

The Lessons of Calamity.

HAGGAI 1. 6.—“Ye have sown much and bring in little; ye eat but ye have not enough; ye drink but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Thus saith the Lord of Hosts consider your ways.”

Thus spoke one of the brave old Hebrew prophets—one of the faithful and fearless ones who of old stood up for God and righteousness, rebuked iniquity, and called to repentance. The calling of the prophet was far from being an enviable one. He had often to tell men bitter, unpalatable truths; to hold up their sins before their eyes; to denounce fashionable respectable wickedness, in high places, and to warn men of coming judgments. And those who were disturbed in their pleasant pursuits by the voice of the prophet, speaking in thunder-tones, loved him not. He was despised, hated persecuted, sometimes stoned. Too often, the only wages of the preacher of righteousness and the rebuker of sin were exile, the dungeon, or the scaffold. Yet did these heroic men front the people in the name of the living God, and addressing alike the king and the subject, the rich and the poor, told them of their sins, not in wrath or hatred, but in pity and love. They spoke because the inward fire burned—because behind them was consciously the Awful Presence,—because the word of the Lord was as “a fire within their bones,” and would not let them rest. They looked far hence for their reward, and were content to get their heavy task accomplished. All who are sent by God to do the prophet's work still, must be satisfied with the prophet's wages.

The man who uttered the words of the text, was one of those courageous preachers of the righteousness to a people who needed it sorely. The Jews, on their return from the Babylonish Captivity, after all their experience of God's mercy and favour, turned aside, in selfish indolence, from the high and glorious work God had given them,—that of rebuilding the House of the Lord, and making Jerusalem once more a “praise in the whole earth.”—They forgot God and his work, and went after selfish enjoyments,