

It was the Assyrians themselves that were thus discomfited or destroyed; and well then, might the heathen say, when, on the deliverance of the Jews from Assyrian and Babylonish captivity, they beheld this fresh signal of divine interposition: "the Lord hath done great things for them."

But the greatest, perhaps, of all their deliverances, was yet to come.

For their national defection and idolatry they had at length been given up to Captivity, and carried away into Babylon—a whole nation nearly carried captive. Not all the warnings of their prophets could suffice to withdraw them from their attachment to idols, and fix their inconstant hearts. Their land was defiled with blood, the blood of the innocents, whom they offered to the worst of the heathen Gods; sin was rampant;—and God, no longer able to restrain his indignation, brought the Babylonian power upon them, and sent them into Chaldaea, to learn there the sad fruits of sin, and above all of repeated and flagrant apostacy. He had not, however, given them up. They were still his people, and with them he had still the highest purposes to serve. For sixty-nine years, however, they endured all the signs and indignities of a severe and cruel bondage, living far from their native land, tasting none of the sweets of home, and seeing in every object which surrounded them but the marks of their degradation and the memorials of other and dearer objects which memory could not restore. They continued sighing for liberty, and longing for the delights and privileges of their own land. Alas! what help was for them? They had forsaken God; and what could they expect but that they should be made still to wear the conqueror's chain, and bear the conqueror's yoke? Such might have been expected. But their prophecies taught them to look forward to a deliverer who would break their fetters, and restore them to Judea again. Even in their captivity they were a peculiar people. They had their sacred books to read and to ponder; and with what avidity may we not conceive them unfolding those scrolls which bore inscribed as by the finger of God himself, the very promises of their deliverance, the very predictions which God had given forth, but which in a happier time they had for the most part slighted and despised! That deliverer did arise, and it was God who raised him up. Conquerors pursue their own ends,

according as their ambition or avarice or hostility may prompt; but all the while they are but accomplishing the designs of the Almighty. They are but the hands on the dial-plate, or the wheels in the machinery, while the divine purpose forms the main-spring within by which all is turned, and all is regulated. Nebuchadnezzar had established himself over Assyria and Babylon, and swayed their united sceptre as of one kingdom. His grandson was now seated upon the throne, and revelling in all the license of uncontrolled power and unbounded luxury. Babylon seemed a city which no enemy could take, which neither artifice nor force could overcome. Cyrus himself, with his army, lay two years before it, ere he succeeded in its capture. During that time, the king and his nobles, deeming themselves so safe, and supposing that their besiegers would at last desist from so hopeless an enterprise, were in the habit, we are told, of deriding their enemy from the walls, and might thence retire to the palace in all the indifference of the most perfect security. But God's purposes were not to be balked. Not all the lofty walls and massive gates could resist His decree, or withstand His power. After a two years' siege Cyrus at length fell upon the singular expedient of diverting the river Euphrates from its channel, and so leading his army by its course thus laid bare, secretly, to the very gates, which he might trust to fortune or artifice for opening; and thus, all unknown to the enemy, gain admission to the city. His success was as signal as his expedient was novel and daring. On a day devoted to some festival, he carried his plans into execution. On the evening of that day, when all the inhabitants were likely to be given up to intoxication and merriment, he directed one half of his army to march by the bed of the river from above, and the other half from below, the city, and to meet at the two opposing gates. It so happened that these gates had been left open, whether by chance or by design it is not known, and the entrance to the city was secured. Cyrus rushed in, immediately secured the palace, put the monarch to death, and henceforth made Babylon but a province of the Persian dynasty.

But how in all this, it may be asked, was the power of God exhibited, or the interposition of His providence evinced? In the most obvious manner. In all the events of providence we are warranted to say: the Lord hath done this. He