

12 The Prophets of the Old Testament

posed to attack from their neighbours on every side, and victory often hung in the balance. Had the young nation succumbed to these attacks, the religion of Israel must have shared its downfall. But victory was fraught with almost graver peril. In all the arts of civilized life the vanquished Canaanites stood high above their rivals; and here too 'the conquered led their conquerors captive.' Once the fury of battle was spent, Israel succeeded quietly to the inheritance of the Canaanites, learning of them to build and to plant, to sow and to reap. Excavations in the buried cities of Palestine show no break in civilization as the result of the Conquest. It is clear from Israel's own records that the simple ties of neighbourly commerce were further strengthened by bonds of friendship and alliance. All this reacted powerfully on the development of Jahwism. The religion of the Canaanites was a warm and sensuous Nature-worship, which exercised a peculiar fascination over the passionate Semitic temperament. While Jahweh remained in solitary majesty on the rugged peaks of Sinai, or marched through tempest and earthquake to battle for Israel, the Baalim or 'Lords' of Canaanite worship lived on the happiest terms of intimacy with their people, giving them in season 'their bread and their water, their wool and their flax, their oil and their drink' (Hos. ii. 5), and filling the round of their lives with gladness.