

Jerusalem had been taken before ; it was doomed to be taken again ; why might it not be God's will that it should be taken now ? The prediction, treat it as we may, was undoubtedly marvellous. It is the more so when we reflect that for thirty or forty years Isaiah had uniformly had the same story to tell of an invasion of the Assyrian, and of his sudden destruction before the walls of Jerusalem. If the incident stood alone, it would be the most remarkable on record, though it might still be conceivably explained as a coincidence. But the weakness of this theory of prophecy is that the instance does not stand alone. It does not stand alone in Isaiah's own case, for, beginning with the long vistas of undeniable prophecy in chap. vi., we have numerous other express and definite predictions in his writings. The same is true of the other prophets, *e.g.*, of Amos, of Jeremiah, of Ezekiel. We grant, of course, that there is an ideal element in prophecy, that as the vistas recede the outlines become more general and the perspective is more indistinct, that the blessings of a future age clothe themselves in the forms of the present, &c. But this is not incompatible with true supernatural prediction, both nearer and remote.¹ We have but to contrast the tone of an Amos, who, as Wellhausen admits, "prophesied as close at hand the downfall of the kingdom which just at that moment was rejoicing most in the consciousness of power and the deportation of the people to a far-off northern land,"² with the language, say, of a John Bright during the progress of the American Civil War, to see how great is the difference between prophecy and "political perception," albeit the latter is quickened with the most intense consciousness of the righteousness of a cause. "What the revolt is to accomplish," said Mr. Bright, "is still hidden from our sight ; and I will abstain now,

¹ Mr. Cheyne has broad views on prophecy, but even he does not go so far as Mr. Smith. He does not pronounce definitely against historical predictive prophecy (*Proph. of Isa.*, i. p. 204) ; finds in the Psalter and Isaiah freshadowings of special circumstances in the life of our Saviour (ii. p. 192) ; and sees, what Mr. Smith does not, the Divinity of Christ in the title 'El gibbōr in Isa. ix. 6 (ii. p. 196).

² *Hist. of Israel* (Eng. trans.), p. 470 ; cf. on Isaiah, p. 483.