

but among the herds and herdsmen of Tekoah, that he received his training for the prophetic office. When his right to exercise his high vocation was called in question by the mercenary officials of the King's Court and Chapels, this is the account which he gave of himself and his calling: "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdman, and a gatherer of yeamore fruit. And the Lord took me as I followed the flock; and the Lord said unto me, go, prophesy unto my people Israel." With great fidelity and devotedness he obeyed the heavenly call, exercising his sacred functions, at the hazard of his life, chiefly in the kingdom of Israel, but often in denouncing the sins of Judah and the surrounding nations.

The immediate occasion of the singular interrogative, now selected as the topic of discourse, was a great public calamity in the land of Israel. The fruits of the earth were about to be consumed by swarms of grass-hoppers in such numbers and size as to threaten complete destruction to the people's harvests. The king's mowings had been secured; but the "latter growth," on which the labouring classes chiefly depended for their flocks and herds, was in danger of being entirely cut off. The sympathies of the herdman-prophet were aroused. From his own position as one of the labouring classes he could fully realize the extent of desolation with which the land was threatened. He used his prerogative of prayer with singular success.—There can be no greater national benefactors, in times of trouble, than men given to prayer. They are more influential for the defence of a country than standing armies. A few more of such persons as Lot in Sodom would have saved that doomed city from its deserved ruin. A few more Havelocks in the Indian army might have spared England the most terrible of modern disasters. In the instance recorded in our text, Israel's threatened calamities were stayed in answer to the prophet's prayers. "And it came to pass that when they had made an end of eating the grass of the land then I said, O Lord God, forgive, I beseech thee; by whom shall Jacob arise? for he is small."

By the name Jacob, as here employed, we are not to suppose that the ancient Hebrew patriarch was personally intended. He had been long dead; but he still lived in the nation that sprung from his loins. The name is often used in the prophetic writings to denote the spiritual seed of Jacob, and in a sense so enlarged as to include the whole Israel of God in all ages. It appears to me to be taking no undue liberty with the meaning of the sacred writer, to give it the enlarged construction in this place; and to call attention, from the passage in which it here occurs, first, to the low and limited condition of the Church; and secondly, to the means of Jacob's elevation and enlargement.

I. The condition of the Church of Christ is low and limited. Jacob is down and small, as to the materials of which the membership of the Church is composed. They are of the earth, earthly: their "foundation is in the dust." In the low standard of spirituality which prevails among the professed followers of Christ, there is much to remind them of the hole of the pit from which they were dug, and the rock from which they were hewn, and the miry clay from which their feet were extracted. "Worm Jacob" is the appropriate, but humiliating title, given by the Spirit of Inspiration to the Israel of God, to magnify the grace and truth by which he is raised to the honours of his high vocation. The fitness of this appellation becomes doubly apparent by a reference to man's low and lost condition. Poor fallen and degraded humanity is such, in its best estate, that the noblest specimens of manhood are possessed of no intrinsic worth in the sight of God. The gre-