil way.” The ways of sin are devious, numerous, and varied; sinners have turned every one to his own way; true repentance shows itself in a resolve on the part of each individual offender to forsake his own sins. “Violence,” whether proneness to national schemes for attacking other peoples, or assaults upon peaceful citizens, seems to have been the prevailing sin; for of this, it is said, the people chiefly repented.

APPLICATION. The whole nature, body and soul, is implicated in sin; and the whole nature accordingly should concur in repentance.

Ver. 9.—*Hoping for mercy.* The pathos of this question is increased as we call to mind the ignorance of the Ninevites regarding the true God. Their own religion was as likely to conceal as to make known the real character of the Deity. And what they had heard from Jonah was but very slender ground upon which to proceed in their approaches to Heaven. Hence the uncertainty, the commingling of fear with hope in the language they employed: “Who can tell,” etc.?

I. THE NEED OF MERCY. This appears from considering (1) human sin; (2) Divine justice; and (3) the express threatenings of the Divine Word. All this was very apparent in the case of the Ninevites, and accounts for their attitude of contrition and supplication. But the same holds good of men of every nation and in every state of society.

II. THE GROUND OF HOPE. 1. With the Ninevites this could have been nothing but some instinct in their own heart. A Creator who has implanted pity in the breasts of his creatures cannot surely be destitute of that quality himself. 2. With those to whom the gospel is preached the case is otherwise; they have not to ask, “Who can tell?” for the Lord of all has made himself known to them as delighting in mercy, and has given his own Son to be the Mediator and the Pledge of mercy.

III. THE OBJECT OF ENTREATY. 1. With regard to God, the aversion of his anger. Applying human language to the infinite God, the suppliants hoped for his turning and repentance. 2. With regard to themselves, the suppliants desired that they might not perish, that the doom deserved and threatened might not come upon them, that, in a word, they might be saved. It is not easy to form any judgment as to the measure in which desire for spiritual blessing entered into the prayers of the men of Nineveh. But enlightened Christians are constrained to feel that the salvation which they seek is not merely release from suffering and penalty, but restoration to the favour and the obedience of God.

Ver. 10.—*Man’s repentance and God’s.* The simplicity with which this great fact is recorded is quite in accordance with the usual style in which the Old Testament is written. Inspired men wrote of God as they would have written of a great king. Thus only, indeed, can we receive or communicate intelligible ideas regarding the Supreme. It is easy to criticize such statements as that of this text by calling them “anthropopathic;” but the fact is that it is not degrading but exalting the conception of God, to

attribute to him, not merely reason and will, but the capacity of the highest, purest, and tenderest emotions.

I. HUMAN REPENTANCE THE CONDITION OF THE DIVINE. 1. Repentance involves the turning with loathing from the paths of sin. Yet this is very difficult to account for. How, why, should those who have addicted themselves to sin, because of its pleasantness or its profitableness, regard it in a quite different, a contrary light? 2. Repentance involves an apprehension of the majesty and justice of the moral law. Whilst men look earthward they will never repent, *i.e.* of sin itself; but when they direct their gaze heavenward, and perceive the splendour and beauty of an eternal, an inflexible law of right, then, by comparison with that, their own sin seems odious and degrading.

II. DIVINE REPENTANCE IS THE RESPONSE TO THE HUMAN. 1. The repentance attributed to God does not involve any real change in the character or the purposes of God. He ever hates the sin, and pities and loves the sinner; this is so both before and after the sinner's repentance. 2. Divine repentance is therefore the same principle acting differently in altered circumstances. If the prospect of punishment answers the same purpose as that intended by the punishment itself, there is no inconsistency in its remission; for punishment is not an end, it is only a means to goodness, to the reign of the law of righteousness. 3. Divine repentance is apparent in the forgiveness and acceptance of the contrite sinner. 4. And also in the moral influence which it exercises over the hearts of those who are reconciled. Gratitude is excited, love is awakened, consecration is elicited, obedience is confirmed.

APPLICATION. It is to be observed that these great principles of the Divine government are exhibited in all their power in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. In the cross God summons mankind to repentance; in the cross God shows how he himself can repent.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—3.—*Peremptory reiteration and prompt obedience.* We see Jonah entering here on the second stage of his strange career. And it is adjusted logically to the first. His recent experiences and their resulting sentiments form an obvious preparation for the duty next to hand. He has sinned and suffered and repented. He has deserted, and been captured and surrendered unconditionally. He has prayed, and been forgiven and set free. And it is natural that duty should be faced from a different standpoint henceforward. He is in another mind now, and ready for a new departure in personal effort and official tactics. And the opportunity to make it is promptly furnished.

I. THE SPIRITUAL DESERTER'S RETURN IS FOLLOWED BY HIS RE-ENGAGEMENT. Jonah had discarded much and been stripped of more. He had refused to act, and had *ipso facto* forfeited his commission. Now with a return to his right mind there is reinstatement in his lost calling, and re-employment in his forsaken work. We account for this on the principle that: 1. *There is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared.* There is a forgiveness that only encourages transgression. Such is weak forgiveness, implying a want of firmness in the forgiver, on which there is the temptation to make further aggressions. Such is careless forgiveness, that takes no hostages for the future, nor even makes terms. Such is inequitable forgiveness, in which principle is ignored, and the offence hushed up without regard to the claims of justice. But the Divine "more excellent way" of pardon is at once equitable and defined and strong. Amends for the past and amendment for the future are both exacted sternly. God forgives when he has punished, and on the unbending condition that the offence cease. Then punishment is mingled with so much of mercy, and requirement is sweetened by such promise of grace, that gratitude mates with reverence, and obedience is the firstborn issue of the happy tie. The insubordinate, mutinous Jonahs having been ironed and subdued, are at length released, that in after-action they may exemplify obedience unquestioning and without a semblance of the old self-will. 2. *Spiritual office attaches to existing spiritual relation.* The Divine government is paternal. God's officers are first of all his children. Their fitness for the discharge of spiritual functions is due to their previous endowment with spiritual gifts. If unspiritual men and whilst unspiritual

they may be formally in office, but are incapable of spiritual work. When Jonah fell for the time being out of the spiritual connection, he ceased to be a prophet of God. He could not be at once a recruiter and a deserter, an ambassador and a rebel. Now he has come back, and in resumed spiritual relations he finds the condition of restored religious functions. He may again speak for God now that again he is on God's side. No man goes legitimately on God's errand who cannot do it *con amore*. Spiritual officers are to be sought exclusively by promotion from the spiritual ranks. Every true shepherd has been first of all a sheep in God's fold, and to each relation has come in by Christ, the Door.

II. GOD'S PROGRAMME IS STEREOTYPED, WHATEVER ELSE MAY CHANGE. (Ver. 2.) God has not changed, although Jonah has. The prophet's mutinous outbreak has not moved him a hairbreadth from his purpose. What he meant at first he means still, and will have. So the prophet is brought back exactly to the point at which he had broken away, and told to begin where he had left off. 1. *God is moved still by the same compassion for the doomed.* "That great city." The repetition of these words on each occasion of the mention of Nineveh is significant. It shows that God had regard to the fact of its size; that all through the arrangement of measures for its warning he was moved by the thought of its teeming population given over to death. Hence it is styled in ver. 3 "a great city to God," i.e. in his estimation, and in ch. iv. 11 the Divine compunction is directly connected with the existence of its hundred and twenty thousand children, not yet responsible, but bound to perish with it. The Divine compassion is a glorious factor in human life. Its attitude is catholic. It embraces in wide paternal arms the heathen that knows not God, the infant that could not know him if revealed. Its outflow is unstinted, averting myriad evils altogether, softening the inevitable, indemnifying the past by the amends of rich compensatory good. Believe in God's pity. It is a splendid fact. It is hunger's provision, and pain's anæsthetic, and misery's comforter, and humanity's good Samaritan in the darkest reaches of its Jericho-journey, and the most calamitous experiences by the way. 2. *God's prescribed step remains the fitting one to take.* What other methods it was within the resources of Divine omnipotence to use for the conversion of the Ninevites, we cannot tell. What we know is that the proclamation of the truth was the ordinary method, and that God keeps to it. "The sword of the Spirit," with which he pierces the soul and kills its sin, is the "Word of God." "The foolishness of preaching" is that special presentment of the Word by which in all ages it has pleased God to save them that believe. And there is, if we could see it, the perfection of fitness in this ordinance. Truth is light revealing things as they are and as they ought to be. Truth is motive, presenting considerations that move intelligence to seek that better state. Truth is force, conveying to the soul and constituting in it the Divine omnipotent energy in the strength of which the new man arises, and the new life is lived. Truth is comfort, unfolding the soul-rest and joy of the free which climb the throne of being when the new *régime* of righteousness begins. Then truth preached with the living voice and personal element is all this and more. To the influence proper to the abstract truth is added its influence as concentered in a human life. As light it is intensified by the added ray of an illustrative experience. As power it is reinforced by the impulse of a co-operant human will. As comfort it is at once confirmed and sweetened by personal testimony and fellow-feeling. There is no conceivable substitute in the enginery of grace for the personal preaching to sinners of the word of life. 3. *Repentance is best proved by obedience in the matter at which there was stumbling before.* Jonah had passed through a severe discipline for the conquest of his self-will. Whether or not it was really overcome, this reiterated commission would test. And there was a needs-be that the point should be settled. All judgment is "unto righteousness;" to bring us to it if afar from it, to restore us to it if we have strayed. And it is this, not in the general, but in the particular. It is to check particular faults and produce the opposite virtues. In this object God will see that it succeeds. He cannot fail as men fail. His chains must bind. He gives no disputable instructions, nor moves to their observance by futile action. In tow of his disciplinary privateers, when they return to port, will be found, as a prize of war, every skulking craft that had been trying to do the enemy's work. The proof that his measures have not been nugatory is the circumstantial realization of their purpose. The iniquity he visits with the rod

he must see put away. The forsworn task he enforces with the strong arm he must see done. "God looks upon men when he has afflicted them and has delivered them out of their affliction, to see whether they will mend of that fault particularly for which they were corrected; and therefore in that thing we are concerned to see to it that we receive not the grace of God in vain" (Matthew Henry).

III. THE DISCIPLINED SERVANT IS AN IMPROVED SERVANT. (Ver. 3.) The stern discipline has done its work at last. The rebellious fit is over, and the unruly servant is pliant to his Master's will. What evils of terror and pain and agony he might have escaped if he had only done this at first! But God bends all things to his purpose, and Jonah's rebellious freak among the rest. His message to Nineveh is not only done, but better done than it could possibly have been at first. 1. *Jonah is better prepared for it than he was.* He has sinned and been forgiven, has suffered and been delivered, has prayed and received an answer. And each experience is of the nature of a qualification for the better doing of his work. "Rejoicing in the sweetness of a fresh and full reconciliation; lightened in spirit by tasting in God a mercy larger than he could formerly have thought of; cleansed from the darkness that brooded over his soul, and the countless images of terror and of evil which rose up before him while he was fleeing from his God in rebellion, and his God was pursuing him in wrath" (Martin), he would approach his Master's work as never before. Reverence for a God so great and good, and gratitude to a God so merciful and kind, would spring together and work together the new mind and way. Affliction, moreover, had left its mark on him. He was subdued and chastened. He knew experimentally his impotence and God's omnipotence. He could speak by book of the terrors of the Lord, and the fatuity of hoping to defy him and escape. And his preaching would have a reality and vividness about it attainable only by way of his late experience. Then "he had called upon the Lord in circumstances almost fitted to shut out the possibility of hope." If there be a case on record pre-eminently fitted to confirm the declaration, "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint," it is his. Would he not resume his post with livelier loyalty and implicit sense of duty, when he could resume it with the blessed protestation, "I love the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplication: because he hath inclined his ear unto me, I will call upon him as long as I live"? (Martin). 2. *He does it implicitly.* (Ver. 3.) "So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh." Submission is now as thorough as at first self-will was resolute. The change is excellent, and its occurrence a vindication of the treatment that has brought it about. An infinitely wise and holy will is God's. The ideal of a man's life is to believe in that will, and will it, and find his joy in doing it. From irreconcilable variance to absolute harmony with that ideal is Jonah's change, a change that means his spiritual readjustment. It will mean no less to us all. "The felicity of heaven greatly consists in perfect submission in all things to the government of Jehovah the Saviour. The misery of this world is the want of that temper of mind; the very end and design of grace is to restore us to it; and so far as we are under the influence of the grace of life, we are brought back to it; the more grace the more submission; and grace will not cease its operation in the saints till every thought is brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (Jones). A man following absolutely the lines of the infinitely perfect will; a man moving thereon with fullest faith and sympathy and zest; a man starting therein as a child starts for the haven of a mother's arms; a man incapable of other thought than following them to the highest good, and till his life's end;—that is a man in the highest sense, and to the highest spiritual effect. 3. *He goes closely by his instructions.* (Ver. 3.) "According to the word of the Lord." This terse record is instinct with suggestiveness. He went because he was told, and where he was told, and when he was told, and as he was told, and to do the thing he was told, and in the way he was told. His conduct now was exemplary as before it was intolerable. And his case is typical. His instructions were the preacher's instructions for all lands and times. "Preach the preaching that I bid thee." It was this Moses preached (Deut. xviii. 18), and Jeremiah (Jer. i. 7), and Paul (1 Cor. xi. 23), and Christ himself (John vii. 16; xii. 50). It is this we must preach. What else is worth preaching, or can or dare be preached? As to the substance of his message, the preacher has no discretionary power. He is not to preach science, nor philosophy, nor sentiment, nor his own notions, nor human knowledge. He is rightly to divide the Word of life. That is all.

"There is not the greatest minister, not the most learned or acute, but must observe this rule; not James, not John, not Peter, not all the troop of the apostles, may once vary from this: he who shall bring other doctrine, let him be accursed by us; he who speaketh of himself, let him be refused by us; howsoever godly or holy he do pretend himself, yet if he decline that word which should be his direction, let him be declined by us" (Abbot). Here is an admirable maxim for universal use, "according to the Word of the Lord." It is good, and wise, and true, and pertinent to every case, and the key to every puzzle of life. Are you a sinner? there is salvation for you, full, and free, and present, and "according to the Word of the Lord." Are you a seeker? expect to find, for salvation is in Christ, and of those that come to him there are none cast out, "according to the Word of the Lord." Are you a saint? then fight and persist and hope; for that you are "kept by the power of God," and will yet "reap if you faint not," is "according to the Word of the Lord."—J. E. H.

Vers. 4-10.—*A heathen city in sackcloth.* Let us try to realize the scene. An Eastern city sleeps in the rosy morning light. Its moated ramparts tower a hundred feet in air, and, dotted with fifteen hundred lofty towers, sweep around it a length of over sixty miles. Already the gates are open for the early traffic, and conspicuous among the crowd a stranger enters. The stains of travel are on his dress, and he looks with curious awe at the figures of winged colossal bulls that keep silent symbolic guard over the gate by which he passes in. Within, things new and strange appear at every step. The houses, sitting each in its own grounds, are bowered in green. The streets are spanned at intervals with triumphal arches, whose entablature is enriched by many a sculptured story. On every eminence is a palace, or monument, or idol temple, guarded by symbolic monsters in stone, and adorned in carving of bas-relief with sacred symbols. The markets fill, the bazaars are alive with multifarious dealing, soldiers and war-chariots parade the streets, and the evidences of despotic power and barbaric wealth and heathenish worship, with their inevitable accompaniments of luxury, corruption, and violence, abound on every side. The stranger is deeply moved. Surprise gives place to horror, then horror warms into righteous indignation; and with trumpet voice and dilating form and eye of fire he utters the words of doom, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed." Through street, and park, and barrack, and bazaar the direful message rings. There is momentary incredulity, then swift alarm, then utter consternation. Like wildfire the news, and with it the panic spreads. It reaches the nobles in their palaces. It penetrates to the king upon his throne. It moves society to its depths. And the result is the scenes of mourning and self-abasement our text records.

I. REPENTANCE COMES READILY TO UNTUTORED MINDS. Never did preacher see better or speedier fruit of his labours than Jonah did in heathen Nineveh. By a single sermon but a few sentences long he sent the entire city into penitence and sackcloth. Granted that there was much to account for this in the preaching itself. It was bold and oracular and explicit, and spoken with the conviction that is most of all contagious. It was enforced by such a narrative of his own recent history as made him nothing less than a sign to the men of Nineveh (Luke xi. 30). Granted too "the great susceptibility of Oriental races to emotion, the awe of one Supreme Being which is peculiar to all the heathen religions of Asia, and the great esteem in which soothsaying and oracles were held in Assyria from the very earliest times" (Keil). Yet still the repentance, so widespread, so real, so sudden, has in it something phenomenal in the religious sphere. Not thus did the prophets and their utterances move the Jews. They "beat one, and killed another, and stoned another," and disregarded all as a general rule (Matt. xxi. 35). A greater than Jonah, the Truth himself, spoke to them, and spoke in vain (Matt. xii. 41). Unbelieving and lengthened contact with truth had no doubt produced the exceptional hardness of the Jewish nature. The works done in vain in the gospel-hardened Chorazin or Bethsaida would, as we know, have brought Tyre and Sidon to repentance in dust and ashes. Even filthy Sodom would have cleansed its way, and been spared on earth, had it seen the mighty works by which Capernaum was yet utterly unmoved (Matt. xi. 20-24). So when the soil of the Jewish nature, plied with the truth-seed till trodden hard by the sowers' feet, refused utterly to produce, the apostles found a fertile seed-bed in the virgin soil of the Gentile mind (Acts xiii. 44-48). An analogous fact is the success of Christ among the common

people (Mark xii. 37), when the scribes and Pharisees, who were more familiar with revelation, remained uninfluenced almost to a man (John vii. 48, 49). It would seem as if Divine truth, like potent drugs with the body, is effective most of all in its first contacts with the soul. Lengthened and frequent contact with truth, if it does not regenerate, only thickens the spiritual skin, and much hearing means little heeding as a general rule.

II. REPENTANCE IMPLIES A BELIEF OF THE TRUTH. (Ver. 5.) Belief of the truth is a logical first step to every religious attainment (Heb. xi. 6). Truth is the revelation of things as they are—of character, of destiny, of duty. Until that has been received there can be no spiritual beginning. While not only danger but the disease itself is disbelieved in, the patient will take no step toward cure. "He that cometh to the Lord must believe that he is." This is the least modicum of knowledge conceivable in any intelligent comer. So he that comes away from sin must believe that sin is. Unless he does, and until he does, he has no reason for moving. He that comes by repentance and faith, moreover, must believe in the propriety and dutifulness of these acts. Forecasting the possible result of Timothy's ministry in the turning of the wicked, Paul says, "If God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth." This aspiration brings out the point exactly. Repentance and the acknowledging of the truth imply and involve each other. Impenitence is largely the result of incredulity. If a man really believed what God says about sin—its demerit, deformity, and destroying character—the grief and hatred and turning which constitute repentance must arise. The impenitent man either does not believe God at all, or he gives him a weak and heedless credence that is never acted on, and so is practical disbelief. Let God's word of dogma, God's word of promise, be truly and adequately believed, and God's word of precept will be infallibly obeyed. A man may contemplate his sin indifferently and commit it with even pulse, but the power to do so means that the Scripture testimony against it has been silenced, or the witness put out of the court of conscience altogether. "It is to be observed that faith operates differently according to the matter believed. When faith looks to the redeeming love of Christ, faith worketh by love. 'We love him who first loved us.' When faith looks to the infinite wrath of God, faith worketh fear, and we 'flee for refuge to the hope set before us.' When faith looks at Christ, bearing in his love the wrath from which he calls us to flee, faith worketh by grief; and, 'looking on him whom we have pierced, we mourn.' And all these operations of faith—love, fear, grief—enter into that repentance unto salvation which true faith produces" (Martin).

III. REPENTANCE IS AT ONCE DEEPENED BY FEAR AND SWEETENED BY HOPE. The Ninevites feared to "perish" through the "fierce anger" of God, yet hoped he might "turn away" from it and "repent." Fear is a rather ignoble emotion, but it is not without its place and power in the religious sphere. A man's *life*, in the widest sense, is his most precious trust. To gain the whole world would not compensate for the loss of it. Hence the universal instinct of self-preservation. "All that a man hath will he give for his life." And by appealing to this instinct, as it so often does, the Scripture assumes its lawfulness (Luke xiii. 3; Matt. x. 28). The loss of soul and body in hell is a loss unparalleled and irreparable, and which it would be madness not to fear. The Ninevites feared it. Their dread of it was a chief cause of the penitence they showed. And naturally so. To a man as yet unspiritual, the bearing of his sin on his own fate is the supreme consideration. When he becomes better he will be amenable to higher motives, but fear as opposed to carnal security is always a prominent factor in the early stages of the religious life. But the Ninevites' repentance did not spring from fear alone; it based on hope as well. "Who can tell," etc. ? (ver. 9). The hope here was far from assured. It was a mere glimmer in the soul. Yet still it was hope. Escape was deemed not impossible,—that was all. And there was a shadow of ground for hope, which the keen eye of the doomed did not fail to detect. They had an intuitive idea that God would make some difference between a penitent city and an impenitent one. Then the catastrophe was not to come for forty days, and, in the granting of so long a respite, they would see the door left open for a possible change before its close. Besides, Jonah's own deliverance in a more dire extremity still, and of which he evidently told them in his preaching (Luke xi. 30), would suggest the possibility of a like escape to them with like repentance. If the preacher had been saved in the very moment of imminent

death, the fact was ground of hope to the people who had forty days' reprieve. Thus the faith in which the Ninevites' repentance originated "wrought by fear and hope combined. The evil dreaded was sufficient to break and humble all their pride. And the hope they entertained was sufficient to prevent their fear from turning into mere despair" (Martin). It is the element of hope in it that marks off the sorrow which worketh only death from the sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation. There is a persuasion of men which bases on the terrors of the Lord, and a beseeching of them also by the mercies he has shown. And what is this but to make fear and hope the limbs of a stable arch to carry the repentance "that needeth not to be repented of"?

IV. REPENTANCE INCLUDES GRIEF FOR THE PAST AND REFORMATION FOR THE FUTURE. The Ninevites "put on sackcloth," etc., and "turned them every one from his evil way." There was compendious logic in this. Sackcloth and ashes were the conventional livery of abasement and grief (2 Cor. vii. 9, 10), and these have a distinct place in the spiritual connection (Joel ii. 13). But they must be spiritual. Not the result of wounded pride, or baffled purpose, or ruined prospects. These things are utterly carnal. They involve no sense of sin's demerit, no horror of its impurity. They are merely aspects and expressions of selfishness. Every detected rogue can see that he has blundered in his sinning, and from that standpoint grieves. Saul does it, exclaiming, in the bitterness of failure, "I have played the fool exceedingly." But the sorrow "after a godly sort" is a radically different thing, and done in a different spiritual atmosphere altogether. And David crying with contrite and humbled spirit, "I acknowledge my transgression, and my sin is ever before me," is a perfect moral contrast. His is a sorrow that has God in it. Sin is viewed in its relation to God, from God's standpoint, and with feelings like to God's. Job sorrowed thus with God when he said, "Now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself," etc. Such sorrow has hope in it, and so "the promise and potency" of a reformed life. Under its impulse the Ninevites "turned every one from his evil way." Reformation is the work meet for repentance—the crystalline form revealing the genuine metal. "Numbers will do everything in religion but turning from sin to the Saviour; and where this is not done, all the rest is lost labour—their religion is hypocrisy, their hope is mere delusion, and their latter end is bitterness and woe; for all who refuse to depart from sin must perish in sin. In vain shall we fast for sin, if we do not fast from sin; and what blessings can all our prayers bring down while we refuse to turn from our evil ways?" (Jones).

V. REPENTANCE CRIES TO GOD IN PRAYER. The words of Jonah were like an earthquake in the vast city. From king to beggar there was consternation and dismay. The destroying armies of heaven were at hand. Men can neither disbelieve, nor doubt, nor resist, nor fly, nor survive. What remains but to submit and beg for mercy—the last resort of the sinner, but the very first command of God? And so the king descends from his throne, and the beggar rises from his straw, and a stricken universal cry for help goes up in the ear of Heaven. In such an exercise true repentance is at home. Prayer is the spontaneous, the instinctive expression of the soul's new-found need. A true sense of sin, together with an apprehension of God's mercy in Christ which all genuine repentance includes, leads logically to prayer. Given a sick man thoroughly alarmed, and a willing physician accessible, and the application for help will infallibly follow.

"On bended knees, replete with godly grief,
See where the mourner kneels to seek relief;
From his full heart pours forth the gushing plea,
'God of the lost, be merciful to me!'
The light of life descends in heavenly rays,
And angels shout and sing, 'Behold, he prays!'"

VI. REPENTANCE IS TO BE NATIONAL WHEN THE SIN IS NATIONAL. The Ninevites' was a "public, general, royal fast." So when the Divine judgments menaced Jerusalem in the reign of Jehoiakim, all the people proclaimed a fast (Jer. xxxvi. 9). Then it was observed by all the people in accordance with a royal edict. So Jehoshaphat "feared and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah" (2 Chron. xx. 3) when Moab and Ammon invaded the kingdom. In the nature of the case, the repentance must correspond to the transgression. The people must repent who have sinned, and in the character and relations in which the sin has been committed. That their action in the matter was suggested

and shaped by royal edict detracted in nothing from the value of the Ninevites' repentance. The obligations of religion rule every relation of life. Each community ought to be religious, and the rulers of each to consider their office sacred to the accomplishment of this result. Monarchs should reign for the glory of God, and they do so when they "take order" for the observance of religious worship with due regard to the prerogatives of the Church, and to the right of private judgment. "It is an evil and dangerous principle that would exempt the rulers of a kingdom from being in subjection in their public capacity to the Word of Christ, and from being under obligation in their government to rule for the promotion of his kingdom. It strikes at the root of all family as well as national religion; and while it would confine Christ to the separate consciences of individual men, it would refuse him the right to govern the households and communities into which in Providence they are combined" (Martin). The practical lesson of this is read to us by Jesus Christ (Luke xi. 32). The existence of saints in the world is a virtual condemnation of all the sinners. With similar privileges and opportunities, why are these spiritually changed, and those not? Unless the believers have done more than their duty, the unbelievers have fallen woefully short. Every saint in a Christian congregation will stand up in the judgment a silent but damning witness against its unconverted members who remain so under equal inducements to repentance. And the case is worse when the balance of privilege was on the unbelievers' side. It was so as between Nineveh and Israel. The one was brought to repentance by means incomparably less than those which had proved entirely inoperative with the other. It will be so as between each of them and us, if we are blind to our greater light, and insensible to our more potent spiritual agencies. "A greater than Jonah is here"—greater in person, greater in office, greater in power, and greater in influence. Have we resisted him? Have we withstood his mightier striving? Then who so inexcusable, who so hopeless, as we? What guilt so deep, what condemnation so great, as ours (Heb. x. 28)?—J. E. H.

VERS. 1—4.—*Jonah's second call.* "And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee," etc.

I. REINSTATEMENT OF THE PROPHET. "The word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second time." Jonah's rebellion had had a twofold effect on his relations to God—broken up his personal fellowship with him, and suspended his official function as a prophet. God's grace restored him both personally and officially, as afterwards in the case of Peter; but, as in this case, the restoration of the first did not necessarily include that of the second. Servants of God who have fallen need a second call to public service; it needs to be shown that God trusts them with his work again. It is natural for ministers who have been publicly dealt with and censured to desire to be reopened; but this cannot be rightly done without some token that God again calls them.

II. THE NEW COMMISSION. "Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee." We know not where Jonah was—where he had been landed—what had happened in the interval. Imagination can picture the prophet on the shore making for Gath-hepher, and probably arriving there. Again the message is preceded by the word of stimulation, "Arise;" brace thyself, prepare for arduous work; and this time it would bring a lesson of warning—remember how easily you were turned aside before! The work was not to be made easier out of regard to the prophet's proved weakness, but the prophet must seek a higher strength. The greatness of Nineveh is again dwelt on—"Nineveh, that great city"—"an exceeding great city, and great unto God" (ver. 3). "Think of a whole vast city, full of this humanity, of this God-breathed life; and is it surprising that a great city should be great unto God? What flashings of intellectual lights in one day!—as many almost as the separate rays of the sun. What throbbings of moral or immoral purpose, the moral faculty acting in each! What a sighing of wandering spirits, unconsciously or blindly seeking the lost portion! What a swell and heave of the great tide of animated life composed of the blended individual streams! London is like a great and wide sea of life. The daily agitations which stir in her bosom are felt in feeblar pulsings even in far-off shores; and in multitudes which no man can number her thoughts and acts, and in these her checked moral history, are going up to God's heaven. Such was Nineveh

of old, and for such reasons as we have named, it was still, as at first, a city great to God" (Raleigh). The message is somewhat different from before: "Preach the preaching [literally, 'cry the cry'] that I bid thee." This may either mean, "the cry that I will bid thee at the time," or "the cry that I already bade thee." Either Jonah was to go, like an admiral, with sealed orders to be opened at a certain place; or he was to say what he had been ordered to say before, but had shrunk from saying. The latter view is probably correct—a further trial of Jonah's sincerity and submissiveness—in the very matter which had dissatisfied him before, he was called to place himself in God's hands, and to engage to do precisely as God would direct. In all cases, true preaching is "the preaching that I bid thee." It is a simple message from God; it becomes effectual when it is given as such. All very well to be able to reconcile it with reason and commend it to the conscience, and to set it forth with the enrichments of learning and the embellishments of art; but there is danger lest its true simple nature be thereby disguised; nothing should be allowed which prevents it from being presented as a simple message from God: "the preaching that I bid thee." "How often did our Lord disclaim the authorship of all that he said, and assign it continually to the Father! 'Jesus answered them, and said, My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me; the words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself' (John vii. 16). Himself personally cognizant of all truth, he acts as the Church's Teacher under the responsibility and within the exact limits of his office. Officially ordained the Father's Ambassador, he confines himself to a declaration of the Father's words. . . . Exactly as the Father had said unto him, so he speaks" (Martin).

III. THE OBEDIENCE OF THE PROPHET. "So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord." "How different every way from what he was when he fled to Tarshish! We see him no more consulting with flesh and blood, but yielding prompt obedience to the heavenly call. No more running away, but asking, 'Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? Here am I; send me.' The Lord saith, 'Go to Nineveh;' he instantly goes without gainsaying or resistance" (Jones). "In the present case, Jonah would resume his commission with a new obedience; with a meekness, a faith, a courage, to all of which his punishment and pardon had been the signal means of disciplining him. He would resume his work and mission with another spirit—(1) as a sinful man, whose sin had been eminently forgiven; (2) as a prayerful man, whose prayer had been eminently answered; (3) as an afflicted man, whose affliction had been eminently blessed" (Martin). "The Word says, 'Arise,' and Jonah arose; the Word says, 'Go,' and Jonah went. It is beautiful. It is grand. We must not indeed exaggerate. For we know that there is something dark and bitter in this man still, which will break out again. But meantime, and in this act of obedience, so far as we see it, there is a grandeur like that of an angel—a simplicity like that of a child" (Raleigh).

IV. THE MESSAGE DELIVERED. "And Jonah began to enter into the city, a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." Jonah in Nineveh—what a contrast to Gath-hepher, Joppa, or even Jerusalem! What temples! what tombs! what monuments!—what new impressions of its vastness and power! Perhaps new impressions of its horrible treatment of those who opposed themselves to it. It was no uncommon sight to witness a row of prisoners, each impaled alive on an iron spike; or men of mark flayed alive; or captives, with hooks in nose, dragged by halters, carrying the bleeding heads of their kings or nobles. Anyhow, pictures of such things abounded. They made no undue impression on Jonah. "Strong in faith," he went boldly forward and delivered the message. "He *cried*, and said"—lifted up his voice like a trumpet—under the windows of the rich, in the resorts of the poor—before the proud military array—before nobles and judges and all. His message was more specific and startling than before. Stern, but faithful and honest preaching; no flattery; no shrinking from exposure of the true mind of God. They might do with him as they pleased; he had not a single friend in that vast multitude—no protection but God's—nevertheless, he would proclaim the message. As John Knox said long afterwards, "I am in the place where I am commanded of God to speak the truth; and the truth I will speak, impugn it whoso list." Contrast the feeling of Jonah now and when he fled to go to Tarshish. His soul tumultuous and agitated then, in peace and serenity now. "He that saveth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his

life for my sake shall find it." Acknowledge the reality of Divine protection and strength—sense of peace and proof of it, for, after all, fidelity to God is the true policy. "Them that honour me, I will honour" (1 Sam. ii. 30).—W. G. B.

Vers. 5—9.—The repentance of Nineveh. "So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them," etc. Here is Jonah in Nineveh alone against the world. Oh, the moral grandeur of the sight!—resting on God alone—"according to his faith it was to him"—marvellous success of his preaching, through Divine power working in him and through him. Observe the contrast to Noah and to Lot. He is like John the Baptist—a torch, setting all on fire. We notice the effects of his crying the cry which God bade him.

I. THE PEOPLE OF NINEVEH BELIEVED GOD. (Ver. 5.) Apparently "the people" were first impressed—deep religious impressions commonly begin with them, and rise from them to the upper class—"the common people heard Jesus gladly." There are many hindrances among men of wealth and station to religious impression, but Providence gives compensations—"the poor have the gospel preached unto them." They believed God. They saw in Jonah only a messenger—the messenger of God, who made the earth and the sea. Probably they had heard his history, for "Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites." Before one, in whose person there had been given such tokens of the Divine power, both to punish and to save, they stood in awe. "The busy crowd is by-and-by arrested; a solemn awe steals over the minds of the people, they press around the preacher to know who and whence he is, and why he utters such an ominous cry in their streets; and hearing as they now do, that, so far from lightly denouncing this doom against them, he had already, at the hazard of his life, shrunk from executing the charge committed to him, that he had been cast out for his wilful resistance into the mighty deep, and miraculously restored only that he might be sent forth anew to utter the cry they now heard of approaching destruction—learning all this concerning Jonah and his burden, how solemn and perilous must their situation have appeared in their eyes!" (Kitto). He whom they now heard proclaiming his warning was the messenger of that God who had roused the storm and cast him overboard; who had prepared the great fish to swallow him, keep him alive within its huge body, and then vomit him on the dry land; and who had sent him back to deliver his message, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed." The whole community were actuated by a common feeling. "Word came to the king." All ranks and classes were moved by the message of the strange preacher; all realized that the anger of God and the coming destruction of the city were awful calamities; as of the Pharisees at John's baptism, the question might have been asked, "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" When God makes his voice heard, he bows the hearts of the people like the heart of one man.

II. PROCLAMATION OF A FAST. An external token of distress is deemed fitting—heathen fasts extended to animals as well as men. "It was a custom among the ancient heathen to withhold food from their cattle as well as from themselves in times of mourning and humiliation; in some instances they cut off the hair of their beasts as well as their own" (Kitto). Attitude of the king, great and noble (ver. 6)—all his pride and vain-glory laid aside—he humbles himself openly before God—contrast this with spirit of Sennacherib afterwards (2 Kings xviii., xix.)—kings never so great as when they pay honour to him by whom kings reign—the King of Nineveh rose above all shame and vanity, saw only the dread reality, and acted accordingly. Kings are in their noblest attitude when leading their people to honour God.

III. PRAYER DEMANDED. "Let them cry mightily unto God." All their own gods are to be set aside—this God only is to be recognized. No one seems to have said a word for the Assyrian gods—"Our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased" (Ps. cxv. 3). Prayer is often derided by the world—in time of pressing danger the praying people are the wise, the patriotic, the true people. Real prayer is no barren form—"let them cry mightily to God"—throw their whole souls into the exercise—pray as for dear life. The true idea of prayer is beseeching God's mercy—beseeching it as the one only resource—what alone can save from misery and ruin.

IV. MORAL REFORMATION DEMANDED. "Let them turn every one from his evil

way, and from the violence that is in their hands." The humiliation of the people more than external—"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts" (Isa. lv. 7)—instinctive recognition of the holiness of God—it is unholy acts and an unholy spirit that excite his displeasure (see Isa. lviii. 5-7). *Violence specified*—the rapacious cruelty which characterized the people, and the cry of which had come up before God. When once conscience was roused, it would condemn these acts of violence very loudly. Interesting and beautiful sight—all classes hastening to put away their evil ways, and reversing them, doing the very opposite to what they had been wont to do.

"Sinners listened to Jonah,
And each one confessed his sins.
The polluted city heard him,
And quickly put off its abominations.
Masters also heard him,
And proclaimed freedom to their bondmen: . . .
At the voice of Jonah honourable women
Brought down their pride in sackcloth:
The repentance was indeed sincere
When haughty women put on humility! . . .
The gay laid restraint upon their eyes,
That they might not gaze on women.
Women laid aside their ornaments,
That those who looked on them might not stumble."

(Ephraem Syrus, translated by Burgess.)

Abiding picture of what ought to be the attitude of kings and people in times of national calamity—sin is then felt to be a curse and a poison: "Search us, O God, and know our hearts; try us, and know our thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in us, and lead us in the way everlasting."

V. REASON FOR THESE STEPS. (Ver. 9.) "Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce wrath, that we perish not?" Only a possibility—"Who can tell?" But in time of extreme peril a possibility ought to be acted on. "We cannot plead this on the score of justice, neither can we ply his faithfulness with any specific assurance of mercy, given to meet the necessities of our case; we have nothing to encourage us but the general character of God himself, as manifested in his dealings with men on earth. But still we have that, and the matter is not altogether hopeless. For why should God have sent his prophet to admonish us of sin, and foretell his impending judgment—a prophet too who has himself been the subject of singular mercy and forbearance? If destruction alone had been his object, would he not rather have allowed us to sleep on in our sinfulness? And why in particular should these forty days have been made to run between our doom and our punishment? Surely this bespeaks some thought of mercy in God; it must have been meant to leave the door still open to us for forgiveness and peace" (Fairbairn). The proclamation and the reason for it were not perfect—did not go beyond the spirit of fear and trembling—but the Ninevites acted on their light. "If there be first a ready mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to what he hath not" (2 Cor. viii. 12). Whoever faithfully follows the light he has may look for more—"to him that hath shall be given." It is interesting to think how Jonah's prophecy would affect the young, and it is the property of childhood to receive testimony with full belief in it. Possibly the emotion of the children may have helped to move the parents. Prospect of speedy death is naturally more terrible to young than old. The following picture of the scene by Ephraem Syrus may be quoted:—

"The children inquired while weeping
Of their fathers, in the midst of their tears,
'Narrate to us, O parents,
How many days yet remain
From the time which that Hebrew preacher
Hath determined for us?
And what hour he hath indicated
When we shall go down below to Sheol?"

And in what day will it be
That this fair city shall be destroyed?
And further, when will the last day be,
After which we shall not exist?
When will the season arrive,
When mortal pangs shall seize on all of us?
And when, throughout the world
Shall fly the tidings of our ruin?
And the passing spectators shall gaze upon
The city overthrown upon its masters?"

"When the parents listened to these things
From the mouth of their little ones,
Their tears most bitterly
Overflowed, and suffused their children,
And dropped at the same time on the persons
Of the speakers and the hearers.
And the fathers were not able
To find utterance through sighing;
For their grief had closed up
The straight path of words;
And their speech was interrupted
By the weeping of their beloved ones."

Read the analogy between threatened destruction of Nineveh and destruction of sinners at the last day. Reasons for repentance in one case infinitely stronger in other. Natural indifference and unbelief of men in reference to the latter. Accumulated guilt of those who refuse him that speaketh from heaven. "The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah: and behold, a greater than Jonah is here." (1) They had but one preacher, and that a stranger. (2) They heard but one message, and it was wrath. (3) They had but a vague hope of mercy.—W. G. B.

Ver. 10.—*God repenting.* "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not." Merciful character of God vindicated. "He retaineth not anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy;" "I said, I will confess my transgression unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin;" "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

I. THE CAUSE OF THE CHANGE. "God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way." He not only heard their professions, but saw from their acts that these were real; they believed God—believed that on account of their sins his "fierce anger" rested on them, and they showed their faith by their works; and the particular kind of works was their turning from their evil way—not resorting to matters of will-worship, such as self-mutilation or making children pass through the fire, not stretching forth hands or making many prayers, but abandoning the sin that had offended God; not giving money to build or ornament temples or buy God's favour, but tearing the idol from their hearts—turning from their evil way. The real test of repentance is giving up sin—favourite sin, pleasant sin—sins of sensuality and indulgence and display; giving them up as acts, and trying to give them up as objects of desire; seeking to have the heart cleansed as well as the hands; to have the natural love of them subdued by the thought that they excite against us the fierce wrath of God; and in our case, under the light of the gospel, by all the considerations derived from the cross of Christ, and God's display of love and grace in him. Was the repentance of Nineveh complete, inward, spiritual? This is not said, nor is it necessary to believe it was. Probably it did not last long. It was repentance, however, according to their light and circumstances—the expression of deep national concern for sins that had come up before God, and against which God had sent his prophet to testify. It was an acknowledgment of the God of Jonah as the God of the whole earth—a submission of themselves to him—such submission as would have saved Egypt and Pharaoh, had it been made, in Moses' time, with accompanying tokens of sorrow and sincerity. Higher-

quality of repentance is demanded from an *individual* than from a *nation*; fellowship of reconciled God with the individual is much more intimate and spiritual than with the nation; such fellowship is impossible, save in case of regenerate hearts; in "repentance unto life" there must be genuine hating of what God hates, and loving what he loves.

II. THE CHANGE ON THE PART OF GOD. "God repented of the evil, that he had said he would do unto them; and he did it not." It is frequently objected that this implies *fickleness* on the part of God, as if he were mutable—*as if he were a son of man* that he should repent. But fickleness or mutability implies change of action *while circumstances remain the same*; immutability *demand*s change of action when circumstances change. Immutability is tested by *principles* on which one acts rather than on the outward *actions* one performs; hence there is no fickleness on part of God in opposite actions, as when he placed man in Paradise and afterwards drove him forth. When God said by Jonah, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed," he meant *that* Nineveh—Nineveh if it continued the same, black with guilt, impenitent, unrepented. He did not mean that *another* Nineveh would be destroyed—Nineveh fasting, penitent, transformed. At the end of forty days old Nineveh did not exist; the corruption that would have drawn down the Divine judgment was removed—in a sense that old Nineveh *was* destroyed—it had passed away. Consequently, the denunciation ceased to be applicable; the doom threatened was not inflicted. This was the whole amount of the change on the part of God. The phrase, "God repented," is an anthropomorphism; God acted as man would have done if he had repented—regarded it no longer as a case for infliction of judgment. God's denunciations of judgment are directed rather against states of mind and conduct than particular places or communities—implying, usually, a chance of repentance. In some cases the time for repentance had passed, and denunciation of doom became absolute—as in the case of our Lord weeping over Jerusalem. In rejecting him they had filled up the measure of their iniquities. Their house was left desolate. "We are ever to guard against assigning human imperfection to God. But we are equally to guard against assigning to him such a character or nature as would render living, intelligible, friendly intercourse between him and his people impossible. But impossible utterly all such intercourse may be, if I may not speak to God in the same forms and phrases and feelings in which I would offer a request, or state my case to a fellow-man, though of course retaining unreserved submission and unlimited adoration of the Mighty One of Israel. My adoration unbounded; my surrender of myself to God unreservedly;—these are tributes to the searchless glory of his Godhead which I may not withhold, and yet profess to worship him. Nevertheless, with these I must be allowed, in condescension to my weakness, to ask God to be 'attentive to the voice of my supplications;' to 'behold and visit me;' to 'stretch out his hand' for my help; to 'shine upon me with the light of his countenance;' to 'awake;' to 'arise;' to 'draw near;' to 'come and dwell with me.' All these expressions and requests are after the manner of men. I must be allowed to spread out my sorrow and my trial before him, precisely as if my design and expectation were to work on his feelings, and move and induce him in his pity to deliver me" (Martin).

III. NINEVEH IS SPARED. Picture the city as the fortieth day approached; when it dawned; afterwards, when it passed away and Nineveh remained. Picture universal relief and joy—old and young—congratulations—life appearing before them with a new brightness—the day breaks, and the shadows flee away. Symbol of what may be realized when the anger of God due to sin is averted: "In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortest me" (Isa. xii. 1). "What, then, must we expect will be the sweet surprise and transport of the *departed soul* on his first entrance into glory; when translated of a sudden from this material world to the world of spirits; from among men into the immediate presence of God? What must be his sensations, delight, and astonishment, when first conducted into the presence of the Saviour reigning on the throne of heaven? What will be his feelings when he sees around the throne a company which no man can number, all arrayed in white robes, and wearing brilliant crowns that never fade; all in transport of joy, singing of redeeming love, and celebrating the praises of the Lamb that was slain, and their voices like the sound of many

waters? When the soul first joins this company, and reviews the dangers it has escaped in the world below, its love will kindle into a burning flame, and its song will be eternal."—W. G. B.

Vers. 1—4.—*Jonah in Nineveh.* I. A GREAT RESTORATION. After his recreancy to duty, who had been surprised if Jonah had been thrust out of the prophet's office? The guilt of his flight, the moral insensibility into which he had sunken, rendered him, many would think, unfit to be God's spokesman to men. But God had mercy on him. And saved, he had presently the assurance of it. He was reinstated in the prophet's office, and solemnly commissioned anew to the prophet's work. A "*second time*" bidden go, he went. It was a great restoration, and openly marked by the great errand on which he was sent. The *work* showed that the worker was restored. For that *still* the backslider is recovered. Not for mere personal enjoyment in religion. Not merely to have the assurance of individual safety. But also to "show" what great things God hath done for him. Was Peter restored? Let him prove it: "Feed my sheep, . . . my lambs." So was Jonah comforted; restored, he had the assurance of it in the renewed commission, "Go to Nineveh."

II. A GREAT SPHERE FOR WORK. God himself, in giving this commission, spoke of Nineveh as "that great city." Jonah knew from human testimony that the city was great. But God says it is. Then let Jonah be ready for difficulties. It is no little work to which he is bidden. And is the greatness of Nineveh mentioned *only* to prepare him for the magnitude of the task before him? Is there not *implied* therein a reason, should the people repent, for the Divine compassion? "Should not I spare Nineveh, that great city?" (ch. iv. 11). In a town, with its many homes, families, cares, virtues, vices,—how much to impress a human imagination, to affect a human heart! But in great cities, throbbing with restless life, each man of the millioned multitude with his own history, his own destiny, how the solemn interest is deepened! Great cities are *great to God*. Religion is the only protection of city or state. The repentance of the Ninevites averted the doom of Nineveh; its wealth, valour, fame, availed not to effect this. This punishment of nations *as such* comes in this world. The sins of nations have destroyed them. May our own nation know the time of its visitation, that it perish not!

III. A GREAT EXAMPLE. Jonah is here seen at his best. There is a moral sublimity in his promptitude. "Arise, go." He went. The difficulty of obedience always grows by delay. It may be hard at the beginning, but it will be easier then than ever after. "God loveth a cheerful giver," *whatever* be the gift. Bold was Jonah. Wisely bold. As soon as Nineveh was reached he began his solemn cry. Bold, *though alone*. He had no human companion to encourage him, to help him. Bold, to utter the cry of woe. Destruction was the burden of his oft-repeated message. Nothing in that to gather affection to him—loving, joyful attention. May his courage be ours! We have glad tidings to tell; and no such lonely path to tread as he. With such a message, and with the viewless presence of the Messenger, we may well be of good courage.—G. T. C.

Ver. 2.—*The preaching that God bids.* 1. Not the message of our own imagination. 2. Not what men desire and what will be palatable to them. 3. But what God bids. To the messenger he gives the message—from his Word; by his Spirit. His gospel—not altered, not added to, not diminished—is to be preached "to every creature." With faithfulness, simplicity, persistence—whether men hear or whether men forbear. Like Luther, "I can do no other; God help me!"—G. T. C.

Vers. 5—9.—*Jonah's successful ministry in Nineveh.* With a quick and marvellous success was Jonah's ministry crowned. Doubtless the Ninevites knew how he had sought to escape his mission to them, and all the perilous and miraculous consequences of his flight. This seems clearly implied in our Lord's words, who says that Jonah was "a sign unto the Ninevites." And he only could be this in so far as they were acquainted with his history. He was "a sign" that Jehovah was not to be trifled with. If he, a friend of Jehovah, had been punished, what might the *enemies* expect? "A sign" also of Jehovah's *mercy* as well as justice. If he had been saved, might not they?

If their case had been utterly hopeless, why had he come at all? So, though they had seen no miracle, they "believed God." That doom was at hand; doom that might—who could tell?—be averted, if they "battered the gates of heaven with storms of prayer." They proclaimed a fast; "the people;" for then, as always, national repentance and reformation worked its way *upward*. Here, from the people, at length reaching the nobles and the king. *He*, too, was a man and in peril, and, like his subjects, must repent. And, by royal proclamation, all were bidden fast, be clad in sackcloth; the creatures, too, dependent on them, by their mute misery were to share in the national humiliation. Above all, let the people "cease to do evil," and show a changed heart by an altered life. The humiliation of the Ninevites was—

I. ROOTED IN FAITH. "They believed God." What were Asshur and their many gods to them now? Jehovah was the *living* God. All else were dead. They believed in his power to punish; and also (though doubt may have mingled with their faith) that if they turned from their evil way, *he* would turn from the fierceness of his anger, and they should perish not. Not "idle words" were Jonah's. Not heard with critic ear. Not questioned, much less opposed. Jonah—who was he? God's messenger. They believed *God*. Hence their repentance. Had they *not* believed, they had been unrepentant. How they rebuke many among us to-day! Those who have heard *many* of God's messengers: why turn they not from their evil way? Because they believe not God. This is the capital count in the Divine indictment against man. He makes God a liar. He believes not the testimony God has given in his Son. The terrible testimony against sin as the dark, dreadful evil it is. The gracious testimony to his unutterable love, that only *could* be truly vocal as it spoke in the sorrow, sufferings, and death-agonies of his Son. Did man believe with the heart this, it would be to repentance—to righteousness. "Believe God." Rooted in faith, the conduct of the Ninevites was—

II. FRUITFUL IN REPENTANCE. True belief and true repentance are ever connected as root and fruit.

"If faith produce no works, I see
That faith is not a living tree."

The Ninevites fasted, put on sackcloth, cried mightily to God. And is the *expression* of our repentance to be the same as theirs? Are we to fast? If given to the pleasures of the table, to fulness of bread, *abstinence* will be well. *Whatever* hinders the soul must be avoided. If gay clothing is a temptation to us, we must watch against *that* peril. The *soul* must be supreme. Let it "cry mightily." Cry that it *may* be truly repentant. For "godly sorrow" is the gift of God. The doom coming on the Ninevites was averted. By what? Not the fasting; not the sackcloth; not even the mighty crying, though a whole city was at prayer. God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way" (ver. 10). That plucked them from the peril. There was *repentance*—a change of mind; *reformation*—a change of life. All is nothing without that. Turn from all evil. Have you wronged another? Confess it; make restitution. Be the changed mind seen in the changed life. The way of sin is an *evil* way and ends in evil. Turn from it. "Lord, make me pure and holy, but not now," prayed the unconverted Augustine. It must be *now*. Turn from sin, and "who can tell if God will turn?" "Tell?" You *know*—as did not the Ninevites—the glorious gospel, that God waits to be gracious; that for Christ's sake he will forgive you. Be not shamed and condemned by the repentant Ninevites. "They repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here."—G. T. C.

Ver. 10.—*Missions to the heathen*. 1. The heathen are capable of salvation. 2. God purposes their salvation. 3. The Jews were the divinely appointed first preachers of salvation to the Gentile heathens. Jewish Jonah, the first of the prophets, was sent to heathen Nineveh. "A real example" this "of the genius of the gospel." And the Jewish apostles were sent to preach Jesus Christ to "every creature." *He* died for *all*!—G. T. C.

Ver. 10.—*God repenting*. It is *another* people in Nineveh that God now looks down upon. These have "ceased to do evil." "God saw their works, that they turned

from their evil way." Then is the threatened doom to come? No; "God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not." And yet in other Scriptures God is said *not* to repent. Words can only faintly portray a *human* friend. How feeble, then, are all words to declare God! Words that *seem* to us to contradict each other are necessary to convey to us a fuller, clearer view of him. If in one Scripture God is said not to repent, or "change his mind" (as the word means), that is true. If in another he is said to do so, that is also true. The Scripture fearlessly declares both. It makes no attempt to harmonize them. We may be unable to do so. And yet we may *believe* both; confident that they are in harmony if we cannot harmonize them. *Men* repent, or change their mind, in reference to *sin*. *God* repents, or changes his mind, in reference to the *sinner*.

I. IN HIS OWN NATURE GOD IS CHANGELESS. What changes there are in earth and sky, the seasons, human life and experience! "*Man* continueth not in one stay." With God "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." He never ceases to be almighty, omniscient, "the only wise God." He says, "I am the Lord, I change not" (Mal. iii. 6). This was the Divine message by Balaam to Balak: "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent; hath he said, and shall he not do it?" etc. (Numb. xxiii. 19, 20). In other words, no enchantment, no divination, could avail against Israel. What were Balak's bribes to God? He *could* fulfil his promises to Israel—for he was almighty; he *would*, for he was faithful. Further, in various Scriptures (Gen. vi. 3; Jer. xviii. 7; as well as here) we are taught—

II. THAT GOD REPENTS, OR CHANGES HIS MIND. Some would limit this to God's altered dealings with men; to his *acts*, never to his feelings. They hold that in his feelings he is ever the same to men; that none of the affections found in us have any counterpart in him; that he looks down upon all human changes—sorrows, joys, conflicts, defeats, triumphs—cold, calm, unmoved, immovable! What! a God only thought, only will? No mercy, no pity, no sympathy, no love? Unlovely creed! "God is love." Then he has the *feelings* of love, without, indeed, the imperfections that may mingle with ours. He is "the Father of our spirits." *Our* emotions are the image of his; in *him* "without spot," or defect, "or any such thing." It is no mere figure of meaningless speech that speaks of him as "angry with the wicked," as "pitying them that fear him," as rejoicing over his penitent creatures; as *repenting* concerning Nineveh. With no idle threatening was Jonah sent to the Ninevites. God then *meant* destruction. And had the people not repented, it would have come. But the very threatening was blessed to them. They saw the greatness of their sin in the greatness of the imminent punishment. And when their state of rebellion and defiance ceased, their city came into a new relation to God, "and room was made for the word to take effect; 'the curse causeless shall not come.'" God knew that the city would be spared. Yes. But he also knew that, *when* spared, it would be another city—a city not of violent rebels against him, but of penitent subjects. God is *righteous* in all his ways. He rewards every man according to his works. It was in accordance, then, with his *nature*, that when the Ninevites turned from their evil courses with true heart-sorrow, *he* should turn from the fierceness of his anger. There is *warning* here. God's threatenings are not to be trifled with. Remember the destroyed sinners "in the days of Noah;" ultimately these very Ninevites; and the Jew, "tribe of the wandering foot and weary breast," is witness to-day through all lands to the fact that when a warned nation repents not, God is faithful to his warning. And so with the individual. Let the warned sinner "*flee* from the wrath to come." What *consolation*, too, in this narrative! God is "not willing that any should perish; but that all should come to repentance." How willing—how revealed in Christ, who came to "call sinners to repentance"! Turn from sin. God will turn to you. From afar he will see you. He will run to meet you. He will kiss into forgetfulness all your sins. He waits to be gracious: "He delighteth in mercy."—G. T. C.

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER IV.

VERS. 1—11.—JONAH'S DISPLEASURE, AND ITS CORRECTION.

VERS. 1—4.—§ 1. *Jonah is grieved at the sparing of Nineveh, the expectation of which had led to his former flight, and complains of God's clemency.*

VER. 1.—It displeased Jonah exceedingly; literally, *it was evil to Jonah, a great evil*. It was more than mere displeasure which he felt; he was vexed and irritated. The reference is to what is said in the last verse of the preceding chapter, viz. that the predicted destruction was not inflicted. How the knowledge of this reprieve was conveyed to the prophet we are not informed. It probably was made known to him before the expiration of the forty days by Divine communication, in accordance with the saying in Amos iii. 7, "Surely the Lord will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (see ver. 5). Various reasons have been assigned for this displeasure. (1) Personal pique, lest, his prediction having failed, he should be liable to the charge of being a false prophet. (2) Zeal for the honour of God, whose knowledge of the future might be discredited among the heathen, when they saw his own servant's words unfulfilled. (3) Because he saw in this conversion of Gentiles a token of the ruin of his own people, who remained always hardened and impenitent. (4) A mistaken patriotism, which could not endure to find mercy extended to a heathen nation which had already proved hostile to Israel and was destined to oppress it still further. This last seems to have been the real ground of his annoyance. So deep was this, that he would gladly have seen the sentence executed even after the city had repented (comp. ver. 11, "Should not I spare Nineveh," i.e. which thou wouldest have me even now destroy?) He was very angry; Septuagint, *συνεχύθη*, "was confounded." His vexation increased unto anger.

VER. 2.—He prayed. He carried his complaint to God, and was prepared to submit it to him, even while he questioned the wisdom of his clemency. I pray thee (*anna*); Vulgate, *obsecro*. A particle of entreaty, "Ah! I pray thee." Was not this my saying? Was not this what I said to myself, viz. that God would spare Nineveh if it showed signs of repentance? My country. Palestine, where the original message reached him, I fled before; lite-

rally, *I anticipated to fly*; Septuagint, *προέβασα τοῦ φύγειν*, "I made haste to flee;" Vulgate, *preoccupavi ut fugerem*. I hastened to fly before I should be reduced to seeing my mission rendered nugatory. For I knew. Joel knew the character of God, and how that he threatened in order to arouse repentance, and that he might be able to spare (see Exod. xxxii. 14; xxxiv. 6, 7). The description of God's mercy agrees with that in Joel ii. 13 and Neh. ix. 17.

VER. 3.—Take . . . my life from me (comp. ver. 8). Jonah throughout represents himself as petty, hasty, and self-willed, prone to exaggerate matters, and easily reduced to despair. Here, because his word is not fulfilled, he wishes to die, though he will not take his own life. In a different spirit Moses (Exod. xxxii. 32) is ready to die for his people's sake, and Elijah asked for death because his zeal for God had apparently wrought no effect (1 Kings xix. 4).

VER. 4.—Doest thou well to be angry? Septuagint, *Εἰ σφόδρα λελύπηται σὺ*; "Hast thou been greatly grieved?" Vulgate, *Putasne bene irasceris tu?* The English Version is doubtless correct. God bids him consider with himself whether his anger is reasonable. The version of the LXX., however grammatically permissible, is somewhat pointless.

VER. 5.—§ 2. *Jonah, not yet abandoning his hope of seeing the city punished, makes for himself a hut outside the walls, and waits there to see the issue. Went out of the city.* It is best so rendered, and not in the plural perfect. It must have been before the end of the forty days that Jonah perceived that Nineveh would escape. And now, from God's expostulation with him in ver. 4, he seems to have conceived the expectation that some catastrophe would still happen; as though God had told him that he was too hasty in his judgment, that he could not know the mind of God, and that because he did not strike immediately he was not to conclude that he would not strike at all. On the east side of the city. The opposite side to that by which he had entered, and where the high ground enabled him to overlook the town, without necessarily sharing in its destruction. A booth. A tent constructed of branches interlaced, which did not exclude the sun (Lev. xxiii. 42; Neh. viii. 14, etc.). What would become of the city. He still expected that some calamity would befall the Ninevites, perhaps with the idea that their repentance would prove so imperfect and temporary that God would punish them after all.

Vers. 6, 7.—§ 3. *God causes a plant to spring up in order to shade Jonah from the sun; but it is made soon to wither away and leave him exposed to the scorching rays.*

Ver. 6.—Prepared (vers. 7, 8); appointed (see note on ch. i. 17). A gourd; Hebrew, *kikation* (here only in the Old Testament); Septuagint, *κολοκύνθη*, "pumpkin;" Vulgate, *hedera*; Aquila and Theodotion, *κυκεών*. Jerome describes this as a shrub called in Syriac *elhera*, and common in the sandy regions of Palestine. It has large leaves and grows to a considerable height in a very few days, so that a mere shrub becomes quickly a small tree. The scientific name of this plant is *Ricinus communis*; in Egyptian, *hiki*; in Assyrian, *kukanitu*. A drawing of it is given in Dr. Pusey's 'Commentary,' p. 260. It is also known by the name of the *Palma Christi*, and from its seeds is expressed "castor oil." But it is very doubtful whether this is the plant intended. Certainly the *ricinus* is never used in the East as a protection against the sun, for which its straggling, open growth renders it unsuitable; while the gourd, as Mr. Tristram testifies ('Land of Israel,' p. 37), is used universally to form trellises for shading arbours and summer-houses, and affords a most effectual screen. "Orientals," says Dr. Thomson ('The Land and the Book,' p. 15), "never dream of training a castor-oil plant over a booth, or planting it for a shade, and they would have but small respect for any one who did. It is in no way adapted for that purpose, while thousands of arbours are covered with various creepers of the general gourd family." With this testimony it is well to be satisfied. Whatever the plant was, its growth was abnormal in the present case, though the rapidity with which it developed was merely a quickening of its ordinary powers, in due accordance with its nature and character. From his grief; Septuagint, *ἀπὸ τῶν κακῶν αὐτοῦ*, "from his evils;" Vulgate, *ut . . . protegeret eum*. The Hebrew word is the same as in ver. 1, and it refers, not so much to the physical discomfort occasioned by the heat, but rather to the condition of his mind, the vexation and disappointment under which he was suffering. Was exceeding glad; literally, *rejoiced a great joy*; *ἔχαρτο χαρὰν μεγάλην* (Septuagint). The candour and simplicity of the writer throughout are very remarkable. He may have seen in this providential shelter an intimation that God approved of his intention to wait and see the issue.

Ver. 7.—Prepared (see note on ver. 6). A worm. Either a single worm which punctured the stem and caused the plant to wither, or the word is used collectively, as in Deut. xxviii. 39, for "worms." A single

warm night, with a moist atmosphere, will suffice to produce a host of caterpillars, which in an incredibly short time strip a plant of all its leaves. When the morning rose. At the very earliest dawn, before the actual rising of the sun (comp. Judg. ix. 33). Jonah seems to have enjoyed the shelter of the gourd one whole day. The withering of the plant came about in a natural way, but was ordered by God at a certain time in order to give Jonah the intended lesson.

Vers. 8—11.—§ 4. *Jonah grieves bitterly for the loss of the gourd; and God takes occasion from this to point out the prophet's inconsistency and pitilessness in murmuring against the mercy shown to Nineveh with its multitude of inhabitants.*

Ver. 8.—A vehement east wind; Septuagint, *πνεύματι καύσωνι* (Jas. i. 11) *συγκάλοντι*, "a scorching, burning wind;" Vulgate, *vento calido et urenti* (Hos. xiii. 15). The word translated "vehement" is also rendered "silent," i.e. sultry. Pusey and Hitzig rather incline to think it may mean the autumn or harvest wind. Either interpretation is suitable, as, according to Dr. Thomson, there are two kinds of sirocco, equally destructive and annoying—the violent wind, which fills the air with dust and sand; and the quiet one, when scarcely any air is stirring, but the heat is most overpowering ('The Land and the Book,' p. 536, etc.). Beat upon the head. The same word for the effect of the rays of the sun as in Ps. cxxi. 6 and elsewhere. Trochon quotes Ovid, 'Metam.' vii. 804—

"Sole fere radiis feriente cacumina primis."

"The sun with earliest rays
Scarce smiting highest peaks."

Rich, 'Koordistan,' i. 125, "Just as the moon rose, about ten, an intolerable puff of wind came from the north-east. All were immediately silent, as if they had felt an earthquake, and then exclaimed, in a dismal tone, 'The sherki is come.' This was indeed the so-much-dreaded sherki, and it has continued blowing ever since with great violence from the east and north-east, the wind being heated like our Bagdad saum, but I think softer and more relaxing. This wind is the terror of these parts." "Few European travellers," says Layard ('Nin. and Babyl.,' p. 366), "can brave the perpendicular rays of an Assyrian sun. Even the well-seasoned Arab seeks the shade during the day, and journeys by night, unless driven forth by necessity or the love of war" (quoted by Dr. Pusey, *in loc.*). He fainted (see note on Amos viii. 13, where

the same word is used of the effects of thirst; comp. ch. ii. 7). His position on the east of the city (ver. 5) exposed him to the full force of the scorching sun and wind. Wished in himself to die; literally, *asked for his soul to die*; Septuagint, ἀρελέγερσεν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ, "despaired of his life" (1 Kings xix. 4). The expression implies that he asked God to grant him his life to do with it what he liked. In his self-will and impatience he still shows his dependence upon God. He may have had in his mind the precedent of his great master Elijah, though his spirit is very different (see note on ver. 3 above). Better for me to die. His wish for death arose from his now assured conviction that God's mercy was extended to the heathen. He argued from the sudden withering of the gourd that he was not to stay there and see the accomplishment of his wishes, and, in his impatience and intolerance, he would rather die than behold Nineveh converted and saved.

Ver. 9.—God said. Keil and others have noted the variety in the use of the names of God in this passage (vers. 6—9). The production of the gourd is attributed to Jehovah-Elohim (ver. 6), a composite name, which serves to mark the transition from Jehovah in ver. 4 to Elohim in vers. 7 and 8. Jehovah, who replies to the prophet's complaint (ver. 4), prepares the plant as Elohim the Creator, and the worm as ha-Elohim the personal God. Elohim, the Ruler of nature, sends the east wind to correct the prophet's impatience; and in ver. 10 Jehovah sums up the history and teaches the lesson to be learned from it. Doest thou well to be angry? The same tender expostulation as in ver. 4. I do well to be angry, even unto death. I am right to be angry, so that my anger almost kills me. Deprived of the shelter of the gourd, Jonah is immediately depressed, and in his unreasoning anger defends himself against the reproaches of God's voice within him. Septuagint, Σφόδρα λελύπημαι ἐγὼ ἕως θανάτου, "I am greatly grieved even unto death," which reminds one of our Lord's words in the garden (Mark xiv. 34).

Ver. 10.—The Lord. Jehovah, closing the story, and driving home the lesson with unanswerable force, the prophet himself being the judge. Thou hast had pity; *thou on thy part hast spared*; Septuagint, σὺ ἐπέσω. For the which thou hast not laboured; Septuagint, ὅπερ ἡς οὐκ ἐκακοπάθησας ἐν αὐτῇ, "for which thou sufferest no evil." The more trouble a thing costs us, the more we regard it, as a mother loves her sickly child

best. Neither madest it grow. As God had made Nineveh into a "great city." Which came up in a night, and perished in a night; literally, *which was the son of a night, and perished the son of a night*. The allusion, of course, is to the extraordinary rapidity of the growth and destruction of the gourd.

Ver. 11.—Should not I spare Nineveh? The contrast between the feeling and conduct of God and those of the prophet is very forcible. Thou hast compassion for a plant of little worth, in whose growth thou hast had no concern, to which thou hast no right; should I not pity a great city which is mine, which I have permitted to grow into power? Thou hast compassion on a flower which sprang up in a day and withered in a day; should I not pity this town with its teeming population and its multitude of cattle, the least of which is more worth than any senseless plant, and which I uphold daily with my providence? Six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; i.e. children of tender years, who did not know which hand was the strongest and fittest for use; or, metaphorically, who "had no knowledge between good and evil" (Deut. i. 39), at present incapable of moral discernment. This limitation would include children of three or four years old; and, taking these as one-fifth of the population, we should set the inhabitants at six hundred thousand in number. The multitude of these innocent children, who must needs perish if the city were destroyed, is an additional reason why it should be spared. A still further claim for compassion is appended. And also much cattle. God's mercy is over all his works; he preserveth man and beast (Ps. xxxvi. 6; cxlv. 9), and as man is superior to other animals, so are cattle better than plants. The book ends abruptly, but its object is accomplished. Jonah is silenced; he can make no reply; he can only confess that he is entirely wrong, and that God is righteous. He learns the lesson that God would have all men saved, and that that narrow-mindedness which would exclude heathen from his kingdom is displeasing to him and alien from his design. "For thou hast mercy upon all; for thou canst do all things, and winkst at the sins of men in order that they should repent. For thou lovest all the things that are, and abhorrest nothing that thou hast made; for never wouldst thou have made anything if thou hadst hated it. . . . But thou sparest all; for they are thine, O Lord, thou Lover of souls" (Wisdom. xi. 23, etc.).

HOMILETICS.

Vers. 1—3.—*Repining at God's mercy.* A more mixed character than Jonah's it would not be easy to imagine. God's treatment of him, God's language to him, prove that he was regarded as a servant, as a prophet, of the Lord. His own prayers and thanksgivings indicated a nature in happy fellowship with the Eternal. Yet how lacking in human charity, in true submissiveness, in unselfishness! True to nature, the portrait is one very suggestive to the thoughtful reader, who is anxious to escape self and to serve God.

I. THE CAUSE OF REPINING. 1. Jonah's fear was realized. 2. Jonah's plans were defeated. 3. Jonah's self-importance was wounded. His sin lay here—he thought little or nothing of the Ninevites, much or altogether of himself. So devoted was he to his own dignity, so filled with a sense of the importance of men's estimate of himself, that he had no pity, no thought, for those to whom he was commissioned. The real explanation is here hinted of much of the repining, murmuring, discontent, which prevail among those professedly religious. Men would complain less frequently and bitterly, did they think less of themselves and more of their fellow-men, were they more ready to forget themselves in desiring and seeking the welfare of others.

II. THE FRUIT OF REPINING. 1. Anger and displeasure. 2. Vexation and dejection. Moses and Elijah, before Jonah, had asked that life might be taken away. Ardent souls, when disappointed, are prone to despondency. But it is one thing to despond because labour is unsuccessful; another thing to despond because men are saved. Because Nineveh was spared, Jonah fain would die. Had Nineveh perished, he would have been willing to live.

III. THE SIN OF REPINING. This appears from the fact, so plainly stated by Jonah himself, that the Divine forbearance and mercy were made the ground of dissatisfaction and complaint. If men murmur at the exercise of God's most gracious attributes, they can have no clearer proof of their want of sympathy with what is best, and no plainer indication of the urgent duty of repentance and humiliation.

Ver. 2.—*The long-suffering of God.* The magnificent description of the Divine character is given in language familiar to the pious Hebrews, as is apparent from its almost exact coincidence with other passages of Old Testament Scripture. Nothing could more conclusively contradict the common impression that the old covenant was one of justice only and not of mercy. The language, occurring as it does in close connection with the repining of the prophet, appears strangely out of place. It is surprising that Jonah could have spoken thus of God without feeling himself reproved and silenced. How could he have reflected upon the mercy and kindness of God, and have continued to cherish regret because his threats were not fulfilled, because a great city was spared?

I. THE BENEVOLENT ATTRIBUTES OF GOD. By a redundancy of language, testifying to the depth of appreciation felt, the Lord is declared to be: 1. Gracious. 2. Merciful. 3. Of great kindness.

II. THE ACTIONS IN WHICH GOD EXPRESSES HIS BENEVOLENT ATTRIBUTES. 1. He defers the execution of his just indignation against sinners. The narrative gives an impressive instance of this; but it is the lesson of all history. 2. He changes his purposes of wrath into purposes of mercy. Such was the case with Nineveh. Such is the case with humanity at large.

Ver. 4.—*Anger rebuked.* The Prophet Jonah was a singularly complex being. On the one hand, he evidently revered and trusted the Lord; yet, on the other hand, he acted disobediently, and he cherished feelings which were in the highest degree discreditable to one who enjoyed his opportunities of knowing the Divine character and purposes. The inquiry, the expostulation, of the text indicates God's displeasure with his servant; yet the form in which it shapes itself shows that God wished rather that Jonah should rebuke himself, that his conscience should be awakened to condemn the attitude which he had assumed.

I. ANGER IS IN ITSELF AN EMOTION WHICH MAY BE EITHER GOOD OR EVIL. God

himself is represented in his Word as having been angry with the wicked; and a righteous anger or indignation with wrong-doers is now and again in the Scripture narrative mentioned with approval. Indeed, a nature to which anger is foreign cannot but be lacking in moral fibre. On the other hand, into how many sins have men been led by giving way to foolish anger?—i.e. to anger either altogether unwarranted or unjustifiable in the degree in which it has been cherished. An angry man can seldom decide with justice or act with consideration.

II. ANGER IS NEVER JUSTIFIABLE WHEN OCCASIONED BY THE ACTION OF A RIGHTEOUS AND GRACIOUS GOD. Now, Jonah saw that the Divine Ruler was "slow to anger" with the Ninevites; yet he himself was quick to indignation and wrath. Anger like Jonah's questions the justice of the Divine proceedings. He who is angry with the plans and purposes of the Eternal sets himself up as a judge of that Being who is Judge of all. There may be occasions for anger with fellow-men; but anger with the Creator and Ruler of all is never defensible or excusable. It evinces a sad lack of modesty and of true submissiveness.

III. ANGER IS ALWAYS BLAMABLE WHEN IT IS OCCASIONED BY THE BELIEF AND SALVATION OF MEN. The plain truth concerning Jonah's anger is this—it arose because the Ninevites were not overwhelmed with destruction. If the city had perished, the prophet would have felt satisfaction in contemplating such a fate. Because the city was spared, and (as he thought) his authority was discredited, he gave way to wrath. A more selfish and unamiable temper has never been exhibited.

IV. THERE IS ALWAYS REASON TO SUSPECT THE JUSTICE OF ANGER WHEN IT ACCOMPANIES SOME HUMILIATION OR MORTIFICATION OF SELF. Plainly Jonah thought more of himself than of those to whom he ministered, or he would not have given way to anger because his word of prophecy was not literally fulfilled. Men sometimes endeavour to deceive themselves, to persuade themselves that their wrath is stirred by some infraction of right, when, all the time, the true secret of their anger is to be found in personal mortification. A lesson this of the importance of being upon our guard against the insidious temptation to vanity and self-importance.

Ver. 7.—*The withering of earthly consolation.* If Jonah's vexation and anger were due first to the sparing of Nineveh, and the mortification of his self-importance, similar emotion was excited within him by the deprivation of personal comfort which was appointed by Divine providence.

I. IN TIMES OF TROUBLE GOD APPOINTS DIVINE CONSOLATIONS FOR HIS PEOPLE. The gourd, or palmcrist, which the Author of nature caused to grow up over Jonah's booth, was "for a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief." Such a refuge, shelter, shadow, Providence often appoints for those who are in distress. Some unexpected provision for want, some gracious alleviation of suffering, some marvellous deliverance from impending danger, reveals the thoughtful and loving care of the Most High.

II. GOD IN HIS MERCY THUS TURNS SORROW INTO GLADNESS. "Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd." It was itself beautiful to behold, and its cool shelter was refreshing, and it was a pleasant and welcome emblem of Divine care and kindness. Many have been made glad according to the days in which they have been afflicted, to the years in which they have seen evil. Of many once storm-tossed and imperilled it may be said, "They are glad because they be quiet." It is right to rejoice when Eternal Mercy rescues and delivers those who are in trouble and distress.

III. CONSOLATIONS ARE OFTEN SHORT-LIVED AND DISAPPOINTING. The caterpillars which smote the palmcrist in a few hours robbed Jonah of his comfort, so that his new, dawning joy was overcast with clouds of gloom. And this withering was an emblem of the transitory nature of all earthly happiness and prosperity. The comforts which God sends he takes away, lest we should set our hearts upon created good. Health fails, property is lost, friends die, bright prospects are clouded, hopes perish. Nothing continueth in one stay.

"This world is all a fleeting show,
For man's illusion given;
The smiles of joy, the tears of woe,
Deceitful shine, deceitful flow:
There's nothing true but heaven."

IV. THE PRIVATION OF EARTHLY COMFORTS IS INTENDED TO LEAD MEN TO SEEK THEIR HIGHEST GOOD IN GOD. Such discipline does not, indeed, produce this effect upon all men; many are hardened, some are driven to despair, by adversity. But with regard to the truly pious, it may be said that, when the gourd withers, the Giver is as firmly trusted and as warmly loved as when the shelter was thick and green.

"Though vine nor fig tree neither
 Their wonted fruit should bear;
 Though all the field should wither,
 Nor flock nor herd be there;
 Yet God the same abiding,
 His praise shall tune my voice;
 For while in him confiding,
 I cannot but rejoice."

Ver. 8.—*Desire to die.* Deep was the mortification, the disappointment, the dejection, which, more than once, found expression in this wish. It is not an uncommon thing for those whose hearts are blighted, whose prospects are clouded, for whom life has but few attractions left, to wish rather to die than to live.

I. THE EXPLANATION OF THIS WISH. 1. The burden of bodily suffering or weakness, or of mental anguish, may be such as is very hard to bear; and men may wish to lay it down even though with it they lay down the load of life. 2. The memory of trouble, calamity, disaster, may be so distressing that even annihilation has been desired rather than an ineffaceable record of woe. The Christian cannot desire extinction of being, but he may hope that, in passing hence, he may steep his soul in Lethe's oblivious waves. 3. The apparent hopelessness of the earthly prospect tempts men to wish to die. To many who are advanced in life, crippled in body, ruined in circumstances, disappointed in life-plans, this earthly existence seems to present no prospects; death seems a relief.

II. THE BLAMABLENESS OF THIS WISH. 1. It implies a habit of discontent and of murmuring. Our circumstances are appointed or permitted by a kind Providence; to wish to escape them is to wish to avoid the discipline ordained for us by our heavenly Father. The Christian pilgrim should be prepared cheerfully, or at least patiently, to finish his path, even to the journey's end. 2. It implies an undue desire for rest. Men's notions of heaven are often carnal and selfish; they look forward to release from labour and service; and sometimes they wish to die that they may enjoy the sweets of repose. But it should be the desire and expectation of all Christians, that they may serve God day and night in his temple. Surely one attraction of the future state for the holy nature is this—it will afford opportunity for higher and purer service.

III. THE COUNTERACTIVE TO THIS WISH. This is to be found in perfect submissiveness to the holy and perfect will of God. Whilst he has work for his people to do on earth, earth is the best place for them; when he wishes them to enter upon heavenly service, he himself will call them hence.

Vers. 10, 11.—*The breadth of the Divine pity.* The close of this very remarkable book is deserving of attention and admiration, as evidently gathering up and exhibiting the purpose for which this composition was designed. Of all things apprehensible by us nothing is equal in interest to the character of the Supreme Ruler and Lord. This is depicted in this closing passage of the narrative and prophecy in the most attractive, encouraging, and glorious colours.

I. GOD'S PITY CONTRASTS WITH MAN'S HARDNESS AND SEVERITY. Jonah, though a prophet of the Lord, would have witnessed the destruction of Nineveh with equanimity and even satisfaction. It might have been supposed that a sinful and fallible being would have been more compassionate. But for the supreme illustration of pity we must look to the Father of all.

II. GOD'S PITY IS EXCITED BY THE SPECTACLE OF A GREAT AND POPULOUS COMMUNITY IN DANGER OF DESTRUCTION. Nineveh was at the other end of the scale, so to speak, from the palm-crisp which grew up and perished in a few hours. It was an ancient, vast, populous, powerful, famous city. "Should I not spare," asked God of Jonah, "Nineveh, that great city?" There is in this language something which

appeals to our heart. God is represented in the most amiable and attractive light. Such sentiments as these will be cherished by God-like men, by those Christ-like hearts that sympathize with him who beheld Jerusalem, and wept over it.

III. GOD'S PITY IS INTENSIFIED BY THE SPECTACLE OF LITTLE CHILDREN EXPOSED TO DESTRUCTION. By those who are described as unable to discern between their right hand and their left we may well understand babes and young children who had not sinned. Yet these were in danger of being overtaken by the one common calamity and ruin. The tender heart of the All-Father was touched by the possibility of such a catastrophe. And when it was possible to avert it—in harmony with the principles of the Divine government, and so as not to endanger the spiritual interests of humanity—it was a joy to the heart of God to spare the city and the babes of the city's household.

APPLICATION. 1. Let the hearers of the gospel take advantage of the sparing mercy of the Lord. 2. Let the preachers of the gospel proclaim the sparing mercy of the Lord. 3. Let all Christians sympathize with, delight in, and imitate, the sparing mercy of the Lord.

HOMILIES BY VARIOUS AUTHORS.

Vers. 1—4.—*A misanthrope's case against Divine benevolence.* It takes a good deal to make a man of God perfect. After a whole life's discipline the old man of sin will sometimes show his baleful features at the window of the soul. Jonah has just been figuring to our mind as a changed character, returned to his allegiance, going God's errand promptly, and doing his work with faithful zeal. But here he forfeits our good opinion, almost before it has had time to form. The patient's cure has been only seeming, or else he has suffered a bad relapse. At any rate, the narrative leaves him on a spiritual level as low or lower than it found him. He began by quarrelling with a particular command of God, and he ends by quarrelling with his moral government as a whole. If there be a point of religious progress scored at all in connection with the matter, it is the exceedingly minute one that at first he tried to defeat the Divine purpose, and at last, and with an ill grace, he submits to its execution as inevitable. And it may be noted, as a qualifying consideration, that sanctification is the work of a lifetime; and therefore we can look for no very material change in the few days which the narrative of the book covers.

I. A MAN WHO HAS FOUND MERCY HIMSELF MAY YET PRACTICALLY GRUDGE IT TO OTHERS. Misanthropy is Satanic. The devil hates men utterly and intensely. And the man, if there be such, who hates men instinctively, and would destroy them unprovoked, is less human than diabolical. Jonah was not such a man. There were considerations, and paltry ones, for which he would have sacrificed all the souls in Nineveh, but, apart from these, he wished them no ill. 1. *One of these considerations was supplied by egoism.* As the prophet and mouthpiece of God, he had predicted the destruction of the city, even to the naming of the day, and his credit required that the event should now occur. If it did not, his prophecy failed, and his reputation as a prophet suffered, both with the Ninevites and with his own people. The prospect of this he could not stand. In his miserable and guilty self-seeking he preferred the destruction, soul and body, of a million people, to the possible discrediting of his prophetic claims. Such heartlessness in a believing man seems well-nigh incredible. But it is far from unparalleled. Every Christian worker approaches it who works for his own credit or advantage, and not for the salvation of men. He may not be conscious of the fact, or he may fail to realize the significance of it, but he virtually and practically prefers that men should perish rather than that he should be deemed a failure. His reputation as a Christian worker, and his success in that character, is more to him than the salvation from sin of all to whom his words may come. 2. *Another consideration sectarianism provides.* To Israel in its wickedness a whole line of prophets had preached, with no result whatever, save their own extermination (Acts vii. 52), and the announcement of inevitable doom on the obdurate race (Amos v. 27; vii. 17). The Ninevites' deliverance, establishing as it would the genuineness of their turning from sin, would bring into unfavourable contrast the obstinate impenitence of Israel, would emphasize the needs-be of her approaching ruin, and would amount to the preservation and

encouragement of the very heathen power by which she was to fall. Then the overthrow of Nineveh by an angry God would have been a terrible example to quote to Israel, and a rod to conjure with when calling on them to fly the wrath of God; whilst its escape the prophet's careless countrymen might wrest to their own destruction, and from it argue that the vengeance denounced would likely never fall. There is an attitude of indifference toward the perishing, into which an analogous spirit of sectarianism sometimes causes believers to fall. The question of their salvation gets mixed up with some question of denominational loss or discredit. We desire their conversion, and desire to be the means of it. But we don't desire it supremely or disinterestedly. We don't desire it apart from all denominational considerations. The idea of their remaining a while longer in sin would be almost as tolerable to us as that some rival sect should win their gratitude and adherence by helping them into the kingdom. This is, at bottom, the spirit of Jonah exactly. It is putting an earthly and narrow interest before the eternal life of souls. It is a spirit unworthy the Christian character, and a shameful stigma on the Christian name. 3. *A further consideration may be found in the surviving misanthropy of a half-sanctified nature.* God desires infinitely the highest well-being of men (Ezek. xxxiii. 11). And men, in proportion as they are God-like, desire it too (Rom. ix. 1—4). The sinful nature, which is largely selfish, is being taken away, and the gracious character, which is essentially benevolent, is being wrought. But neither process is complete on earth, and the missionary spirit, which is their joint issue, is proportionally weak. It was so with Jonah. He shows the old nature strong still in pride and petulance and ingratitude, and why not in lovelessness, its characteristic vice? Such a man is incapable of understanding the tender and gracious heart of God, which loves men absolutely and infinitely, and acts in every respect in character. He is incapable of desiring supremely the highest good of men, for he has never climbed to the high spiritual level in which to apprehend his own. A half-sanctified man is considerably more than half selfish, and a good deal less than half benevolent. If we would know what it is to travail for men's salvation, we must rise to a love of God baptized into the likeness of the Divine love out of which it springs.

II. GOD'S CHARACTER IS CONSTANT, WHATEVER ELSE MAY CHANGE. (Ver. 2.) Jonah changed, and the Ninevites changed, and God's treatment was changed accordingly; but the Divine character and rule of action remained the same throughout. 1. *He acted strictly in character in this case.* Jonah's language seems to imply a charge of weakness against the Divine dealing with Nineveh. On no other assumption can we understand his quoting in such a connection, and with disapproval, God's own revelation of the character in which he desired to be known (Ezek. xxxiv. 6). And the supposition is strengthened by the fact that, whilst he gives literally the clauses that speak of God's mercy, he leaves out the clause that speaks of his justice (Exod. xxxiv. 7), and substitutes for it a sentiment of his own. But justice and mercy met in the whole transaction. The Ninevites were mercifully spared, yet not unjustly. They might in justice have been destroyed, but not in mercy (Isa. lv. 7; Jer. xxxi. 20). Therefore Jonah absurdly makes it a charge against God that he is what he had always gloried in declaring himself to be. So blind and stupid can a sulky servant be. God need not overact his merciful character in order to offend such people; it is his mercy itself with which they have a quarrel. 2. *The prophet himself affirms the Divine consistency.* "God," we are told, "repented of the evil," etc.; and Jonah says, "I knew that thou art a gracious God . . . and repentest thee of the evil." The thing that Jonah knew he would do he did. His action was normal and entirely consistent—such action as he has always taken, and will take, in a like case. He repented, in fact, yet did not change. He did what it would be a change to cease from doing in the circumstances. He threatened Nineveh sinning, as he threatens all, and then he spared it turning, as he spares men in every age. His repentance, so called, is his method co-ordinating itself with the changing conditions of life, and is simply an aspect of his immutability.

III. THE PRAYER OF THE SELF-SEEKER IS OF NECESSITY ILL-ADVISED. (Ver. 3.) Jonah's prayer was *bona fides*. It is as a believer he prays. His spiritual instinct brings him in his unhappiness to a throne of grace. "He does not seek a refuge from God. He makes God his Refuge" (Martin). He shows a surly sincerity in unreservedly stating what is working in his mind; and "so long as all can yet be declared unto the Lord, even though it be your infirmity, there integrity still reigns" (Martin). Yet,

barring the quality of sincerity, this prayer lacks almost every other element of acceptable worship. 1. *It is inappropriate in its matter.* (Ver. 3.) It is not absolutely and necessarily wrong to pray for death. Paul, persecuted and afflicted, had "a desire to depart and be with Christ." It is easily conceivable that a believer, broken down and prostrated with incurable disease, should pray for death as the sole available release. It would be nothing unbecoming if a ripe saint, whose life-work is done, and who longs for rest, should make its early coming a matter of prayer. But Jonah was neither past living usefully nor, in his present temper, ready to die. His death, if allowed, would have advanced no interest either of his own or of others. His work was, humanly speaking, far from being done, and his life, if he put a noble interpretation on it, might be of great importance in the world. He was stupidly wanting to fling away from him, instead of prizing and using it, one of God's most precious gifts, and his own most sacred trust. The desire to die, which some consider the cream of all piety, is as often mistaken as appropriate, and far less often a duty than a sin. In such cases men "ask and receive not, because they ask amiss." 2. *It is improper in spirit.* One can easily see that Jonah was in no praying mood. He was angry and insolent. His prayer was really a contentious manifesto—the joint issue of arrogance and discontent. As such it was utterly offensive to God, and itself a new sin in his sight. The spirit of it, however, made it harmless, as it secured the refusal of its mischievous request. Our union with Christ is a condition of successful prayer (John xv. 7). The guarantee of its acceptability is our dwelling in Christ; the cause of its fitness is his Word dwelling in us. The Spirit helps the believer's infirmities, and in these qualities we have the outcome of his work (Rom. viii. 26). The very gist of prayer is a leaving of ourselves in the hands of God. Its inquiry is, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" and its request is, "Lord, here am I; send me." Such a request is offered in terms of our Father's will, and, being offered in Christ, is ideal prayer to God. But the prayer of wilfulness, of fretfulness, of carnal suggestion in any shape, is lacking in every element that God regards or can accept. "For let not such a one think that he shall receive anything of the Lord."

IV. GOD ANSWERS A FAULT-FINDING PRAYER BY REBUKING THE SPIRIT OF IT. The rule is that believing prayer is answered (Matt. xxi. 22; Mark ii. 24). It is a special qualification of the rule that the answer comes in the form of things agreeable to God's will. Jonah's prayer had enough of faith in it to secure an answer, and yet enough of folly to necessitate an answer very different from the one desired (ver. 4). There was wonderful condescension here. Jonah makes an insane request, and it is mercifully ignored. He makes it in a sinful way, and gets the thing he was most in need of—an admonition. The words imply: 1. *Are you angry on sufficient grounds?* An enumeration of the antecedents of his anger would have covered Jonah with confusion. His contemptibly egotistic refusal to prophesy, as it was his business to do, had not so much been punished, as forcibly overcome, and then forgiven. His life, jeopardized, in the natural course of events, by his own infatuate conduct, had, by a miracle of mercy, been given back to him from the grave's mouth. His recent ministry so tardily exercised had been blessed beyond a parallel, to the saving of a mighty city and the glorious illustration of the mercy and grace of God. These grounds of feeling are the only grounds which, as a servant of God, he could consistently regard. The others, which bore on possible results to his own official prestige, and Israel's moral attitude and fate, were purely speculative, might prove unfounded altogether, and whether or not should have no place in a spiritual mind. A true prophet is a man who speaks for God unquestioningly, who acts for God undauntedly, who is in fullest sympathy with his gracious purposes, and who knows no personal considerations in his work. Well might God ask, "Art thou wiser than I?" "Is thine eye evil because I am good?" If a servant may have an interest antagonistic to his masters; if a man "may make his own narrow capacity the measure by which to judge of the Divine will and the Divine procedure" (Martin); if the salvation of a million strangers is nothing in the balance against a possible hurt to a few of our own friends;—then Jonah was fitly angry, and we, in a like case, may fitly be angry also. The words also imply: 2. *Is your anger itself a right thing?* The will of God is the ultimate reason of things. The way of God is unchallengeably right. The office of censor over him does not exist. There is no provision in his scheme of government for our being angry,

and no place in the chain of cause and effect at which it could come in. We do it solely on our own responsibility, in violation of the Divine harmonies, and at our own risk and loss. It settles nothing outside ourselves, influences nothing, and has no right of way across the field of providence. God is supreme, and men are in his hands, and all duty in relation to his government is, "Thy will be done." The question of men's salvation is God's question in the last appeal. He sits at the helm. He settles who shall be saved, and whether any shall be saved (Rom. ix. 11, 16, 22, 23). The conversion of sinners is but the evolution of his purpose; the glorification of saints the realization of his plan. Is not this good tidings for the lost? Seeking God as he thinks with all his heart, the anxious sinner fancies sometimes that he is willing and God is not, and that the question to be solved is the question of overcoming a certain Divine inertia, and getting God's consent to his entrance into life. The idea is a delusion of Satan, and has ruined more lives than could be told. "Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life." That is Christ's way of it. "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." That is God's gospel, the glorious and precious truth. God's willingness to save is infinite. He waits to be gracious. It is you that are not willing. You think you are, and you may be in some respects. But you are not willing perfectly and all round. There is a secret reservation lurking somewhere. Search well and see. If you had ever been wholly willing for a single instant, you would that instant have been across the threshold and in the kingdom. If you are wholly willing now, it is the golden hour of your life, for it is the beginning of the new life in Christ.—J. E. H.

Vers. 5—11.—*Divine mercy formulating its own apologetic.* God is patient and persistent to a marvel. He sticks to men whom we would unhesitatingly cast off, and bears with them when, to our mind, patience has ceased to be a virtue. His keen eye sees ground for hope where we should utterly despair; and he goes on dealing with cases that we should regard as quite beyond treatment. The case of Jonah was one in point. He displayed a mulish obstinacy, and a tenacious and assertive self-will, on which anything short of the strong arm seemed only labour thrown away. Yet God is neither disgusted nor discouraged. He does not cease to strive; neither does he resort to the violence that would seem so fitting. His mildly suasive measures go on, and go on calmly and confidently, as to infallible success. Verbal expostulation has failed, but that is only one agency of exhaustless Divine resource. The symbolic method of teaching still remains, and may prevail, and God mercifully tries it on the refractory prophet before he will either say, "Cut him off!" or, "Let him alone!" We learn here—

I. HOW TENACIOUSLY A SERVANT OF GOD MAY CLING TO A MUTINIOUS PROJECT. (Ver. 5.) Jonah's leaning toward the destruction of Nineveh was not mere caprice. It was largely selfish. That event would have been to him equivalent to a new credential of office. The heathen abroad and Israel at home he could have referred to it as a miraculous authentication of his word, and a new feather in his official cap. Accordingly, his preference went and his influence tried to work in that direction. In this mind he left the city. He would not mingle with the people. Their abject attentions while dreading death, and their possible ridicule if it did not come, would be alike distasteful. His mission, moreover, was practically fulfilled, and he had no very definite business to detain him longer; whilst there would be a natural desire to be out of the city when its fateful hour should arrive. There was, however, a reason for his departure a good deal less to his credit than any of these. He went to see "what would become of the city." Here was watching for souls in hideous, baleful travesty. He was watching for their salvation, it is true, but watching for it in protesting anger and fear. He cannot bring himself to believe that it will take place; and he climbs the hills overlooking the city from the east to watch developments with a mind divided between anger, curiosity, and misgiving. And here he displayed the deliberation and resource that we observed on other occasions. Anticipating inconvenience from the burning heat, he built himself a rustic arbour in which he could sit in the pleasant shade and comfortably await the end. It is humiliating to think that questions of earthly interest, questions even of personal convenience, will compete successfully at times

with the question of men's salvation, for the first place in the attention of God's people. Words have, for some paltry personal consideration, been left unspoken, interviews unsought, measures unattended to, on which, humanly speaking, the question of some one's eternity hung. Those who know God and speak for him want to realize that their doing so is the paramount consideration, with which there is no other matter that may for a moment come into competition. A Paul "counts not his life dear unto him that he might finish the ministry received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts xx. 24). On no lower level can we, as regards the perishing, "walk in love as Christ also loved us."

II. HOW GOD IN PROVIDENCE BLESSES SINNERS AGAINST HIS GRACE. (Ver. 6.) Jonah had just complained of the great lenity of God. But he is only quarrelling with his own mercy. He is the very first, as he was the very last, to profit by that lenity himself. The God who offended him by pitying penitent Nineveh gave him unmingled gratification by pitying his rebellious self, and bringing him in his self-made discomfort prompt relief. And the gourd that grew so timely and served so well may be taken as a type of the Divine compensatory arrangements in connection with human life. 1. *These always come.* God does not forget His people, and cannot disregard their troubles. He heeds and he helps them. Wherever there is the burning sun of calamity there is the gourd of some ameliorating circumstance. They do not intermit; if they did our well-being, our very life, would intermit also. They do not fluctuate with our allegiance; if they did they would be at the ebb perpetually. They flow down in a continuous steady stream. "No father like God; none feel for his children like him; none so forgiving and ready to relieve; when none else will pity them, he will; and in the face of manifold provocations the Lord remembereth mercy. When they become sufferers, the Father's bowels of compassion melt over them. We have a High Priest that is soon touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Jones). 2. *They always suit.* Appropriateness must characterize a "good and perfect gift," such as all God's are. They are not at right angles to our need, but along the line of it. There is a destroying angel to rout a besieging army (2 Kings xix. 35), a flowing spring to quench a dying woman's thirst (Gen. xxi. 19), an earthquake to shake open prison doors (Acts xvi. 26), and "sufficient grace" to make a thorn in the flesh enduring (2 Cor. xii. 8, 9). In fact, God's helpful action bears directly on our sufferings and their alleviation. We get sometimes what we ask for, and always what we need. And we get it too at the moment we need it most. "The sea is opened when Israel is hemmed in on every side; the manna comes down when they have no bread; and the water flows from the rock when they are ready to die with thirst (Ps. xxvii. 10)" (Jones). 3. *They do for us what our own skill and contrivance have failed to do.* Jonah's booth proved insufficient shelter, and in the hour of its proved inadequacy the gourd grew. God allows us to build our own booth first. We try our hand at improving our earthly lot, to find that we cannot command success. We lay deep plans and put forth stupendous efforts, and then flounder and stick fast. At last God, who has been awaiting such a juncture, steps in, and, by some unthought-of incident, the blocked path is opened, and the thing is done. The testimony of God's people everywhere has been that, not their own brain or arm, but "the good hand of the Lord," has opened their path and made their life's prosperity. 4. *They are often appreciated without being traced to their source.* "Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd." And well he might. It intercepted the broiling sunshine, and converted physical distress into luxurious ease. Yet he rejoiced in its grateful shade without considering it to be God's gift or a blessing to thank him for. It is so that many of our mercies are received. They are welcomed and prized and rejoiced in. We are exceeding glad of them, and more than enough are exercised about them. "I become exceeding glad of my gourd. My heart entwines around it. This pleasing prospect; this budding hope; this successful movement; this welcome visitant, the golden-haired little one within my earthly home, crowing in my arms, searching my eye for the kindling glance of joy and love, and dancing gleefully on finding it;—ah! in many a form my gourd may grow; and I am exceeding glad of my gourd, even when I quarrel with God" who gives it (Martin). But our best of blessings we do not trace to their heavenly source. We take them unheeding as to whence or where they come. It is a fault of our life, and a chief cause of our ingratitude and lack of love, that God's gifts

are treated often as our own gains, and so are godlessly enjoyed. They are understood only when God is seen in them, and rightly used when used as from his hand; but, received with the dry eye of ingratitude, or with the shut eye of insensibility, they are deforced of their Divine element, and to us are God's gifts no longer.

III. HOW GOD CONFERS SOME GIFTS ONLY TO TAKE THEM AWAY AGAIN. (Ver. 7.) Jonah got his time of the gourd, but it was a short time. For one day he reclined luxuriously beneath its shadow; the next came the worm, and his shelter was gone. It is so with many comfortable earthly things. God gives them in mercy, and seeing them either inappreciated or idolized, he in further mercy takes them away. They "perish in the using." At best they could only last a lifetime; often they do not last so long. They are flowers that only bloom to wither, mists that melt away as soon as the sun is risen. And, whilst this is true of them as a class, it is specially true of some varieties. "When things come to us in haste, they as hastily part again; when riches come too quickly they quickly take their flight; sudden glories decay suddenly; the fruit which is soonest ripe is found to be soonest rotten" (Abbot). There is in the sudden removal of valued blessings a needful assertion of the Divine control. The things we have are not our own. We hold them at God's pleasure. And he emphasizes this fact occasionally by taking away the thing or the good of it, when we are just settling down for a whole life's enjoyment. Then we make idols of our mercies sometimes. We put the gift into the Giver's place. The most effectual cure for this is to be left without it. Our Father bestows his favours "not with a view to make man happy in the possession of them, but to win upon man, and to allure his heart to himself by his gifts. Abraham's servant did not bestow the jewels of silver and jewels of gold and raiment on Rebekah to make her joyful in a heathen land, but to win her heart to Isaac" (Jones).

IV. CALAMITY SHOWS MEN HOW BADLY THEY COULD DO WITHOUT GOD'S GIFTS. (Ver. 8.) The withering of the gourd and the rising of the hot sirocco were timed to synchronize. And there was disciplinary value in the adjustment. The loss of a gift becomes a lesson by emphasizing what and how much it means. Had the gourd remained, the heat would have been little felt. Had not the sirocco followed, the withered gourd might never have been missed. The concurrence of the two events and their obvious adjustment to each other reveal the hand of God, and point the lesson of the providence beyond mistaking. So misfortunes often march on us in companies, and support each other. One trial prepares the way of another, and lays bare the breast for its darts to penetrate. The discipline of grace is a lengthened process, and advances stage by stage to its lofty end of lust killed and a transfigured life.

V. FROM OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD OUR LOVED OBJECTS WE MAY ARGUE UP TO GOD'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS HIS. (Vers. 10, 11.) Our creation in the Divine image involves this, and all parabolic teaching takes it for granted. The soul is a miniature of God, and the order of coming to pass in it is "after God." Hence the unanswerableness of the question with which the parable and the book both close. 1. *The things we love are paltry.* A gourd against a city, a worthless plant against half a million of immortal souls. Such is a sample of the contrast between the objects of God's compassion and of ours. May we not argue that the compassion itself in the one case and the other is in still profounder contrast? God's love and mercy have reference to a lost race. Ours, unless in so far as we are God-like, refer to some trifling earthly object. Let the fact be realized, and the lesson is learned—a lesson of admiration and awe, and lowly gratitude and love. 2. *We have but a limited interest in the things we prize.* The gourd did not belong to Jonah. He "did not make it grow." He got the use of it for a while, but that was all. So the things we have are not our own. They are left with us as a loan, and held as a brief trust. Our attachment to them has no element of ownership in it, and is therefore destitute of a fundamental excellence. But God loves souls as his property and portion, and with a view to the fruition of them through all eternity. His is indeed a sublime affection—a "love which passeth knowledge." 3. *We have done but little for them.* (Ver. 10.) "For which thou hast not laboured." We love what costs us something. It is to the sickly child, which has cost her years of anxiety and care, that the mother's heart cleaves in most intense affection. Labour and sacrifice for an object bind us to it by a special tie. Created by our skill and effort, it is our offspring in a sense, and dear accordingly. This tie

was absent in the case of Jonah. He had not produced, nor contributed to the production of, the much-lamented gourd. But what had God not done for Nineveh? His were the lives forfeited, his the blessings menaced, his the repentance which led to the reprieve. In pitying Nineveh God was pitying the work of his own hands, an object in which he held, as a vested interest, all that he had done for it and meant to do. 4. *They are of brief endurance.* "Which came up in a night, and perished in a night." The time element is an important one in all attachments. The longer they have been growing the firmer they are. Jonah's gourd was lost almost as soon as found, and could not have been the object of any settled regard. But Nineveh had been in God's heart since before the world began, and many in it were to be his joy after time had ceased to be. His love had in it the incomparable strength of continuance, an aspect of "the power of an endless life." What an overwhelming argument for acquiescence in the Divine purpose of mercy! And how often, in the giving and taking away again of some form of earthly good, does God press home the argument on men who are quarrelling with his will! My gourd, like Jonah's, may have grown and flourished, "to the end, perhaps, that it may wither and droop and die; and that my heart, untractable, may at last, by losing it, be taught to feel that, if the object which my poor foolish love fastens on be hard to part with, how infinitely wrong in me to desire God to abandon those purposes which his infinitely wise will hath cherished from eternity, and which he hath bound in with and wrapt around my destiny at once to bless and train me!" (Martin).

Learn from this how to conceive of the value of the souls of men. They are the priceless things. God's masterpieces as to their origin, they are unparagoned as to intrinsic excellence; whilst, as to their place and function, they are the crown jewels of Christ, and the objects for which all heaven is a place prepared. Let saint and sinner mark this well. To barter away our soul is a transaction which will not profit us, though we "gain the whole world" instead. To love our neighbour as ourself, and in doing so supremely to love his soul, is "more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices." To love God supremely is to combine in ideal ratio the love of self and the love of souls. They are the "children of the Highest," whose hearts are the home of such affection, and they have in its presence the fruition of their inheritance begun.—J. E. H.

Vers. 1—4.—*Jonah's displeasure.* "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry," etc. This is not a wholly unexpected manifestation of character in Jonah. His was evidently a strange character, full of contradictory elements. A prophet of the Lord, who can yet run away from his work—influenced by high considerations in the main, yet yielding to a low desire for personal comfort—can sleep in a storm while pagans are at prayer—yet susceptible of profound contrition and repentance—frankly owns himself the cause of the storm—had ignominiously consulted for his comfort, but now generously sacrifices his life—in depth of his humiliation becomes wonderfully penitent, trustful, and obedient. Notwithstanding these contradictions, we should, perhaps, hardly have expected another outbreak of his lower nature, after so striking a Divine discipline and subjugation, and so remarkable a display of honesty, courage, self-sacrifice: it is a surprise to find him again quarrelling with God's appointment, discontented, hard, unmerciful, excited and grieved at the respite of Nineveh. There is a certain inconstancy in impulsive natures; there is a desperate activity of the lower propensities; hence our need of Divine guidance, a continual need—God alone is able to keep the very best from falling. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."

I. JONAH'S DISPLEASURE. (Ver. 1.) Proposed change of translation, making words to express *grief* rather than resentment, is hardly called for. Evidently Jonah lost self-control, and gave way to violent excitement. Here is another proof of the honesty of Bible narrative. It gives a faithful picture of human infirmity—"the law of sin in the members warring against the law of the mind." It would be a very untrue representation if faults corrected once, even by God, were represented as subdued for ever. The most distressing experience of true Christians is the renewed activity of their infirmities and corruptions even after profound humiliation and true contrition. "Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me" (Ps. xix. 12, 13).

II. REASON ASSIGNED FOR IT. (Ver. 2.) God too merciful—his mercy on this occasion judged out of place. Jonah's truthfulness as a prophet seemed to be compromised; he was made to appear foolish in the eyes of men—the whole of the painful experience he had gone through shown to be unnecessary; he would have to return home without bringing word to his people of the great catastrophe by which they would have been compelled to regard God's will. Jonah finds confirmation of the thought that had influenced him at first—God too merciful to inflict great judgments; he seems to find a reason for his original rebellion, and, with irreverent honesty, vindicates himself before God. A very great aggravation of his sin, that what he disliked in God was his graciousness to sinners. The mood of mind which Jonah is represented as expressing openly often has a lurking existence, not less mischievous because half concealed. Mercy of God is sometimes thought to be excessive. So thought Jews when Gentiles were to be admitted to Christian Church. Possibly this transaction was designed to foreshadow that event—Jonah's strong feeling a foreshadow of narrow Jewish jealousy. On a wider theatre, man's terrible selfishness is apt to prevail even over all considerations of mercy; for instance, a merchant interested in fall of price of grain is apt to be grieved for good weather and plentiful harvest—the heir of a rich man (possibly of his father) disappointed when he recovers from serious illness—the heart is apt to grieve at the good of a neighbour, especially of a rival—some one has said, "There is something even in the troubles of our friends which is not altogether displeasing to us"—a state of war is sometimes desired because of impulse to be given to certain branches of trade: in all such cases, the aspect of selfishness is simply hideous—men may well shrink from looking at such pictures of themselves—yet such feelings are by no means uncommon. What surprises in case of Jonah is that, after showing himself a very paragon of self-sacrifice, the selfish feeling should have been so strong, and that he should have given such open expression to it.

III. JONAH'S PRAYER. (Ver. 3.) He asked to be relieved of his life, which had become too burdensome to him. See here the sad prevalence of carnal spirit—no acknowledgment of higher wisdom of God, of the way in which good might be brought by him out of what seemed to Jonah to be evil. See, too, the sinfulness of a despairing spirit in servant of God—not unnatural in men of world—complications and miseries may arise which overwhelm—misery may be too absolute to bear, and every succeeding step may only aggravate it—dreadful condition of human spirit when absolute misery closes upon it. Such should never be the condition of a servant of God while in possession of his reason—sense of Divine providence, and assurance of protection and guidance should repel it—it is unbelieving men that ask, "Is life worth living?" Unbelief and suicide go together. Observe, in Jonah's case, effect of tolerated sin on his spiritual condition—he loses trust in God—does not see how God can save him even from himself—makes no such request, but only asks him to take away his life. Sometimes it seems so impossible to do right, that we are willing to give up all in despair. "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

IV. GOD'S REMONSTRANCE. (Ver. 4.) "Doest thou well to be angry?" Oh the gentleness of the Divine method!—Jonah's thoughts are thrown in upon himself—no Divine denunciation, but Jonah made, as it were, judge in his own case, asked to sit over himself and say if his feeling was right. Resemblance of this to the method of our Lord—his way of putting questions, compelling thought, and constraining a just decision. See his method of dealing with Simon the Pharisee (Luke vii. 42). Facility with which God may judge us, by making us judges of ourselves. Difference of our actions as regarded by us, and as seen from God's point of view. It is from God's point of view their criminality is most clearly shown. Hence the sense of unworthiness we feel when we bend the knee, and pour out our spirit before God at night. The actions that at the time seemed right enough assume aspect of sin when looked at, as it were, with God's eyes. In the present case no such effect was made on Jonah; he himself comes before God in sullen, selfish spirit. Even God's question does not subdue him. Summing up the sins of Jonah's spirit in this transaction, we notice: 1. His limiting God. There was but one way, in his view, in which the right thing could be done. Nineveh must be destroyed. To that he had made up his mind, and his whole moral nature was shaken when it appeared that God had another way. 2. His refusing to believe in the efficacy of Divine forbearance. Rough methods of dealing alone are

believed in by many—slaves treated with fearful violence—the terrors of the Inquisition brought down on heretics—offence of many at the clemency of Lord Canning after Indian Mutiny—Ireland must be scourged with fire and sword—scoundrels, said Carlyle, must suffer the unmitigated doom of scoundrels. God's methods more merciful—he seeks to win, to humble, to reclaim, to convert. 3. His readiness to sacrifice a vast community to carry out his own idea. His want of regard for human life—a common feeling of the time—in Jonah's view all that vast mass of life was not to be considered, provided a blow was struck that would vindicate his authority, and impress his people. 4. Impatience of spirit, giving birth to rash desires and prayers. Loss of self-control is a very humiliating experience in one who desires to be a servant of God. "He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city" (Prov. xvi. 32). But "he that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls" (Prov. xxv. 28). How unlike Jonah was now to what he had been before!—W. G. B.

Vers. 5—11.—*God's remonstrance with Jonah.* "So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city," etc. Jonah appears to have gone out of the city and taken up his abode in the booth *before* he knew that Nineveh was to be spared. As Noah entered the ark before the Flood came, and waited for the moment when the judgment of Heaven would verify the warnings of a hundred and twenty years, so Jonah entered his booth before the expiry of the forty days, and waited the moment when the judgment of Heaven would verify *his* warning. We can imagine him speculating on the form the judgment would take: "what would become of the city"—whether it would perish as Sodom and Gomorrah perished, or as the Tower of Babel, or as the walls of Jericho had fallen down in presence of the ark. That something was to happen he appears not to have had the slightest doubt; this may account for his mortification when he found that, after all, the city was to be spared. The revulsion of feeling after his mind had been wound up to the highest pitch of expectation, and the sense of having been befooled before men, may explain the vehemence of his feeling. In rebuking Jonah it pleased God to do so by means of an acted parable—the parable of the gourd.

I. THE GOURD (or *Palma Christi*, *palmerist*, as some suppose) **PREPARED.** (Ver. 6.) Further indication how God is Lord of the whole earth and all therein. This book shows God controlling *things inorganic* (winds and waves, ch. i., and the east wind, ch. iv. 8); *vegetables* (the gourd); *things fortuitous* (the lot); *animals* (the great fish); *reptiles* (the worm); also *men*, both Jonah and the Ninevites. The great object, both of the transactions themselves and of this record of them, is to vindicate the universal sovereignty of God, both natural and moral. The gourd partly natural, partly supernatural; God's purpose in it was to deliver Jonah from his grief. So far as supernatural, a pleasant token that God had not forsaken him. Natural effect to ward off sun, cool the air, prevent feverish irritation, keep mind and body calm and cool. Jonah probably suffered much before it grew up, but would feel immediate relief when it came. Learn herein God's ability to effect important results by simple means—influence of mind on body, and body on mind: "Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd."

II. THE GOURD DESTROYED. (Ver. 7.) Again an important result due to a trifling cause—a worm. Figuratively and spiritually, "the worm Jacob threshing mountains" (Isa. xli. 15). Apparent collisions and contradictions in nature—one force seems to destroy what another creates—as if there were a Siva as well as a Brahma—in the plan of God all work together—it was alike of God to prepare the gourd and to destroy it—the purposes of Divine discipline often require opposite influences at different times, but all are to be regarded as parts of a gracious plan: "I will sing of mercy and of judgment" (Ps. ci. 1); "All things are yours, whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come" (1 Cor. iii. 22).

III. JONAH'S VEXATION. (Ver. 8.) Aggravation of his uneasiness by the vehement east wind—whatever comfort of mind might have come through the remarkable origin of the gourd was counteracted by this wind, which seemed a token of God's displeasure—combined distress of body and mind in Jonah—impulsiveness of his nature again apparent—contrast between his two faintings—at ch. ii. 7, "when my soul fainted within

me, I remembered the Lord;" here "he fainted, and wished in himself to die"—Jonah his own reprover. The great lesson—we should sit loose to creature comforts, like the gourd—thankful for them while we have them, not repining, and, above all, not despairing, when we lose them. Habakkuk's spirit the model, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom," etc. (iii. 17)—Jonah walked by sight, not by faith; he should have said, "When heart and flesh faint and fail, God is the Strength of my heart, and my Portion for evermore."

"But O, thou bounteous Giver of all good,
Thou art of all thy gifts thyself the sum!
Give what thou mayest, without thee we are poor,
And with thee rich, take what thou wilt away."

"It is impossible to help 'moralizing' on the worm and the gourd. . . . They are felt inwardly to be emblems, too faithful, of the swift-coursing, closely linked joy and sorrow of this mortal life. The *fine plant*, leafy-green, type of our comforts, successes, joys. The *single day* of shade it furnished to the heated prophet . . . transiency of our pleasure. The *worm* . . . a small and mean creature, may be a very formidable enemy. The *place* of its operations probably under the soil . . . agents unknown to us may smite in secret the sources of prosperity. The *time*—morning—human helps and hopes often wither at any season when most needed. *Utter loss* . . . warning not to set our affections on anything which *can* be utterly lost. . . . The *preparation*, indicating how God orders trials for our good" (Raleigh abridged). "Is it not a blessing when the gourds wither? Is it not a mercy in God to sweep them away, even though the heart should be half broken by the loss? . . . Many will bless God for ever because their gourds were withered. Had the gourd not withered, the soul would not have been saved; and the withering of the gourd therefore makes the anthem of the saved the louder" (Tweedie, 'Man by Nature and by Grace').

IV. GOD'S REMONSTRANCES. (Ver. 9.) Repetition of an old question, and, as before, without evoking a suitable answer. We may note man's self-justifying tendency—especially tendency to excuse passion; excitement of passion is sometimes so great that even a question from God fails to convict—Jonah's mood is so completely self-justifying, that he justifies his wish to die—as if his suffering was really beyond what could be borne. Observe the unbecoming attitude and spirit before God; the true attitude of sinners is that in Rom. iii. 19, "that every mouth might be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." Silence is the true condition of the sinner, as far as justifying pleas concerned; or, when silence is broken, such words as the publican's, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

V. DIVINE APPLICATION OF THE GOURD-HISTORY. (Vers. 10, 11.) Unexpected, yet felicitous, adaptation of the physical to the moral—light thrown on a dark providence—a foreshadow of revelations of many enigmas of providence yet to come. The argument is *ad hominem*: If Jonah would have spared his gourd, why should God not spare Nineveh? It is also *à fortiori*: If the fate of the gourd, a perishing and trifling thing, was an object of concern to Jonah, *much more* must the fate of such a city as Nineveh be an object of concern to God. Observe the force of the how much more—the *numbers* so different—the *relative endurance* of the two objects—the *labour* bestowed on them—the one *sensitive* beings, the other not. The special reason for sparing Nineveh; it contained more than a hundred and twenty thousand infants, and also much cattle. God's regard for children is here set forth—in these Eastern countries lives of children were little thought of—infanticide was common—in some countries (Moab, etc.) children were made to pass through the fire to their gods—massacres of children common (Judg. ix. 5; 2 Kings ii. 1)—their lives precious in eyes of God, even though pagan and uncircumcised—a foreshadow of the gospel view: "of such is the kingdom of heaven"—children may peradventure ward off great calamities—children in great cities are often neglected—immense proportion of deaths occurs under the age of five—mostly due to preventible causes—hence sanitary reform becomes a great duty—laws of healthy upbringing of children are most important—spiritual and moral oversight not less so—the New Testament rule is, "Bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." God's regard for cattle—he likes to see

them enjoying life—shrinks from what needlessly entails or destroys it—thoughtless and needless infliction of suffering and death on animals is a great sin in God's eye. The prophet is silenced now—he opens not his mouth.

The narrative ends somewhat abruptly; but leaves two great truths full in view—the littleness of man; the greatness of God. 'The littleness even of a good man, one who in his deliberate judgment and inmost soul honoured God, and sought to serve him, but was very excitable, and could not subdue the poor impulses of the lower part of his nature. The greatness of God, Lord of the earth and the sea, caring for his creatures, not willing that they should perish, but that they should be saved. Especially the greatness of God in clemency, compassion, sparing mercy; for the very attributes that Jonah depreciated are as real as they are noble: "a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil." This is emphatically the gospel aspect of God's character: "just, and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus"—rich in mercy and great in love, sending his Son into the world, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but should have everlasting life." Let us cherish the view of the Divine character that Jonah disparaged; it is the only hope for us sinners. And again let us remember how the men of Nineveh have not passed entirely off the scene, for, as our Lord said, "The men of Nineveh shall rise up in judgment against the men of this generation, and shall condemn them; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and, behold, a greater than Jonah is here."—W. G. B.

Vers. 1—5.—*Jonah's grief.* There "sat" Jonah, watching, displeased with the Ninevites' preservation, grieved at the gentle dealings of their Preserver. And God's only rebuke of him was the gentle question, "Dost thou *well* to be angry?" In his mood and conduct let us read our own.

I. OUR DISPLEASURE. Have we never been displeased with God's ways? It may have been as patriots. It is easy to be resigned to judgments that come upon our country's enemies. We must beware—beware lest we encourage in ourselves the belief that the great work of God among nations to-day is to do all for the glory of England. Jonah was displeased that his country's enemies should be spared. Yet God spared them. In our own personal history have we never been displeased with God?—displeased that prosperity has been denied us, who could so wisely have used it? displeased that losses and afflictions have impoverished us, when they seemed so much more *needed* by others who have been free from them? displeased to lose our *one* child, when in other homes the many are spared? displeased, it may be, that even the one has been denied us? Have we never charged God foolishly?

II. OUR GRIEF. Jonah was "very grieved" that the Ninevites should be spared. Better, he deemed, that they should perish. Better for Israel thus to be quit of an enemy. Better for God, as thus vindicating his righteousness. Better for Jonah himself—thus accredited as a prophet of truth. Grieved; but what is he doing with his memory? He, such a sinner against the light, had been spared; then why not these repentant heathen? Ungrateful Jonah! But why wonder at him? Have we not forgotten the Divine goodness? Have we not been grieved at God's dealings? Even in his work how thwarted! How little credit do we get to what we expected! And the work does not prosper in *our way*. Have we never been grieved, angry, with God?—that that great and good man should be taken away in the midst of his days? that that youth of high promise should be cut down when the bright bud was just showing the brilliant flower? that God's work, where most successful, should be threatened with hindrance and be hindered? that our work for him should be obstructed, and we get so little commendation for it when we had deemed we deserved it so much? Grieved—and therein the evil—by regarding *God* as at fault.

III. OUR WAYWARD PRAYER. Jonah longed to die. His work seemed to fail because Nineveh was spared. Fail? No; it was a transcendently glorious success. A sublime and ever-memorable proof of the Divine mercy. An abiding encouragement to all coming workers for God. So our work, when we count it a failure, may in God's eyes be "not in vain." How we bear ourselves in severe trials of faith will show what spirit and character we are of. Let no wayward prayer be ours. In our peevishness and distrust and vexation God says, "Dost thou *well* to be angry?" He is ever right.

His way is perfect. "Consider Jesus, *lest* ye be wearied and faint in your minds." What is our grief to his?

"O brothers, let us leave the shame and sin
Of taking vainly, in a plaintive mood,
The holy name of *grief*!—holy herein,
That, by the grief of *One*, came all our good."

As with him so with us—the way of the cross is the way to the crown.—G. T. O.

Vers. 6—8.—*Jonah and the gourd.* Welcome was the broad shadow of the gourd rising round the booth and above it! The great glare in subdued green light streamed through the leaves to the calmed and cooled and comforted prophet. Just now he wished to die. *Now* he was willing to live—"exceeding glad of the gourd." Short-lived was his gladness. Worm-smitten, the gourd withered. A day of beauty and value, and then the end of it. And now, unsheltered by the plant, exposed to branding sun and burning wind, Jonah longed again to die. Note here: *Divine discipline.* The gourd, worm, wind, divinely sent, have each a ministry for the prophet. He needs *correction* if he is to amend. They are to teach him. But such is the Divine pitifulness that there comes—

I. THE LESSON OF REFRESHMENT. There was sent the gourd "to deliver him from his grief." He needed a shadow. It was given, and the plant shielded him from the oppressive, life-exhausting heat. The gloom of his mind had been increased by the heat of the booth; the outer had aggravated the inner weariness. In the coolness of the gourd he was calmed and soothed. The mind affects the body, and the body the mind. "Heaviest the heart is in a heavy air." Much mental and even spiritual depression must be put to the account of physical causes. Jonah sheltered was cheered and refreshed; gloom became gladness. Did he rejoice in the gourd? How, then, must God rejoice to spare his human creatures! And did Jonah meanwhile, "glad of the gourd," with, we may hope, thankfulness to God for it, think that after all God was favourable to his bitter longing for the punishment if not utter destruction of Nineveh though repentant? If so, he thought wrongly. Outward prosperity is no proof of the Divine approval. In doing wrong, in feeling wrong, all may seem to go well with us; *still*, it is none the less wrong. Are we in accordance with Divine truth and righteousness—our will in harmony with the Divine? *Then all* providences are in reality friendly, and "even the night is light about us."

II. THE LESSON OF BEREAVEMENT. Did Jonah pity, miss, and mourn for the gourd? Shall not God have pity on the myriads in Nineveh? That was the lesson of his loss to the prophet. But how reluctant to learn it! We may be bereaved of our strength, competence, loved ones. Ah! how *God* is bereaved! "Shall a man rob God?" What multitudes do—of their love, loyalty, service! He appeals to each. "How can I give thee up?" he says. He may take away his gifts. It is the more fully to give us himself. All earthly gourds will wither. But for all who will, there is an abiding shelter from every storm; a *living* shelter—Christ. In him, though the tempests come of sorrow, bereavement, death, we have peace, safety, and eternal life.—G. T. O.

Vers. 10, 11.—*An argument from human pity to Divine mercy.* Jonah is met on his own ground. From his human compassion comes the irresistible enforcement of the argument for the Divine mercy. Mark the contrasts.

I. PITY ON THE GOURD; PITY ON NINEVEH. Useful had been the gourd to Jonah. It had made life tolerable; it had gladdened him. He had saddened to see it wither, sorrowed to see it dead. He had pity on it; his pity would have spared it. Nor was he wrong. It is *well* to be unwilling to see aught that has cheered us perish. But if he was right in his desire to spare that plant, "should not I spare Nineveh?" asked God. Should a plant be more than a great city? *God's* great thought is upon *men*. How the Divine pity moved over repentant Nineveh! How the blessed Redeemer longed to save Jerusalem! On his last visit, with what other eyes than those of his disciples did he look upon it!

"They shout for joy of heart,
But he the King, looks on as one in grief;
To heart o'erburdened weeping brings relief,
The unbidden tear-drops start."

II. PITY ON THE SHORT-LIVED GOULD; PITY ON THE NINEVITES, IMMORTAL CREATURES. That gourd had but the life of a day. Then "the grace of the fashion of it perished." So frail! But look at those multitudes in Nineveh. Few there had so brief a life as the gourd. And all of them were heirs of immortality, passing to an eternal destiny. How the *human* transcends all lower forms of life! Did Jonah pity the short-lived plant? Shall not God pity the ever-living multitude in the city?

III. PITY ON THE GOULD THAT HAD COST JONAH NOTHING; PITY ON THE VAST POPULATION THAT GOD HAD MADE AND UPHELD. The gourd "came up over" Jonah; unsought, unhelpt by him—*came* to him. He brought it not; he kept it not in life. He had done nothing for it, yet how he mourned its decay! Mark the principle implied in this contrast! This—that we show our value of a thing by the labour we expend upon it. This also—that our sense of the value of a thing, our love to it, *grows* in proportion to our labour for it. How much God had done for the Ninevites! They were all his creatures. If he had not "laboured for" them, he had made them. He was the Fountain of their life. They lived because he held them in life. He could not lightly let them perish; he was their Maker. Jonah had "not made" the gourd to "grow." But God had made the Ninevites to grow; had built them in strength, fed, clothed, preserved them. And, as with us, the more we do for another, the more we love him; so with God and those Ninevites. They were dear to him, and ever dearer because of what he had done for them.

IV. PITY ON THE ONE PLANT; PITY ON THE MANY-PEOPLED CITY. One plant called out Jonah's yearning tenderness. But what was that to a *man*?—a man made in God's image, "endued with sanctity of reason," dowered with immortality? A man? Here was a city full of men. *God* knew the number. But in this plea he only gives the number of the children. They in their helplessness and innocence were pleas with him for the preservation of the city. Beautiful, effectual priesthood of children! They are unconscious yet mighty intercessors for us. One hundred and twenty thousand of them are in Nineveh. That is a reason why God should spare it. Better that they should live than die. Heaven, to one who has known God's grace and accepted it, temptation and overcome it, who has "served his generation," will be a nobler world than to an infant caught in his unconsciousness to its unexpected bliss. "And much cattle." Not an animal in Nineveh but is worth more than the gourd. Man's Maker is *its* Maker. And he who made man made it *for* man. The very cattle are a plea for the preservation of the city.

Conclusive, unanswerable appeal! Jonah, so ready with his replies, is now speechless. He *saw* that God's way was right. Let *our* pity to things and persons remind us of God's mercy. A mercy almighty and "to everlasting." A mercy revealed in Christ. A mercy to be *accepted*. If not, if rejected, if trifled with till life is trifled away—where, where can we look? There is one Saviour, and no other!—G. T. C.

Ver. 11.—*The unconscious priesthood of children.* The Ninevite little ones effectually, though unwittingly, interceded with God for the preservation of Nineveh. And are not little children *still* unconscious intercessors with God? 1. By their innocence. *They* have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression. 2. By their dependence. Their dependence on God makes them the dearer to God; their dependence on their parents makes their parents the dearer to him. 3. By their undeveloped moral possibilities. What a work in the earth *they* may do for God! "I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said"—Ninevite babe and suckling—"spare me, teach me," and then in the future "send me."—G. T. C.

Ver. 11.—*God's consideration for animals.* The "much cattle" in Nineveh a plea with God for the preservation of the city. And *still*, be animals where they may: 1. God has made them. 2. He preserves them. "His full hand supplies their need." 3. He dowers them with beauty, or swiftness, or strength, with sensibility and sagacity. 4. He makes them of varied serviceableness to man, and has given man authority over them. "Thou madest him to have dominion over all sheep and oxen; yea, and the beasts of the field." 5. "He regardeth the life of the beast;" complacently, in their "lower pleasures;" pitifully, in their "lower pains;" constantly and minutely, "not

one falleth on the ground" without him. 6. He would have them preserved from cruelty and needless destruction (Exod. ix. 19). 7. It is God-like to care for the lower animals.

"He prayeth well who loveth well
Both man, and bird, and beast.
He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small;
For the dear God, who loveth us,
He made and loveth all."

G. T. C.

Vers. 6—8.—*The gourd, the worm, and the east wind.* Jonah was not faultless after his prayer and penitence. He undertook his work, and boldly proclaimed his message in Nineveh. His success was beyond expectation. The whole city was moved, and all the inhabitants fasted, repented, and prayed. And in the mercy which is ever his delight, God averted the threatened disaster. "But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry." He was indignant that his message should appear to be unfulfilled, and angry when he found that he had been the means of saving from destruction the most dangerous foes of his own country. Any one who reads the history of Europe at the beginning of this century will understand this feeling. It was with an awful sense of dread that our grandfathers heard that Napoleon had swept into Russia at the head of six hundred and fifty-seven thousand veterans, expecting to return flushed with victory to complete his work of devastation. When the news came that of all that great host only eighty-five thousand men had escaped from the horrors of war and frost and famine, a jubilant shout of thanksgiving went up to Heaven, led by the Christian Church! Sinful though Jonah's feeling was, it was not unnatural, and he sat himself down within view of the city, hoping and praying that at least some smaller disaster would befall it. Our text shows how graciously God sought to bring him to a better state of mind. The withering of the gourd, like the withering of the fig tree, was intended to be an epitome of human experience. Let us learn from it—

I. THAT ALL OUR EARTHLY COMFORTS ARE OF GOD'S PROVIDING. When Jonah set himself to watch what would become of the city, he made for his shelter a booth, formed of the interlaced branches of trees, which imperfectly kept off the heat of the sun. And God prepared a gourd, whose broad leaves spread over the booth till good protection was given from the scorching heat, which even seasoned Arabs dared not brave; and Jonah was exceeding glad of it. There was never more danger than there is now of the non-recognition of God's hand in nature and in history. The clearness with which we see natural phenomena tends to make less credible what is only spiritually discerned. But happy is the man who finds every blessing sweetened to him by the thought, "God gave me this." The great purpose of all his dealings with us is to bring us to thought about himself. Sometimes he turns us back to duty, as Jonah was turned, by a storm; and sometimes he brings us back to a right mind, as Jonah was brought, by a blessing—strangely coming, and then as strangely going.

II. THAT OUR EARTHLY BLESSINGS ARE OF SHORT DURATION. Their brevity is as much God's appointment as their existence. Notice the emphatic declarations in our text: "*The Lord prepared a gourd;*" "*The Lord prepared a worm;*" "*The Lord prepared a vehement east wind.*" In other words, the blessing and the cause of its removal both emanated from him. 1. *The gourd withered when Jonah reckoned most confidently on enjoying it.* It is so with our blessings too. Examples: The wealth amassed with such difficulty seems secure at last, but unexpectedly it vanishes. The child nursed through all the perils of a weakly childhood dies in the fulness of manhood's strength, etc. 2. *The gourd withered from a small and secret cause.* A worm at the root killed it. Little things, preventable things, as we think them, often cause our losses. We may be ruined by some one we never saw, and of whom we never heard. A noble reputation may be blasted by a silly slander. Yet there is no awful fate blindly striking hither and thither; there is no hostile power supreme over human events. Of every loss we may say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord."

III. THAT TROUBLES SELDOM COME ALONE. It was bad enough to lose the shelter of the gourd, but it was worse to find a vehement east wind springing up just after it withered—not one like ours, cutting in its keenness, but one singularly depressing and relaxing in its effects. It came over the burning desert sands; it drank up fire by the way; it dried the skin, and filled the pores with dust, and beat upon the wayfarer like the blast of a furnace. Jonah found it the more unbearable because his shelter was gone. Sorrow comes on sorrow—financial anxiety, domestic bereavement, impaired health, unexpected loss, following each other till our souls are overwhelmed. But God is patient with us, in spite of our angry thoughts; he pities our passionate weeping, and waits till we can say with him who in his agony prayed yet more earnestly, “Thy will, not mine, be done.”

CONCLUSION. While Jonah was pitying the gourd whose beautiful leaves were withered, and was grieving over the loss of its shade, God pointed him from it to Nineveh, and said, “If you sorrow over this, how much more do I sorrow over that? You have not laboured for this gourd, but I have laboured for that city. The gourd could never be worth much, but what might not Nineveh be if only its people were redeemed from sin?” Thus would he point us from the contemplation of life’s sadness to the contemplation of its sin. He would remind us that as we would sacrifice anything to save the life of one we love, so he has given his only Son to save us from sin and death eternal.—A. R.

Vers. 6—8.—*Emblems of man’s earthly good, and God’s disciplinary procedure.* “And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd,” etc. I shall use these verses as presenting an emblem of man’s earthly good, and an emblem of God’s disciplinary procedure.

I. AS AN EMBLEM OF MAN’S EARTHLY GOOD. I take the “gourd” to represent this. What this plant was, whether it was, as some suppose, a kind of cucumber, which sprang swiftly from the soil, and covered the booth which Jonah had reared and under which he sat, or a kind of ivy that crept up and overshadowed his dwelling, or some plant of more rapid growth and more luxuriant foliage, it matters not. We are told the Lord “prepared” it. It was some indigenous plant, characterized by a speedy growth and abundant leafage, and whose growth, perhaps, was stimulated by a Divine infusion of an unusual amount of vegetative force. It was a great blessing at the time to Jonah. It screened him from the rays of the Oriental sun, and refreshed his sight with its verdure. And it is said that “Jonah was exceeding glad of the gourd.” He felt that it was good. Now, this gourd was like man’s earthly good in three aspects—in its development, its decay, and destruction. 1. *In its development.* (1) It came out of the earth. The gourd was not a plant sent down directly from heaven. It grew out of the soil. So with all our worldly good. From the earth come all our granaries, our wardrobes, our houses, and all that blesses our material existence. It is all out of the earth. (2) It came out of the earth by Divine agency. It was not the less a Divine gift because it seemed to grow in a natural way. God produced it. He “prepared” it. All the earthly good we possess, even that for which we have laboured with the greatest skill and persistent industry, is the gift of God. He it is that gives us our daily bread, and that furnishes us with food and raiment. 2. *In its decay.* “But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.” Not long, perhaps only a few hours, had the gourd spread its shady and refreshing influence over Jonah’s dwelling-place before the worm began to gnaw at its vitals and soon smote it. Mark the decaying agent, a “worm.” (1) How *mean*! It was not some huge quadruped of the wild, or some royal bird from the craggy cliffs or towering forests, but a worm. The work of destruction is very easy. We are crushed “before the moth.” (2) How *prompt*! Decay commenced at once. “When the morning rose the next day” it had done its work. The worm of decay begins its work with the commencement of our earthly good. It gnaws at the foundation of mansions as soon as they are built, at friendships as soon as they are formed, at life as soon as it begins. “As soon as we begin to live we all begin to die.” This worm of decay is working everywhere. (3) How *secret*! It works unseen, underground. It gnaws at the vital roots. It is an unseen agent. Who sees the worm

that strips the trees in autumn, that steals strength from the strongest animal, and gnaws away the life of the youngest? Verily man and all his earthly good is being "destroyed from morning to evening." 3. *In its destruction.* "God prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and wished in himself to die." "This wind," says an old expositor, "was not as a fan to abate the heat, but as a bellows to make it more intense." It may be that this vehement east wind was that terrible simoom which was common in that land, and which smote the four corners of the house in which Job's children were. How desolate is the prophet now! The burning beams of the sun are beating on his head. His booth is destroyed, his gourd is withered to the roots, and the east wind like a breath of fire is drying up the current of life. His existence became intolerable. He wished in himself to die. Here, then, is a picture of our earthly good. However abundant in its nature and delicious in its enjoyment, like this gourd it must go from us. The worm will gnaw out its existence and the east wind will utterly destroy it, and when it is gone and we are stripped of everything but sheer existence, unless Christ is formed in us the Hope of glory, our life will be intolerable, and we shall seek for death as our only relief.

II. AS AN EMBLEM OF GOD'S DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE. The Eternal, in order to get Jonah into a right state of mind, employs a variety of agency. It is suggested: 1. *That God disciplines man by facts.* Precepts and theories are powerless in the human soul compared with actual facts. "I have heard of thee," says Job, "by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee." Nature is a system of facts. Human life is an experience of facts, the Bible is a record of facts, and by facts God disciplines the human soul. The gourd was a fact, the worm was a fact, the east wind was a fact, and these facts went down to the centre of Jonah's soul. 2. *That these facts are varied in their character.* Here was the pleasant and the painful. The gourd, how pleasant! the simoom and burning sun, how painful! So now God employs the *pleasurable* and the *painful* to discipline our souls to virtue. He employs the *small* and the *great*. Here was the insignificant worm and vehement wind. "Lo, all these things worketh God oftentimes with man, to bring back his soul from the pit, to be enlightened with the light of the living" (Job xxxiii. 29, 30). 3. *That these facts are adapted to their end.* Jonah did not wish that mercy should be shown to the Ninevites. He desired their destruction. This was his state of mind, and a bad state of mind it was, and God dealt with it by giving him a lesson in personal suffering. He taught him what suffering was.

CONCLUSION. 1. Let us not trust in *earthly good*. It is but a mere gourd. It must wither and rot. "All flesh is grass." Trust in righteousness. "Trust in him that liveth for ever." 2. Let us *improve under the disciplinary influences of Heaven*. Life is a moral school, a school in which the great Father seeks to make his children meet for the "inheritance of the saints in light."—D. T.

Vers. 9—11.—*God reasoning with man.* "And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd?" etc. The whole Book of Jonah develops at least the following truths: 1. *That the regard of Heaven, even under the old dispensation, was not confined to the Jews.* Jonah was sent to Nineveh, a city far away from Judæa, whose population had neither kinship nor sympathy with the Jewish people. It is represented as a bloody city, full of lies and robbery, its ferocious violence to captives is portrayed in its own monuments. The opinion that once prevailed very extensively in the Christian world, and which still prevails to a certain extent, that the Eternal Father confined his interest and communications entirely to the descendants of Abraham, is without foundation; Nineveh, Egypt, and Babylon were as dear to him as Jerusalem. He revealed himself to Pharaoh as well as to Moses, and to Nebuchadnezzar as well as to Daniel. 2. *That wickedness, if persisted in, must end in ruin.* "Arise," says Jehovah to Jonah, "go . . . to Nineveh, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me." And because of its wickedness it was on the verge of destruction. So it ever is, sin leads to ruin. "The wages of sin is death." 3. *That true repentance will rescue a people from their threatened doom.* Though the ruin of Nineveh seemed all but settled to take place in about forty days, yet because it repented the terrible doom was averted. "When God saw their works, that they had repented of their evil

ways, he repented of the evil he said he would do unto them; and he did it not" (ch. iii. 10). It is ever so. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." Amongst the many remarkable and suggestive passages in this book, not the least striking and significant is that which I have now selected for meditation. I shall employ it to illustrate the amazing interest God takes in mankind. This is seen—

I. IN HIS REASONING WITH A MAN WHO IS IN A BAD TEMPER. That the "High and Holy One that inhabiteth eternity" should notice individual man at all is a condescension transcending our conceptions, but that he should now enter into an argument with one who is under the influence of a bad temper is still more marvellous. Jonah was "angry," and the intensity of his anger became so intolerable that he wished to die. "Therefore now, O Lord, take my life, I beseech thee; for it is better to die than to live." Why was he angry? 1. *Because of the Divine compassion shown to the Ninevites.* Jonah had proclaimed their destruction in forty days, and fully perhaps did he expect that the truthfulness of his word would be attested by the fact. But the forty days passed away, and no thunderbolt of destruction came; it was preserved, and preserved by God because it repented. It seems that he would sooner have seen Nineveh in ruins than have had his word falsified before the people. His vanity was wounded. He thought more of his own reputation than of the lives of a teeming population. "Dost thou well to be angry?" The question implies a negative. "No; thou dost ill; thine anger is a sinful anger." There is a righteous anger; hence we are commanded to "be angry and sin not." Indignation against falsehood and meanness and selfishness and impiety is a holy passion—a passion that must often flame out in all pure hearts in passing through a world of corruption like this. This, however, was not the anger of Jonah; his anger implied vanity, heartlessness, and irreverence. 2. *Because of the loss of a temporal blessing.* The gourd that grew up in a night and mantled his tent with its luxurious leafage, thus sheltering him from the rays of the burning sun, was felt by him one of his greatest temporal blessings. "He was exceeding glad of the gourd." That was now taken from him, the worm gnawed it to death, and as the hot simoom rushed at him, and the rays of the burning sun beat upon his head, he deeply felt its loss, and he was angry; he was angry with God for depriving him of this blessing. He was thus angry with the Almighty for showing compassion to the Ninevites, and also for depriving him of this temporal blessing. His anger seems to have been not a passing emotion, not a momentary flame, but a fire that rendered his life unbearable. "Let me die," he says. The passions of the soul have often extinguished the natural love of life and snapped the mystic cord that unites the body to the soul. Now, is it not wonderful that the great God should condescend to reason with a man in such a state of mind? Man is wont either to shun the individual who is indignant with him, or to hurl anathemas at his head. Not so the Infinite Father. Calmly and lovingly he reasons with his indignant enemy. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow."

II. IN HIS REASONING WITH A MAN WHO IS IN A BAD TEMPER IN ORDER TO IMPRESS HIM WITH THE REALITY OF HIS COMPASSION. "Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?" The Almighty here argues from Jonah's pity for the gourd—the plant—to his compassion for Nineveh. The argument is from the less to the greater. If you, Jonah, feel pity for that mere vegetable production which you had for a few hours only, and which you yourself did not produce, conceive of my compassion for the inhabitants of Nineveh. The comparison here implied between the plant and Nineveh may be expressed in three questions. 1. *What is this one plant to the men that inhabit Nineveh?* What is the grandest production in the vegetable world, the most stately and symmetrical tree towering as the king of the forest, to one human being? The tree is the production of the earth, cannot think of its Creator, cannot itself alter its own position, is the mere creature of external influences, and must exhaust itself by its own growth; but man is

the offspring of the Infinite, capable of tracing his existence to its Source, having the power to move as he pleases, and endowed with powers inexhaustible, and ever-increasing development! But if a plant is nothing to one man, what is it to the thousands of men that are found in Nineveh? You, Jonah, would have spared the one plant: shall not I spare the million of men? 2. *What is this one plant even to the unconscious infants in Nineveh?* "Wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand." What is one plant to a hundred and twenty thousand unconscious infants? Out of those infants will grow sages, poets, saints, kings and priests unto God. What men, in visiting cities, concern themselves with the babes that breathe therein? And yet the purest, divinest, most influential portion of the population are the babes. The great Father regards the infant population. His blessed Son, when here, took babes in his arms, and said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." Even one babe is of more worth in the universe than the whole vegetable kingdom. 3. *What is one plant to even the irrational creatures in Nineveh?* "Also much cattle." Though the cattle are below children in the scale of being, they are greater than plants. They are endowed with sensibilities; they have locomotive powers; and for their use the vegetable kingdom exists. God has an interest in the brute creation. "He openeth his liberal hand, and supplies the need of every living thing." He feeds the cattle on the hills, makes provision for the finny tribes of ocean, feeds the fowls of heaven, and prepares nourishment even for the world of microscopic existences. If God thus regards those creatures, with what kindness should we treat them, taking care that they suffer not, either from want of food or the cruelty of man! Such is a brief and imperfect sketch of the argument here employed to impress Jonah with God's compassion for Nineveh. To use the language of another, "It is very beautiful; if you linger over it, planting your feet in the steps of it, touching the several links of it as you pass along, you will say it is beautiful. The skilfulness with which it is introduced, the forbearance with which it is conducted, the condescending regard to the prophet's infirmities, the recognition of human excellence, the delicate allusions, the precious truths hidden in them, the accumulation of force as the argument goes on, the comprehensive linking of the different worlds of life to each other—plants, animals, infants, men—the easy transition from one to another, the abruptness of the close, too, indicating in its own way the completeness of the triumph,—all these proclaim the argument Divine."

CONCLUSION. What subject is more suited to cheer and sustain our hearts amid the somewhat saddening associations connected, for instance, with the closing of the year, than the truth that the great God is lovingly interested in mankind? Every year as it passes bears away objects once most dear, the companions of our youth, and the dear friends of our riper years. And how dark, dreary, and depressed we might feel without the assurance that amidst all these changes and bereavements the great Father lives on, and feels the deepest and most vital interest in our weal! Though years, as they roll on, take away from us, and from our world, those whom we have known and loved, the great Father continues here. He has not withdrawn from the world and left it in an orphan state, dreary and desolate. He is here—here with every human being, here reasoning with the thoughtless, enlightening the ignorant, consoling the sad, strengthening the weak, guiding the perplexed, restoring the lost.

"God liveth ever!

Wherefore, soul, despair thou never!

What though thou tread with bleeding feet

A thorny path of grief and gloom,

Thy God will choose the way most meet

To lead thee heavenward, to lead thee home;

For this life's long night of sadness

He will give thee peace and gladness.

Soul, forget not in thy pains,

God o'er all for ever reigns."

D. T.

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