

## LENGTHENED CORDS AND STRENGTHENED STAKES.

THE SUBSTANCE OF THE CENTENARY SERMON PREACHED IN HARVEY LANE CHAPEL, LEICESTER, JUNE 1ST, 1892, BY THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF.

When, a hundred years ago, it pleased God to wake from sleep a lethargic Church, from the belfry of the ages there rang out a signal sound, and William Carey's hand was on the bell-rope. And these are the words which echoed over the Church of Jesus Christ: "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations; spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited" (Isa. 54: 2, 3).

Those words have more than once rung out on this centenary, and they will more than once ring out again! But God's bell is not cracked yet, and it may be well for us, as the hundred years have brought their hands round on the dial to the even hour of the century, that we should humbly and reverently take hold of the same bell-rope and sound from the same signal bell the same impressive tones: "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations!" for this is the most remarkable missionary text in the Old Testament.

I first want to vindicate this decision, which I make after many years of careful study both of missions and of the Word of God. In the first place, the position of this text in this prophecy of Isaiah is peculiar and unique. The last twenty-seven chapters of this prophecy, from the fortieth to the sixty-sixth inclusive, contain the most remarkable Messianic poem to be found in the pages of the Old Testament; and it is quite noticeable that the very book that modern critics are seeking to pull to pieces should contain the sublimest of all Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. These twenty-seven chapters are, in the original Hebrew, divided into three books, of nine chapters each, as the chapter divisions run in our version, each book signaling its conclusion by a certain refrain: "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked;" "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked;" and the last book concluding with the same sentiment, couched in more impressive phrasology: "Their worm shall not die and their fire shall not be quenched;" "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked." In the exact centre of the middle book of the three comes the fifty-third chapter, occupying thus the precise centre of the entire Messianic poem. That chapter contains twelve verses and fourteen distinct declarations of the doctrine of vicarious sacrifice. It is like a great radiant ruby, set in the front of a coronet with many jewels round about it, but obviously the central gem of them all, and its color is blood-red. It is a remarkable chapter, so mysterious that even the Jewish Rabbis could make nothing of it, unless they understood it to prophesy two contradictory Messiahs—one a Messiah of conflict, and the other a Messiah of conquest;