

prices high and the wages low. So they contended, "This is not the time." It is just possible that they urged that God's time had not come for building His house. These, however, were mere excuses. What hindered them was indifference to the work. They wished to expend all upon themselves. They went on building for themselves, and dwelling at ease in "ceiled houses"—corresponding it may be with the 'brown-stone-fronts' of our day. Thus matters went on for about fourteen years; and the Lord's house was lying "waste"—the very foundations, laid years before, in danger of falling into decay. This was the state of God's cause in the time of Haggai. The people were absorbed in their own houses, their own comforts, in crops and wages; and God's house waste, no interest in it and no sacrifice for it. Even Zerubbabel and Joshua, so full of zeal after the return, needed to be stirred up.

Let us consider :

II. The Condition of the People when God's cause was neglected.

How, under God's providence, did it fare with the people when His house was waste? It is very evident that they did not prosper. There are various points to be noted, and they must be considered very briefly.

1. Their crops failed. "Ye have sown much and bring in little." The farmers gave themselves to tilling the land some of which may have laid fallow while they were in Babylon. They ploughed and sowed much. But it was to little purpose. In harvest-tide they brought in little. In some way or other, for some reason or reasons, the crops failed.

2. Food served not its purpose. We eat and drink to satisfy the demands of nature, to support and strengthen the body for life's duties. They ate, but were not satisfied: they drank but were not satisfied with drink. Either there was not enough to eat and drink, or the food and drink lacked the qualities necessary to serve their purposes.

3. Raiment also failed to serve its purpose. "Ye clothe