

THE PULPIT.

THE FOUR LEPERS IN THE SYRIAN CAMP.

"And there were four leprous men at the entering in of the gate; and they said one to another, Why sit we here until we die? If we say, we will enter into the city, then the famine is in the city, and we will die there; and if we sit still here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us fall into the host of the Syrians; if they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die. And they rose up in the twilight, to go into the camp of the Syrians; and when they were come to the uttermost part of the camp of Syria, behold, there was no man there. For the Lord had made the host of the Syrians to hear a noise of chariots, and a noise of horses, even the noise of a great host; and they said one to another, Lo, the king of Israel hath hired against us the kings of the Hittites, and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us. Wherefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents, and their horses, and their asses, even the camp as it was, and fled for their lives. And when these lepers came to the uttermost part of the camp, they went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver, and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it. Then they said one to another, We do not well: this day is a day of good tidings, and we hold our peace: if we tarry till the morning light, some mischief will come upon us: Now therefore come, that we may go and tell the king's household. So they came and called unto the porter of the city: and they told them saying, We came to the camp of the Syrians, and, behold, there was no man there, neither voice of man, but horses tied, and asses tied, and the tents as they were. And he called the porters; and they told it to the king's house within."—2 Kings VII. 3-11.

Samaria was besieged by the Syrians. The city was surrounded by the host of the enemy; the siege had lasted long; there was a great famine. The distress was extreme. The least morsel of food sold at a great price; women bargained for and ate their own children. There seemed nothing but a miserable death before all the people, when God in His mercy was pleased to deliver them. He did it in a remarkable way; the instruments he used were these four lepers.

1. The story is full of lessons; let us notice this as the first—that God can deliver by the weakest and most unlikely means. The king of Israel was powerless; he could but see the misery of the people, and rend his clothes, and put on sackcloth, and vent his feelings in wicked and foolish threats against the prophet Elisha. The lords of the land could do nothing; one of them, in his hopeless despair, did but mock when the prophet, in the name of the Lord, foretold coming plenty. Some horses, and horsemen, and soldiers still remained; but, shut up in the city, they could do nothing for its relief; the more the mouths the greater the misery. King, nobles, and soldiers—those who might naturally have been looked to for deliverance—were all equally powerless. But there