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although it was once more *near;* but, continuing in a southerly direction, they pitched their camp at Marah, which Canon Scarth agrees with Dr. Brugsch in identifying with the present Bitter Lakes intersected by the Suez Canal, for in them we recognize "the waters of Marah" of which the Israelites could not drink, "for they were *bitter.*"

It is hard to refrain from tracing further the wanderings of the children of Israel, but it would be beyond the scope of the present paper to do so, as it has only been written in the belief that the minute agreement of every detail of the physical and topographical features of the places suggested as the scenes of the events of the Exodus, with the Bible narrative, tends greatly to elucidate this most important portion of God's word.

A. G. WELD.

ISAIAH: AN IDEAL BIOGRAPHY.

V. UNDER HEZEKIAH.—THE EGYPTIAN ALLIANCE.

THE ambitious foreign policy of Hezekiah received, as we have seen in the case of Merodach-Baladan, a check at the hands of Isaiah. But it would seem that the king yielded in the letter rather than in the spirit. The Shebna party, the "scornful men" who sneered at the prophet's preaching, were still dominant in the king's counsels, and Eliakim, if he opposed their designs at all, offered but an ineffectual protest. The defeat of Merodach by Sargon, his retreat from Babylon, and the capture of that city by the Assyrian king, as recorded in the Assyrian inscriptions,[1] attested the wisdom of Isaiah's counsels; and probably, during the remainder of that king's reign they contented

[1] Le Normant, *Ancient History*, vol. i. p 395.

themselves with accumulating wealth, and employing it, as Shebna had done, in an ostentatious stateliness. The accession of Sennacherib however, and the active measures which he took against a renewed rebellion of Babylon under the same, or possibly another, Merodach,[1] alarmed the princes of Judah. They felt that the new king was not likely to acquiesce in the position of independence which Hezekiah had taken up, and they looked out for a fresh alliance. They turned, as the last king of Israel had turned, to the Ethiopian dynasty which was then reigning in Egypt (2 Kings xvii. 4). So, or Sabaco, Hoshea's ally, had been defeated by Sargon, but his grandson Tirhakah gave promise of a vigorous and active policy, and the counsellors of Hezekiah turned to him as likely to give them an effective support. Prophets and seers backed them up with the predictions of a counterfeit inspiration (xxviii. 7; xxix. 10), and those who questioned the wisdom of their policy were, as before, reviled as traitors (xxix. 21). Among these Isaiah was naturally prominent. He denounced the Egyptian alliance, as Burke denounced what he called a Regicide Peace, with every form of invective and of satire. It was false and evil in itself because it was trusting in an arm of flesh, and not in the God of Israel. Men were taking counsel, but not of Him, when they "wove their webs"[2] of diplomatic policy, and strengthened themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and trusted in the shadow of Egypt (xxx. 2, 3). In the time of Sargon he had borne his witness against such plans by one of those startling symbolic acts which shock our conventional notions of a prophet's dignity, but in which the Eastern mind sees a poetry more impressive than that of language. Laying aside his sackcloth mantle, the "rough garment" of his

[1] Le Normant, *Ancient History*, vol. i. p. 397.

[2] "Wove their webs," the true rendering of the "cover with a covering," of the Authorized Version.

order (Zech. xiii. 4), in which, with something of the look of a Franciscan friar, he went to and fro in the streets of Jerusalem, he appeared month after month, "naked and barefoot," in the scant attire, *i.e.* of a prisoner stripped of all but his inner tunic and carried off into exile. Men were told, when they wondered, that thus should the Egyptians and Ethiopians in whom they trusted, be carried off, to their own confusion and that of those who found in them their expectation and their glory (chap. xx.). Now again he predicted that the negotiations would issue in shame and confusion. When the embassy started on its way he painted the march of the procession in a word-sketch, which in its keen incisive sarcasm must have had somewhat of the effect of a telling caricature in the politics of modern Europe, and left a stinging epigram to dwell in the memories of men. It took the form of an oracle, such as Isaiah had been wont to speak or write as to the fortunes of the neighbouring nations (xxx. 6, 7), "the Oracle of the beasts of the *Negeb*," *i.e.* of the *South Country*, through which the envoys would have to march on their way to Egypt. He sees the long cavalcade winding its way, asses and camels laden with silver and gold and costly garments, and tapestries and art treasures from Hezekiah's palace, as an offering, half tribute and half bribe, to the Ethiopian king. They find the journey not without the common perils of the country. It was a land of "trouble and anguish," the young and the old lion threatened them when they encamped; the viper and the fiery serpent made them tremble. The prophet dwells, perhaps with a pardonable exaggeration, on these outward perils for the sake of emphasizing the failure which was to follow when they had been surmounted. So much cry and so little wool! So many dangers and sufferings for such a lame and impotent conclusion! He pictures, for himself and for his hearers, the arrival of the embassy at Zoan and

Hanes, their shame and confusion when they meet only with big words and vague promises of help, and are compelled to come to the conclusion that they have come to a people that "should not profit them, but be a shame and a reproach." Using the poetic equivalent for Egypt, as indicating its arrogance and pride, he emphasizes their failure in three short words, which were to become a bye-word and a proverb, "Rahab sitting still;" the haughty one who halted and did nothing (xxx. 7).[1] And in contrast with that he draws three other pictures, pointing to a surer ground of confidence. There is Ariel, the "lion of God," as the type and symbol of Jerusalem, disturbed and humbled for a while, speaking low, as a spectre from the shadow-world might speak, but then rising up in its strength, and victorious over its assailants; mustering its heroes, themselves also "lions of God," to do battle against its foes (xxix. 1–6; xxxiii. 7). There is Jehovah Himself, in another sense, the true "Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev. v. 5), defending Jerusalem as his own peculiar possession, reserving for Himself the right to punish it in measure, but refusing to abandon it to the fierce shepherds (the Assyrian invaders), who claim it as their prey. With a sudden change of imagery, which reminds us of Æschylus (*Agam.*, 47–57), as the other does of Homer (*Il.*, xxi. 299–302; xviii. 161), his protecting care appears as that of the parent eagles, who hover over their nestlings, scaring off those who come to plunder and destroy. We, who feel our hearts burn within us as we gaze on the word-pictures drawn by such a master hand, can well understand, if we throw ourselves mentally into the position of Isaiah's contemporaries, the impression they then made on them. We cannot wonder that in regard of the first at least of these,

[1] I give the true rendering of the words which appear in the Authorized Version as "their strength is to sit still." "Rahab," it will be remembered, appears for "Egypt" in a contemporary Psalm (Ps. lxxxvii. 4) and in Isa. li. 9.

he should give a special command to the disciples who listened to him, and reported his discourses, that they should "write it in a tablet, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever," as an abiding witness against the people who said to the seers, "See not;" and bade the prophets "speak unto them smooth things, and prophesy deceits" (xxx. 8–10).

Side by side with these schemes of the diplomatists, it was natural that Hezekiah should strengthen the fortifications of Jerusalem, as soon as he heard of Sennacherib's projected invasion, an invasion which was probably the direct consequence of his having heard of the embassy to Tirhakah. He "built up all the wall that was broken, and raised it up to the towers, and built another wall without, and Millo (=the Rampart) in the city of David." He took counsel with his princes and his mighty men (we must remember that they included the Shebnas and the Eliakims) to stop the waters of the fountains which were outside the city, so that the army of the king of Assyria might be distressed, and perhaps compelled to remove to a distance from the city through the lack of a supply. With an activity which recalled the old days of Uzziah, darts and shields were provided on a large scale for the use of the defenders. With the eloquence which had been developed under the training of Isaiah, he made an appeal, we might almost say he preached a sermon, to the captains and their troops, and, as at the beginning of his reign he had "spoken comfortably" (literally, "spoken to the heart") "to the Levites," so he spake to them, not without echoes from Isaiah himself or from the Sacred Books which he had made his study (2 Chron. xxxii. 1–8). "Be strong and courageous" (that came from Josh. i. 7); "be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him" (that from Isa. vii. 4); "for there be more with us than with him" (that from

the story of Elisha and his servant, which we now find in 2 Kings vi. 13–16): "With him is an arm of flesh, but with us is the Lord our God" (this is a reproduction of the prophet's watchword of "Immanuel" given in Isaiah viii. 10). Even here, however, in the midst of all this eloquent *cento* of devout sentiments, there was to the keen ears of the prophet something of a false ring. There had been no real humiliation, no true repentance. He stands as a seer upon his watch-tower in that "valley of vision,"[1] and sees far off the coming armies, with all the multitude of mighty nations from Elam to Kir; and the valleys are filled with the chariots and horsemen of the invader. The words that follow offer a curious and suggestive parallel to those just quoted from 2 Chron. xxxii. Men were "looking to the armour of the house of the forest," *i.e.* the arsenal which had been built by Solomon. They saw "the breaches of the city of David that they were many," and took measures to repair them; they "gathered together the waters of the lower pool," that they might have a supply of water and that their enemies might have none. They "numbered the houses of Jerusalem," that each might be registered according to its value as a position of defence, as the "counter of the towers" on the enemy's side noticed those which presented an opening for attack (xxii. 10). They broke down the houses to fortify the walls; they made a ditch between the two walls (Ophel and the high tower, on each side of the valley of Tyropœon) "for the waters of the old pool" (the Pool of Siloam, or the "King's pool," Neh. ii. 14). But in all these was the confidence in

[1] The name obviously designates Jerusalem as a whole, or some special part of it, as being the place in which the prophet received his visions of the future; or, possibly, as being a place of resort for other prophets, who claimed to have their visions there also. Soothsayers and diviners of all kinds were prominent at such a crisis (xxviii.). On this last hypothesis the name may have been given with a certain touch of sarcasm. We recall the description which Thucydides gives of the crowd of excited soothsayers who were found in Athens at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War.

an arm of flesh which the prophet looked on with misgiving: "They had not looked to the Maker thereof; they had had no respect to Him who fashioned it long ago." They had forgotten that, "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain"; that He was in the truest and deepest sense the Builder and Maker of the earthly, as He was afterwards proclaimed to be of the heavenly, Jerusalem (Heb. xi. 10). And how were they spending that interval of preparation for a great national crisis? Already was the city overcrowded with fugitives. Already to the prophet's mind it was a time for bitter weeping, and he refused to be comforted (xxii. 4); but, as he looked out from his watch-tower, he saw no signs of serious and earnest purpose, still less of repentance and amendment. They were entering on the terrible issues of the struggle with Assyria with as light a heart as the Parisians did on the Franco-German war. They were spending, as it were, the night before the battle in the revelry of drunken mirth, as the Saxons spent the night before the battle of Hastings. The whole city was "on the house tops," as though there was some great festivity. When the Lord God was calling "to weeping and to mourning, to baldness and girding with sackcloth," there was "slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine," men saying in their drunken mirth, as with the courage of despair, "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die." Was there not some terrible purgatory of suffering needed for such a people as this? (xxii. 1–14). If we draw an inference from the suggestive collocation of the two sections, Shebna and his party, the "scornful men" who spoke and acted as if they were in agreement with Hades and had made a covenant with death, were the leaders in this unseemly revelry (xxii. 15–19; xxviii. 15)

It would seem that Isaiah's call to repentance and humiliation, and his solemn announcement of the gravity

of the crisis told, at least, on the mind of Hezekiah, and on that of some of his counsellors, probably on Eliakim and his followers. A change of policy followed, in which we can trace, with hardly the shadow of a doubt, the hand of Isaiah. Sennacherib, after having taken many of the fortified towns of Judah, was laying siege to Lachish, and Hezekiah sent his envoys with overtures for peace. He made the humiliating confession, "I have offended," and placed himself entirely in the king of Assyria's hands as to the amount of the penalty. The conditions of peace imposed by the conqueror were sufficiently hard and crushing. Three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold were to be paid into the Assyrian treasury, and every resource had to be strained to the utmost in order to raise what was relatively so vast a sum. The treasures of the king's house, which he had displayed so exultingly to the ambassadors of Merodach, were soon exhausted. It lies in the nature of the case, that the princes of Judah and the self-made men of wealth like Shebna, would have to contribute largely; even "the silver that was found in the house of the Lord," as the offerings of the people, or deposited there for the sake of security,[1] was seized on for this purpose. The very plates of gold with which the doors and pillars of the temple were overlaid had to be melted down (2 Kings xviii. 13–16).

Was the counsel of which this was the result a wise and patriotic one? Are we justified in ascribing it to Isaiah as consistent with the principles by which he had all along been guided, with the policy which he had all along pursued? We can imagine how the question was answered at the time, the torrent of abuse which was poured on him

[1] The practice was a common one in the case of heathen temples, such, *e.g.* as that of Artemis at Ephesus, and the peculiar phrase, "silver that was found," suggests something different from the sacred vessels, or the temple treasury or offerings.

as having filled in the last drop of the cup of national humiliation, the reproach which must have rested on him as a traitor to his God, his country, and his king, just as like reproaches were heaped afterwards on the head of Jeremiah (Jer. xxxvii. 13). Judging of his conduct as seen in the light by which he himself was guided, and with the dispassionate calmness of history, we can answer those questions unhesitatingly in the affirmative. From Isaiah's standpoint there were two conditions of success for any conflict on which the nation was about to enter. The cause for which it fought must be a righteous one. It must enter on the conflict in a right temper. And in this case he was compelled to confess that neither of the conditions were fulfilled. The cause was not a righteous one. That assertion of independence had been, at least, a blunder.[1] Those abortive negotiations with Egypt, against which he had so strenuously protested, were a crime. And that wild revelry and drunken rollicking defiance, was that the mood of men arming for battle with "deliberate valour"? Were the vainglorious Shebna and his party fit leaders of the people at such a time as this? No; on the grounds of principle, it was right to confess the wrong that had been done, and to accept the punishment. On the ground even of expediency, it was better to wait till the people had been taught wisdom by this discipline of suffering, and had learnt what it is that constitutes the true strength and greatness of a nation. It was well for them that they should "eat of the bread of adversity and the water of affliction," if only they could thus look with open eyes upon

[1] The Assyrian inscriptions throw light on what was the real, or ostensible, *casus belli*, which led to Sennacherib's invasion. The people of Ekron (Sir H. Rawlinson's reading) or Migron (Le Normant) had rebelled against their king Padi, who was "inspired by zeal and friendship for Assyria, and had given him up bound in chains to Hezekiah, king of Judah." One of Sennacherib's acts, coinciding probably with Hezekiah's humiliating submission, was to liberate Padi and restore him to his kingdom. (Le Normant, *Ancient History*, vol. i. p. 399.)

their true teacher, and hear the voice behind them saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it" (xxx. 21).

There was, however, still in store for Isaiah what must have seemed the most bitter trial of his life. The policy which he had suggested did not succeed in procuring even an interval of peace, during which Jerusalem might prepare for war. The king, guided by Isaiah, had acted as if he would pay any price for peace, and he paid all that was demanded, and then the haughty conqueror tore up the treaty, and sent his armies to lay siege to Jerusalem, and made his Tartan, or commander-in-chief, his Rabsaris and his Rab-shakeh (the names are clearly official titles, but the precise nature of each office is obscure [1]) the bearers of an insolent message, demanding, with brutal taunts, an unconditional surrender. The details of that embassy are given in three distinct narratives in the Old Testament, with an almost unequalled fulness. The king's ministers, Eliakim now at their head, and Shebna in the subordinate position of a scribe or secretary, go out to the camp of the invader. The Rabshakeh taunts them first with their reliance on the broken reed of Egypt; [2] then with their trusting in Jehovah when, judged by the heathen standard that the honour of a God varied according to the number of his sanctuaries, they had been dishonouring Him. As if taunting them with their vain efforts to get chariots and horsemen from Egypt, and with their own weakness in cavalry, he offers, almost in the form of a wager proposed in mockery, to provide two thousand horses if they can find riders for them. Finally, in words at which the envoys

[1] "Chief of the eunuchs" has been suggested for the first, "chief butler" or "chief officer" for the second. There may, possibly, have been a touch of scorn in thus sending civilians, mere court officials, instead of generals, to the impotent State that had dared to defy the great Assyrian king.

[2] We are reminded of the despatch addressed by Lord Lytton to the unfortunate Shere Ali, warning him, through the apologue of the earthen and brazen vessels, against his trust in a Russian alliance.

shuddered as a blasphemy, he claimed to have entered on his work at the bidding of Jehovah. In vain did they implore him to speak to them in his own language and not in the Hebrew which the townsmen of Jerusalem would understand.[1] In words which have scarcely a parallel in history for their brutal insolence, till we come to Bismarck's letting the Parisians "stew in their own gravy," he threatened the besieged with the most revolting extremity of famine. After the fashion of other invaders, he declared that he had come to attack the king and not the subjects. They had only to submit and pay tribute, and they should for a time have peace and quiet in their own land; and then should in due course, as he added with a mocking heartlessness, be carried off to another land as good as their own or better, "a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards."[2] Lastly, rushing on in his impiety, he proclaims that his master Sennacherib is above all the gods of the nations, that Jehovah will fall before him as the gods of Hamath and Arphad, of Sepharvaim and Samaria, had fallen. "Where are they now?" he asks, with the implied answer that they with other spoils of war were adorning Assyrian temples. The envoys listened to the blasphemy in silent horror, and coming to the king with their clothes rent, reported what they had heard to him. He, in his turn, rent his clothes, and putting off his kingly robes went into the temple clad in sackcloth. From the temple a sad procession, ministers and the elders of the priests, all clad in sackcloth, wound their way through the streets of Jerusalem, perhaps through the very "valley of vision," to the house of Isaiah.

[1] The words are suggestive as shewing that the statesmen of Jerusalem, and therefore, probably Isaiah also, knew other languages besides that of Canaan. Aramaic would seem to have been then, as Greek was afterwards, the medium of intercourse between the conquerors and the conquered.

[2] The promise probably had its starting point in the works which Sennacherib had undertaken for the improvement of his provinces,—constructing aqueducts, planting gardens and the like. See EXPOSITOR (Second Series), Vol. II. pp. 437 ff.

Strange to say, they found him not disheartened or despondent. He found hope in the very extremity of the evil. In Chapter xxxiii. we have what is obviously a series of meditations written at this crisis, but put together without any systematic order. He sees the "valiant ones" (the men who are as lions of God) "crying without, the ambassadors of peace weeping bitterly," the highways lying waste, the "earth mourning and languishing," Lebanon and Sharon and Bashan and Carmel, the representative examples of grandeur and beauty and fertility, all stripped of their glory (xxxiii. 7, 8). That which gives him hope is that the king of Assyria has now at last put himself unmistakeably in the wrong. He has "broken the covenant," has spoiled and dealt treacherously with those who had not deal treacherously with him. Isaiah's faith in the law of a righteous retribution made him feel sure with a confidence which he had not felt when he had misgivings as to the wisdom and the rectitude of Hezekiah's policy. The procession which solemnly and sadly entered the courtyard of his house, Eliakim and Shebna, as before, in their new relative positions of chief and subordinate, priests whose sins Isaiah had so often reproved, all coming to him as their one resource, their solitary hope—this was a proof that at last the people had come to see their teachers, and to hang upon the words of one whom they had before derided and despised. The sneers of "line upon line," "precept upon precept" were heard no longer. Schemes of policy had proved, in the most literal sense of the word, abortive. The "children were come to the birth and there was not strength to bring forth." In words that shewed how deeply Isaiah's favourite phrase had impressed itself upon his mind, Hezekiah implored the prophet to "lift up his prayer for the remnant that was left." The prophet's answer was oracular and brief. He is sure that there will be deliverance, but the method of that deliverance is not yet revealed to

him. Through natural, or it may be supernatural, sources of information, he had learnt that the armies of Egypt, though slow to move, were at last mobilized. "Rahab" was no longer "sitting still." The march of Tirhakah, the greatest king of the Ethiopian dynasty, was heralded by vague rumours (xxxvii. 9). In them Isaiah saw what was likely to act as a diversion, and draw Sennacherib and his generals to another basis of operations. The prophet's augury was in part fulfilled. Sennacherib raised the siege of Lachish and attacked Libnah.[1] Before he took this step he sent yet another message to Hezekiah, more insolent and impious, if possible, than the first. No gods of all the nations round had been able to deliver them. What ground was there for thinking that Jehovah would be the solitary exception?

The daring impiety of the Assyrian king had the effect of rousing Hezekiah to the full heroism of faith. In the fullest sense of the words, he "cast his burden upon the Lord." In solemn procession—this lies in the nature of the case—at the head of his ministers and court, all probably in sackcloth, he went into the temple, with the blasphemous letter in his hand, and prayed to "the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel that dwelleth between the Cherubim." Other gods were the work of men's hands, wood and stone, but He whom Sennacherib had reproached was the living God. Would He not arise and save his people from the hand of the destroyer, that all the kingdoms of the earth might know that He, Jehovah, was only and alone the God?

To that prayer Isaiah, as soon as he heard of its purport from the messengers whom Hezekiah sent to him, and while

[1] The two cities appear to have been no distant neighbours, and both within the tribe of Judah (Josh. x. 29; xv. 42). M. Oppert, however, identifies this Libnah with the Egyptian city Pelusium. This would, of course, imply a more entire alteration of the strategy of the campaign, but the identification is somewhat conjectural.

the king was yet kneeling in supplication in the temple, returned the answer which yet rings through the centuries in the unapproachable greatness of its thoughts and language. I need not reproduce here what every reader can find in his Bible. I will not rob it of its majesty by any attempt at paraphrasing or abridging it. It will not, however, I believe, be without interest to note how, even in this hour of transcendent inspiration, Isaiah does not lose one jot or tittle of his intense individuality—how words and phrases which characterized the prophecies of his early manhood reappear in this, which was, in one sense, the last public utterance of his old age. He had spoken of old of the "virgin daughter of Sidon" who had been ravished by the conqueror (xxiii. 12). Now he uses the same phrase of the virgin daughter of Zion who was to defy the ravisher (xxxvii. 22). He dwells as throughout his teaching on the name of the Holy One of Israel (xxxvii. 23). The cedars and the fir-trees of Lebanon, and the forests of Carmel, are still with him the symbols of the beauty and fertility of the land which the invader had come to ravage (xxxvii. 24; xxxiii. 9; xxxv. 2). As before in the case of Sargon or Tiglath-Pileser, he had reminded the mighty king that he was but as the axe, the rod, the staff in the hands of the great Workmaster (x. 15), so now he reminds Sennacherib, as in the words of Jehovah, "Hast thou not heard long ago how I have done it, and of ancient times that I have formed it, now have I brought it to pass that thou shouldest be to lay waste fenced cities into ruinous heaps" (xxxvii. 26). As he had before painted the judicial infatuation of the enemies of Israel—"there shall be a bridle in the jaws of the people causing them to err" (xxx. 28)—so now Jehovah tells Sennacherib, "I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest" (xxxvii. 29). As he had offered Ahaz a sign either in the heavens above or in the earth beneath

(vii. 11), and had given Hezekiah a sign in the bringing back of the shadow on the sun-dial of Ahaz (xxxviii. 8), so now he offers a sign to meet the fears of Hezekiah that Sennacherib might yet return at the head of a more powerful army. That year the people must depend on what the invaders had left of standing corn and other fruits of the field. The next year, as there was no longer any time for tillage, they would have to fall back on the scanty harvest that might spring from what was left, but there should be no fresh invasion, and when the third year began, two years from the date at which Isaiah spoke, the country should recover from its distress, and men should once more "sow and reap and plant vineyards and eat the fruits thereof" (xxxvii. 30). In promising that sign with the full assurance of faith, he tested the faith of Hezekiah as he had before tested the faith of Ahaz, but, as might have been expected, with a widely different result. If the king accepted that sign, he would abstain from all plans of foreign alliances, with Egypt or with Babylon, and would "wait still upon God." Still more striking, as the echo of his earliest utterances, were the words that followed. The name of Shear-Jashub (whether that son were now living or dead we do not know), was still fresh in his memory as a Divine omen. "The *remnant* that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward. . . . Out of Jerusalem shall go forth a *remnant*, and they that escape out of mount Zion" (xxxvii. 31, 32). He closes his great prophecy with the same formula of solemn asseveration as that which he had used fifty years before, "The zeal of the Lord of hosts shall do this" (xxxvii. 32; ix. 7). What the method of deliverance was to be was, it would appear, not revealed to him, but of the fact of the deliverance he had no doubt. And it came in a way in which he could recognize nothing else than the hand of God. A modern historian might have described the

material phenomena, dysentery or some other form of epidemic disease, such as has often, in all ages, turned the fortunes of a campaign, spreading rapidly, aggravated, as seems probable, by atmospheric conditions, which brought on a fearful thunderstorm (xxx. 30), culminating in the horrors of that dread night which slew more than would have fallen in a long day's battle. To the prophet-poet who had learnt that "the winds were as God's angels and the flaming fire his ministers" (Ps. civ. 4), it was nothing less than the sword of the Angel of Jehovah, which David had seen when the pestilence fell upon his people (2 Sam. xxiv. 16). So he would have said of the defeat of the Armada as Elizabeth said, *Afflavit Deus et dissipantur inimici*, or of Napoleon's terrible retreat from Moscow, "He sendeth forth his ice like morsels; who is able to abide his frost?" (Ps. cxlvii. 17). The dawn of that next day was for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, as they awoke "early in the morning," a time of deliverance almost awful in its suddenness. The few that remained of the vast Assyrian host beat a hasty retreat. Sennacherib felt that he could not proceed further in that campaign, and did not venture on another, but returned to occupy himself with building palaces at Nineveh till eighteen years[1] later he was assassinated, apparently during a solemn ceremonial, by his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer. The fulfilment of Isaiah's predicted sign as to the tillage of the next two years became the earnest of his prediction that the danger from Assyria, as far as Sennacherib was concerned, was over.

According to the rectified chronology which I have been led to follow this was the last public act of the prophet's life of which we have any record. Later Jewish tradition reports, and the facts reported are in themselves probable enough, that on the accession of Manasseh, he protested

[1] The interval between the retreat and death of Sennacherib is determined by the Assyrian inscriptions. (Le Normant's *Ancient History*, vol. i. p. 404.)

with all the energy of his early manhood, and with all the authority of age, against the idolatries into which the young king threw himself with a frantic eagerness, that for so doing he was condemned to death, and that he was sawn asunder. To that tradition we have probably a reference in Heb. xi. 37. In this dearth of recorded facts it may be allowable to picture to ourselves some at least of the incidents of Isaiah's closing years, and to consider how they bore upon his character and life.

The retreat of Sennacherib's army obviously gave Hezekiah, in the eyes of the surrounding nations, the prestige of having defeated him. He became a king whose alliance was worth courting. But for the difficulties already stated in connexion with the chronology of Assyria, Merodach-Baladan's embassy might have seemed to follow on this reported victory, the congratulations on the king's recovery from sickness being hardly more than an ostensible pretext. In any case tributes and gifts came from many quarters, and the treasury which he had emptied to pay the indemnity demanded by Assyria was again filled, and he had exceeding much riches and honour, and the land was fertile and new storehouses were built for "the increase of corn and wine and oil, and stalls for all manner of beasts and cotes for flocks" (2 Chron. xxxii. 27–29). There seemed a fresh rush of prosperity like that of the days of Uzziah and Solomon. Could Isaiah look upon that prosperity with unmixed satisfaction? The answer must, alas! be in the negative. The old hereditary taint, the inborn sin of kings, began to shew itself. Not all the discipline of his life had availed to teach Hezekiah the full lesson of humility. The words in which the Chronicler speaks of the conclusion of his reign imply that he began to think with insufficient gratitude of Jehovah and of his prophet: "He rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him, for his heart was lifted up; therefore there was wrath

upon him and upon Judah and Jerusalem (2 Chron. xxxii. 25). There came it is true, at the close, another partial or complete repentance, and when he died, he received greater funeral honours than any of his predecessors, and was "buried in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David" (2 Chron. xxxii. 33), but it is not the less true that the closing period of his reign must have been to Isaiah a time of keen disappointment; that there was some unrecorded disaster which promised ill for the future; that Isaiah and other teachers of the truth were once more "removed into a corner." Nor could Isaiah look to the growth of his successor with much hopefulness. With the cessation of the peril which for a time had enabled Isaiah to be, as it were, the master of the situation, the party in opposition to him, of which Shebna was the head, naturally regained their prominence, and ministered after their manner to the king's passion for material wealth and greatness. Hezekiah, marrying apparently comparatively late in life[1] (his heir was only twelve when he succeeded him), yielded himself to the harem influences, which had always been fatal to purity of faith and worship. It is in the nature of the case, that there could not have been so complete a reversal of the religious policy of Hezekiah on

[1] The dates fix the marriage of Hezekiah after an interval of two years from the recovery from his illness, when he was forty-one years old. His wife's name was Hephzibah. The occurrence of that name in Isa. lxii. 4, where the prophet says to Jerusalem, "Thy name shall be called Hephzibah" (=my delight is in her), in connexion with the thought of the mystic marriage of Jehovah with his people, suggests the idea that the prophet may have taken Hezekiah's wedding as the starting point of his allusive allegory. It adds to the force of the coincidence that the name "Forsaken" (Heb. Azubah), which was to be changed into Hephzibah, was that of the mother of Jehoshaphat (1 Kings xxii. 42). The name Manasseh (=forgetting) may have been suggested for Hezekiah's heir partly as a recognition of the partial return of that tribe to its allegiance to the house of David, partly as significant of an "amnesty" for all past offences. The absence of any record of Hephzibah's parentage suggests the inference that she herself was a stranger to Judah, and possibly a native of the tribe after which her son was named, and that this may explain, in part, the tendency to idolatry which shewed itself in her degenerate son.

the accession of the boy-king, if he had not been surrounded by counsellors who, while they had conformed to that policy outwardly, had in their hearts been looking back to the days of Ahaz as a better model for imitation. Now, as before, they were intolerant of those who were always talking to them of the Holy One of Israel, and threw themselves with a zeal which was half fanaticism and half fashion into a multiform and confluent idolatry (2 Chron. xxxiii. 1–10). The evils that had accompanied the magnificence of Solomon followed hard upon that of the later years of Hezekiah, in which he seemed to be reviving the extent and the majesty of the Salomonic empire. A devout king like Hezekiah, with Isaiah's ideal visions floating before him as already within his reach, might flatter himself that this acknowledgment of the suzerainty of Judah, these tributary or congratulatory visits from many nations, would be a means of converting them to the worship of Jehovah,—might look forward to the time when the priests of Jehovah should say in his name, "Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance" (xix. 25). The sons of Korah might celebrate the admission of such proselytes by a hymn specially written for the purpose, dwelling in the very phrases of Isaiah on the admission of proselytes from Rahab (=Egypt) and Babylon, from Philistia and Tyre and Ethiopia on the census roll of the newborn citizens of Zion (Ps. lxxxvii.); but Isaiah had lived to see the transitoriness of such visions, and by the strange irony of history, every abomination that could be imported from the "children of strangers" once again found a home in Judah. Altars for Baalim and the Asherah (the "groves," as before, of the Authorized Version) and the hosts of heaven, were seen in every street of Jerusalem, and even in the very courts of the temple; in the very sanctuary where there was to be no form or similitude, there was the

obscene symbol of a phallic *cultus;* the valley of Hinnom re-echoed once again with the noise of drums and the cries of infants and parents' tears; and the wizards with "familiar spirits," who had from the first been the objects of Isaiah's antipathy and scorn, "peeped and muttered" as of old (2 Chron. xxxiii. 3–7; Isa. viii. 19). We have no record of any direct action on the part of Isaiah in protesting against these evils. Age probably prevented this. But in the course of his long life, he had trained many disciples who now acted as his mouthpiece, and, either before or after his death, ultimately not without effect (2 Chron. xxxiii. 11–18), reproduced his teaching. Once again the people heard of the "line" and the "plummet," emphasized now as "the line of Samaria" and the "plummet of the house of Ahab," which were the symbols of deliberate and complete destruction (2 Kings xxi. 13; Isa. xxxiv. 11); of the "remnant" not as yet cleansed from evil, and therefore needing still the sharp pruning knife of tribulation (2 Kings xxi. 14; Isa. vi. 13). The prophets who thus bore their witness had to be martyrs in the fullest sense of the word, and for the first time since the days of Jezebel and Jehu the pages of the history of Israel were stained with the record of a persecution in which much "innocent blood" was shed. And punishment followed hard upon the sin. The son of Hezekiah had to appear at Babylon, not as an honoured ally of Merodach-Baladan or his successor, but, like Ahaz at Damascus before Tiglath-Pileser, as a vassal prince, a conquered rebel, bound in fetters, submitting to an abject humiliation before Esar-haddon, the successor of Sennacherib, and so fulfilling the predictions which Isaiah had uttered when that ill-omened alliance was in contemplation (2 Chron. xxxiii. 11; Isa. xxxix. 7). It is in the nature of things probable that, if this was the portion of the king himself, the words of the prophet may have had a literal fulfilment for other princes

of the royal house, and that there may have been sons of Hezekiah, serving, as Shadrach and Meshach and Abednego did afterwards, as eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon (Isa. xxxix. 7).[1] The conversion of Manasseh after this humiliation had done its work lies, of course, outside the limits of a biography of Isaiah, but it is worth noting, as a probable instance of the effect of the prophet's teaching, perhaps also as an answer to a prayer like that of Stephen. The prayer of Manasseh, as we now have it, is probably in every sense of the word, apocryphal; but it appears as taking the place of one which was actually written, and which was at the time thought as worthy of remembrance as that of Hezekiah, and as such found a place in the short volume of "the visions of the seers" by one of Isaiah's disciples (2 Chron. xxxiii. 18, 19).

The very absence of any record of Isaiah's death in the Old Testament is, it may be noted, singularly suggestive. He was one of the crowd that perished, perhaps by frequent individual executions, perhaps in a massacre like that of Jezreel or St. Bartholomew. In words which the prophet may have written with the fate of the earlier victims before his eyes, it was true of him, as of them, that "the righteous perish and that no man taketh it to heart." For him at least there was the consoling thought that the righteous was "taken away from the evil to come" (lvii. 1). The "sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and the whore," might use mocking gestures and speak derisive words, but for him it was true that "he should enter into peace." And if we are right in this application of the

[1] The fact may furnish a possible explanation of the singular prominence given in Isa. lvi. 4, to the blessedness of the faithful eunuchs who kept the sabbaths of Jehovah, and chose the things that pleased Him. Might not the promise that He would give them in his house "a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters," be a word of comfort for those who were reduced to what every Israelite regarded as the most wretched and humiliating form of bondage?

opening words of this section of Isaiah's later utterances, may we not see in what follows a glance of hope, a word of comfort, even for his persecutor. "For the iniquity of his covetousness I was wroth, and smote him: I hid me and he was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comfort to him and his mourners" (lvii. 17, 18).

We have to ask what under these conditions were the occupations and the thoughts of the closing years of the prophet's life. The answer to that enquiry must form the subject of a separate paper, which will involve, if not a full yet, at least, a partial, discussion of the questions connected with the arrangement of the first volume of his writings, and the authorship of the second. We shall have to ask by whom and on what principles the former were, in modern phrase, collected and edited, and whether the book which carries the spirit and thoughts of Hebrew prophecy to their highest point, was the work of Isaiah himself or of a "great Unknown."

E. H. PLUMPTRE.