

"[Mohammed] had suffered from a nervous disorder which tradition calls epilepsy, but the symptoms of which more closely resembled certain hysterical phenomena well known and diagnosed in the present time, and which are almost always accompanied with hallucinations, abnormal exercise of the mental functions, and not unfrequently with a certain amount of deception, both voluntary and otherwise."¹ One cannot, however, be sure that we have the visions of the prophets exactly as they were experienced, if they were written down a long time afterwards, and the plays upon words which occur in Jeremiah's account of his own visions,² warn us not to build too much on the literal historical accuracy of the narrative. It will be pardonable if some reader should doubt whether Jeremiah meant us to believe that he had really had any vision at all—whether he does not presume that his readers will take these so-called visions as pure literary fictions, such as have been recognized in all great literary periods. The decision depends on the range which each person allows to the quality of reverence. For my part, I prefer to believe that one who is so candid as Jeremiah in his descriptions of himself really did experience a vision at this crisis of his inner life, like Isaiah before him; but I lay no stress upon this, because the opposite view is possible, and Jeremiah's principal object in writing verses 11-16 of chap. i. is to bring strikingly before us the grand though not the only themes of his prophetic discourses.

The first visionary experience of Jeremiah is described in the words, *And Jehovah put forth his hand and touched my mouth* (i. 9). Just as God so often employs the letter of Scripture as the channel of spiritual illumination, so here He repeated a scene in the grand inaugural vision of Isaiah, because His servant, by frequent study of that revealed vision, was prepared to understand a similar experience. Jeremiah's inner eyes were opened (2 Kings vi. 17), and he saw a Form, which he does not attempt to describe, approach him and touch his lips. What this meant could only become clear by the Divine guidance of the prophet's reasoning powers. Isaiah had been led to interpret a similar action, performed by one of the sera-

¹ "The Qur'ân" (Oxford, 1880), Part i., Introd., p. xx.

² These plays upon words remind us of Amos viii. 2, which was probably Jeremiah's model.