

all their affairs would prosper. *Shall come.* He is sure to come, but in an unlooked-for manner.

Vs. 2, 3. *Who may abide . . . coming?* Only those could endure God's presence in whose character there was no dross. *Like . . . refiner's fire . . . fullers' soap* (Rev. Ver.); "soap of the washers." (See *Light from the East*.) *Shall sit as a refiner*, etc. The refiner sits watching the metal in the process of refining. When he sees his own image reflected in it he knows that the dross is purged away. *Purify the sons of Levi*; who had charge of the temple, representing the holy God. They must first be cleansed if the nation is to be purified. (Compare John 2 : 14-16.)

Vs. 4, 5. *Offering . . . pleasant unto the Lord.* The life, character and motives of the offerer must first be pure, if the offering is to be acceptable (see Mark 12 : 43; 2 Cor. 8 : 12). *As in the days of old*; when the Lord was pleased with the offering of Abel (Gen. 4 : 4) and the faith of Abraham, Gen. 15 : 6. *I will come near.* Instead of "he" it is now "I", so completely one are the Lord who speaks and He of whom He speaks (compare John 10 : 30). *A swift witness*, etc. This is the answer to the question of the people, "Where is the God of judgment?" (see ch. 2 : 17). God will come and show His hatred of all that is evil and His determination to punish it.

II. The Lord's Rebuke, 6-9.

Vs. 6, 7. *I . . . the Lord . . . change not.* The delay in God's coming to the help of His people was due, not to any change in His love to them, but to their forsaking Him. *Therefore*, etc. The sufferings which had been permitted to come upon them were intended to purify, not to destroy them. *Ye are gone away.* Compare the departure of the prodigal from his father's house to the far country, Luke 15 : 11-24. *From mine ordinances*; the requirements of God's law for the daily life, and the worship represented by the temple and its services. *Return unto me.* This is the gospel call, the eager invitation of a loving Father, that rings through the Bible from beginning to end. *I will return unto you.* For those who listen to the gospel "come" there is always a joyful "welcome."

Vs. 8, 9. The way to return is by rendering

to God the *tithes* (the tenth of their possessions) for keeping up His service in the temple, which they had been holding back (see Lev. 27 : 30-33; Deut. 14 : 28, 29). Instead of gaining they had sadly lost by withholding from God His due.

III. The Lord's Promise, 10-12.

V. 10. *Bring ye all the tithes.* If men will be generous toward God and his cause, He will pour out rich blessings on them. *Into the storehouse.* This may have been the "great chamber" (Neh. 13 : 5), or "lean-to," which surrounded the temple on three sides, and was used as a receptacle for tithes and offerings. *Meat (food) in mine house*; for those who had charge of the temple services. *Prove me.* The people had tried their way of withholding their gifts, and it had resulted in failure. Now they are asked to try God's way of bringing their offerings to the temple. *Open . . . windows of heaven . . . pour . . . out . . . blessing* It is as if God would empty out His vast reservoir of blessings on those who were faithful to Him.

Vs. 11, 12. *I will rebuke*; cause to cease. *The devourer*; "any insect, especially the locust, that would devour the fruits of the earth." (Plumptre.) *All nations shall call you blessed*; an ideal condition, much desired by the Jew, when he would be regarded by all people as holding the highest place in point of happiness and prosperity. Compare the fame of Solomon's kingdom which reached to distant Sheba, 1 Kgs. 10 : 7.

'Light from the East

FULLERS' SOAP—Two processes in the preparation of woollen cloth are called fulling: the one is intended to thoroughly cleanse and bleach it, and the other to so mill or felt the wool together as to lessen the possibility of subsequent shrinking. This was accomplished in the East by washing the material in a preparation of lye and then tramping it with the feet in a vessel of hot water. The making of soap is one of the chief industries of modern Palestine, although there is no sign that the people use it themselves. The poorer grades of olive oil are used in it, and the potash necessary is obtained by burning glasswort