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ISAIAH: AN IDEAL BIOGRAPHY.

I. The Youth and Training of the Prophet.

I have asked myself during some recent studies of Isaiah's writings, whether it were possible to construct out of the fragments that remain to us a picture, at least in outline, of the man as he lived and worked, and of the surroundings in which his life was passed, which, while calling into play that element of historical imagination without which no biography worthy of the name can ever be written, shall yet be something more than a work of imagined history. In the case of the prophet's great successor, the priest of Anathoth (Jer. i. 1), the materials are more abundant. Almost every chapter has its notes of the time and occasion when the prophecy was delivered, from the first summons which called the youthful prophet to his dread task, through the long struggle with many foes, those of his own house and city, the princes of Judah, the priests and false prophets who accused him, down almost to the last days of his life of suffering, as the shadows lengthened in his Egyptian exile (Jer. xlii.–xliv.). We see the circle of the prophet's friends, Baruch and Gedaliah, and Ahikam and Shaphan and Ebed-Melech. We know the names of his bitter foes, Pashur and Irijah, and the rest. In the case of Isaiah the materials are, it must be admitted, scantier. One can hardly wonder that even the most able of recent commentators, Mr. Cheyne, should pronounce the task hopeless, and content himself with the work of interpreting the writings of Isaiah, without any attempt at constructing a biography.[1] If I do not share that hopelessness, and venture, not without some rashness, it may be, to enter

[1] "The Editor of a modern classic of the interest and importance of the Book of Isaiah would naturally preface his illustrations with a life of his author. But of Isaiah what has the Editor to tell?"—Cheyne's *Isaiah*, vol. ii. p. 159.

on his abandoned task, it is mainly because, as I have read his volumes, the outlines and even the colours of such a life have come before me with a new distinctness.

We may assume without much risk of error, that Isaiah was born not less than twenty years before the death of Uzziah. When, in the year of that death, he receives his call to a prophet's work, he does not plead youth as an excuse for shrinking back from it, as Jeremiah afterwards did (Jer. i. 6). He must at least have passed out of boyhood. It is not probable, however, that he was much older. The contents of the volume of his writings confirm the tradition that he survived Hezekiah and lived at least some few years into the reign of Manasseh. Assuming this as probable, the chief periods of his life may be arranged as follows:—

Under	Uzziah	are 20 years.
,,	Jotham	,, 16[1] ,,
,,	Ahaz	,, 16 ,,
,,	Hezekiah	,, 29 ,,
,,	Manasseh	say 5 or 6 years.

This brings him beyond the four-score years which were the proverbial limit of man's life, say to the age of eighty-six or eighty-seven, and had he been much over twenty when Uzziah died, or lived far into the reign of Manasseh, it is scarcely probable that history and tradition would alike have passed over such an exceptional longevity.

(1) Under Uzziah (B.C. 778–758).

We start then with the first period of the training and the growth of Isaiah, the son of Amoz. We know his father's name, and nothing more, and the Rabbinic legend

[1] It is possible, however, that the sixteen years of Jotham's reign may include the years of his regency.

which makes him the brother of Amaziah, king of Judah, is of not the slightest authority.[1] But, from first to last, the thoughts of Isaiah dwell on the Temple of Jerusalem. What most grieves his soul are the sins of the priesthood, the hypocrisy of the worshippers, the worthlessness of the sacrifices (i. 10–15, xxviii. 7). The vision of the sixth chapter is best understood when we think of the prophet as fallen into a trance in the inner court of the Temple, looking, as only a priest could look, at the curtain which separated the court of the priests from the Holy of Holies, and seeing, in his ecstasy, that which was behind the veil. The narrative in 2 Chronicles xxvi., obviously taken from a lost history of Uzziah written by the prophet (ver. 22), is manifestly the work of one whose whole heart was with the four-score priests of the Lord who resisted that king's attempt to usurp the priestly prerogative and to burn incense to Jehovah.

The life of a priest in Judah alternated, of course, between his home and the Temple. Of the cities that were assigned to the priests in the kingdom of Judah, nine belonged to the joint territory of Judah and Simeon (practically, as Simeon had disappeared from history, to Judah only), and four to Benjamin (Josh. xxi. 13–19). The name of one of these, about four or five miles from Jerusalem, afterwards memorable as the birthplace and home of Jeremiah, appears in Isaiah's prophetic vision of the march of the Assyrian armies from the north, through the territory of Benjamin, with a special note of pathos, "O poor Anathoth!"[2]

[1] The names are, however, suggestive. Amoz, like Amaziah, of which it is probably a shortened form, means "Jah (or Jehovah) is strength." Isaiah is identical in meaning, though the words stand in an inverted order, with Joshua and therefore with Jesus, as signifying "Jah is Saviour." A maxim of the Rabbis that wherever the father of a prophet is named he was also himself a prophet (Delitzsch on Isaiah i. 1), falls in with the conclusion I have drawn.

[2] The Hebrew involves a striking assonance amounting almost to a *paranomasia, Aniyya Anathoth.*

(x. 30). The whole of that description is manifestly written by one whose point of view was on the north, or Benjamin, side of Jerusalem. If the home of Isaiah is to be sought among the four priestly cities in that region, there seems accordingly some presumption in favour of that city. It will throw, if I mistake not, some light on the life and work of the later of the two great prophets if we think of him as inheriting the traditions of the earlier.

The education of a priest's son was naturally based upon the "Book of the Law of the Lord," whatever form that book may then have assumed; but the long and prosperous reign of Uzziah was evidently favourable to a wider culture. Volumes like those of the "Book of the Wars of the Lord" (Num. xxi. 14) and the "Book of Jasher" (the Heroes or Worthies of Israel) (Josh. x. 13; 2 Sam. i. 18), must have been within the boy's reach. From them, if not from the Book of Judges in its present form, he may have drawn his pictures of "the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb" (x. 26), of that "day of Midian" (ix. 4), which was for him the type of every day of deliverance from the rod of the oppressor.[1] The first of these books, giving, as it did, a special prominence to the victories of Israel over the Moabites (Num. xxi. 14), may well have made him familiar with the names of the cities and villages which must have figured in it, and which Isaiah enumerates, giving to each of them its special poetical associations (xv. xvi.). From the last he may have learnt the stories still extant in Jewish traditions of the deliverance of Abraham from his idolatrous persecutors (xxix. 22), perhaps, if we assume that the Book of Genesis had not yet gained its present form and position, what he knew of the *tohu, bohu* ("without form

[1] Comp. Judg. vii. viii. The reference to Gideon's victory in Ps. lxxxiii. 11, shews how a later age looked back to that day of triumph. It was the Poitiers or the Agincourt of the history of Israel.

and void") of the primeval chaos (xxiv. 10;[1] comp. Gen. i. 2), of the promise that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth (liv. 9), of the histories of Abram and Sarah, of Eden and the garden of the Lord (li. 2, 3). With these, and naturally entering largely into the work of education, there must have been the Wisdom-literature which bore its first-fruits in the Proverbs of Solomon; and of this also we find traces in the prophet's phraseology, in the stress he lays on "wisdom," "understanding," "prudence," "doctrine," "the fear of the Lord" (xxix. 13, 14, 24), each with as distinctive a connotation as the *σοφία*, *φρόνησις*, *σύνεσις* of Greek writers; in the enumeration of like ethical gifts, in xi. 2, 3, in the maxims, almost quotations, like those from the Book of Proverbs; "The vile person will speak folly . . ." (xxxii. 6, Prov. xiv. 24), "the way of the just is uprightness" (xxvi. 7, Prov. xi. 5), in the gnomic parable of the sowing and threshing, with his opening appeal, "Give ye ear, and hear my voice," which meets us in xxviii. 23–29 (comp. Prov. iv. 1, v. 1, xxiv. 30). His sense of the value of that teaching as laying the foundations of religion and ethics in something deeper than "the precepts of men" (xxix. 13), not in the maxims of a conventional morality, but in "the fear of Jehovah," may perhaps be traced in the fact that a fresh collection of the Proverbs of Solomon was made by the "men of Hezekiah" (Prov. xxv. 1) at a time when Isaiah's influence over the mind of that king was paramount. There seems good ground for believing that their work may have been carried on under his immediate direction.

The knowledge of the priests of Israel, however, took a wider range. Their functions in connexion with leprosy and

[1] The Authorized Version gives "the city of confusion," better, "the city of chaos," the Hebrew word being "city of *tohu*," the word rendered "without form" in Gen. i. 2. So again, in xxxiv. 11 we have the line of *confusion* (*tohu*) and the stones of *emptiness* (*bohu*).

other diseases involving ceremonial defilement naturally gave their studies a medical direction. The temples of the gods of the heathen round them, notably that of Baal-zebub at Ekron (2 Kings i. 2), were visited by sufferers from various diseases, as those of Apollo and Asklepios (Æsculapius) were in Greece, partly as oracles to tell men whether they should recover, partly as colleges of priest-physicians to tell them the means of recovery. The fame of these physicians, whose practice united the use of medicaments with charms and incantations in the name of their gods, such as we find in the Assyrian inscriptions translated in *Records of the Past*,[1] exercised an injurious influence over the minds of many Israelites, and it is recorded, as an instance of the faithlessness of Asa, king of Judah, that when he was diseased in his feet, suffering, *i.e.* probably, from an attack of gout, he sought to them and not to Jehovah and his servants the priests, for the means of healing (2 Chron. xvi. 12). It was necessary for the priests of Judah not to fall behind their rivals in this form of knowledge, and Isaiah's education would, accordingly, not have been complete without it. It supplied him with a fitting imagery for the diseases of the nation's life, in which the "whole head was sick, and the whole heart faint," nothing "from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head," but "wounds and bruises and putrefying sores," which had been left untended, "neither closed, nor bound up, nor mollified with ointment" (i. 6, 7). It gave him the practical skill which enabled him, when Hezekiah was sick unto death with some dangerous form of carbuncle, probably with the well-known boil of the Eastern plague, to prescribe the lump of figs which were to be "made into a plaister and laid upon the boil" (xxxviii. 21). It was not unconnected with that wide knowledge of all the lower forms of life, of the

[1] I think in vol. i., but my absence from England prevents my giving the exact reference. See also Le Normant, *Ancient History of the East*, vol. i. p. 448.

Fauna and *Flora* of Palestine which contributes so largely to the beauty of Isaiah's prophecies and which has scarcely a parallel save in the Book of Job.

But, over and above this form of training, there was that which led the future prophet into the regions of poetry and prophecy and history.

The Psalms of the Temple must, of course, have been familiar to the youthful priest, to the student in a college of the prophets, and the long peaceful reign of Uzziah must have been favourable to the development of this form of literature among the sons of Korah,[1] and other Levite minstrels. With a genius greater than theirs, with a deeper and fuller inspiration, passing in due time to a sterner and sadder work, he must yet have been familiar with their minstrelsy and music. It has been said of Burke that he would have been a great poet if he had not been a great orator. It might be said of Isaiah that, if he had not been the chief of the prophets of Israel, he would have been the chief of its psalmists. As it is, even in his prophetic work he has not forgotten the psalmody of his earlier days. He sings, "to his well-beloved a song of his well-beloved touching his vineyard" (v. 1). He has a new song of salvation for the Lord Jehovah with a great Hallelujah chorus (xii. 2–6). He writes yet another hymn for the "strong city" to which God has appointed "salvation" for its "walls and bulwarks" (xxvi. 1–4) "a song to be sung in the land of Judah."

Prominent too among the poems which attracted the attention of the young student, at once by the profoundness of its insight and the loftiness of its thought and language, must have been the great drama which we know as the

[1] Most of the Psalms that bear this title are clearly of the period which includes Uzziah and Hezekiah. Some of them present striking parallelisms to Isaiah's own teaching. See "Essay on the Psalms of the Sons of Korah," in the present writer's *Biblical Studies*.

Book of Job. Mr. Cheyne, in his invaluable Essay on "the critical study of parallel passages" (Isaiah ii., p. 217), has brought together a suggestive group of co-incidences[1] which makes it certain that, at least, the style of Isaiah must have been largely influenced by his study of that book. But those who have entered into the spirit of that book in its incisive reproofs of the conventional moralizings of the hypocrites, conscious or unconscious, whose fear of Jehovah is taught by the precept of men (Job xiii. 1–8, xlii. 7; Isa. xxix. 14), in its profound sense, true even though it come from the lips of the "miserable comforters" as from those of the sufferer, that God is indeed the Holy One (Job iv. 17, 18; Isa. v. 16), in its confessions of a deep and all pervading sinfulness (Job vii. 20, xlii. 6; Isa. vi. 5), in its great moral that sufferings are not retributive only, but are sent to educate and purify, in its conviction of a far-off Redeemer (*Goel*), the kinsman and advocate and deliverer of mankind (Job xix. 25; Isa. xli. 14), will be ready to go further than this, and to recognize how greatly the whole heart and mind of the greatest of the prophets was formed and fashioned by the greatest of the poets of the Old Testament. It is hardly too much, I think, to say that what Virgil was to Dante, that the unknown author of the Book of Job must have been to Isaiah.

It lies in the nature of the case that there was as yet no volume with what we call canonical authority, containing the writings of earlier prophets; but some at least of those whom we find among the minor prophets of the

[1] I venture to transfer the parellelisms, which are taken exclusively from chaps. i.–xxxix.

Isa. i. 8.	Job xxvii. 18 (figure from a booth in a vineyard).
,, v. 24.	,, xviii. 16 (root and branch consumed).
,, xix. 5.	,, xiv. 11 (rivers dried up—a quotation).
,, xix. 13, 14.	,, xii. 24, 25 (figurative description of general unwisdom).
,, xxviii. 29.	,, xi. 6 (God's wisdom marvellous).
,, xxxiii. 11.	,, xv. 35 (reap as you sow).
,, xxxviii. 12.	,, iv. 21. vii. (figures from the tent and the weaver's shuttle).

Old Testament canon must have been well known to him. Joel must have taught him to look for the outward and inward restoration of his people, when the pastures of the wilderness should spring and the fig-tree and the vine should yield their strength (Joel ii. 22, comp. Isa. xxx. 23), for the outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh, even upon the slaves and handmaids, so that all should prophesy (Joel ii. 28, 29, comp. Isa. xxviii. 6, xxix. 18, xxx. 20, 21). In Amos, not a prophet, nor a son of prophets, not trained, that is, in any prophetic college, but of the herdmen of Tekoa, a gatherer of sycomore fruit (Amos vii. 14), he may well have seen the fulfilment of Joel's prediction; and that prophet, probably on his being driven from Bethel by the priest Amaziah, had uttered his words of warning against the transgressions of Judah and Jerusalem (Amos i. 1, 2, ii. 4), and had taught men to look on all the nations round them, Damascus and Gaza, and Tyre and Edom and Moab, as well as on Judah and Israel, as coming under a Divine order of chastisement and retribution. From him Isaiah may have learnt, in like manner, to stand upon his watch-tower, and to utter his "burdens" or "oracles" for the same nations (chaps. xv.–xxiii.) It is possible, as the work of Amos was carried on in the reign of Uzziah, that Isaiah may have actually heard him, as he spoke, in the name of Jehovah, the words, "I hate, I despise your feast-days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies" (Amos v. 21), which were afterwards almost verbally reproduced by him in what was probably the inaugural discourse of his prophetic work (i. 10–15). An older seer, Jonah, had enlarged the range of the prophetic horizon, till it included "Nineveh, that great city," (Jon. iii. 2), the capital of that great Assyrian empire which was already beginning to loom in large outline in the near future of Judah and of Israel, and which is, above all other nations, the most prominent subject of Isaiah's prophecies.

Two other prophets more nearly contemporary, Hosea of Israel and Micah the Morasthite of Judah, carrying on their work during the same reign as he did (Hos. i. 1; Mic. i. 1), must certainly have been known to Isaiah, though we know too little of their precise dates to say whether they could have exercised any direct influence on the formation of his character. The work of Hosea, indeed, dealt chiefly, almost exclusively, with the exception of a passing glance at Judah (Hos. v. 10–14, vi. 11, xii. 2), with Ephraim and Samaria, and there is nothing to indicate that he preached personally in the southern kingdom. With Micah, however, there was a closer connexion, and we may almost picture to ourselves the two prophets as knowing each other in their youth, trained, it may be, at the feet of the same teacher in some school of the prophets (Isaiah, probably, somewhat the older of the two), and working together in their manhood. Whether one borrowed from the other, and if so which from which, or whether both drew from a common source, it is not easy to determine, but no one can mistake their identity of tone and feeling. Each utters his woe against those that covet fields and houses and take them by violence and wrong (Mic. ii. 2; Isa. v. 8). Each dwells on the growing evils of a voluptuous intemperance (Mic. ii. 11; Isa. v. 12, 22; xxviii. 7), on the tyranny of the princes who "abhor judgment and pervert all equity," against the heads of the people who "judge for rewards, and the priests who teach for hire, and the prophets who divine for money" (Mic. iii. 11, 12; Isa. v. 23). Each prophesies of the coming judgments of which Assyria is to be the instrument: "Zion ploughed as a field and Jerusalem left in heaps" (Mic. iii. 12; Isa. vii. 20). Each was derided by mockers who bade him cease from his work (Mic. ii. 6; Isa. xxx. 10, 11). Each has the same scorn and condemnation for soothsayers and diviners (Mic. v. 12; Isa. viii. 19). For each there is the vision of a glorious future, which both

prophets give in absolutely identical language, when "in the latter days, the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains," and the national religion having developed into the religion of mankind, "all nations should flow unto it," and there should be the beginning of a golden age of peace and blessedness for mankind (Mic. iv. 1, 2; Isa. ii. 2). Each, we may add, was accused of being disloyal and unpatriotic (Jer. xxvi. 18, 19; Isa. xxix. 21). The parallelisms which have thus been brought together carry us, of course, far beyond the period of Isaiah's life with which we are now more immediately concerned; but in taking a survey of the prophet's youth, it did not seem right to pass over the evidence which makes it probable that from first to last he had a friend and companion in his work like-minded with himself, that Isaiah and Micah may have been among the prophets of the Old Testament what Paul and Barnabas were among the prophets of the New.

The education of a priest-prophet must, in the nature of the case, have included history, and of this, whether in such books, or portions of books, of the present Old Testament canon as were then accessible, or in other quarters, the materials were not scanty. There were the official annals or "books of days" (the Hebrew title of what we call the Chronicles). There were, besides these, monographs on the history of individual monarchs, the three lives of David, by Samuel, by Nathan, and by Gad (1 Chron. xxix. 29), and Jehu's life of Jehoshaphat (2 Chron. xx. 34), and Iddo's life of Abijah (2 Chron. xiii. 22), and not a few others. On these books also the mind of Isaiah must have fed. They had, as we shall afterwards see, so strong an attraction for him that his first start in literature was in that form of composition.

Do we know anything of the personal surroundings of the prophet's youth, of his own life and habits? May we see

in the exceeding pathos with which he paints a mother's power to comfort (lxvi. 13) a reminiscence of the sorrows and the comfort of his own youth and early manhood? May we find in his stern rebuke of those who had the false manliness of intemperance, "men of strength, to mingle strong drink, rising up early till wine inflame them" (v. 22) in the special vehemence with which he condemns this vice in priests and prophets (xxviii. 7), indications that the nobleness of a consecrated self-control had marked his early life, and that he too had his place among the Nazarites of whom Amos had spoken (Amos ii. 11), when he named it as one of the sins of the nation that they "gave them wine to drink"? No certain answer, it may be, can be given to these questions. I leave the suggestions which they imply to the judgment of the reader.

The reign of Uzziah was, as has been said, a long and prosperous one, both in its home and external relations. Agriculture flourished, the Philistines, Ammonites and Arabians were subdued, Jerusalem and other cities fortified anew (2 Chron. xxvi.). With this prosperity there came, in the natural course of things, corruption and excess. Conquest brought the people into contact with alien creeds. "*Philistia capta victorem cepit*," and there set in a tide of fashion in favour of soothsayers and diviners after the manner of those of Ekron (ii. 6, viii. 19, xxix. 4). Towards the end of Uzziah's reign, however, were three memorable events, each of which must have had its effect upon the prophet's mind as he passed from youth to manhood. The first of these is not noticed in the books of the Old Testament, but has been brought to our knowledge by the Assyrian inscriptions. In spite of its show of power in relation to the weaker neighbouring states, Judah had had to acknowledge the suzerainty of Nineveh, and the name of Uzziah, or, as it is in the inscriptions and in 2 Kings xiv. 21, Azariah, appears in a list of kings, Hittite and others,

who paid tribute to the Assyrian king (Cheyne's *Isaiah*, vol. ii. p. 161). To a mind like Isaiah's that must have seemed the forerunner of many evils. The first appearance of an Assyrian envoy in Jerusalem must have been to him what the first appearance of the Northmen is said to have been to Charlemagne. The cloud might be at first no bigger than a man's hand, but it would grow till it covered the whole face of heaven with blackness. The submission might seem to be little more than nominal, but it would end in an invasion which would sweep over the country like a razor (vii. 20). From that time, we may believe, the thought of Assyria weighed on his mind with an almost overwhelming force, as yet without any vision of a better future in the further distance to counterbalance it.

The second of the events of which I speak was an earthquake such as had not been known in Jerusalem within the memory of man, and which after a lapse of four hundred years was still remembered as without a parallel (Zech. xiv. 5). It became an epoch by which men reckoned the events of their lives (Amos i. 1). The inhabitants had fled from their tottering houses into the open country. It impressed men, as such disasters always do, with the sense of insecurity and coming evils. It was for them as "a day of Jehovah," the precursor of other like days. Given a mind and character like Isaiah's, with a vivid imagination, a keen sense of the reality of the Unseen, and of a righteous Order working alike through nature and through history, and we can understand how the impressions thus made told upon the prophet's mind in after years; how, in his first great sermon or pamphlet, he pictured the coming judgment as leading men to flee, as they had then fled, into the holes of the rocks and the caves of the earth, when Jehovah should arise to "shake terribly the earth" (ii. 19); how he drew a yet more terrible picture of the shaking of the earth's foundations, the earth itself utterly broken, clean dissolved,

moved exceedingly, reeling to and fro like a drunken man (xxiv. 18–20). It is not too much to say that the whole tone of Isaiah's mind was coloured by that earthquake in the days of King Uzziah which he had witnessed in his youth, just as Goethe records that his mind received impressions of a widely different character, of which he could never afterwards divest himself, from the great earthquake at Lisbon.

The last of the three events, which is recorded both in 2 Kings xv. and 2 Chronicles xxvi., must have made at the time a still deeper impression than any external catastrophe, and yet it was in part the consequence of the intercourse with Assyria of which I have just spoken. Uzziah sought to be to the religion of Israel what the Assyrian kings proclaim themselves to be, in their inscriptions, to the religion of their kingdom. He desired to figure as the priest of Jehovah, just as they figured as priests of Marduk (Merodach) and of Nisroch, of Ashur and of Ishtar. The narrative of 2 Chronicles xxvi. 16–23 (directly representing, as has been said, what had come from the pen of Isaiah himself), shews how strongly the priests protested against what seemed to them as great an evil as any form of idolatry, an entire subversion of the fundamental ideas of the theocracy. "It appertained not to the king," so spake Azariah the high-priest, at the head of "fourscore valiant men" of the second order of the priesthood, "to burn incense." They fearlessly told him that he "had transgressed, and that it should not be for his honour." It is at least probable that the father of Isaiah was among those worthies. For the youth itself, the sacrilegious claim must have directed his thoughts to deeper questions, not without their bearing on his future work. Had not a Psalm, which tradition assigned to David, spoken of one who was to be indeed what Uzziah and the Assyrian kings claimed to be, both priest and king, a priest after the order of Melchizedek? (Ps. cx. 4.) Uzziah's impiety may have been prompted

by the wish to claim for himself the fulfilment of that predicting Psalm. But of whom, then, if to claim the priesthood was an impiety for any earthly king, if no son of Aaron might presume to sit upon the throne of David, did the Psalmist speak? Must it not be One who should be of earth and yet of heaven, man yet more than man, one to whom Jehovah could speak as to Adonai ("the LORD said unto my *Lord*") almost as to one who was his fellow,—a son of David and yet also in some sense, and by some process as yet unrevealed, a son of God? The outcome of those questions may be traced, if I mistake not, in the later thoughts and language of Isaiah when he spoke of the child who was to be called "Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty One (or the Hero), the Father of the ages, the Prince of Peace" (ix. 6), of the rod out of the stem of Jesse on whom the Spirit of the Lord should rest, and who should reign over a restored and regenerated earth (xi. 1-9), of the Servant of the Lord who was to be brought very low and yet to be exalted very high (lii. 13, 14), cut off out of the land of the living, and stricken for the transgression of his people, and yet prolonging his days and seeing of the travail of his soul (liii. 8-11), called not only to restore the preserved of Israel, but to be "a light to the Gentiles, the salvation of the ends of the earth" (xlix. 6).

A young man with Isaiah's gifts and culture had what might have seemed a brilliant career before him. He might have taken his place among the counsellors of kings, have risen to the high rank of the "king's friend," the "prime minister" of an Eastern court (1 Kings iv. 5), might have conducted negotiations for alliances with the monarchs of the neighbouring nations. He tells us himself how it was that he was called to quite another life than this. But that call was, we may well believe, with him, as with others, the crown and consummation of a period of struggle and of

conflict. The brightness of his life had been darkened by the new strange thoughts that stirred within it, by the sense of evils in himself and others with which he found himself powerless to cope. Were those four-score valiant priests who had been so zealous for the privileges of their order true representatives of the ideal of priesthood? Did he not, living among them and, as it were, behind the scenes, see that they too were worldly, sensuous, corrupt, ambitious (xxiv. 2, xxviii. 7)? Were they exercising any influence for good on a people sinking into yet grosser vices? Lastly, was he himself better than they? Had he any right to judge or even to reprove them? He felt as one who lives in times that are out of joint, who cannot make up his mind whether he is born to set them right or no, who now is burning to enter his protest against the evils that surround him, and now sinks back in the consciousness of his own impotence and unworthiness. He stood at least on the verge of the full maturity of manhood when there came to him that which was at once his conversion and his call. It was to him what the vision on the journey to Damascus was to St. Paul, what that of the Divine Presence in the bush that burnt with fire had been to Moses. It was in the year of Uzziah's death—probably, but not certainly, after that death—when the opening of a new page in the history of his nation would intensify all these conflicting feelings. He was in the Temple, on a solemn feast-day. The courts had been filled with priests and worshippers. The thick clouds of incense made the air heavy with their perfume. He fell into a trance, and his eyes were opened as those of Amos had been before (Amos ix. 1), as afterwards were those of Stephen (Acts vii. 55, 56), to see what others did not see, to hear what they did not hear. The veil of the Temple was drawn aside, and on the Mercy Seat he beheld a Throne, and on the Throne the long "train" of the glory-robe of the Divine Pre-

sence of Jehovah Sabaoth. The cherubim, with whose forms he had been familiar, as represented on the veil of the Temple (Exod. xxvi. 31), representatives of the great elemental forces of nature in its manifold forms of life, were transfigured into the seraphim, the "burning ones," incandescent as the swift-winged lightnings. He heard, as it were, the great Hallelujah of the universe: "Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah Sabaoth, the whole earth is full of his glory." And then there came on him, as on all who have been led, in like or unlike ways, into the consciousness of the nearness and holiness of God, a sense such as he had never known before, of his own exceeding sinfulness, of his sharing in the evil of a nation also exceeding sinful. All past convictions of sin uttered themselves in the cry, "Wo is me, for I am a man of unclean lips, and dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." And this was followed, as in the experience of ten thousand times ten thousand, by a new sense of pardon and peace and purity. For him there was, as it were, the fire of an instantaneous purgatory. One moment of agonizing pain, as the burning seraph took the glowing charcoal from the altar and touched his lips, and then the voice that said unto him, "Lo, this hath touched thy lips, and thine iniquity is taken away and thy sin is purged." And now he could answer eagerly to the call from which he had before shrunk. He heard from out the glory of the Throne the question asked, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?"[1] As yet he saw not who it was that sat on the right hand of the Majesty on high, the fellow and the counsellor of Jehovah Sabaoth; but that plural could hardly fail to associate itself in his mind with the mysterious Adonai of the

[1] The ordinary explanations that the words are a *pluralis majestatis*, or the address of Jehovah to the Seraphim as of a king to his counsellors, are hardly satisfying. There would be, even from the merely poetic standpoint, an incongruity in representing the Seraphim as at once adoring in profoundest reverence and sharing in the divine deliberations.

Melchizedek psalm, and to prepare the way for the thought of a plurality, or at least a duality, in the unity of the Divine Nature. He, at any rate, answered to the call with all the eager ardour of a glowing youth, "Here am I; send me." The mission on which he was sent was one of the most discouraging that ever came to man. He must have felt, as no prophet had ever felt before him, how terrible it was for a mortal man to be a vessel of God's truth.[1] He was not sent, as Paul was sent afterwards, to "open the eyes of men, and to turn them from darkness to light and the power of Satan unto God" (Acts ix. 15); but to "make men's ears heavy and to close their eyes," to deepen the self-chosen blindness and deafness of his people till they filled up the measure of their iniquities, and judgment came upon them to the uttermost, and "cities were left without inhabitants, and many houses were made desolate, and there was a great forsaking in the midst of the land." It was well that beyond this darkness he saw a gleam of hope. He might yet believe in the promises of God, and the indestructible vitality of his people. There might be but "a remnant" left, the "tenth" part of the people, but that, as a tithe, should be consecrated to God. Even that elect portion might need to be reduced yet more, to be "eaten" and, as it were, pruned, by further chastisements; but within this should be left the true scion that should spring out of the stump, and that at last should be holy and inviolable (vi. 1–13).

What effect this vision had on the character and work of Isaiah will be seen when we pass to the second period of his life. It will be enough here to note the fact that this is the only vision of the kind, the only apocalyptic trance of which we find a record in his writings. It might be given

[1] "Schrecklich ist es deiner Wahrheit
Sterbliche Gefäss zu sein."
Schiller.

to other prophets, as to Amos, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, St. Paul, St. John, to see many visions of manifold symbolic forms, each with its own mysterious significance. His eyes had looked upon the King, the Lord of Hosts, and that was to be enough for him. The way had been pointed out to him so that he could not doubt, and he was content to walk in it, and do his work without turning to the right hand or the left, though as yet he knew not whither it would lead him. To use his own words at a later date, he chose rather to walk on still in darkness and have no light "than to compass himself with the sparks of a fire of his own kindling" (l. 10, 11).

E. H. PLUMPTRE.

SCRIPTURE STUDIES OF THE HEAVENLY STATE.

I. THE PAULINE VIEW OF DEATH.

1 Corinthians xv. 36; Philippians i. 21; Colossians iii. 3.

THE history of the Bible, as it seems to us, exhibits four distinct attitudes of the human mind towards the idea of death; a crouching attitude, an attitude of flight, an attitude of conflict, and an attitude of reconciliation. To put it otherwise, we have within the limits of Scripture, (1) a sense of the predominance of death; (2) a hope of escaping death; (3) a prospect of vanquishing death; and (4) a denial of the reality of death.

The earliest phase is a sense of the predominance of death. Man receives it as a penalty from the hand of his Creator, and therefore its physical terrors are accompanied by an experience of moral degradation: "In the day when thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die;" "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." The second stage is not a contradiction of the first, but the addition to it of a thought which somewhat relieves its gloom; it is the hope